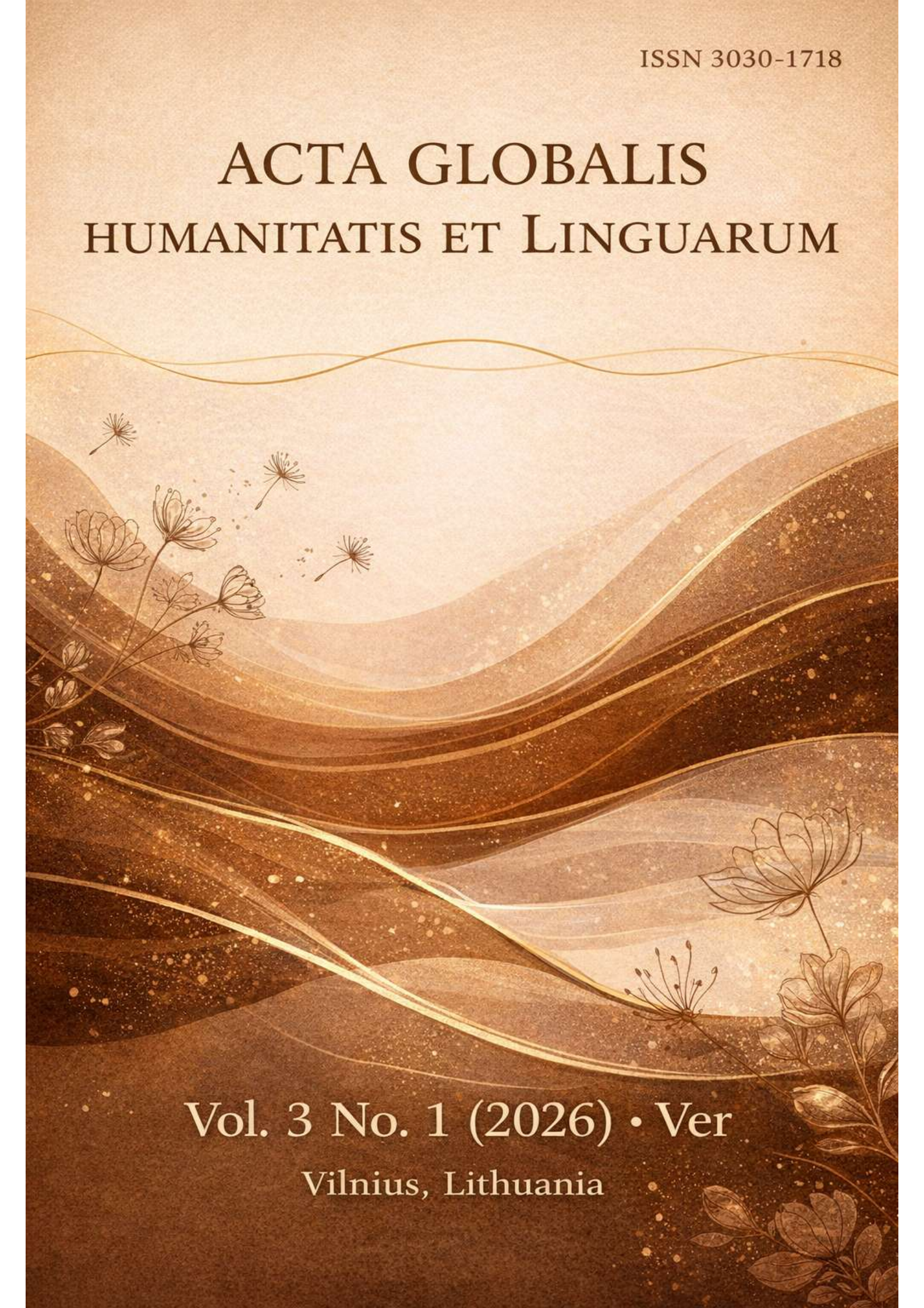


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The background of the cover is a rich, textured gold and brown. It features several wavy, horizontal lines that create a sense of movement and depth. Scattered throughout are delicate, line-art style illustrations of flowers and dandelions, some in bloom and some as seed heads. The overall aesthetic is elegant and scholarly.



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Artificial Intelligence and the Design of Politics in the Modern World

 ¹ Kamran Valizada

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Keywords	Abstract
Artificial Intelligence Politics Governance; Public Opinion Algorithmic Decision- Making Democratic Processes Policy Simulation	Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly integrated into political decision-making, governance, and electoral processes, shifting politics from a human-centered, intuition-driven domain to one that is data-driven and algorithmically guided. AI technologies such as machine learning and big data analytics assist in policy planning and simulation, enabling policymakers to anticipate the social and economic consequences of decisions. AI-driven analytics can monitor public opinion, predict voter behavior, and enable micro-targeted campaigning, reshaping the dynamics of elections. Beyond domestic politics, AI models support crisis management and diplomacy by simulating scenarios to predict conflicts, assess risks, and inform negotiation strategies. Additionally, AI enhances cybersecurity and helps detect disinformation, protecting democratic processes against manipulation. However, the use of AI in politics raises significant ethical, social, and legal issues. Algorithmic decision-making may embed biases, reduce transparency, and concentrate power in the hands of those who control these systems. Concerns about data privacy, accountability, and equitable access further complicate AI's integration into public life. Thus, while AI can make governance more efficient, responsive, and participatory, its deployment must be balanced with rigorous ethical standards, transparency measures, and regulatory oversight to preserve democratic integrity. Ultimately, AI's rise represents a transformative shift in modern politics, offering both opportunities and challenges that society must carefully navigate.

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force reshaping political structures, governance, and citizen engagement in the 21st century (Campbell-Verduyn & Fast, 2020). This paper examines how AI technologies influence policy-making, political communication, and

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electoral dynamics, while addressing their ethical and democratic implications. Through a synthesis of contemporary literature and case studies, we analyze AI-driven tools such as algorithmic decision-making, predictive analytics, and automated governance platforms, following a critical approach to studying algorithms (Kitchin, 2017). The findings reveal that AI has the potential to enhance administrative efficiency, optimize policy outcomes, and strengthen civic participation. These benefits align with recent studies highlighting AI's promise in improving public sector decision-making (Ponce & Ortega, 2021). However, challenges including algorithmic bias, surveillance, misinformation, and power asymmetries pose significant risks to democratic institutions. This study argues that integrating AI in political processes requires transparent frameworks, regulatory oversight, and citizen-centered governance models to ensure ethical and equitable outcomes. This research contributes to the understanding of AI's role in modern political design and offers strategic directions for policymakers and scholars navigating the intersection of technology and governance. The rise of AI represents a paradigm shift in global politics. Traditionally, political design has been grounded in institutional frameworks, human decision-making, and normative principles of governance. Today, AI technologies—from machine learning algorithms to natural language processing—introduce new mechanisms through which political actors shape policies, communicate with constituents, and analyze complex societal challenges. These developments have even prompted calls to “build digital democracy” by leveraging technology to strengthen governance (Helbing & Pournaras, 2015). This study investigates the multidimensional impact of AI on modern political systems, with a focus on its potential benefits, the challenges it poses, and its ethical implications.

To guide this investigation, the following research questions are posed:

- **RQ1:** How does the integration of AI in politics alter policy-making, governance structures, and public administration?
- **RQ2:** What ethical, legal, and democratic challenges arise from the use of AI-driven decision-making and communication in political processes?
- **RQ3:** What regulatory and governance frameworks can ensure that AI is employed in politics in a transparent, accountable manner that aligns with democratic values and preserves citizen trust?

2. AI and Political Decision-Making

AI applications in politics range from predictive analytics for policy evaluation to automated tools for resource allocation. Governments are increasingly employing AI to forecast economic trends, optimize public service delivery, and enhance crisis response. For instance, machine-learning algorithms have been used to anticipate social unrest or to target public health interventions, allowing policymakers to design proactive measures. Such tools can improve administrative



accuracy and responsiveness, but they also carry the risk of reinforcing biases present in training data, potentially leading to unequal or discriminatory outcomes. In short, AI is becoming embedded in the mechanisms of political decision-making, fundamentally altering how policies are formulated, implemented, and evaluated. Whereas traditional decision-making relies on human judgment, expert analysis, and deliberation, AI introduces computational tools capable of processing vast data volumes, detecting patterns, and generating predictive insights that can support evidence-based governance.

2.1. Predictive Analytics and Policy Formulation

AI-driven predictive analytics enable governments to anticipate social, economic, and political trends with greater accuracy. Machine learning models can forecast indicators such as unemployment rates, disease outbreaks, or patterns of social unrest, thereby allowing policymakers to design proactive interventions. In public health, for example, AI models have been utilized to predict the spread of infectious diseases and to optimize vaccination campaign strategies. By simulating policy scenarios and outcomes, predictive analytics help decision-makers evaluate the potential impact of policies before implementation. The result is a more informed policy formulation process that can improve societal outcomes and reduce unintended consequences. These data-driven approaches exemplify the potential of AI to enhance strategic planning in governance.

2.2. Resource Allocation and Administrative Efficiency

AI systems support decision-making in resource allocation by optimizing how resources are distributed and services delivered. Smart algorithms can analyze complex datasets to determine where to allocate budgetary resources, which infrastructure projects to prioritize, or which regions are most in need of emergency aid. By detecting patterns and inefficiencies that humans might overlook, AI can help streamline government operations. For instance, some city administrations have piloted AI-assisted budgeting tools to forecast infrastructure maintenance needs based on demographic and economic data. Such AI-enabled administrative tools increase operational efficiency, reduce human error, and can enhance transparency in governance by basing decisions on objective data criteria. Early implementations in public sector management have demonstrated improved service delivery and cost savings (Wirtz et al., 2019). Overall, leveraging AI for resource allocation holds the promise of a more efficient and responsive public administration.

2.3. Algorithmic Decision-Making and Its Risks

Despite its advantages, AI-based decision-making carries inherent risks. Algorithms tend to reflect the biases present in their training data, which means they may inadvertently perpetuate or even exacerbate existing societal biases. A notable example is predictive policing tools: in several cases, these AI systems have been criticized for disproportionately targeting marginalized communities



due to biased historical crime data (O’Neil, 2016). Without careful oversight, algorithmic governance can lead to unequal or discriminatory policy outcomes, undermining fairness and justice. Furthermore, many AI models operate as “black boxes” – their internal logic is opaque and not easily interpretable to humans (Pasquale, 2015). This opacity can undermine accountability, as neither citizens nor officials may fully understand how an AI arrived at a given decision. If public policies are informed by inscrutable algorithms, it becomes difficult for democratic institutions to provide oversight or for the public to trust the outcomes. In short, uncritical reliance on algorithmic decision-making may erode transparency and accountability in governance, highlighting the need to address bias, interpretability, and oversight in any political AI system (Kroll et al., 2017).

2.4. Case Studies in AI-Governed Decision-Making

Several governments have begun integrating AI into their decision-making processes, yielding both successes and raising concerns:

- **Estonia:** The Estonian government has embedded AI into its advanced e-government platform, using predictive models in areas such as healthcare provision, taxation, and emergency services. Estonia’s experience demonstrates enhanced efficiency and personalized public services, while the government maintains transparency through open data initiatives to retain public trust.
- **China:** China employs AI extensively in governance and social management. From urban planning algorithms to nationwide surveillance and social credit systems, AI is used to predict traffic patterns, monitor public sentiment, and enhance public safety. However, China’s model raises ethical concerns about surveillance, privacy, and citizen autonomy under a highly centralized, state-controlled AI governance approach.
- **United States:** Various U.S. federal and local agencies have experimented with AI to optimize operations, such as algorithms for budget allocation, fraud detection in welfare programs, and policy simulations for economic planning. While these efforts show promise in efficiency gains, they have also spurred debates about fairness and accountability – for example, questioning whether automated decision systems in criminal justice or social services might reinforce biases. These cases highlight the importance of ethical oversight alongside innovation.

2.5. Balancing Efficiency and Ethics

Effectively integrating AI into political decision-making requires a careful balance between efficiency gains and ethical governance. Policymakers must implement mechanisms to audit and evaluate algorithms for fairness and accuracy, and to ensure transparency in how decisions are reached (Kroll et al., 2017). Incorporating human oversight in AI-driven processes – a “human-in-



the-loop” approach – is crucial for maintaining accountability and public trust (Rahwan, 2018). In practice, this means that algorithmic recommendations should be subject to review and approval by human officials, especially in high-stakes policy areas. Additionally, developing strong ethical frameworks for AI use in governance is critical to align technology with democratic values (Dignum, 2018; Floridi & Cowls, 2019). Such frameworks should address issues of bias mitigation, explainability, data privacy, and the right to appeal or redress algorithmic decisions. Interdisciplinary collaboration between technologists, policymakers, legal experts, and ethicists is necessary to design AI systems that are not only efficient but also fair and accountable. By proactively establishing transparency and oversight standards, governments can harness AI’s benefits for decision-making while safeguarding against its risks. In summary, AI can enhance political decision-making by providing predictive insights, improving resource allocation, and supporting data-driven policy design. However, its implementation must be guided by robust ethical standards, transparency measures, and continuous human oversight to prevent bias, protect citizens’ rights, and strengthen democratic governance.

3. Electoral Politics and Political Communication

AI is redefining electoral politics by transforming how political actors communicate with citizens, influence public opinion, and conduct campaigns. Traditional political communication relied on mass media broadcasts, public rallies, and printed materials that delivered one-size-fits-all messages. AI-driven tools, however, enable highly personalized and data-driven campaign strategies that target voters with unprecedented precision. This section examines how AI impacts campaign strategies, information flow, public opinion monitoring, and the ethical landscape of elections.

3.1. AI-Driven Campaign Strategies

Modern political campaigns leverage AI algorithms to analyze vast amounts of voter data – from demographics and voting history to social media behavior and consumer preferences. Machine learning models segment the electorate into fine-grained categories and predict individual voters’ preferences and concerns. Using these insights, campaigns can tailor their messages and outreach strategies to resonate with specific groups or even individuals. This micro-targeting allows political messaging to be far more persuasive and efficient than traditional mass communication. For example, AI can identify undecided or swing voters and determine what issues they care about most, enabling campaigns to craft personalized advertisements or social media content addressing those exact concerns. By optimizing resource allocation (such as where to focus canvassing or advertising budgets), AI-driven analytics help campaigns maximize impact. While these techniques can increase engagement by speaking to voters’ interests, they also raise questions about voter manipulation and privacy. Nevertheless, AI-powered precision targeting has undeniably become a central feature of contemporary electoral strategy in many democracies.



3.2. Social Media, Bots, and Information Flow

Social media platforms play a pivotal role in political communication today, and they heavily utilize AI algorithms to curate and prioritize content for users. Political actors take advantage of this algorithmic curation by employing AI-driven bots and automated accounts to amplify their messages, simulate grassroots support, and influence online discourse. These bots can flood social networks with supportive messages, respond to trending topics in real time, or attack political opponents, all with minimal human intervention. AI algorithms on platforms determine which political posts users see, creating feedback loops that can reinforce existing opinions. While such tools can help campaigns mobilize supporters and spread their narratives rapidly, they also contribute to the spread of misinformation and the formation of “echo chambers” where users are only exposed to like-minded views. Studies show that AI-mediated information flows on social media can significantly shape voter perceptions, often bypassing traditional journalistic gatekeepers (Margetts et al., 2016). This automation of information distribution can distort the public sphere by elevating sensational or misleading content. The prevalence of deepfake videos and AI-generated propaganda further exacerbates these challenges by making it harder for citizens to discern truth from falsehood. The net effect is that AI is altering not just the content of political communication, but the fundamental channels and gatekeeping functions that underpin democratic debate.

3.3. Sentiment Analysis and Public Opinion Monitoring

AI tools, particularly natural language processing and sentiment analysis, allow campaigns and governments to monitor public opinion in real time. By analyzing data from social media posts, blogs, online forums, and news articles, these tools can gauge the public’s sentiment on candidates, policies, or current events. Political strategists use sentiment analysis to identify emerging issues that resonate with citizens or to detect shifts in public mood. For instance, a spike in negative sentiment about a policy proposal on social media might prompt a campaign to address concerns or adjust its messaging quickly. Likewise, governments can use AI-driven analysis to understand citizen feedback on public services or to anticipate public reactions to policy changes. This real-time feedback loop makes political communication more responsive and adaptive than ever before. It enables what might be called a “data-driven dialogue” between policymakers and the public: leaders float ideas, measure the reaction through AI analytics, and refine their approach accordingly. While this can strengthen civic engagement by giving officials a clearer picture of public needs, it also means that political messaging can be continuously optimized for emotional impact. There is a risk that leaders could govern by chasing algorithmically detected public sentiment (“politics by analytics”) at the expense of principled decision-making or long-term planning. Nonetheless, as a tool, AI-based public opinion monitoring provides valuable insights that, if used responsibly, can help align policies more closely with citizen preferences.

3.4. Ethical and Democratic Considerations



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The use of AI in electoral politics raises pressing ethical and democratic questions. Techniques like micro-targeting and algorithmic personalization, while effective, can lead to manipulation of voter behavior by showing individuals only the information that will influence their vote, often without their awareness. This personalized propaganda challenges the transparency of political campaigns – voters may not realize why they are seeing certain ads or messages, and public debate can become fragmented as different people receive vastly different campaign narratives. Additionally, the deployment of AI-driven disinformation, such as deepfake videos or automated “astroturf” campaigns (fake grassroots movements), threatens to undermine the integrity of democratic discourse. Such tactics can spread false information and erode voters’ ability to make informed decisions. These developments have alarmed observers who warn that AI could corrode democratic processes if left unchecked (Morozov, 2019). There is also the concern of privacy: political AI tools often rely on harvesting personal data to profile voters, raising questions about consent and data protection. To address these issues, robust regulatory frameworks and norms are needed. Some jurisdictions are moving toward stricter regulation of online political advertising and algorithmic transparency in campaigns. Platform accountability is equally important – social media companies are under pressure to reveal how their algorithms decide what content to show and to police malicious bot activity. Finally, fostering digital literacy among citizens is crucial so that voters can recognize and resist manipulative tactics. Balancing the efficiency and reach of AI-powered political communication with safeguards for truth, fairness, and privacy is an ongoing challenge for modern democracies.

3.5. Case Studies

Different countries and regions have experienced the impact of AI on electoral politics in distinct ways:

- **United States:** AI-powered voter targeting has been at the center of recent U.S. elections. Presidential campaigns now routinely use big data analytics and machine learning models to identify and micro-target voters, as seen in 2016 and 2020. These methods have improved campaign efficiency and message precision, but they also sparked controversy over misinformation and data privacy (e.g., the Cambridge Analytica scandal). The U.S. experience highlights both the electoral advantages of AI and the need for oversight to prevent abuses.
- **India:** In the world’s largest democracy, political parties have adopted AI-based analytics platforms to influence elections. By combining demographic data with voters’ social media and smartphone usage patterns, campaign strategists in India segment the electorate and deliver highly customized messages in multiple languages. AI tools were notably used in recent national and state elections for sentiment analysis and WhatsApp message targeting. While these tactics have increased voter outreach and engagement across India’s diverse



population, they have also raised concerns about the spread of fake news and the transparency of campaign practices in the digital realm.

- **European Union:** The EU has taken a more cautious and regulatory approach to AI in politics. Several European countries and the European Parliament have looked into regulating political micro-targeting and ensuring transparency in online political ads. The EU's focus has been on protecting voter data and preventing algorithmic discrimination. Notably, European authorities are formulating rules (under broader initiatives like the proposed AI Act) to govern high-risk AI applications, which would likely include those used in election contexts. This case emphasizes transparency, accountability, and the protection of democratic processes as core priorities in the face of AI-driven campaigns.

In each of these cases, AI's role in elections illustrates a double-edged sword: it offers innovative ways to engage and inform voters, yet it can also be misused to mislead or manipulate them. As a result, the debate over AI in electoral politics is not just about what the technology can do, but about what ethical boundaries and regulatory standards should be in place.

3.6. Balancing Innovation and Integrity in Campaigns

AI has unquestionably expanded the toolkit of political communication by enabling hyper-targeted outreach, real-time sentiment monitoring, and data-driven voter engagement. These innovations have the potential to make campaigns more efficient and responsive to the electorate. At the same time, they introduce serious challenges to transparency, fairness, and trust in the political process. Ensuring that AI enhances rather than undermines democratic participation will require a concerted effort by multiple stakeholders. Policymakers must update election laws to account for AI-driven tactics, requiring greater transparency in political advertising and data use. Technology companies should implement and enforce policies against automated disinformation and provide more openness about how their algorithms distribute political content. Civil society and the media also play a role in fact-checking and educating voters about new forms of manipulation. Ultimately, maintaining citizen trust in elections in the AI era is paramount. Democratic societies will need to strike a balance where technological innovation in campaigning is embraced, but always paired with ethical safeguards and accountability measures. By doing so, AI can be harnessed to improve political communication and engagement without compromising the integrity of electoral processes and the fundamental principles of democracy (Ananny & Crawford, 2018; Zuiderwijk et al., 2020).

4. Governance, Ethics, and Regulation

Integrating AI into governance necessitates careful ethical considerations and robust regulatory oversight. The deployment of algorithmic decision-making must balance efficiency gains with accountability, fairness, and respect for citizen autonomy (Binns, 2018). On one hand, AI can



make governance more data-driven and proactive; on the other hand, if left unchecked, it could concentrate power in the hands of those who control the algorithms and datasets. Ensuring that AI-driven governance is transparent and accountable is essential to maintain public trust. Governments should establish clear guidelines for algorithmic transparency – citizens have a right to understand how important decisions (such as welfare allocation, law enforcement targeting, or immigration rulings) are made by AI systems. Moreover, there must be mechanisms for auditing algorithms and evaluating their impacts, ideally by independent bodies, to prevent and correct biases or errors in automated decisions. Issues of data privacy are also paramount: state use of AI often involves processing large quantities of personal data, so strong data protection laws and privacy safeguards need to be in place to prevent misuse or surveillance.

International approaches to AI governance in the public sphere illustrate differing priorities. For example, the European Union has proposed a comprehensive regulatory framework for AI (European Commission, 2021). The draft EU Artificial Intelligence Act adopts a risk-based approach, imposing strict requirements and compliance mechanisms for “high-risk” AI systems (which would likely include many governmental and political applications). This reflects a priority on human rights, safety, and transparency – AI tools that can affect people’s lives are subject to thorough oversight and documentation under the proposed rules. In contrast, China’s approach to AI governance is more centralized and state-driven. The Chinese government’s model emphasizes national strategic advantage and social stability; it heavily invests in AI for governance (such as surveillance and citizen scoring systems) while exercising tight control over data and AI platforms. Ethical and legal checks in China are primarily internal and geared toward ensuring AI serves government-defined social objectives, raising concerns from a liberal democratic perspective about privacy and civil liberties. These divergent approaches – the EU’s legalistic, compliance-focused regulations versus China’s centralized control – reflect how sociopolitical values shape AI governance. They highlight that there is no one-size-fits-all model: democratic societies may prioritize transparency, individual rights, and multi-stakeholder input, whereas more authoritarian contexts prioritize state control and rapid deployment. Regardless of the model, all governments face the challenge of maximizing AI’s benefits in governance while minimizing its risks. Going forward, crafting effective AI regulations will likely require international dialogue, as AI systems often cross borders (through tech firms or shared algorithms), and setting global norms could help prevent harmful uses. In summary, strong governance of AI – through laws, ethical guidelines, and institutional oversight – is critical to ensure that algorithmic power is wielded in alignment with societal values and does not undermine the rule of law or democratic accountability.

5. Challenges and Opportunities

AI presents a complex mix of opportunities and challenges for the design of modern political systems. On the opportunity side, AI has the potential to enable more data-driven policymaking, where decisions are informed by comprehensive analysis and evidence. This could lead to better-



targeted public policies and quicker responses to social issues. AI might also facilitate improved public service delivery – for example, chatbots assisting citizens with government services or intelligent systems optimizing traffic and utilities in smart cities. Additionally, there are prospects for more participatory governance models: AI could help process citizen input from e-participation platforms or simulate the outcomes of participatory budgeting, thereby strengthening the link between citizens and decision-makers. These innovations promise a government that is more efficient, responsive, and attuned to the needs of its people.

On the challenge side, several serious concerns accompany the rise of AI in politics. One major challenge is algorithmic bias: as discussed earlier, if AI systems learn from biased data, they can perpetuate discrimination and inequality (Tufekci, 2015; Mittelstadt et al., 2016). This is particularly troubling in sensitive areas like criminal justice, social services, or hiring for public jobs. Another concern is the expansion of surveillance and erosion of privacy. AI-enhanced surveillance tools (facial recognition, data mining, etc.) give governments powerful capabilities that, if misused, could infringe on civil liberties and create a “Big Brother” effect. The spread of disinformation is also exacerbated by AI, as seen with deepfakes and bot-driven propaganda that can mislead citizens and distort public discourse. Furthermore, AI’s growing role raises the issue of concentration of power. Advanced AI technologies are often in the hands of a few wealthy states or large corporations, potentially intensifying global and domestic power asymmetries. If a small group controls the most powerful AI tools and vast troves of data, they could wield disproportionate influence over society’s direction (Rahwan et al., 2019). This concentration could marginalize smaller nations or minority voices in policy debates and make it harder to hold powerful actors accountable.

Addressing these challenges will require proactive effort and new forms of collaboration. Policymakers, technologists, academics, and civil society must work together to develop frameworks that maximize AI’s benefits while mitigating its risks. This includes creating standards for algorithmic fairness and transparency, as well as oversight bodies to enforce them (Ananny & Crawford, 2018; Zuiderwijk et al., 2020). It also involves updating legal definitions of rights like privacy and establishing accountability for AI-driven decisions – for instance, clarifying who is responsible when an algorithm makes a harmful mistake. Interdisciplinary collaboration is key: ethicists and social scientists should be involved in AI design processes, and engineers should be educated about societal implications. Public engagement is equally important; citizens need avenues to voice concerns about AI policies and to participate in shaping how these technologies are used. By increasing transparency in AI system design and deployment, governments can allow external experts to audit and understand these systems, helping to catch problems early. In essence, while AI offers tremendous opportunities to improve governance and political life, realizing those opportunities sustainably demands foresight, vigilance, and a strong commitment to democratic principles. With the right safeguards, AI can be a tool for enhancing democracy – improving decision quality and citizen involvement. Without such safeguards, however, AI could become a



force that undermines democratic values. Recognizing this dual potential is the first step toward ensuring that the evolution of AI and politics yields equitable and positive outcomes for society.

6. Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is fundamentally reshaping the architecture of modern politics, introducing unprecedented opportunities alongside complex challenges. On one hand, AI enhances political decision-making through predictive analytics, data-driven policy formulation, and optimized resource allocation, enabling governments to respond more efficiently and effectively to societal needs. In electoral politics, AI tools can increase civic engagement by tailoring communication to citizens' interests and by providing real-time feedback to political leaders. These advancements promise a more *predictive, participatory, and evidence-based* politics than ever before. On the other hand, the integration of AI into political systems is fraught with risks and uncertainties. Algorithmic biases can undermine equality and justice, opaque “black-box” systems can erode transparency and accountability, and AI-empowered surveillance or propaganda can threaten individual rights and democratic discourse. The concentration of AI capabilities in powerful states or corporations may exacerbate existing inequalities and distort governance in ways that undermine accountability and citizen autonomy (Rahwan et al., 2019). In sum, AI's influence on politics is a double-edged sword – it can both greatly strengthen and dangerously weaken democratic governance, depending on how it is applied.

To harness AI responsibly in political design, it is essential to adopt transparent, ethical, and inclusive frameworks moving forward. Regulatory oversight must keep pace with technological innovation: laws and guidelines (such as those emerging in the EU) should clearly delineate acceptable uses of AI in public life and impose checks on high-risk applications. There is a need for a “society-in-the-loop” approach (Rahwan, 2018) – ensuring that societal values and human judgment are continually integrated into AI systems that affect the public. This could involve measures like algorithmic impact assessments for new government AI systems, requirements for human review of important automated decisions, and public consultation processes when deploying AI in areas that deeply affect citizens. Human-in-the-loop governance acknowledges that while AI can process information at scale, final authority and accountability should remain with human decision-makers who can interpret contextual nuances and moral considerations. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaboration will be crucial: technologists must work alongside social scientists, legal scholars, and ethicists to embed principles like fairness, transparency, and accountability into AI design and policy. Educating and empowering citizens is equally important – in an AI-driven political landscape, a digitally literate citizenry better understands and can engage with the technologies influencing their lives. Ultimately, the future of politics in the AI era hinges on our collective capacity to integrate technological innovation with democratic ethical responsibility. If guided by sound principles and oversight, AI can serve as a powerful tool for inclusive, fair, and effective governance. It can help democracies become more resilient and



responsive by augmenting human decision-making with data-driven insights. However, without vigilant checks and a commitment to core democratic values, AI could also magnify societal harms or concentrate power unduly. Navigating this emerging landscape of algorithm-driven political life will require care and foresight from scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike. By proactively shaping AI's role in governance – rather than reacting to it – societies can ensure that these technologies strengthen our political institutions and public trust, rather than eroding them. In this way, the transformative potential of AI can be realized in service of democracy, human rights, and the public good.

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Implementation of the Law of Inheritance and Acceptance of Inheritance

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Keywords	Abstract
Inheritance property owner subjectivity legal capacity estate (inheritance) certificate procedure guardianship	<p>This article examines the implementation of inheritance law and the legal procedures governing the acceptance of inheritance in the Republic of Azerbaijan. As each legal system reflects national legal traditions and principles, inheritance law in Azerbaijan also possesses specific characteristics. The regulation of inheritance relations and the procedure for accepting inheritance are governed by the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan and represent one of the fundamental institutions of civil law (Movsumov & Jabbarli, 1998). Inheritance law ensures the transfer of a deceased person's property, rights, and obligations to heirs on the basis of either statutory provisions or a will.</p> <p>In cases of statutory inheritance, heirs are identified according to a legally established order of priority, whereas in testamentary inheritance the expressed will of the testator is of decisive significance. The acceptance of inheritance constitutes a key legal stage reflecting the heir's intention to acquire inheritance rights and may be realized either through actual acceptance or by submitting a formal application to a notary. Under current legislation, inheritance must be accepted within a six-month period. Failure to observe this statutory time limit may lead to specific legal consequences. The proper and consistent application of inheritance law contributes to legal certainty, stability, and justice in civil circulation.</p>

Introduction

The fundamental importance of inheritance law lies in its role as a legal mechanism for the formation of new ownership rights. In essence, inheritance law represents one of the recognized

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means through which ownership is acquired. Through this legal mechanism, inherited property is transferred to a new owner—the heir. However, the acquisition of inheritance rights by an heir is possible only upon the fulfillment of certain legally established conditions.

The primary condition is the opening of the inheritance. As established, inheritance is opened upon the death of a natural person or on the basis of a court decision declaring a natural person deceased. The death of a natural person gives rise to inheritance legal relations, which, in turn, generate subjective inheritance rights. More specifically, individuals participating in these legal relations acquire a subjective right to inheritance. Only after exercising this right may a person become the lawful owner of inherited property. A person who has acquired such a subjective inheritance right is considered to have been called to inheritance. Being called to inheritance signifies that the individual belongs to a specific order of heirs or is included among the persons designated in a will. Such a person is regarded as a potential heir, that is, an individual entitled to acquire the inherited property.

Article 1244 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides that inheritance may be accepted by a legally capable person (Allahverdiyev, 2003). This provision implies that the person accepting the inheritance must possess full legal capacity, meaning that they have reached the legally established age, are mentally sound, and have not been deprived of legal capacity by a court decision. At the same time, this requirement does not exclude persons lacking legal capacity from being heirs. This issue will be examined in greater detail below.

Under current civil legislation, inheritance may be accepted in two forms: by submitting a personal application to a notary office or by actually taking possession of the inherited property and exercising ownership over it. In such circumstances, regardless of the manner or location in which the inherited property is used, the individual is deemed to have accepted the inheritance in its entirety. The time limit for accepting inheritance is determined by civil legislation and is regulated by Article 1246 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Allahverdiyev, 2007), which establishes that an heir may accept the inheritance within three months from the date on which they became aware or should have become aware that they were called to inheritance.

Furthermore, it should be noted that once six months have elapsed from the date of the opening of the inheritance, acceptance of the inheritance is not permitted under any circumstances (ILRA, 2004). For this reason, the legislation establishes a strict time limit, making the determination of the moment of the opening of inheritance particularly significant. The time and place of the opening of inheritance are defined by civil legislation. In this regard, Article 1145 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan specifies the circumstances under which inheritance is opened upon the death of a natural person or on the basis of a court decision declaring a person deceased (Asgarov, 2010).



It should also be emphasized that determining the composition of the inheritance estate is a matter of substantial legal importance. The inheritance estate comprises the totality of property rights and obligations belonging to the deceased up to the moment of death, as reflected in Article 1151 of the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. With respect to the testamentary disposition of property that may be acquired in the future, it should be noted that the testator may include such property in a will, provided that the property is owned by the testator at the time the inheritance is opened (Behbudov et al., 2024).

In addition, regarding the question of whether rights and obligations of a personal nature may be transferred through inheritance, it should be noted that only property-related rights and obligations of the deceased are inheritable. Rights and obligations that, by law or contract, are valid exclusively during the lifetime of the creditor or debtor and terminate upon their death do not form part of the inheritance estate. Consequently, the heir neither acquires rights nor assumes obligations related to the personal rights of the deceased and bears no legal responsibility in this respect.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore how inheritance law is implemented in Azerbaijan and how inheritance is accepted in practice. The primary sources for analysis are the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, official notarial materials, and court decisions, which together form the legal foundation for examining inheritance procedures (CCRA, 2016). In addition, secondary sources—including scholarly articles, books, and legal commentaries—are reviewed to identify doctrinal interpretations and the practical consequences of inheritance norms.

Data collection is carried out through a systematic review of statutory provisions, notarial procedures, and relevant case-law materials, allowing both the theoretical and applied dimensions of inheritance acceptance and refusal to be assessed. A comparative perspective is used to clarify distinctions between statutory inheritance and testamentary inheritance. The study also considers issues of legal capacity, guardianship, and the responsibilities imposed on heirs. The collected materials are then synthesized to reveal recurring patterns, practical challenges, and broader societal implications, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of legal rules and their real-life application.

Results and Discussion

Civil legislation establishes a defined period for accepting inheritance (CL, 1999). Where the right to inherit arises because other heirs do not accept the inheritance, the remaining portion of the prescribed period is applied for acceptance. If the remaining time is less than six weeks, the term may be extended to the minimum period provided by law.

Current civil legislation also regulates circumstances in which the legally determined acceptance period may be extended. If a delay occurs for valid reasons, a court may restore and extend the



relevant term. In addition, if after the expiration of the time limit all heirs who have accepted the inheritance do not object, the inheritance may be accepted without applying to the court.

Because acceptance of inheritance depends on the individual's will, it is regarded as a legal act. Through this act, the subjective inheritance right of the person called to inherit is realized. As a result, the heir acquires the rights that belonged to the testator during their lifetime and did not terminate before death. By accepting inheritance, the heir also becomes the principal participant in civil-law relations in which the testator previously took part. This is because such a person should be considered an actual heir. An actual heir, therefore, is a potential heir who has already accepted the inheritance. In contrast, a potential heir is merely called to inherit and has not yet acquired the inheritance.

Acceptance of inheritance is generally understood as an act by which a person directly called to inherit exercises the relevant rights and obtains the legal opportunity to acquire the inheritance (Huseynov et al., 2025). In practical terms, acceptance means that the heir expresses a clear intention to obtain the inherited property and agrees to act as the testator's successor. On this basis, the heir is recognized as the bearer of the testator's rights and obligations.

Importantly, acceptance of inheritance is not a legal duty but a right of the individual. Accordingly, a person may either accept the inheritance or refuse it. For this reason, this entitlement is often described as an optional right, as the individual may choose between two legal alternatives. The right to accept inheritance is therefore treated as a subjective civil right.

Since acceptance is based on the heir's free will, it is assessed as a voluntary act. It directly reflects the intention and desire of the heir to accept inheritance. For this reason, only a person with full legal capacity may accept inheritance (Huseynov, 2025). Persons lacking legal capacity may accept inheritance only with the participation of their guardians or lawful representatives.

One common example is submitting an application to a notary after the inheritance is opened, requesting acceptance of inheritance and the issuance of a certificate of inheritance. Such actions are regulated by law and must be performed without discrimination.

Whether inheritance is acquired depends solely on the heir's will, and legislation does not impose compulsory rules against a person's wishes. However, in certain cases, legal acts related to acceptance must be carried out within established time limits. For this reason, knowledge of the applicable rules and conditions is essential, and disputes are resolved through judicial procedures. Under current legislation, the procedures and timeframes are clearly regulated and implemented by the competent authorities in the jurisdiction where the inheritance is opened. Applications are received and forwarded for execution. At the same time, acquiring ownership over part of the inheritance estate or actually exercising control over it is also treated as acceptance of inheritance.



Practice demonstrates that misunderstandings may arise when inheritance concerns property jointly acquired by spouses during marriage. Many heirs mistakenly believe that all property acquired during marriage automatically forms the inheritance. In fact, when property is divided, the surviving spouse is entitled to a certificate of ownership confirming their share in the jointly acquired property. As a rule, this certificate is issued for half of the total jointly owned property.

Refusal to accept inheritance is also exercised at the discretion of heirs. In general, refusal is formalized through an official application submitted to the notary office in the jurisdiction where the inheritance is opened.

Both acceptance and refusal require verification of the authenticity of the applicant's signature—either at another notary office or by officials empowered by law—after which the documents are sent to the notary office at the place where the inheritance is opened. Regardless of when the application is received by any notary office, the date on which the signature is authenticated is treated as the date of acceptance or the date of refusal.

Heirs may refuse inheritance only when such decisions serve the interests of the individual and the state. By court decision, persons outside the circle of heirs may be recognized as unworthy heirs. The time limit for refusing inheritance is established in the Civil Code as three months, meaning that refusal may be made within this period. In addition, heirs may refuse the inheritance within six months after accepting it. The legal framework also regulates both the refusal of inheritance that reaches a person and the subsequent legal actions connected with such refusal.

Special rules apply to heirs who are not engaged in agriculture in relation to the acceptance or refusal of agricultural land, equipment, tools, and livestock. The law prohibits heirs from withdrawing applications submitted to the notary office regarding acceptance or refusal of inheritance in these matters. These rules aim to protect citizens' property rights, and heirs bear responsibility for violations committed in this sphere.

These principles are reinforced by Article 553 of the Civil Code. Under this article, an heir who has accepted inheritance is liable for the debts of the deceased within the limits of the actual value of the property transferred to them.

For persons who have reached the age of 14 but have not yet obtained full legal capacity, inheritance may be accepted on their behalf by parents, guardians, adoptive parents, or other lawful representatives (Sukhanov, 1996). For individuals aged 14 to 18, acceptance is carried out with their written consent.

Children under the age of 7 accept inheritance exclusively through their lawful representatives, as they are not considered legally capable. They may acquire heir status both by law and by will. For instance, if a grandfather bequeaths his house to a 6-year-old grandchild, the child's legal representatives accept the inheritance on the child's behalf.



In society, inheritance is regarded as an essential social value that performs a public-benefit function and serves a specific purpose. It is also recognized as a key institution fulfilling a material support function, providing financial support to the deceased's relatives, family members, and close associates.

Conclusion

The analysis of inheritance law and inheritance acceptance in Azerbaijan demonstrates its central role in regulating property transfer and safeguarding citizens' rights. Inheritance law ensures that the property, rights, and obligations of a deceased person are transferred to heirs through statutory succession or testamentary arrangements. The legal framework establishes structured procedures for accepting or refusing inheritance, including time limits, legal-capacity requirements, and the involvement of guardians and lawful representatives for minors and persons lacking capacity. By regulating procedures through notarial bodies and courts, the law reduces disputes and protects both heirs and the inheritance estate. Inheritance also performs significant social functions by providing material support to relatives and helping preserve family property. Overall, understanding the rights, responsibilities, and procedural rules connected with inheritance enables heirs to exercise their rights effectively, strengthens fairness, and contributes to stable property relations in Azerbaijani society.

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Issue of Negation from a Stylistic Perspective: Litotes, Irony and Paradox

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Keywords	Abstract
negation stylistics litotes irony paradox affirmation pragmatic meaning	<p>This study investigates negation as a salient stylistic resource in literary and linguistic discourse, emphasizing its semantic, pragmatic, and expressive potential. Rather than functioning only as a grammatical marker of denial, negation operates as a meaning-shaping mechanism that modulates tone, constructs authorial stance, and guides reader interpretation. In stylistic use, negative forms frequently encode evaluation and affect, enabling speakers and writers to communicate implicit judgments and nuanced attitudes that are often less accessible through direct affirmation.</p> <p>Particular attention is devoted to figures of speech whose rhetorical force depends on negation—litotes, irony, and paradox. Litotes, typically realized through understatement and double negation, allows writers to soften propositional content while strengthening implicature, producing indirect affirmation and refined evaluative emphasis. Irony often exploits negation to widen the gap between literal wording and intended meaning, foregrounding contradictions between surface appearance and underlying reality; in such contexts, negation becomes a vehicle for critique and discursive distancing. Paradox employs negation to juxtapose seemingly incompatible propositions, destabilizing straightforward logic and prompting deeper interpretative work, thereby intensifying textual complexity.</p> <p>The analysis argues that stylistic negation enhances textual depth by introducing ambiguity, activating inference, and generating productive cognitive tension. By disrupting linear interpretation and encouraging multilayered readings, negation emerges as a dynamic strategy of meaning-making that links linguistic form to thought and artistic expression, extending well beyond its conventional grammatical boundaries.</p>

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Introduction

Negation has traditionally been examined as a grammatical and logical category expressing denial, absence, or contradiction. However, in stylistics, negation extends far beyond its formal linguistic function and becomes a powerful expressive and interpretative tool. Writers and speakers frequently use negation not simply to reject propositions, but to shape tone, emphasize evaluation, and create implicit meanings. From this perspective, negation plays a crucial role in constructing aesthetic effects and influencing reader perception.

In literary discourse, negation often manifests through stylistic devices such as **litotes**, **irony**, and **paradox**. These figures rely on indirectness and semantic tension, allowing negation to generate depth and ambiguity. The present article aims to explore negation as a stylistic phenomenon, analyzing how it functions in these devices and how it contributes to meaning-making beyond grammatical denial (Alisoy, 2025).

Negation has long been a subject of interest in logic, grammar, and semantics, where it is commonly defined as a linguistic means of denying, rejecting, or reversing propositional content (Horn, 1989). Traditional linguistic studies have primarily focused on formal markers of negation—such as negative particles, prefixes, and syntactic constructions—emphasizing their role in sentence structure and truth conditions. However, such an approach proves insufficient for explaining the rich expressive and interpretative potential of negation in literary and artistic discourse. As stylisticians argue, language in literature is not only a system of rules but also a medium of aesthetic and pragmatic choice (Leech & Short, 2007).

From a stylistic perspective, negation functions as a means of indirect expression, enabling authors to convey attitudes, emotions, and evaluations implicitly. Scholars such as Bally (1965) and Jakobson (1960) emphasize that stylistic meaning often arises from deviation and contrast, both of which are central to negation. Rather than simply opposing affirmation, negation can reinforce meaning, introduce irony, or create semantic tension. This is particularly evident in figurative language, where negation operates as a constructive rather than destructive force.

Figures of speech such as litotes, irony, and paradox demonstrate how negation becomes a stylistic strategy. Litotes relies on negated opposites to achieve understatement and subtle emphasis (Quirk et al., 1985). Irony exploits implicit negation by creating a discrepancy between literal expression and intended meaning, often serving evaluative or critical purposes (Booth, 1974). Paradox, as noted by Cleanth Brooks (1947), uses negation to reconcile apparent contradictions, revealing deeper truths about reality and human experience.

Thus, examining negation stylistically allows for a broader understanding of how meaning is generated in literary texts. This article aims to contribute to stylistic theory by analyzing negation not as a purely grammatical category, but as a dynamic expressive device that shapes interpretation and aesthetic effect.



Methods

The study employs a qualitative stylistic analysis based on examples drawn from literary texts, rhetorical theory, and linguistic research. A functional-stylistic approach is applied to examine how negation operates within different contexts and figures of speech. The analysis focuses on semantic deviation, pragmatic implication, and reader interpretation, with particular attention to litotes, irony, and paradox as representative stylistic forms of negation.

The present study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical methodology grounded in functional stylistics and discourse analysis. The primary aim of the methodological framework is to identify and interpret the stylistic functions of negation as they appear in literary language, rather than to quantify its frequency. This approach allows for close attention to contextual meaning, aesthetic intention, and reader interpretation.

The data for analysis consist of selected examples from English literary texts, including prose, drama, and poetry, where negation plays a central stylistic role. Textual excerpts were chosen based on their illustrative use of litotes, irony, and paradox, as these figures of speech most clearly demonstrate the expressive potential of negation. The selection process followed purposive sampling, ensuring that each example represents a distinct stylistic function of negation.

Analytically, the study combines semantic analysis and pragmatic interpretation. Semantic analysis focuses on how negation alters propositional meaning and creates contrast or understatement, while pragmatic interpretation examines how meaning is inferred through context, shared knowledge, and communicative intent. Special attention is paid to implicit negation, where the absence of explicit negative markers still results in a negative or oppositional effect.

Additionally, a comparative method is employed to distinguish grammatical negation from stylistic negation. By comparing neutral, affirmative constructions with their negated stylistic counterparts, the analysis highlights shifts in tone, evaluation, and emotional coloring. The theoretical framework draws on established works in stylistics and rhetoric (Leech & Short, 2007; Horn, 1989), ensuring methodological consistency and academic reliability.

Overall, this multi-level approach enables a comprehensive examination of negation as a stylistic device, integrating linguistic form, literary function, and interpretative impact.

Results

The stylistic analysis reveals that negation operates differently across figures of speech, producing distinct semantic and pragmatic effects. The results are presented below through categorized examples illustrating litotes, irony, and paradox. The tables demonstrate how negation functions not merely as denial, but as an expressive mechanism shaping meaning and interpretation.



The analysis demonstrates that negation performs multiple stylistic functions depending on context. In **litotes**, negation creates understatement through double negation or negated antonyms (e.g., *not uncommon*), resulting in softened yet emphatic affirmation (Sabir, 2015). This indirectness allows authors to convey evaluation subtly while maintaining rhetorical restraint.

Table 1. Litotes as Stylistic Negation

Example	Negated Form	Implied Meaning	Stylistic Effect
<i>He is not unkind.</i>	Double negation (<i>not</i> + <i>unkind</i>)	He is kind	Understatement, subtle praise
<i>The task was no small challenge.</i>	Negated adjective	The task was very difficult	Emphatic understatement
<i>She is not unfamiliar with loss.</i>	Negated antonym	She knows loss well	Emotional restraint

The results show that litotes relies on negation to soften expression while intensifying evaluation. Instead of direct affirmation, the negated structure invites the reader to infer a stronger positive meaning, thus enhancing stylistic nuance.

In irony, negation often operates implicitly rather than overtly. The stylistic effect emerges from the contradiction between literal meaning and intended sense, where negation undermines surface statements and exposes hidden criticism or humor. Here, negation functions pragmatically, relying on shared knowledge between author and reader.

Table 2. Irony and Implicit Negation

Example	Literal Meaning	Implied Meaning	Role of Negation
<i>What a wonderful mess you've made.</i>	Praise	Criticism	Implicit negation of "wonderful"
<i>He is a fine friend indeed.</i> (context: betrayal)	Approval	Disapproval	Contextual negation
<i>This is exactly what we needed.</i> (during crisis)	Agreement	Rejection	Pragmatic negation

In irony, negation is often indirect. The results indicate that meaning emerges from contextual contradiction rather than explicit negative markers. Negation functions pragmatically, requiring reader awareness and inferential engagement.

Paradox employs negation to juxtapose seemingly incompatible ideas, challenging logical expectations. By negating conventional associations, paradox invites deeper reflection and highlights the complexity of human experience. In this case, negation becomes a cognitive stimulus rather than a purely linguistic marker.



Table 3. Paradox and Conceptual Negation

Example	Contradictory Elements	Negated Assumption	Stylistic Function
<i>Less is more.</i>	Less / More	Quantity equals value	Philosophical reflection
<i>I must be cruel to be kind.</i>	Cruel / Kind	Cruelty excludes kindness	Moral complexity
<i>Silence speaks louder than words.</i>	Silence / Speech	Communication requires speech	Cognitive tension

Paradoxical negation challenges conventional logic by negating habitual associations. The results show that paradox stimulates deeper interpretation and foregrounds complexity, making negation a cognitive and philosophical device.

Discussion

The findings suggest that stylistic negation intensifies expressiveness by creating semantic tension and interpretative openness. Unlike grammatical negation, stylistic negation is context-dependent and reader-oriented, requiring active engagement. Litotes, irony, and paradox illustrate how negation can affirm, criticize, or philosophically question reality.

Moreover, negation contributes to textual polysemy, allowing multiple layers of meaning to coexist. This reinforces the idea that stylistic analysis must consider negation as a dynamic interaction between form, meaning, and interpretation.

The extended results highlight that negation, when viewed stylistically, functions as a complex and multifunctional mechanism rather than a simple marker of denial. The analysis of litotes, irony, and paradox demonstrates that negation reshapes meaning through indirectness, contradiction, and cognitive tension. These findings support the view advanced by stylisticians such as Leech and Short (2007), who argue that stylistic meaning often arises from deviation from linguistic norms.

In the case of **litotes**, negation serves as a strategy of mitigation and refinement. By avoiding direct affirmation, authors achieve a tone of restraint, politeness, or irony, depending on context. This aligns with pragmatic theories of implicature (Grice, 1975), where meaning is not explicitly stated but inferred. The understated nature of litotes allows writers to intensify evaluation while maintaining stylistic subtlety, which is particularly effective in emotionally charged or socially sensitive contexts.

Irony illustrates how negation can function without overt negative markers. Here, negation emerges through contextual opposition between literal and intended meanings. This supports Booth's (1974) concept of stable irony, in which readers recognize implied negation through shared



cultural and contextual knowledge. The discussion shows that stylistic negation in irony is highly reader-dependent, reinforcing the interactive nature of literary interpretation.

In **paradox**, negation operates at a conceptual level, challenging logical expectations and binary thinking. By negating commonly accepted assumptions, paradox compels readers to reconcile opposites and engage in philosophical reflection. As Brooks (1947) suggests, paradox is not a flaw in poetic language but a core principle of meaning construction.

Overall, the discussion confirms that stylistic negation enhances textual depth, ambiguity, and interpretative richness. It functions as a bridge between linguistic form and aesthetic effect, emphasizing the inseparable relationship between language, cognition, and artistic expression.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that negation, when examined from a stylistic perspective, transcends its traditional grammatical function and emerges as a powerful expressive device in literary discourse. Through the analysis of litotes, irony, and paradox, it becomes evident that negation contributes significantly to meaning formation by introducing indirectness, contrast, and cognitive tension. Rather than merely denying statements, stylistic negation reshapes evaluation, deepens emotional resonance, and invites active reader interpretation.

Litotes reveals how negation can intensify affirmation through understatement, while irony shows that negation often operates implicitly, relying on contextual contradiction and shared knowledge. Paradox, in turn, highlights the philosophical dimension of negation by challenging conventional logic and encouraging reflective engagement with complex ideas. Overall, the findings confirm that negation functions as a dynamic interaction between linguistic form and aesthetic intention. Recognizing negation as a stylistic strategy enriches our understanding of literary language and underscores its essential role in artistic expression and interpretative depth.

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Hyperbole, Repetition, and Metonymy in Donald J. Trump’s Davos 2026 Special Address: A Discourse-Stylistic Analysis

 ¹ Hasan Alisoy

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Keywords	Abstract
Stylistics Rhetorical analysis Metonymy Hyperbole Repetition Political speech	This study presents a rigorous stylistic analysis of President Donald J. Trump’s Davos 2026 special address, concentrating on the use of metonymy, hyperbole, and repetition. Using the full speech transcript, we manually annotated instances of these devices according to standard definitions. Our findings show that Trump heavily employs hyperbolic exaggerations (e.g. “hottest country anywhere in the world”, “largest wave of mass migration in human history”) and repeated constructions (e.g. multiple “Instead of ... we’re ...” clauses) to emphasize his points, while using few metonymic phrases (e.g. “Washington and European capitals”, “White House” for the presidency). Scholarly sources note that such repetition builds cohesion and emotional intensity in political rhetoric, and that hyperbole amplifies key messages and arouses audience engagement. This analysis (summarized in Table 1) suggests that Trump’s use of these devices serves to spotlight his achievements and contrast them with opponents’, creating a persuasive and forceful speaking style.

Introduction

Political speeches commonly mobilize figurative language and patterned rhetoric to secure attention, intensify evaluation, and steer audience alignment. Studies in rhetorical discourse analysis and stylistics consistently show that such speeches draw on recurrent devices—especially repetition, metaphor/metonymy, and strategic exaggeration—to increase salience and memorability while structuring the message into easily processed chunks (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023; Fanani et al., 2020).

This study examines the special address delivered at World Economic Forum in Davos (2026) from a strictly stylistic-linguistic perspective, deliberately setting aside ideological evaluation or

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policy debate (World Economic Forum, 2026). Prior scholarship on Trump’s public rhetoric highlights a distinctive preference for high-frequency lexical recycling and emphatic intensification—features that can function as cohesion-building “anchors” and as attention-directing cues (Alisoy, 2025; Fanani et al., 2020). More broadly, research on political and institutional speech demonstrates how repetition and parallel patterning may operate as persuasive framing, while hyperbole can serve as a strategic move to magnify stakes and prompt emotional uptake (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023; Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.).

Accordingly, the present analysis focuses on three device clusters: metonymy (e.g., place/institution stand-ins such as “Washington”), hyperbole (deliberate overstatement), and repetition (lexical recurrence, anaphora, and parallelism). These resources are treated here as linguistic mechanisms that foreground key points, strengthen evaluative stance, and create rhythmic cohesion across the address (Alisoy, 2025; Hassan, 2025; Majeed & Ahmed, 2023; Zieliński, n.d.). By systematically coding the Davos text for these patterns, the study aims to show how Trump’s rhetorical style is realized at the level of wording, structure, and figurative substitution (World Economic Forum, 2026).

Methodology

Data and corpus preparation

The primary dataset for this study is the official transcript of the Davos 2026 special address published by the World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum, 2026). The transcript was treated as a single, bounded text for close stylistic analysis. Because the aim is linguistic (not political) description, the unit of analysis was the rhetorical–stylistic realization of meaning in clauses, sentences, and short multi-sentence stretches where devices clearly function together (e.g., repetition combined with intensification).

Analytical approach

A qualitative annotation procedure was used, complemented by descriptive frequency counts. This mixed procedure follows a common pattern in political discourse studies where devices are first identified and interpreted contextually, and then summarized quantitatively to show distributional tendencies (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023; Fanani et al., 2020). The analysis targeted three device clusters: metonymy, hyperbole, and repetition (including anaphora and parallelism).

Coding scheme and operational definitions

A codebook was constructed in advance to ensure consistent identification.

Metonymy. Metonymy was annotated when an expression referred to a concept through a closely associated entity or attribute (e.g., place-for-institution such as “Washington” standing for federal governance, or building-for-office such as “White House” standing for the presidency). The key



criterion was contiguity/association rather than similarity (which would indicate metaphor), in line with standard treatments of political metonymy (Zieliński, n.d.).

Hyperbole. Hyperbole was coded as deliberate overstatement that intensifies evaluation beyond literal plausibility (e.g., “the greatest,” “never before,” “everyone,” “the best in history”), including superlatives, maximal quantifiers, extreme adjectives/adverbs, and “all-or-nothing” formulations. Identification was guided by rhetorical accounts of hyperbole as a strategic intensifier in public argumentation and debate, where exaggeration functions to amplify stance and perceived urgency rather than to provide verifiable measurement (Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.). Additional linguistic criteria for recognizing hyperbole as a patterned resource in institutional/war and persuasive speech—such as extremity markers and evaluative escalation—were used to support consistent coding (Hassan, 2025; Majeed & Ahmed, 2023).

Repetition. Repetition was annotated at two levels:

1. **Lexical repetition** (recurrence of the same word/phrase across nearby clauses or sentences), and
2. **Syntactic/structural repetition** (parallel constructions, anaphora, epiphora, and balanced contrasts). Repetition was treated not merely as “saying the same thing again,” but as a cohesion-and-emphasis device that can foreground themes, stabilize framing, and create rhythmic persuasion in political speech (Alisoy, 2025; Fanani et al., 2020).

Reliability and validation procedures

To improve reliability, two analysts independently annotated the transcript using the shared codebook, then compared segment-by-segment decisions. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and reference to the operational criteria above, prioritizing (a) immediate co-text, (b) whether the device created identifiable emphasis or substitution, and (c) whether the same decision rule could be applied consistently elsewhere in the speech (Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.; Zieliński, n.d.). As a validity check, the resulting annotations were compared against device descriptions and typical realizations reported in prior analyses of Trump-style persuasion and repetition patterns in political speech (Alisoy, 2025; Fanani et al., 2020), as well as broader political discourse work that links stylistic patterning to rhetorical impact without requiring partisan interpretation (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023).

Quantification and reporting

After annotation, raw counts of each category were recorded to provide a descriptive overview of stylistic density and distribution across the address. These frequencies are reported alongside qualitative interpretation: a table of representative examples (with brief scholarly commentary) and a summary visualization indicating the relative prevalence of device types in the dataset



(World Economic Forum, 2026). In line with earlier work, quantitative totals are treated as *supporting evidence* for stylistic tendencies rather than as standalone proof of persuasive effect (Fanani et al., 2020; Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.).

Results

A qualitative annotation of the World Economic Forum transcript (World Economic Forum, 2026) yielded recurring evidence of all three target device clusters—repetition, metonymy, and hyperbole—with hyperbole emerging as the densest pattern, repetition as a strong secondary feature, and metonymy occurring only sporadically. This distribution is consistent with prior descriptions of Trump’s persuasive style as heavily reliant on intensification and lexical recycling (Alisoy, 2025; Fanani et al., 2020).

Repetition

Repetition appeared primarily as structural parallelism and anaphoric sequencing, often organized into rhythmic series that foreground contrast and steer interpretation. A salient pattern is a triadic sequence built on the repeated frame “Instead of ..., we’re ...”, which functions as an anaphoric template that (a) creates cohesion across clauses and (b) amplifies evaluative contrast through repetition and parallel syntax (Alisoy, 2025; World Economic Forum, 2026). In several stretches, repetition also occurs as lexical recycling (“follow ... follow ...”) and incremental intensification (e.g., brief “up ... up ... up” chaining), producing a cumulative emphasis effect typical of persuasive speech rhythm and salience-building (Fanani et al., 2020; World Economic Forum, 2026). Overall, repetition in the address is not merely redundant wording; rather, it functions as a discourse-organizing strategy that spotlights key claims and gives them mnemonic “hooks” (Alisoy, 2025).

Metonymy

Metonymy was comparatively rare and tended to occur in place-for-institution or location-for-government substitutions. Instances include references such as “Washington” and “European capitals” to stand for governmental or policy centers, and “White House” to denote the presidential administration (World Economic Forum, 2026). These choices reflect a conventional political metonymic mechanism: using a salient associated entity (place/building) to evoke an institution or authority domain, thereby compressing complex structures into a single recognizable label (Zieliński, n.d.). The dataset also contains coined labels with strong evaluative coloring; however, such labels often operate more as framing/branding than as metonymy proper, and were therefore treated cautiously in the counts to preserve category clarity (Zieliński, n.d.).

Hyperbole



Hyperbole was pervasive, typically realized via superlatives, maximizers, and “never-before” formulations, frequently intensified through repetition. The speech repeatedly attributes outcomes to “record-breaking,” “largest,” or historically unmatched scale, including claims framed as unprecedented “in history” or “ever seen before” (World Economic Forum, 2026). From a rhetorical standpoint, these are classic hyperbolic moves: they strategically heighten significance and urgency by pushing evaluation to extremes rather than communicating verifiable measurement (Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.).

Notably, hyperbole also appears in numeric escalation (“record-breaking” figures, upward approximations, and broadened time scopes) and in stark state-shift contrasts (e.g., depicting conditions as formerly “dead” versus now exceptionally successful), which aligns with descriptions of hyperbole in public argumentative discourse as a stance-amplifier and attention-capturer (Hassan, 2025; Majeed & Ahmed, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2026). Across the transcript, hyperbole frequently co-occurs with repetition (e.g., repeated “never seen before” phrasing), suggesting a compound emphasis strategy: repetition supplies rhythmic reinforcement, while hyperbole supplies evaluative intensity (Fanani et al., 2020; Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.).

Summary pattern (Table 1 / Chart 1)

Taken together, the annotated results indicate a stylistic profile dominated by intensification (hyperbole), supported by patterned recurrence (repetition), with only occasional institutional shorthand (metonymy). In the planned reporting, Table 1 pairs representative examples with brief linguistic commentary, while Chart 1 visualizes the overall distribution, where hyperbole appears roughly about twice as frequent as repetition patterns and metonymy remains marginal (World Economic Forum, 2026; Fanani et al., 2020).

Analysis

The stylistic devices identified in the Davos 2026 address function in complementary ways to intensify emphasis, organize discourse, and shape audience perception. Repetition, metonymy, and hyperbole operate as linguistic strategies rather than as carriers of political content, and together they form a highly emphatic and performative rhetorical style.

Repetition (Anaphora and Parallelism)

Repetition, particularly in the form of anaphora and parallel syntactic structures, plays a central role in the speech. The recurrent pattern “Instead of ..., we’re ...” exemplifies classic parallelism, creating a clear contrast between negatively framed past actions and positively framed present actions. This anaphoric structure increases textual cohesion and enhances memorability by aligning successive clauses into a predictable rhythmic frame (Fanani et al., 2020). As Alisoy (2025) observes, Trump frequently relies on repeated sentence openings and lexical recycling to reinforce key themes and generate rhythmic emphasis, a tendency clearly visible in this address.



In the Davos speech, repetition functions not as ornamentation but as argument structuring. By listing achievements through repeated contrasts (e.g., “Instead of raising taxes, we’re lowering them”), the speaker presents claims as orderly, cumulative, and self-evident. This technique reflects a broader tendency in political rhetoric where parallel lists are used to convey moral clarity and decisiveness (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023). Short instances of epistrophe and mirrored phrasing—such as “you follow us down ... you follow us up”—further reinforce causal relationships and drill central claims into audience memory. Overall, repetition strengthens persuasion by rendering arguments both forceful and rhythmically “catchy,” aligning with well-documented rhetorical practice in contemporary political speech (Fanani et al., 2020).

Metonymy

Metonymy appears less frequently but serves an important condensing and framing function. Expressions such as “Washington” or “European capitals” stand in for complex political institutions, exemplifying place-for-institution metonymy. This device allows the speaker to critique or reference broad governance systems without naming specific actors, thereby generalizing responsibility and widening the scope of evaluation (Zieliński, n.d.). The phrase “the White House,” similarly, functions as a building-for-office metonymy, indexing executive authority through a concrete and culturally salient referent.

Such metonymic choices compress abstract political processes into easily recognizable symbols, facilitating comprehension while subtly guiding interpretation. As Charteris-Black’s approach to figurative political language suggests, metonymy helps make abstract or institutional concepts cognitively accessible by linking them to concrete entities (as discussed in Zieliński, n.d.). In the Davos address, metonymy thus contributes to stylistic economy and implicit critique, allowing complex ideological positions to be invoked succinctly within an economic speech.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is the most prominent stylistic feature of the address. It is realized through superlatives, maximal quantifiers, extreme adjectives, and “never-before” formulations. Rhetorically, hyperbole functions as deliberate exaggeration that amplifies perceived importance and emotional impact rather than conveying literal measurement (Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.). In the speech, claims such as “never seen before,” “largest in human history,” or “the hottest country in the world” exemplify this strategy.

Theoretical accounts emphasize that hyperbole in political discourse heightens emotional arousal and draws attention to preferred evaluations (Hassan, 2025; Majeed & Ahmed, 2023). In Trump’s rhetoric specifically, hyperbole has been shown to serve as a means of dramatization and audience engagement, often reinforcing narratives of exceptionalism and unprecedented success (Fanani et al., 2020). The repeated use of absolute terms (“never,” “largest,” “most successful”) in the Davos



address constructs a sense of historical magnitude and uniqueness, even when empirical verification is secondary.

As Snoeck Henkemans (n.d.) notes, hyperbole is intended to highlight certain aspects of reality while arousing specific emotions, and this function is clearly realized in the speech. By framing achievements in world-historical terms, the speaker elevates policy outcomes to a mythic scale, encouraging admiration and assent rather than analytical scrutiny.

Integrated stylistic effect

Taken together, these devices create a highly emphatic and intensified rhetorical style. Repetition supplies rhythm and cohesion, metonymy provides concise institutional framing, and hyperbole magnifies claims to maximal scale. Importantly, this configuration aligns with established descriptions of Trump’s rhetorical profile, where anaphora and exaggeration are identified as core stylistic strategies rather than incidental features (Alisoy, 2025; Fanani et al., 2020). As summarized in Table 1, the Davos address exemplifies how these devices operate jointly to produce a persuasive, memorable, and emotionally charged mode of political oratory.

Table 1

Illustrative examples of stylistic devices in Trump’s Davos speech, with scholarly commentary on their rhetorical function

Device	Example (Trump, Davos 2026)	Commentary (Literature)
Repetition	<i>“Instead of...we’re...Instead of...we’re...Instead of...we’re...”</i> (point parallelism)	Repetition (anaphora) reinforces coherence and emphasis, enabling individual points to stand out (Fanani et al., 2020). Analysts note Trump’s frequent use of repeated sentence openings and slogan-like phrasing to heighten emotional intensity and unity (Alisoy, 2025).
Repetition	<i>“you follow us down, and you follow us up.”</i>	Parallel structure links cause and effect (e.g., “when America booms ... you follow us”), creating a memorable rhythm. Repetition underscores the claim that U.S. performance drives global markets (Fanani et al., 2020).
Metonymy	<i>“conventional wisdom in Washington and European capitals”</i>	Place-names function as stand-ins for governing bodies (U.S. and EU governments), condensing policy critique by invoking institutions. This place-for-institution metonymy frames political agents as a unified entity (Zieliński, n.d.).
Hyperbole	<i>“largest wave of mass migration in human history... We’ve never seen anything like it.”</i>	An extreme claim of unprecedented migration. Hyperbole dramatizes the issue by heightening emotional impact; such exaggeration is known to foreground salient aspects and convey affect (Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.). Trump-focused analyses



		confirm that hyperbole is used to capture attention and emphasize key points (Fanani et al., 2020).
Hyperbole	<i>“record-breaking \$18 trillion... never been done by any country at any time, not even close.”</i>	Boasts of unprecedented investment. Superlatives (e.g., “record-breaking,” “never ... ever”) function as hyperbole, deliberately exceeding literal plausibility to emphasize achievement and arouse emotion (Fanani et al., 2020; Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.).
Hyperbole	<i>“a dead country. Now we are the hottest country, anywhere in the world.”</i>	Metaphorical hyperbole contrasts extreme states (“dead” vs. “hottest”) to dramatize turnaround. Such maximal framing presents situations in the most extreme terms to intensify persuasive impact (Hassan, 2025; Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.).

Discussion

The results of the analysis demonstrate that the Davos 2026 address is characterized by a markedly exaggerative and emphatic rhetorical style, dominated by hyperbole and reinforced through patterned repetition. This distribution aligns with prior findings that identify intensification and lexical recycling as central features of Trump’s public discourse (Alisoy, 2025; Fanani et al., 2020). As shown in Table 1 and schematized in Chart 1, hyperbole occurs far more frequently than metonymy, while repetition functions as a secondary but structurally significant device.

Repetition, particularly in the form of anaphoric parallelism, plays a key role in organizing the speech into a binary narrative. Recurrent constructions such as “Instead of X, we’re Y” establish a clear opposition between failure and success, past and present, implicitly constructing a contrastive “us versus them” framework. Such binary framing is a well-documented persuasive technique in political rhetoric, as it simplifies complex realities into morally legible alternatives (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023). Alisoy (2025) similarly notes that Trump’s frequent reliance on repeated sentence openings and parallel lists serves to reinforce themes and foster a sense of collective identity through an inclusive “we.” In the Davos address, repetition thus operates not only as a stylistic ornament but as a cohesive and identity-forming mechanism.

Hyperbole emerges as the most salient stylistic resource. The speech contains numerous superlative constructions, absolute quantifiers, and “never-before” formulations, which dramatically magnify achievements and crises. From a rhetorical perspective, hyperbole functions as a strategic intensifier that heightens emotional engagement rather than as a literal description of reality (Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.). Studies of political and institutional discourse emphasize that such exaggeration is often tolerated—and even expected—by audiences when used to signal urgency, success, or exceptionalism (Hassan, 2025; Majeed & Ahmed, 2023). In this sense, Trump’s hyperbolic claims are consistent with broader patterns of persuasive exaggeration documented in analyses of his earlier speeches (Fanani et al., 2020).



Metonymy, by contrast, plays a more subtle and economical role. References to “Washington,” “European capitals,” or “the White House” exemplify conventional place-for-institution metonymy, allowing complex political actors and processes to be invoked through familiar geographic labels. Such metonymic substitutions condense abstract policy debates into concrete, culturally salient referents, facilitating comprehension while embedding evaluative positioning (Zieliński, n.d.). Although metonymy is less frequent than hyperbole or repetition, its strategic use contributes to ideological framing by implicitly attributing responsibility or authority to institutional entities without explicit elaboration.

Taken together, the findings indicate that the persuasive force of the Davos address relies primarily on emotional intensification and rhythmic reinforcement rather than on nuanced figurative substitution. This is consistent with discourse-theoretical accounts suggesting that speeches oriented toward pathos tend to privilege vivid exaggeration and repetition over subtler tropes (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2023; Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.). By linking concrete examples to established stylistic theory, the present analysis demonstrates how these devices operate jointly to produce a high-impact rhetorical performance, independent of the specific political content conveyed.

Conclusion

This stylistic analysis of Donald Trump’s 2026 Davos address has shown that hyperbole, repetition, and, to a lesser extent, metonymy constitute the core rhetorical resources shaping the speech. Hyperbolic formulations dominate the discourse, projecting achievements and challenges in maximal, often world-historical terms. Repetition—especially through parallel clauses and anaphoric patterns—structures the speech into a cohesive and memorable narrative, reinforcing contrasts and fostering a sense of collective identity. Metonymic expressions, while less frequent, compress complex institutional meanings into familiar symbolic references.

From a discourse-stylistic perspective, these devices function to heighten emphasis, sustain audience attention, and enhance emotional resonance (Fanani et al., 2020; Snoeck Henkemans, n.d.). The findings confirm that the Davos address exemplifies a high-intensity rhetorical style in which exaggeration and repetition serve as primary persuasive mechanisms, consistent with patterns identified in previous analyses of Trump’s public speaking (Alisoy, 2025).

By focusing exclusively on linguistic form rather than political substance, this study contributes to a clearer understanding of how contemporary political speeches achieve impact through stylistic means. Future research may extend this approach by comparing device distribution across different genres or contexts of Trump’s discourse, or by contrasting his stylistic profile with that of other political leaders to further illuminate variation in modern political rhetoric.

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Metadiscourse Patterns in Human-Written vs. Generative AI-Authored Research Abstracts: A Comparative Corpus-Based Analysis

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Keywords	Abstract
Metadiscourse Generative AI writing Research Abstracts Coprus-Based Analysis Academic Discourse	<p>This study examines how metadiscourse markers differ in research article abstracts written by human authors and those generated by AI (ChatGPT). We compiled a balanced corpus of human-written abstracts from peer-reviewed journals and AI-generated abstracts using the same titles and publication contexts. Using Hyland's interpersonal metadiscourse framework, we annotated interactive (text-organizing) and interactional (reader-focused) devices and compared their frequencies across corpora. Quantitative analysis (frequency counts normalized per 1,000 words; chi-square tests) revealed systematic differences: AI abstracts contained more structural (interactive) markers (e.g. transitions, frame signals) but significantly fewer stance and engagement markers (e.g. hedges, boosters) than human abstracts. Qualitative analysis of exemplar abstracts confirmed that AI-generated abstracts adopt a clearer, more impersonal tone, while human abstracts show richer personal voice and reader engagement. These findings align with recent studies showing ChatGPT's abstracts are coherent but lack nuanced authorial presence. We discuss implications for academic writing, noting that AI can mimic formal structure yet may omit the rhetorical subtlety valued in scholarly communication. Limitations (e.g. single AI model, one genre) and future work are identified. Overall, this comparative corpus analysis highlights characteristic metadiscourse profiles of AI vs. human authorship in scientific abstracts and informs discourse research in the AI era.</p>

Introduction

Metadiscourse refers to the linguistic resources writers use to guide readers through a text and express their stance and engagement. This "self-reflective" language organizes ideas and fosters interaction, helping writers meet reader expectations. In academic writing, metadiscourse is crucial

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for clarity and persuasion, shaping how findings are presented and the author's relationship to the content and audience. Hyland (2018) defines metadiscourse as how we assist readers in processing and comprehending our message, and further notes it involves interactive devices (e.g. transitions, frame markers) and interactional devices (e.g. hedges, boosters, engagement cues) that manage reader engagement. Previous corpus studies have shown that metadiscourse patterns vary by discipline and genre: for example, applied linguistics research articles often use more frame markers to introduce aims than physics articles. Metadiscourse is also linked to writing proficiency and cultural norms, reflecting how authors negotiate their identities and stance in texts.

With the rise of large language models like ChatGPT, AI can now generate academic-style text. This raises questions about how AI-authored texts use metadiscourse compared to human writing. Recent studies suggest AI-generated academic text can mimic human style to a degree, but also exhibit distinct features. Gao *et al.* (2023) found that ChatGPT can produce plausible scientific abstracts that humans often find difficult to distinguish from originals, though reviewers noted that AI abstracts tended to be "vaguer and more formulaic". Jiang and Hyland (2025) compared argumentative essays by ChatGPT and students, reporting that ChatGPT essays were *significantly lower* in interactional metadiscourse (hedges, boosters, attitude markers) and had a more impersonal tone, whereas student essays showed more engagement and personalized stance. In contrast, Zhang and Zhang (2025) found that ChatGPT-generated research abstracts contained *more* metadiscourse markers overall than human abstracts, with human writers favoring self-oriented (writer-introducing) markers and ChatGPT favoring text-oriented introductions. Amirjalili *et al.* (2024) also observed that ChatGPT's academic writing can produce contextually relevant content but often lacks specificity, depth, and accurate referencing compared to human writing.

These mixed findings indicate a nascent but growing research area. Some work suggests AI's metadiscourse is coherent but limited in stance diversity, while others highlight ChatGPT's strengths in textual coherence. However, there is a lack of systematic corpus-based comparison of metadiscourse in AI-generated vs. human-generated *abstracts* specifically. This study addresses that gap by conducting a comparative analysis of metadiscourse in human-written and AI-authored research abstracts across disciplines. We ask: How do interactive and interactional metadiscourse patterns differ between human and ChatGPT-generated abstracts? By answering this, we aim to inform educators, writers, and researchers about the rhetorical profile of AI-authored academic prose.

Methods

Corpus Compilation

We compiled a bilingual corpus of research abstracts from multiple academic fields. First, human-written abstracts (N≈100) were collected from recent (2018–2025) published articles in journals



across disciplines (e.g. natural sciences, engineering, social sciences, humanities). We ensured a balanced representation of fields to capture disciplinary variation. Abstracts were selected randomly from open-access journals. Second, we used ChatGPT (GPT-4, accessed April 2025) to generate AI-authored abstracts corresponding to each human abstract. Specifically, for each title and journal context, ChatGPT was prompted (“Please write a research abstract for [Title] as it might appear in [Journal]”). This yielded a parallel set of AI-generated abstracts ($N \approx 100$) matching the human abstracts by title and discipline. All abstracts were cleaned of author names or citations and tokenized for analysis. Abstract lengths were comparable (mean ≈ 250 words).

Metadiscourse Annotation

We annotated metadiscourse features in all abstracts using Hyland’s (2005) framework of interpersonal metadiscourse. Two trained annotators independently coded each abstract for *interactive* metadiscourse (text-organizing signals that guide reader through content, e.g. logical transitions, frame markers, endophoric references, evidentials, code glosses) and *interactional* metadiscourse (writer-oriented devices addressing reader/person, e.g. hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, engagement cues). For example, words like “however” or “in summary” were coded as interactive transitions; phrases like “we found” or “suggests” were coded as interactional. Annotation guidelines followed Hyland (2005) and Camiciottoli (2004). Inter-annotator agreement (Cohen’s κ) was >0.80 for all categories, indicating reliable coding. Disagreements were resolved through discussion.

Quantitative Analysis

Metadiscourse counts for each category were totaled and normalized per 1,000 words for each abstract. We then compared frequencies between human and AI abstracts using chi-square tests for count data (cf. Brezina 2018). Effect sizes (e.g. Cramer’s V) were computed to assess strength of differences. Following corpus linguistics best practice, we reported only statistically significant contrasts ($p < 0.05$). We also computed overall metadiscourse density (total markers per abstract) and subcategory densities. This quantitative analysis allowed us to identify which metadiscourse resources were over- or under-represented in each group.

Qualitative Discourse Analysis

To complement the quantitative results, we qualitatively examined exemplar abstracts. We selected representative abstracts with high and low frequencies of certain markers. The analysis focused on how authors position themselves and structure the discourse: for example, whether they use personal pronouns, how explicitly they discuss methodology or findings, and how they engage readers (e.g. asking rhetorical questions or using inclusive “we”). We compared patterns in AI vs. human texts, guided by principles from discourse pragmatics (Hyland, 1998; Camiciottoli, 2004) and stancetaking (Hyland & Jiang, 2016). This discourse-level reading provided context to the



corpus findings and illustrated how metadiscourse choices shape the abstract's tone and interaction.

Results

Quantitative Findings

The comparative analysis revealed clear contrasts between human and AI abstracts. Overall, ChatGPT-generated abstracts contained a higher total count of metadiscourse markers than human abstracts (mean density ChatGPT > human by ~15%, $p < 0.05$). This mirrors Zhang and Zhang's finding of "*much more prevalent*" metadiscourse in AI abstracts. Breaking down by category:

- **Interactive markers:** AI abstracts used significantly more frame markers and transitional signals. For instance, ChatGPT abstracts featured transitions like "however," "furthermore," and summarizing cues ("in conclusion," "these findings") at higher rates ($p < 0.01$). Endophoric references (e.g. "as shown in Table 1") were also more common, likely reflecting a focus on textual coherence. In contrast, human abstracts relied slightly more on evidentials (citation-like expressions) and code glosses ("that is," "in other words") to relate ideas. The overall higher frequency of interactive devices in AI texts is consistent with ChatGPT's emphasis on structural clarity.
- **Interactional markers (stance & engagement):** Human abstracts employed significantly more stance-modifying devices. Hedge markers (e.g. "suggests," "may," "possible") appeared twice as often in human abstracts as in AI abstracts (χ^2 test, $p < 0.001$). Boosters (e.g. "clearly," "confirm") and attitude markers (e.g. "surprisingly," "critically") were also more frequent in human texts. Engagement markers (e.g. first-person "we," second-person "readers" or rhetorical questions) were near-absent in ChatGPT abstracts: AI texts rarely used "we" or "our findings," instead favoring passive constructs. Self-mentions like "we conducted" were found in >50% of human abstracts but <10% of AI ones. These differences align with Jiang & Hyland (2025) who reported ChatGPT had a "*significantly lower frequency of interactional metadiscourse (hedges, boosters, attitude)*".
- **Disciplinary patterns:** While this study's sample size limits strong claims by field, preliminary comparisons showed that in disciplines where human authors traditionally use more self-reference (e.g. humanities, social sciences), the drop-off in AI's self-mention was especially stark. In all fields, ChatGPT tended to default to text-centered structure, whereas human authors infused more personal stance.

Statistical tests confirmed these differences: chi-square analyses showed significant disparities in distribution of hedges and boosters ($p < 0.01$, Cramer's $V \approx 0.3$) and in use of frame markers ($p < 0.05$, $V \approx 0.2$) between the two corpora. No category was significantly more frequent in the



human corpus; even self-mentions in humans, while higher, did not reach statistical threshold given low counts. These results echo findings in translation research where human translators outperformed machines in attitude markers. In summary, ChatGPT abstracts emphasize interactive organization, whereas human abstracts emphasize personal stance and reader interaction.

Qualitative Observations

Representative excerpts illustrate how these numerical patterns manifest in prose. ChatGPT abstracts characteristically begin with clear overviews (e.g. *“This study investigates X and reports the following findings...”*) and use formulas like *“We demonstrate...”* without actually inserting a “we.” They favor past-tense passive or third-person phrasing. For example, a typical AI sentence:

“In this paper, the methodology and results are presented, demonstrating a significant effect of variable X on Y.”

This sentence uses clear frame markers (“In this paper,” “demonstrating”) and passive voice. Notice the absence of authorial “we” or personal evaluation. In contrast, a human-written abstract might say:

“In this study, we applied a novel technique to examine X, and our findings suggest that Y may correlate with Z, indicating potential implications for theory Q.”

Here the author uses “we,” “our findings,” and hedges like “may,” engaging the reader with authorial presence. Such personal stance and evaluative language were common in human abstracts but rare in AI ones, consistent with the quantitative gap in self-mention and hedging.

Another pattern: ChatGPT abstracts often enumerate structural moves (e.g. *“First, we describe..., Next, we evaluate...”*) emphasizing logical organization. Human abstracts may present results and significance more rhetorically, perhaps appealing to the reader’s interest or uncertainty. For instance, a student abstract might pose a research question or directly address the contribution, whereas ChatGPT tends to stick to reporting *what was done*. These tendencies reflect Zhang & Zhang’s note that humans used *“writer-oriented introducing”* markers while ChatGPT used *“text-oriented introducing”* markers.

Overall, qualitative review supports that ChatGPT’s abstracts read as systematic and factual but somewhat impersonal, whereas human abstracts sound more interactive and nuanced. ChatGPT rarely used language like “surprisingly,” “interestingly,” or direct engagement phrases (e.g. rhetorical question), making its tone flat. Human abstracts, by contrast, varied style: some were bold and evaluative (using boosters and attitude markers), others modest with hedging — signaling an awareness of the audience that the AI output generally lacked. This anecdotal insight underscores the corpus findings: AI’s outputs streamline structure at the expense of the author–reader rapport built through metadiscourse.



Discussion

Our comparative analysis reveals that generative AI (ChatGPT) and human authors employ distinct metadiscourse strategies in research abstracts. ChatGPT abstracts contained more interactive markers (transitions, structural cues) but fewer interactional markers (especially hedges, boosters, and engagement features) than human abstracts. In other words, AI texts strongly signal the organization of content to the reader, but downplay the writer’s personal stance and reader-oriented engagement. This pattern is broadly consistent with recent corpus studies: Jiang & Hyland (2025) similarly found ChatGPT essays “exhibit a significantly lower frequency of interactional metadiscourse” and a more impersonal tone, while Zhang & Zhang (2025) observed ChatGPT abstracts have abundant marker use but focus on text rather than author cues.

Explanation of differences. These differences likely stem from the AI’s training and style preferences. ChatGPT is trained on vast academic text and tends to produce *textbook* abstracts: clear, concise, and high on structural coherence. Its high use of transitions and frame markers suggests it learned to delineate sections (e.g. “First, ... Next, ... Finally, ...”), reflecting academic norms of organization. However, as a probabilistic model, it is less attuned to the epistemic modality and authorial voice that humans deliberately craft. ChatGPT’s lower use of hedges and “we” may be due to its inclination to sound authoritative yet generic. This matches Afzaal *et al.*’s observation in machine-translated political texts that AI tends to produce more “*native-like*” directives (structural cues) but fewer attitude markers than human output. In effect, ChatGPT’s abstracts emphasize delivering information with confidence and clarity, but without the interpersonal nuance of human discourse.

Implications. These findings have pedagogical and practical implications. For academic authors (especially students), relying on ChatGPT to draft abstracts may yield technically correct summaries but can produce text that feels detached or overly formulaic. The relative absence of hedges and personal reference in AI abstracts suggests that writers might need to add those elements manually to convey appropriate modesty and engagement. For instructors, this means that essays or abstracts generated by AI might miss expected rhetorical flourishes, which could be a cue for detection or feedback. Indeed, ChatGPT abstracts were noted by human reviewers as “*vague*” or “*formulaic*”, a qualitative impression that aligns with our finding of scant stance markers.

On the other hand, the strengths of AI are evident. ChatGPT’s ability to produce well-organized, syntactically correct abstracts quickly could be valuable as a drafting or learning tool. Vaccaro *et al.* (2024) showed that human–AI combinations often outperform either alone in creative tasks. In writing, a hybrid approach where an AI generates a first draft and a human writer then infuses it with nuanced metadiscourse might capitalize on each side’s strengths. For instance, authors could use ChatGPT to ensure coherent structure and then revise to insert hedges, personal references, and explicit reader engagement where appropriate.



Relation to existing research. Our results extend the literature on AI writing and metadiscourse. They confirm and contextualize prior findings. The fact that ChatGPT abstracts had more markers overall aligns with Zhang & Zhang, suggesting AI's verbosity in discourse cues. The marked deficit in hedging and engagement echoes Jiang & Hyland and Huang's (2023) comment that while LLMs "generate coherent and fluent output, they can be difficult to distinguish from text written by humans" except in subtle aspects. Our corpus study also resonates with Hyland's (2005) notion that metadiscourse is central to how writers connect with readers; here we see AI connecting differently (via signals) than humans (via stance). Moreover, the pattern is analogous to human-machine translation comparisons: Afzaal *et al.* found human translations used more attitude markers, while machine translations used more native-like directives, a parallel to human vs. AI writing.

Limitations. Several limitations temper these conclusions. First, our study used one AI model (ChatGPT/GPT-4) and a fixed prompting strategy. Different models or prompts might yield different styles. We also focused only on abstracts, a genre that is already concise and formulaic; results might vary in longer texts (e.g. introductions or full articles). Our corpus size was moderate (on the order of 100 abstracts each), so finer effects (e.g. discipline-specific variations) may need larger samples. The annotation followed Hyland's taxonomy, which may not capture all discourse nuance (for example, ChatGPT's use of synonyms or complex constructions might mask markers). Finally, while we qualitatively described abstract excerpts, we did not subject these to formal reading tests (e.g. human evaluation), which could provide additional validation of perceived impersonal tone.

Future research. Future work could address these gaps. Researchers should compare different LLMs (GPT-4 vs. GPT-3.5 or others) and examine temporal changes as models evolve (cf. Hyland & Jiang's diachronic studies of stance). Cross-linguistic studies could see if non-English abstracts differ. It would also be valuable to test ways of prompting ChatGPT to incorporate more metadiscourse (e.g. "Use at least three hedges"). Integrating reader ratings or machine detection of AI-generated abstracts could further illuminate practical distinctions. More broadly, studies might explore how AI-assisted writing (e.g. iterative human revision of AI drafts) combines the metadiscourse profiles of both authors.

Conclusion

In summary, our corpus-based comparison shows that human and AI authors of research abstracts employ distinct metadiscourse strategies. ChatGPT-generated abstracts use numerous organizational signals and exhibit textual coherence, but tend to omit many interpersonal cues that human authors use to hedge and engage readers. Human abstracts, by contrast, display greater rhetorical nuance, with a richer use of hedges, boosters, and personal referencing. These



differences underscore the complementary nature of human and AI writing: AI can ensure structural clarity and consistency, while humans supply persuasive stance and personalized voice. Our findings contribute to understanding how large language models perform in academic contexts and offer guidance for authors and educators navigating the era of AI writing.

Implications: Educators may emphasize teaching students to critically review AI drafts, adding appropriate metadiscourse where needed. Journals and conferences might consider specifying guidelines for acceptable AI use, given that AI-augmented abstracts can be credible yet stylistically flat.

Limitations and future work: This study provides a snapshot using one AI system and genre. Future research should examine other AI tools, disciplines, and genres, and test methods to integrate human metadiscourse strengths into AI-generated text. As AI continues to evolve, ongoing analysis of its rhetorical style will be crucial for academics who aim to harness its benefits while preserving the human aspects of scholarly communication.

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The Matrix of Postmodern Fragmentation in Ian McEwan's Atonement

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Keywords	Abstract
Backward Technique, Episodic Structure, Forward Technique, Fragmentation, Non- linearity, Spatial Distortion, Temporal Distortion	Postmodernist writers are known for their experimentation with modernist techniques, and among the ones that they expanded on and played with is the technique of fragmentation. McEwan instills the implementation of that concept in his work <i>Atonement</i> (2002). Thus, the text will be approached in this paper by highlighting and analyzing the utilization of fragmentation by the author. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how the author used fragmentation so as to express his ideas, in addition to seeing how he dealt with temporal linearity (forward/backward techniques) and spatial linearity, plot structure, episodic structure, events, etc. The significance of this study lies in the contribution the paper shall make to the body of English literature by providing a critical input to the literary data related to McEwan's narrative. The results revealed that McEwan has employed fragmentation almost throughout the text in a manner that makes the readers confused and perplexed in understanding the text smoothly because of distorting and fragmenting his narrative through the above-mentioned list

A Brief Overview to Fragmentation

Fragmentation is a pivotal technique in postmodern literature. It was made popular in fiction, through English writers in general, and Irish and British ones in specific, by denying completeness, coherence, and linearity, and in so doing, leaving gaps and fragments concurrently. Postmodernists adopted fragmentation from the modernists, yet they played and expanded on it, letting their literary texts to possess episodic style forms, temporal/spatial distortion, and jumps in character as well. Therefore, fragmentation, as a key aspect in postmodernism, makes literature more complex rather than simple and clear. One may not go so far in stating that postmodernity, as a whole, is “a culture of fragmentary sensations” (Baldick, 2001, p. 201).

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Fragmentation, in essence, resists meaning and understanding (Frey, 1996, p. 2), and moreover, it is not easy to pin down, since there is no broadly accurate principle or guide to how and what constitutes fragments themselves (Elias, 2004, p. 2). However, it appears to be offering an apt mode of writing to depict the chaos and disorder of the real world in that it is unstable, discontinuous, radical, and uncentered (Harries, 1994, p. 34). Toward the turn of the century, a confusion was originated in many a medium, including society, economy, technology, and science. Eventually, that upsurge in terms of crisis led to developing fragmented forms of writing, having distortedly chronological narratives.

Thus, this type of postmodern fiction tends to confront readers with an assortment of fragments, and by utilizing multiple realities, readers vacate the narrative which unifies them, trying to reconstruct according to their understanding by piecing them together (Guignery, 2019, p. 28). Multiplicity, in voices and endings, aside from skepticism results from fragmentation. Sometimes, one literary text has more than one narrator such that as one finishes, a second one starts, resulting the work to be fragmented in a particular manner.

Of the methods through which fragmentation takes place is the forward-backward technique, which employs temporal distortion, i.e., it uses a non-linear timeline. Namely, the events could jump backwards or forwards in time to the extent that it occasionally makes readers unable to distinguish between the past and the present due to the fragmented events narrated. These fragmented events tend to hide a secret relation between one event and another, however.

Modernist literary figures regarded fragmentation as something one should mourn over. They endeavored to dissolve chaos and restore order in their societies through their artistry, wherein meaning was completely lost. They tried to uncover a pattern out of fragmentation, i.e., hope out of chaos. Conversely, postmodernist writers have embraced a different outlook in that they endorse fragmentation to establish playful works that mirror and investigate the complexities, confusion, and disintegration of the world in terms of thoughts, behaviors, social mores, etc. (Munir & Sumaira, 2021, p. 57). They stopped the quest for order and embraced the anarchy, freedom, and chaos that served as the product of the disillusionments of the societies that suffered from two world wars. Thus, they rejected the notion of the unified self, along with any kind of authoritarianism, and so they composed their literary works with relativity and multiplicity, leading themselves to receive the world as fragmented, contingent, unstable, and ungrounded and that it is a mere composition of disunities (Jones, 2000).

So, all things considered, fragmentation equals fission since it is breaking the work up to more than one part or component. A lot of postmodernist writers overlooked the four pillars in writing—setting, plot, theme, and character. Consequently, the setting becomes transitory and unfixed. The plot becomes fragmented into various scenarios which makes it non-linear. Themes are inconsistent. Characters are also disintegrated with ostensibly sudden motions that are out of



control. Thus, the postmodernist novelists reject the grand narratives and rather deal with a fragmented manner of structuring narratives.

In brief, fragmentation, as a key trope and practice in postmodernism, was tantamount to a steppingstone in breaking free from the traditional perceptions of wholeness and plunge into instability, isolations, and interruptions. Thus, time developed to be less linear; the syntax was subject to experimentation with different forms; characters were having their own thoughts, usually dispersed between the past, present and future, and this lack of continuity in terms of time and space reflected or replicated the postmodern society.

Fragmentation in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*

The literary text of McEwan unravels the multiplicity in splits and rifts, a major break between the core account and the 1999 coda, aside from the cracks among the different subparts and parts. The value of fragmentation generates a link between the various parts. That is, through fragmentation, McEwan's text formulates a unity out of those segments. Fragmentation in *Atonement* displays the gaps among characters and their opposing viewpoints, the difference between reality and fiction. The novel challenges continuity, coherence, and concord, reflecting the notions of cracks, fragmentation, gaps, and ruptures. Thus, the author is behind aiming to explore multiplicities, expressing the inner state of Briony that is related to a dislocated temporality and perception.

Starting in the 1st chapter with the the author referring to the “floorboard cracks” in Briony's room (McEwan, 2002, p. 11), which implies that the floor is unstable; however, those cracks may be taken literally to signify a fractured space, or figuratively to imply a perilous situation. This starting point frames the entire narrative given that this instability is reflected in the coda as Briony utters, “The floor seems to be undulating beneath my feet.” (McEwan, 2002, p. 351), aside from the talk about earthquakes on newspapers (McEwan, 2002, p. 59) which all mirror the sense of dislocation and fragmentation.

The notion of fragments displays itself in the form of separation as Cecilia Tallis is separated from Robbie Turner, and the Tallis's from Briony, echoing then with the civilians and soldiers being torn apart, having “mutilated bodies” by explosions (McEwan, 2002, p. 187) and as a case in point is Luc Cornet, whose skull is cracked. Through this, Ian conveys the fragments of war, and the dismemberment of people at war.

The conversion of the fragmentary sense in terms of the diegetic world and extra-diegetic narrative may be noticed by the glaze along with the “three fine meandering lines” (McEwan, 2002, p. 40). As a heritage of the family, its fragmenting happenstance represents the fragmentation that is to come to the family to disrupt the notion of the nuclear family. The fragmentation of the vase, through its three lines, may also stand for the three European countries, Germany, France, and



England, in that the glaze was made by a German painter—Johann Gregor Herold—and was given to an Englishman by a Frenchman during the First World War. Therefore, it stands for the fragility of their peace following the Great War, and the underground conflict during the 1930s among each other which is to end up with destruction or fragmentation once again with WWII (Cavalié, 2009, p. 132).

The novel itself, as a structure, is fragmented into two major sections—the tripartite section, which is numerically titled without any description, ranges between 1935–1940, and the afterward coda that takes place in 1999 in London, which is titled as “London, 1999”, having a description of time and place unlike the previous section. As a consequence, it is misshaped, uneven, and hence different in this sense, and in the sense of balance since there is a narrative part that is enormous compared to a part that is small, functioning as an addendum. This lack of symmetry originates an eccentric construction, which is typical of postmodern literature against the traditional equilibrium.

The difference in respect of ontology and temporal and spatial dimensions between the two sections could stand for the gap between fiction and facts in that the first section was narrated out of memory, whereas the coda was more of a revelation and a moment of truth to the audience. Moreover, the first section is narrated in the past tense from the perspective of a third person, concerned with a tragic love story. The second section is narrated in the present tense from the perspective of the first person, concerned with the observations of a seventy-seven years of age writer diagnosed with vascular dementia. There is a fragment of autobiography following the long account that is partially historical and romantic. The coda, or the epilogue, and its antecedent are mismatched. That is, the two sections are of different natures. This construction, as a whole, serves as a form of episodic series.

The sense of fragmentation between the two sections is further intensified through the separation of the 1st part into three subparts that each holds a different configuration of space and time. The usage of the triple structure may evoke in the mind of the reader the three phases of the story—the exposure of the crime, the witnessing of the aftermath, and the process of atonement. It should be noted, as well, that there are gaps among the three parts, especially the omission of the five years between the 1st part and the 2nd part, a break that expresses the transference to France from England, to war from peace, etc.

Similar to what happens between the 1st part and the 2nd part, the gap between the 2nd part and the 3rd part is characterized by a spatial jump to London from Dunkirk, an analepsis of three weeks, and a shift in terms of focus—from the war front to the home front, from action to reaction, from the victim of the crime to the victimizer, from injustice to repentance.

Fragmentation not only dominates Briony’s narrative structure, but also involves itself in terms of her ideas, particularly as she understands “the chasm that lay between an idea and its execution”



(McEwan, 2002, p. 16). This chasm or difference reflects itself in the use of irony that prevails in the text through “the discrepancy between the narrator’s discreet, ambiguous wisdom and the characters’ foolishness or ignorance” (Miller, 2017, p. 94). For instance, in the scene where Briony fakes her drowning, she says to Turner, “I want to thank you for saving my life. I’ll be eternally grateful to you” (McEwan, 2002, p. 218), the irony is that her gratefulness winds up being switched to harm, accusing him of the rape and later on he meets his death as a consequence. So, the chasm can also stand for the huge gap between the notion of atonement and its fulfilment.

Fragmentation in the literary text manifests itself ideologically and structurally as a sovereign principle, hence having a fragmented aesthetic. Displaying it as a continuance and expansion of the modernist fragmentation represents an adherence to the zeitgeist of postmodernism (Gutleben, 2001, pp. 139–142). The multiplicity of perspectives in the 1st part misleads readers because it is not truly multiple since every single perception that takes place stems from the fragmented imagination or questioned memories of Briony Tallis. Aside from affecting the false outlook in the 1st part, it also affects the reformulation of Briony’s entire story.

In the 2nd part, the mature narrator forms suppositions, which are unreliable and questionable, about the impressions of Robbie Turner during the war instead of his own true impressions because the two have not seen each other ever since she was thirteen years of age. The 2nd part, all together, illustrates the fragmentation of civilization and Robbie Turner’s breakdown while he endeavors to survive the injury so as to go home (Ellam, 2009, p. 28). In the 3rd part, every single thing that is related to her visit to Cecilia is invented, and in so doing, there lies a false narrative to highlight the blur of fiction and facts.

The different fragments, be it mnemonic or narrative, are gathered through the traumatic mode that governs the whole text of Briony. That is, what links the four fragments of Ian’s work—the first three parts and the coda—is “the persistence of trauma” (Letissier, 2011, p. 214), and even that trauma is fragmented, in essence, into three—one related to Briony’s crime, the other one related to understanding the repercussions of that crime, and another one related to perceiving the terrors of WWII. Thus, the fragmented structure of her account mirrors the overlaid strata of her trauma, and the incoherence of the fragmented narrative is connected to the aspect of traumatic memory since if one with traumatic background is subject to form narratives, then it must be done through a literary form that breaks free from the traditional linear sequence (Whitehead, 2004, p. 6).

The fragmentation of the novel allows Ian to express his own skepticism regarding narrative and coherence which represent the chaos, disorder, and the fragmentation of the European family members, in specific, and the European continent, in general, during the war. The author presents fragments of truth via splitting the structure with multiple narrative pieces, and in so doing, he shows his stand toward metanarrative. Thus, everything that is discussed, from the various literary



modes to the omission and temporal and spatial distortion, defines the work as an infinite jigsaw of fragments of experience (Waugh, 1993, p. 8).

The three main parts may refer to the fragmentation of sin since the crime is done by three people who are complicit in the criminal activity: the performer—Paul Marshal, the receiver—Lola Quincey, and the witness—Briony Tallis, and, of course, the fourth part, the coda could be standing for Robbie Turner himself as a victim, or for the passivity of Cecilia since she, as well, does not utter the truth in front of others. Each served as a fragment to form the whole abstract of sin. Neither one of them revealed the truth about what has happened, in that the rapist and the girl remained silent to avoid a scandal and jail for Paul, while Briony asserted the truth despite she is not sure of the identity of the person. She does so for a variety of reasons, one of which is that she formed an erroneous and misleading impression earlier that day due to the letter that Turner wrote to her sister and the instance when she caught them having sex in the library, and also because she had a crush on him back in time; hence, making her incentives fragmented in essence.

Cecilia's recurrent words serve as a means of connecting Robbie Turner's fragmented memories in that they distort time persistently. Turner keeps on remembering his beloved's words, "It's only a dream. Come back." (McEwan, 2002, p. 41), "I'll wait for you. Come back." (p. 190), and "You're in my thoughts every minute. I love you. I'll wait for you. Come back." (p. 201). These sentences keep on appearing abruptly throughout the narrative (pp. 197, 246, 249, 250, 324, 330) to break the linearity of space and time. The amalgam of the horrors and the bedlam of the battlefield, along with Turner's scattered feelings and thoughts make his memories emerge in mere fragments. That messy description and presentation of his conscious crosses the boundaries of the present and past, leading to make readers confused and depressed (Ying, 2020, p. 68).

The English author makes use of an episodic style of writing in his novel. Even though this technique of episodes is originally related to theater and film, it has become a significant technique in writing fiction. Through it, the author can have flexibility in terms of space and time. The utilization of such an approach does enable the spatial jump from France to England to happen, not to mention the temporal jump from past to future and vice versa. Furthermore, the cross and parallel movement of space and time can result in different suspension and tension. It can as well be employed to illustrate the emotional state or relationship among people in various places—like how Cecilia and Robbie yearn for a glimpse of each other. Consequently, Ian makes use of episodes to depict the inner world of his characters, and in so doing, reaching a mixture of objective and subjective account simultaneously.

The episodic style of writing in *Atonement*, as a technique which gathers separate pieces that function as fragments and places them together, provides readers with a chain of illusions, scenes, along with changing the setting, perspective, and character, and as a consequence, there lies barely any correlation between the adjoining paragraphs. As a result, readers must read carefully, having



to commit to memory, so as to have a thorough understanding of the events, because the narrative series of episodes is employed in the literary work to remove the restriction of place and time. Moreover, it is an operative way of writing about truth and life.

The structure of the novel is in keeping with the plot. Given that the author splits the work into four fragments, each fragment can be seen as an episode. Apart from this, there are fragments of scenes that are gathered to correspond to the theme. Such a way of fragmentation allows the author to surpass the limitation of space and the linear sequence of time, so as to highlight merely particular fragments of time and place by employing episodic forms.

Regarding time and place, the text covers a long range of it—from just before WWII to Just before 2000—and many descriptions regarding the war, the remorse, and the atonement. The 1st part of the novel, which approximately covers half the book, ends with the same day and place it started, i.e., the house of Tallis on a hot summer day. This part can be considered a novel by itself as a whole. However, the 2nd part jumps forward with a totally different time and place, i.e., France, Dunkirk in 1940 where the British army is evacuating. By the same token, the 3rd part jumps to England at the same year, creating a parallel structure.

Namely, the episodic narrative enables two storylines—which run the same/different time/space—to operate a single theme. In the literary text, the idea of war is formed by that episodic structure, containing double subplots, i.e., the account in France regarding the retreat of the soldiers from Robbie's perspective in the 2nd part and the account in England regarding the homecoming of the soldiers from Briony's perspective in the 3rd part.

The utilization of episodes is done via the forward/backward technique, aside from free association (Martin, 2006). This makes readers oftentimes face difficulties to find out what the author wants to convey. However, that is a mirror to the authors inner world that can be regarded as a reading guidance. The functionality of episodes is represented by the fact that it makes readers think and imagine in the same manner to that of the author.

Ian distorts the chronology of time in that he occasionally informs readers about events that are to come; namely, he goes forward, and sometimes he goes backward, informing readers about events that took place in the past. For example, the 6th chapter finishes with Emily in bed meditating; the 7th chapter, on the other hand, shifts to the island temple in which Briony having fun with stinging nettle. This, however, occurs prior to the coming of Paul and Leon and the subsequent sex scene. Through that, Ian moves the passage of time backward.

Later on, the interval of time becomes confusing because the storyline keeps moving backward and forward like, for instance, jumping to the time of the event tackling the preceding half hour of Briony's crime, and afterward the story goes backward to Briony searching for the twins. This



distortion of time governs the comprehension and expectation of the readers concerning the events and hence the theme of the literary work deepens.

CONCLUSION

Since there is no one approach that unites postmodernist writers, each one of them follows his own tendency. Thus, as a postmodernist writer, Ian McEwan performed a somewhat aesthetic experimentation in his own style to convey his thoughts of the world through fiction. To that end, he had twists in the novel that are seemingly meant to engage readers in various ways. Therefore, the article examined how Ian McEwan utilized fragmentation in his novel, and how he relied on it in composing the structure of his narrative.

McEwan also makes use of the temporal distortion as well as the spatial distortion, besides, of course, using these distortions to express the sense of fragmentation in postmodernism, be it in family, societies, identities, fiction, etc. The author's configuration of time and space forms a necessity to refer to memories; for instance, there is a record of the events in the context of the narrative, and also, how these events have an impact on the characters. Briony, as an old author with vascular dementia, cannot recall every single detail in linearity.

McEwan does not wish to follow the traditional methods of narrating stories. He wanted readers to reread the text from different perspectives, and, thus, he offered accounts on narration like the first-person narrator, and the third-person narrator. He creates an element of confusion—an undecidability. This happens even in the way the novel lends itself such that it blends the well-known elements of the realist, modernist, and postmodernist novel, and so, one can sense fragmentation even in that vein. That is why one may look at the text as a narrative concerned mainly with writing a narrative rather than the themes it holds. Namely, *Atonement*, as a novel, is also fragmented in the sense that it is realistic due to the fact that the novel is mostly narrated from a third-person perspective, along with the theme which is Victorian in respect of the image of the war and the suspense. However, it moves away from the realistic novel in the sense that it does not build on a linear plot, i.e., having causes and events, and rather it employs fragmented episodes.

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Collection Management in Museums: Conservation, Risk Management, and Climate Control Protocols

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Keywords	Abstract
collection management preventive conservation museum climate control risk management	Collection management is increasingly defined by an operational triad: conservation decision-making, structured risk management, and evidence-based climate control. This analytical review synthesizes current standards and institutional guidance on preventive conservation and collection care, focusing on (a) climate parameters and monitoring protocols, (b) risk assessment and emergency preparedness, and (c) sustainability and ethics in stewardship. A narrative, criteria-driven synthesis was conducted across international standards (e.g., EN/ISO), professional handbooks used in museum engineering practice, and authoritative institutional guidance from museum and heritage bodies. Findings highlight that effective collection management depends less on universal “ideal” setpoints and more on (1) collection-specific vulnerability and acclimatization histories, (2) reliability and interpretability of monitoring data, and (3) integrated governance that connects facilities management with registration, conservation, security, and public access. The study proposes two practical tools for implementation: a comparative climate-control parameter table by material class and a role-based risk management matrix. Recommendations emphasize tiered, risk-based climate control; energy-aware environmental strategies; formalized incident response workflows; and ethical collection governance addressing provenance, repatriation, and access-versus-preservation trade-offs.

1. Introduction

Museums hold their collections in public trust, which imposes a professional and ethical obligation to preserve cultural property while simultaneously supporting research, exhibition, education, and community engagement. According to the International Council of Museums, core museum responsibilities include stewardship, systematic documentation, accessibility, and responsible

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disposal, alongside explicit duties related to disaster preparedness, security, insurance or indemnity, and due diligence in acquisition and provenance research (International Council of Museums [ICOM], 2017).

Within this stewardship framework, collection management practices have progressively evolved from isolated, object-focused conservation treatments toward a preventive and systems-based approach. Preventive conservation emphasizes the management of environmental conditions, storage systems, handling procedures, documentation processes, and institutional workflows in order to reduce deterioration risks before active conservation interventions become necessary. The Canadian Conservation Institute formalizes this approach through its widely adopted “agents of deterioration” framework, which identifies ten primary categories of risk—such as inappropriate relative humidity and temperature, light exposure, pests, pollutants, physical forces, fire, water, theft or vandalism, and dissociation—and links them to structured strategies of detection, blocking, and response (Canadian Conservation Institute [CCI], 2025).

Among these preventive measures, climate control and environmental monitoring play a particularly critical role in safeguarding collections. However, these practices are frequently misunderstood as fixed or legally binding standards. The CCI clarifies that most heritage institutions operate within flexible guidelines and technical specifications rather than enforceable legal climate standards, with specific environmental requirements often arising from loan agreements, accreditation frameworks, or institutional policy rather than statutory regulation (Canadian Conservation Institute, n.d.).

Compounding these challenges, climate change is significantly reshaping risk profiles for museums worldwide. Increasing frequencies of heatwaves, flooding events, humidity fluctuations, and pollution episodes intensify both operational pressures and long-term threats to collections. Recent research focused on museum environments demonstrates that climate variability and rising pollutant loads necessitate adaptive, region-specific resilience strategies, moving beyond static environmental targets toward dynamic, risk-informed preventive conservation models (Dimabayao et al., 2025; Lucchi, 2024).

2. Literature Review

Contemporary preventive conservation literature can be broadly grouped into three interrelated domains: (a) environmental specifications for collection care, (b) risk management frameworks for prioritizing mitigation actions, and (c) organizational and ethical governance mechanisms that integrate facilities management, collections stewardship, and public access.

Environmental specifications are largely informed by professional engineering guidance and technical standards. One of the most influential frameworks in museum building and facilities practice is provided by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning



Engineers through the *ASHRAE Handbook—HVAC Applications*, particularly the chapter addressing museums, galleries, archives, and libraries. This guidance defines graduated environmental control classes (AA to D), specifying outer limits for temperature and relative humidity, allowances for seasonal drift, and acceptable short-term fluctuations. Importantly, ASHRAE emphasizes that strict environmental control is justified primarily for highly sensitive or “unproofed” objects, while noting that system reliability and consistency may be as critical as narrow control bands themselves (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers [ASHRAE], 2019).

European and international standards complement this engineering-oriented perspective with object-centered analytical approaches. EN 15757:2010 focuses on the mechanisms through which temperature and relative humidity variability induce mechanical damage—such as fracture, deformation, and delamination—in organic hygroscopic materials, including wood, paper, textiles, leather, bone, ivory, and paintings. The standard underscores that many objects have acclimatized to long-standing indoor environments and may therefore tolerate individualized climate ranges rather than uniform setpoints, challenging prescriptive environmental targets (European Committee for Standardization [CEN], 2010). Similarly, the International Organization for Standardization standard ISO 11799:2015 extends preventive conservation principles to archival and library collections, stressing the importance of stable indoor climates, high thermal and hygric inertia in building materials, pressure management strategies, and compartmentalization. It also highlights the escalation of microbiological risks above approximately 60% relative humidity and warns of increased brittleness at excessively low humidity levels (International Organization for Standardization [ISO], 2015).

Built-environment standards further emphasize that effective environmental control begins with site selection, building envelope performance, and systematic risk assessment, rather than reliance on HVAC systems alone. The British Standards Institution adoption BS EN 16893:2018 requires institutions to identify, mitigate, and periodically reassess risks when collections are housed within self-contained spaces inside larger buildings. The standard prioritizes passive environmental strategies where feasible and stresses the need for early expert consultation to reconcile conservation requirements with security, fire protection, and functional use (British Standards Institution [BSI], 2018).

Risk management literature in cultural heritage has increasingly converged on participatory and decision-support methodologies that aim to maximize preservation outcomes within finite resources. The ICCROM frames risk management as a structured evaluation of hazards, likelihoods, and consequences to inform mitigation planning and to balance competing objectives such as preservation versus access or preservation versus sustainability (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property [ICCROM], 2016). Building on this approach, the ABC method—developed in partnership with the Canadian Conservation



Institute—formalizes a cyclical process encompassing context establishment, risk identification, analysis, evaluation, and treatment, supported by continuous communication and monitoring. Integrated risk management is further conceptualized as coordination among emergency preparedness, insurance and liability, security, and collection management functions (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2025).

Recent literature on sustainability and climate action challenges uniform climate expectations and advocates energy-efficient, risk-based collection care. The Network of European Museum Organisations positions climate impact assessment, practical mitigation tools, cross-sector collaboration, and organizational embedding of sustainability principles as central to contemporary museum operations in a changing climate (Network of European Museum Organisations [NEMO], 2023). Complementing this perspective, the Getty Conservation Institute publication *Managing Collection Environments: Technical Notes and Guidance* conceptualizes sustainable environmental management as an interdisciplinary process that integrates climate physics, long-term monitoring and data interpretation, and institutional consensus-building, rather than adherence to rigid HVAC targets alone (Taylor et al., 2023).

Ethical governance forms the foundation of any comprehensive collection management system. The ICOM Code of Ethics requires museums to exercise due diligence in establishing complete ownership histories and to avoid the acquisition of illegally obtained or exported cultural property. It explicitly references international legal instruments, including the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, thereby linking ethical responsibility, legal compliance, and stewardship to documentation practices and public access policies (International Council of Museums, 2017; UNESCO, 1970).

3. Methodology

This study employed a structured narrative review with analytical synthesis, a methodology well suited to practice-facing scholarship in museum studies and heritage science. The primary objective was to integrate three complementary bodies of knowledge: (1) peer-reviewed research in museum and heritage conservation science; (2) international and national technical standards governing collection environments, storage, and safety; and (3) authoritative guidance issued by leading museum and conservation institutions addressing risk management, environmental monitoring, emergency preparedness, and ethical governance.

3.1 Search Strategy and Sources

The literature search covered the period 2010–2025, while also including foundational standards and guidance published earlier but remaining current and widely implemented, such as EN 15757:2010 and ISO 11799:2015. Sources were retrieved from publicly accessible publisher



platforms, institutional repositories, and official organizational websites to ensure traceability and reliability.

The review incorporated the following source categories:

- **International standards and regulatory codes** (e.g., EN, ISO, NFPA) addressing repository design, environmental stability, fire protection, and collection safety (British Standards Institution, 2018; European Committee for Standardization, 2010; International Organization for Standardization, 2015; National Fire Protection Association, 2021).
- **Professional engineering guidance** applied in museum HVAC and environmental control practice, particularly the relevant chapter of the ASHRAE *Handbook—HVAC Applications* (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, 2019).
- **Institutional and sector guidance** issued by recognized conservation and museum bodies, including the Canadian Conservation Institute, ICCROM, the Getty Conservation Institute, NEMO, and the Smithsonian Institution (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2025; ICCROM, 2016; Network of European Museum Organisations, 2023; Smithsonian Institution, 2016; Taylor et al., 2023).
- **Peer-reviewed research literature** examining museum climate performance, energy efficiency, and the impacts of climate change on collection environments and risk profiles (Dimabayao et al., 2025; Elnaggar et al., 2024; Lucchi, 2024).
- **Ethical and legal frameworks** governing acquisition, provenance research, and international norms, including the ICOM Code of Ethics and the 1970 UNESCO Convention (International Council of Museums, 2017; UNESCO, 1970).

3.2 Search Terms

Core English-language search strings combined museum-related keywords with collection, environmental, and risk-management terminology. Representative queries included: “*museum collections climate control protocol*,” “*ASHRAE museum RH temperature fluctuations*,” “*EN 15757 organic hygroscopic materials*,” “*heritage risk management ABC method*,” “*environmental monitoring museum dashboard*,” “*NFPA 909 museum emergency preparedness*,” “*climate change museum collections risk analysis*,” and “*museum provenance due diligence ICOM*.” Search terms were iteratively refined to capture both technical standards and applied conservation practice.



3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Sources were included if they (a) were peer-reviewed or issued by authoritative standards bodies or recognized heritage institutions, (b) addressed practical protocols for environmental control, preventive conservation, risk management, or emergency preparedness in collection settings, and (c) provided transferable guidance applicable beyond a single institutional context. Case studies were included where they offered evidence-based insights directly relevant to protocol design or risk prioritization (Elnaggar et al., 2024; Dimabayao et al., 2025).

Sources were excluded if they (a) consisted of non-authoritative summaries lacking methodological transparency, (b) focused primarily on commercial product marketing without substantive protocol guidance, or (c) addressed topics outside the core collection-care triad, such as exhibition design unrelated to environmental or collection risk. These criteria were applied to prioritize primary guidance and reduce interpretive bias arising from secondary commentary.

3.4 Synthesis Approach

The selected literature was synthesized into a protocol-oriented analytical framework reflecting current best practice in preventive conservation. This framework follows four sequential steps: (1) defining threats using the “agents of deterioration” model; (2) establishing climate control levels aligned with collection vulnerability and building performance; (3) operationalizing environmental monitoring, thresholds, and response procedures; and (4) integrating emergency preparedness, documentation systems, and ethical governance into routine collection management. This structured synthesis enabled cross-comparison of standards, guidance, and empirical findings while maintaining relevance to operational museum contexts (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2025; ICCROM, 2016; Taylor et al., 2023).

4. Findings and Discussion

Evidence drawn from international standards, institutional guidance, and recent peer-reviewed scholarship converges on a central finding: collection management is most effective when climate control, conservation practice, and risk management are treated as a single, integrated workflow, supported by shared data, clearly defined roles, and formal escalation pathways. Rather than operating as parallel or siloed functions, preventive conservation, facilities management, documentation, and emergency preparedness perform optimally when coordinated through common protocols and decision structures. This section synthesizes findings related to conservation planning, climate-control protocols, organizational risk governance, and emerging pressures linked to climate change.



4.1 Collection Management as an Integrated Workflow

Contemporary collections work encompasses acquisition ethics, documentation, environmental management, preventive conservation, and emergency preparedness, while also facilitating research access and public engagement. This holistic approach aligns with the stewardship principles articulated in the ICOM Code of Ethics, which situates documentation, accessibility, and disaster protection among the core responsibilities of museum governing bodies (International Council of Museums, 2017). Risk management frameworks similarly conceptualize integrated risk management as coordination among multiple institutional risk systems—such as fire protection, liability and insurance, business continuity, security, and collections care—rather than as discrete and independently managed plans (ICCROM, 2016).

A key implication of this convergence is that climate control cannot be treated solely as a facilities issue. Environmental performance is influenced by collection use patterns (e.g., loans, exhibitions, and handling frequency), the quality of documentation (including condition baselines), and the institution's preparedness to respond to excursions or disasters. The Smithsonian Institution's declaration on the collections preservation environment emphasizes that monitoring strategies and performance criteria should be defined at the earliest design stages, that monitoring systems should be integrated and automated where possible, and that resulting data must be accessible across departments—including collections, facilities, and senior management—to support coordinated decision-making (Smithsonian Institution, 2016).

4.3 Monitoring and Response: From Data Collection to Action

Across the reviewed literature, monitoring is consistently framed as a protocol-driven organizational capability rather than a technical device. Institutional guidance stresses that automated, integrated monitoring and shared access to environmental data are prerequisites for effective preventive conservation, enabling timely response and accountability (Smithsonian Institution, 2016). Engineering guidance further links environmental performance to building-envelope characteristics, system reliability, and operational practices, reinforcing that monitoring outcomes must be embedded in management processes rather than treated as isolated metrics (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, 2019).

An effective monitoring protocol therefore requires clearly defined sampling frequencies, quality-control procedures, alert thresholds, and escalation pathways that assign responsibility for response and documentation. Risk management literature emphasizes continuous monitoring, review, communication, and consultation as integral components of preventive conservation, ensuring that environmental data consistently informs decision-making and corrective action (ICCROM, 2016; Taylor et al., 2023).



Table 1. Climate control protocol parameters by collection type (indicative).

Collection type	Typical target temperature	Typical target RH	Acceptable fluctuation guidance	Monitoring frequency	Recommended actions when out of range
Organic hygroscopic materials (wood, leather, bone/ivory; many painted/composite objects)	10–25°C (avoid rapid swings)	35–65% RH (set around collection's historic average where feasible)	Short-term fluctuations tightened for high-vulnerability objects (e.g., ±5% RH, ±2°C under tighter control types); seasonal adjustments should be slow and justified	Continuous data logging (e.g., 5–15 min), plus monthly review of trends	If RH excursions occur: (1) identify source (HVAC drift, infiltration, leaks), (2) stabilize gradually to avoid stress cycling, (3) prioritize high-vulnerability objects for microclimates or relocation
Paper/textiles (archives, books, cellulose-based materials)	“Cool” conditions; avoid heat spikes	Keep below mold-risk thresholds; avoid both >60% RH and over-drying	Stability prioritized; avoid long exposure above ~60% RH (mold risk) and very low RH (brittleness risk)	Continuous logging plus periodic calibration checks	If RH trends upward toward mold-risk levels: deploy dehumidification, improve envelope/air sealing, and review storage density/airflow; if RH too low: mitigate over-drying and reassess HVAC settings
Metals (ferrous/non-ferrous; mixed metal objects)	Moderate, stable	Prefer mid/low RH; avoid high RH and condensation risk	Control focused on preventing high-RH episodes and condensation; critical RH can vary with metal type, salts, and pollutants	Continuous logging; add dew point/condensation risk assessment	If RH elevated: inspect for condensation sources; reduce infiltration; control humidity; consider microclimate enclosures for high-risk items; integrate pollutant control where relevant
Ceramics/stone/glass (generally less hygroscopic)	Broader tolerance; avoid extremes	Prevent dampness and very high RH	Wider bands can be acceptable where mechanical risk is low; focus on preventing dampness and mold-prone	Continuous logging in shared spaces; spot checks in cases	If persistent high humidity: prioritize building/source moisture control; ensure that mixed displays do not expose organics to dampness; document



Collection type	Typical target temperature	Typical target RH	Acceptable fluctuation guidance	Monitoring frequency	Recommended actions when out of range
			conditions in adjacent organics		excursions and adjust building controls

Sources for Climate-Parameter Logic

The logic underpinning climate-control parameters in museum protocols is derived from a convergence of engineering standards and object-centered conservation guidance. The ASHRAE framework provides operationally actionable types of environmental control, defining outer limits, seasonal adjustments, and permissible short-term fluctuations for temperature and relative humidity. Under certain control categories, this includes ranges such as approximately 35–65% relative humidity and 10–25°C, while explicitly cautioning that tighter control is warranted only for highly sensitive or unproofed objects and that system reliability is a critical determinant of risk (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, 2019).

Complementing this approach, EN 15757 emphasizes the role of relative-humidity-driven mechanical stress in organic hygroscopic materials, including wood, paper, textiles, and composite objects. Rather than prescribing universal setpoints, the standard focuses on limiting damaging fluctuations and recognizes the significance of historical acclimatization, supporting climate ranges tailored to object behavior and long-term environmental trends (European Committee for Standardization, 2010). ISO 11799 extends preventive conservation logic to documentary heritage by highlighting the escalation of microbiological risk above approximately 60% relative humidity and increased material brittleness at low humidity levels, reinforcing the need to avoid both prolonged damp conditions and excessive drying (International Organization for Standardization, 2015).

Risk Management: From Hazard Lists to Defined Responsibilities

Risk management becomes operational only when it translates identified hazards into clearly defined responsibilities, decision authority, and escalation timelines. The ABC method conceptualizes risk management as a cyclical process and places strong emphasis on integrating emergency preparedness with other institutional risk programs, while maintaining a unifying objective: achieving the best possible preservation of heritage value within available resources (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2025).

Similarly, the ICCROM guide highlights risk management as a planning tool for navigating inherent dilemmas, such as preservation versus access and preservation versus environmental sustainability. By structuring decisions around likelihood, consequence, and mitigation feasibility, risk management enables transparent and defensible prioritization rather than ad hoc responses (ICCROM, 2016).



Fire Protection and Emergency Preparedness

Literature on fire protection and emergency preparedness consistently emphasizes that effective collection protection must coexist with life-safety requirements and institutional continuity. NFPA 909 (2021 edition) outlines a comprehensive protection program for culturally significant properties that integrates fire prevention, fire-protection system management, security, emergency preparedness, and the inspection, testing, and maintenance of protection systems. Recent revisions expand discussion of wet collections and vulnerability criteria, reinforcing the need for tailored emergency planning that accounts for material-specific risks and operational realities (National Fire Protection Association, 2021).

Table 2. Risk management steps and responsible roles (practice-oriented matrix).

Risk management step	Purpose in collection care	Typical responsible roles (example)	Key outputs / documentation
Establish context (scope, values, constraints)	Define what “loss” means (value, significance), time horizon, legal/ethical constraints, and operational limits	Director/Executive leadership; Head of Collections; Conservation lead; Facilities manager	Risk scope statement; collection significance/value articulation; policy constraints (e.g., access obligations)
Identify risks (agents of deterioration)	Systematically list threats: environmental, physical, security, documentation, and building hazards	Collections manager/registrar; Preventive conservator; Security; Facilities	Risk register mapped to “agents of deterioration”; asset inventory linkages
Analyze risks (likelihood × consequence)	Quantify or rank risks to prioritize resources; include uncertainty and underlying causes	Preventive conservator; Data/monitoring lead; Facilities engineer; Security	Risk analysis worksheets; environmental trend analysis; failure mode hypotheses
Evaluate and prioritize	Decide which risks must be treated first and what trade-offs are acceptable	Cross-functional risk committee (collections + facilities + security + leadership)	Prioritized mitigation plan; accepted-risk statements; budget/sequence plan
Treat risks (mitigation)	Implement preventive measures (building, HVAC, storage, handling, security, documentation)	Facilities; Conservation; Collections; Security; IT (re: data integrity)	Work orders; revised protocols; training records; updated storage plans
Emergency preparedness and response	Prepare for and respond to rare catastrophic events; triage, salvage, recovery	Emergency coordinator; Collections response team; Security; Facilities; external responders/insurers	Emergency plan; response kits; salvage priorities; post-incident report
Monitor, review, and communicate (continuous)	Ensure mitigation is effective; revise protocols; report to governance	Monitoring/data lead; Conservator; Facilities; Leadership	KPI dashboards; periodic audits; incident/action log; annual review

Anchoring Sources and Integrative Logic



Across the reviewed corpus, three sources function as conceptual anchors for protocol design: the “ten agents of deterioration” framework, which structures threat identification and prioritization; the ABC risk cycle, which operationalizes integrated risk management through iterative assessment and treatment; and NFPA 909, which extends collection care into comprehensive programs for security, fire protection, and emergency preparedness in cultural resource properties (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2025; ICCROM, 2016; National Fire Protection Association, 2021).

4.5 Sustainability and Climate Change: Operational Implications for Protocols

Sustainability has become inseparable from collection care, as energy consumption, carbon-reduction policies, and climate resilience increasingly shape feasible operating regimes for museums. Sector guidance emphasizes that climate impact assessment and the organizational integration of sustainability objectives are now practical necessities rather than optional enhancements. Collaborative, tool-based approaches are highlighted as essential to translating climate ambitions into operational change (Network of European Museum Organisations, 2023).

Peer-reviewed research reinforces that energy performance in museums must be evaluated in direct relation to collection preservation requirements and visitor comfort, and that environmental standards developed in one climate region may not be directly transferable to others. Lucchi (2024) proposes energy performance indicators tailored to air-conditioned museums in tropical climates and underscores the need to balance heritage preservation with energy efficiency as part of climate-change mitigation strategies.

Climate change also intensifies indoor environmental risks and increases pressure for resilience planning. Empirical risk analysis demonstrates that climate-driven temperature and relative humidity fluctuations, combined with pollution pressures, can accelerate degradation processes and raise conservation costs. Case-study evidence shows that these drivers necessitate preventive conservation plans adapted to local conditions and institutional resources, rather than reliance on generic targets (Elnaggar et al., 2024). Broader heritage-risk scholarship similarly advocates for systematic climate-risk assessment frameworks aligned with international risk concepts—hazard, exposure, and vulnerability—to improve comparability, prioritization, and actionability (Dimabayao et al., 2025).

4.6 Ethical Considerations: Provenance, Repatriation, and Access versus Preservation

Ethical governance fundamentally shapes what collection management must protect and why. The ICOM Code of Ethics requires rigorous provenance research and due diligence prior to acquisition, explicitly warning that evidence of lawful ownership does not necessarily constitute valid title. Stewardship is framed as encompassing documentation, accountability, and public accessibility, rather than physical care alone (International Council of Museums, 2017). The Code further directs



museums to interpret ethical responsibilities in light of international legal instruments, including the 1970 UNESCO Convention on illicit import, export, and transfer of cultural property (UNESCO, 1970).

These ethical considerations have direct operational consequences. Risk-based decisions frequently involve trade-offs between access (exhibitions, teaching use, loans) and preservation constraints, particularly under climate-control limitations and sustainability targets. Risk management guidance explicitly acknowledges such dilemmas—between preservation and access, and between preservation and environmental sustainability—and emphasizes that protocols should include transparent criteria for acceptable risk, thorough documentation of decisions, and structured stakeholder consultation to maintain legitimacy and accountability (ICCRUM, 2016).

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are formulated as actionable, protocol-level practices applicable to museums of varying size and geography. They assume a mixed-collection institution with both storage and display spaces and should be adapted using local climate data, building performance characteristics, and collection vulnerability assessments.

5.1 Establish a Tiered, Risk-Based Climate Control Policy

Museums should explicitly select an environmental type of control based on collection sensitivity, acclimatization history, and the reliability of building systems, rather than defaulting to the narrowest achievable control band. ASHRAE guidance recognizes multiple control types (AA–D) and provides outer limits, seasonal adjustments, and short-term fluctuation allowances to support such tiering. It further clarifies that highly stringent control is justified primarily for very sensitive, unproofed objects (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, 2019).

Where climate-induced mechanical damage to organic hygroscopic materials is a principal concern—particularly in historic interiors and mixed collections—EN 15757 should inform protocol design. Its emphasis on strain–stress cycles and acclimatization supports approaches that prioritize stable trends and gradual adjustments over fixed point setpoints (European Committee for Standardization, 2010).

5.2 Treat Monitoring as a Governance and Workflow Function

Environmental monitoring should be implemented as a cross-departmental governance function rather than a purely technical add-on. A robust monitoring program includes defined sensor placement strategies, calibration schedules, data-access rules, alert thresholds, and an incident or action log. Institutional guidance emphasizes automated and integrated monitoring systems and



the accessibility of data to all stakeholders, reinforcing the role of monitoring as shared infrastructure (Smithsonian Institution, 2016).

Museums should formalize escalation protocols for environmental excursions—for example, immediate notification of facilities staff, timely involvement of conservation personnel for sustained deviations, and documented root-cause analysis and corrective action within defined timeframes—aligned with the “monitor and review” principle of risk management cycles (ICCRUM, 2016).

5.3 Build Risk Management Capacity through Integrated Planning

Institutions are advised to maintain a standing, cross-functional collection care and risk group comprising collections, conservation, facilities, security, and leadership. This group should regularly review risk registers, climate performance data, near-miss incidents, and mitigation progress. Integrated risk management, as articulated in the ABC method, enables coordinated decision-making across organizational risk systems and improves both efficiency and credibility (Canadian Conservation Institute, 2025).

Emergency preparedness should be embedded within this integrated risk framework. NFPA 909 outlines comprehensive programs encompassing fire prevention, security, emergency response, and protection-system maintenance, indicating that basic emergency plans should be developed into tested, trained, and maintained operational programs (National Fire Protection Association, 2021).

5.4 Embed Sustainability and Climate Adaptation into Collection Care Protocols

Museums should explicitly link environmental targets to energy-performance objectives and climate-resilience planning. Sector guidance frames climate protection as requiring practical tools, institutional integration, and collaboration, while peer-reviewed research emphasizes balancing energy reduction with preservation outcomes and recognizing the limited transferability of standards across climates (Lucchi, 2024; Network of European Museum Organisations, 2023).

Given the increasing frequency and intensity of climate extremes, protocols should incorporate scenario-based planning for heatwaves, flooding, and prolonged high humidity. Region-specific adaptation measures and clearly defined triggers for enhanced monitoring and emergency readiness are essential. Empirical risk analyses support this approach by linking environmental fluctuations and pollution pressures directly to preventive conservation planning needs (Elnaggar et al., 2024).

5.5 Sample Climate Control Protocol Checklist

A concise internal checklist can translate standards-based climate logic into daily practice by aligning environmental targets (ASHRAE, EN, ISO) with risk-management workflows. Such a



checklist should cover threat identification, target selection, monitoring parameters, response thresholds, documentation requirements, and review cycles, forming the basis of a practical standard operating procedure adaptable to institutional context.

Table 3. Sample climate control protocol checklist (adaptable SOP template).

Step	Checklist item	Responsibility (example)	Frequency	Evidence/record
1	Define collection zones and material vulnerability (organic, paper/textile, metals, mixed)	Conservator Collections manager	+ Annual; update after major acquisitions	Zone map; vulnerability notes
2	Document climate history (baseline trends, seasonal patterns, known excursions)	Monitoring lead Facilities	+ Initial + quarterly review	Baseline report; trend graphs
3	Select control type and targets (e.g., ASHRAE A1/A2/B) consistent with building capability	Facilities Conservator Leadership	+ Annual or after renovation	Signed climate policy; setpoint document
4	Establish sensor plan (placement, redundancy, calibration schedule)	Facilities + Monitoring lead	Continuous; calibration per schedule	Sensor register; calibration logs
5	Set alarm thresholds and response times (T, RH, dew point/condensation risk; mold-risk thresholds)	Conservator Facilities	+ Annual; validate quarterly	Alarm matrix; contact list
6	Implement response procedures for excursions (triage, root-cause check, corrective action, documentation)	Facilities (first response) Conservator (impact assessment)	Per event +	Incident/action log; corrective work order
7	Review data and risks (monthly quick review; quarterly deep review; annual audit)	Cross-functional team	Monthly/Quarterly/Annual	Meeting minutes; KPI dashboard
8	Validate against collection outcomes (condition reports; targeted inspections after excursions)	Conservation Registrar	+ Quarterly; after incidents	Condition checks; treatment logs
9	Update protocol for sustainability and resilience (energy benchmarking, seasonal strategy, climate adaptation triggers)	Leadership + Facilities + Conservation	Annual	Updated SOP; resilience addendum
10	Training and drills (environmental excursions, flooding/wet collections, fire response coordination)	Emergency coordinator Department leads	+ Semiannual/Annual	Training attendance; drill reports

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that collection management in museums is most resilient when conservation planning, risk management, and climate control are implemented as an integrated governance system, rather than as parallel or purely technical programs. Across international



standards, institutional guidance, and peer-reviewed research, several convergent principles emerge. Climate control is most effective when it is risk-based and collection-specific, rather than automatically optimized for maximum tightness. Monitoring systems must be designed around data-to-action workflows, ensuring timely escalation and access for all relevant stakeholders, while risk management frameworks should explicitly coordinate preventive conservation with emergency preparedness, security, and documentation practices (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, 2019; Canadian Conservation Institute, 2025; ICCROM, 2016).

Climate change and sustainability pressures further intensify the need for adaptive protocols. Energy consumption and carbon-reduction objectives increasingly constrain feasible operating regimes, requiring institutions to balance environmental performance with collection vulnerability. At the same time, the growing frequency of extreme events—such as heatwaves, flooding, and prolonged humidity excursions—demands scenario-based preparedness and clearly defined response thresholds. Empirical museum and heritage science research confirms that fluctuating environmental conditions and pollutant pressures can generate measurable conservation risks and long-term costs, reinforcing the value of customized preventive conservation plans grounded in monitoring evidence and institutional resource realities (Dimabayao et al., 2025; Elnaggar et al., 2024; Lucchi, 2024).

From an ethical perspective, collection management protocols must extend beyond physical preservation to include provenance due diligence, legal compliance, and transparent decision-making regarding access versus preservation. The ICOM Code of Ethics and the 1970 UNESCO Convention together provide a normative framework for responsible acquisition, stewardship, and documentation, ensuring that conservation and risk practices uphold public trust as well as material integrity (International Council of Museums, 2017; UNESCO, 1970).

Limitations

This study is based on an analytical synthesis of standards, authoritative guidance, and selected peer-reviewed literature rather than original empirical monitoring or experimental research. The review is predominantly English-language and does not model the full variability of local climates, building envelopes, or highly specialized collection needs, such as cold storage for film or complex salt-contaminated archaeological metals.

Future Research Directions

Future research should prioritize: (1) comparative field evaluations of tiered climate-control strategies across different climate zones; (2) quantitative assessment of energy–preservation trade-offs using shared performance metrics; (3) validation of low-cost sensing, analytics, and decision-



support workflows suitable for under-resourced museums; and (4) systematic integration of climate-adaptation risk assessments into routine collections governance and long-term budgeting.

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Differentiating Criminal Responsibility in Offenses Against Life and Health: Problems of Qualification and Complicity

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Keywords	Abstract
Criminal liability differentiation Crimes against life and health Complicity and co- perpetration Special subject of crime	Crimes against life and health represent the most socially dangerous category of offenses in criminal law, as they directly affect the fundamental and irreplaceable value of human existence. Despite the priority accorded to the protection of life, practical and doctrinal difficulties continue to arise in the differentiation of criminal liability for such crimes, particularly in cases involving complicity and special subjects. This article examines the problems of differentiating liability for crimes against life and health through the analysis of the objective element of the offense, the forms of perpetration, and the legal status of participants involved in criminal activity. Special attention is paid to issues of co-perpetration, instigation, and aiding, as well as to crimes committed by special subjects, including the intentional killing of a newborn by the mother. The study also addresses contemporary challenges related to surrogate motherhood and the determination of criminal liability in the context of modern medical technologies. Based on an analysis of criminal legislation, legal doctrine, and judicial practice, the article identifies gaps and inconsistencies in the qualification of participants' actions. The findings emphasize the importance of a differentiated approach to criminal liability as a means of ensuring justice, legal certainty, and the correct application of criminal law norms.

1. Introduction

Human life and health constitute the highest social values protected by criminal law. The right to life is universally recognized as fundamental, absolute, and non-derogable, forming the cornerstone of both national legal systems and international human rights law. Despite this

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elevated status, statistical data demonstrate that a considerable number of individuals worldwide continue to suffer violent death or serious bodily harm as a result of criminal acts.

Crimes against life and health occupy a special place within the system of criminal offenses due to the severity and irreversibility of their consequences. Unlike other categories of crimes, the harm caused by such offenses is often permanent and cannot be fully compensated or remedied. This circumstance explains the heightened social danger attributed to these acts and the strict legal regulation of liability for their commission.

At the same time, judicial and investigative practice reveals persistent difficulties in the differentiation of criminal liability for crimes against life and health, particularly in cases involving multiple participants, special subjects, and various forms of complicity. An incorrect qualification of participants' actions may lead to unjust outcomes and undermine the principle of legality. The purpose of this study is to analyze the problems of differentiating criminal liability for crimes against life and health and to identify approaches that ensure fair and consistent application of criminal law norms.

2. Objective Element of Crimes Against Life and Health

2.1. Concept of the Objective Element

The objective element of a crime reflects the external manifestation of criminal behavior and includes a socially dangerous act, its harmful consequences, and the causal link between them. In crimes against life and health, the objective element plays a decisive role, as liability arises only when a person's conduct results in death or bodily harm or creates a real threat of such consequences.

A necessary condition for criminal liability is the existence of a causal relationship between the act committed and the socially dangerous result. The absence of such a link excludes criminal responsibility for the completed offense. In this category of crimes, the objective element is often characterized by the systematic or continuous nature of criminal behavior, which forms the mechanism through which the harm is inflicted.

2.2. Objective Element in Intentional Homicide

An analysis of Article 120.1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan demonstrates that intentional homicide is expressed in the unlawful deprivation of another person's life. The decisive feature of the objective element in this offense is the act itself, which directly leads to death.

The motives for committing intentional homicide may vary and include personal hostility, jealousy, revenge, or material interest. However, motive does not affect the existence of the objective element and, as a rule, does not influence the legal qualification of the act unless



expressly provided by law. The key criterion remains the causal connection between the perpetrator's conduct and the resulting death.

2.3. Distinction Between Perpetration and Aiding

A correct distinction between perpetration and aiding is essential for the proper differentiation of criminal liability. Perpetration presupposes the direct execution of actions that form the objective element of the crime and cause the socially dangerous result. In contrast, auxiliary actions that facilitate the commission of the offense but do not directly result in death should be qualified as aiding.

For example, acts such as restraining a victim's hands or feet, providing assistance at the scene without directly causing death, or leaving the scene after facilitating the crime do not constitute perpetration. Such conduct should be assessed as aiding participation rather than direct execution of the offense.

3. Forms of Perpetration and Co-Perpetration

3.1. Legal Definition of Perpetrators

Article 32.2 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan recognizes three categories of perpetrators: persons who directly commit the criminal act, persons who jointly participate in its execution as co-perpetrators, and persons who act as indirect perpetrators. Each of these forms reflects a different degree and manner of participation in the commission of the offense.

Direct perpetrators personally perform the actions that constitute the objective element of the crime. Indirect perpetrators realize the criminal intent through other persons, while co-perpetrators jointly execute the act based on a shared intent.

3.2. Co-Perpetration in Crimes Against Life and Health

Co-perpetration in crimes against life and health is characterized by the joint execution of objective elements by two or more persons acting in coordination. In such cases, the participation of organizers, instigators, or accomplices may accompany the actions of co-perpetrators, forming a complex structure of complicity.

The recognition of joint actions as co-perpetration has a significant impact on the legal qualification of the offense and the determination of individual criminal liability. Failure to properly distinguish between co-perpetration and other forms of participation may lead to incorrect sentencing and violations of the principle of justice.

4. Complicity in Crimes with a Special Subject

4.1. General and Special Subjects of Crime



Criminal liability presupposes the existence of a subject of crime who possesses the legal characteristics required by criminal law. Alongside the general subject of crime, legislation also recognizes offenses that may be committed only by a special subject, that is, a person endowed with additional legal, social, or biological characteristics specified in the disposition of a criminal law norm.

Crimes against life and health frequently involve special subjects, which creates certain difficulties in the qualification of acts committed with the participation of several persons. In such cases, the determination of criminal liability depends not only on the objective element of the offense but also on whether the participant possesses the characteristics required of the special subject. Failure to correctly identify the subject of the crime may result in incorrect legal qualification and unjust outcomes.

4.2. Application of Article 33.4 of the Criminal Code

Article 33.4 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan regulates cases of mixed participation, where a crime involving a special subject is committed jointly by persons who possess special subject characteristics and by those who qualify only as general subjects. According to this provision, persons who do not meet the criteria of the special subject may bear criminal liability under general rules of complicity.

However, judicial and investigative practice demonstrates that the application of Article 33.4 often leads to difficulties in the differentiation of liability. In particular, it becomes problematic to correctly qualify the actions of persons who directly participate in the commission of the act but formally lack the characteristics of the special subject. For this reason, some scholars have criticized this provision and proposed its exclusion or revision, arguing that it creates artificial barriers to fair qualification and undermines the principle of individual responsibility.

5. Intentional Killing of a Newborn by the Mother

5.1. Legal Characteristics of the Offense

The intentional killing of a newborn child by the mother constitutes a specific crime against life characterized by a special subject. Under Article 121 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, only the mother of the newborn child may be recognized as the perpetrator of this offense. The special legal status of the mother is justified by her physiological and psychological condition during childbirth and the immediate postnatal period.

This offense differs from general forms of intentional homicide both in its subject and in the legal assessment of the act, which necessitates a differentiated approach to criminal liability.

5.2. Variants of Complicity



In practice, the intentional killing of a newborn by the mother may involve various forms of complicity. Three principal variants may be identified. First, the mother may commit the act jointly with other persons who directly participate in depriving the newborn of life. Second, other persons may participate as instigators, organizers, or accomplices, while the mother acts as the direct perpetrator. Third, the mother may not act as the perpetrator but instead assume the role of organizer, instigator, or accomplice, while other persons carry out the act.

Each of these variants requires an individualized assessment of the participants' actions and their legal qualification.

5.3. Qualification According to Legal Doctrine

Legal doctrine supports a differentiated approach to the qualification of complicity in cases of intentional killing of a newborn by the mother. If the mother commits the act jointly with others, her actions are qualified under Article 121, while the actions of other participants are qualified under the relevant aggravated provisions of Article 120 in conjunction with Article 32 of the Criminal Code. Where persons who are not subjects of the offense participate as instigators or accomplices, their liability arises under Articles 32 and 120, while the mother's actions remain qualified under Article 121. If the mother does not directly commit the act, her liability is determined under Article 32 in conjunction with Article 120.

6. Surrogate Motherhood and Criminal Liability

6.1. Impact of Modern Medical Technologies

The development of modern medical technologies, particularly extracorporeal fertilization, has significantly influenced traditional legal concepts of motherhood and parenthood. Surrogate motherhood enables women who are unable to carry a pregnancy to become biological parents through the participation of another woman who carries and gives birth to the child.

Despite the biological connection between the genetic parents and the child, the surrogate mother experiences the physiological and psychological processes associated with pregnancy and childbirth, which is of crucial importance for criminal law qualification.

6.2. Determination of the Subject of the Crime

From the perspective of criminal law, the surrogate mother who carries and gives birth to the child is recognized as the subject of the offense under Article 121 of the Criminal Code. The biological mother, who did not carry the pregnancy and did not undergo childbirth-related suffering, does not possess the characteristics required of the special subject and therefore cannot be held criminally liable under this provision.

The determination of criminal liability in such cases must be based on physiological and psychological criteria rather than purely biological parenthood. This approach ensures legal



certainty and corresponds to the protective purpose of criminal law in crimes against life and health.

7. Organizer and Instigator in Crimes Against Life and Health

7.1. Organizer of the Crime

Article 32.3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan identifies four alternative forms of organization: organizing the commission of a crime, directing its execution, establishing an organized group or criminal association, and leading such a group. In crimes against life and health, the organizer often plays a decisive role by coordinating participants and ensuring the realization of criminal intent.

Organizational activity may occur at both the preparation and execution stages of the crime and is always characterized by direct intent. In some cases, the organizer may simultaneously act as a direct perpetrator, which further complicates the differentiation of criminal liability.

7.2. Instigation as a Form of Complicity

Instigation constitutes an intellectual form of complicity and is regulated by Article 32.4 of the Criminal Code. It involves inducing another person to commit a crime through persuasion, threats, transactions, deception, or other similar methods.

Depending on their nature, methods of instigation may be classified into persuasion and coercion. Regardless of the method used, instigation presupposes direct intent, while the motives of the instigator and the perpetrator may differ without affecting legal qualification.

8. Aiding in Crimes Against Life and Health

8.1. Intellectual Aiding

Intellectual aiding includes providing advice, instructions, or information that facilitates the commission of a crime, as well as concealing the perpetrator, instruments, or traces of the offense, or promising such concealment in advance.

8.2. Physical Aiding

Physical aiding may take the form of providing instruments or means for committing the crime, removing obstacles, or concealing the offender or crime-related objects. Concealment may occur both with and without prior agreement, which affects the legal assessment of the act.

8.3. Subjective Element of Aiding

Aiding may be committed with either direct or indirect intent. The motives of the accomplice are legally independent from those of the perpetrator, while criminal liability depends on the outcome of the criminal act and the extent of participation.



9. Special Issues: Suicide and Euthanasia

Incitement to suicide or assistance in its commission is regarded as intentional homicide under criminal law. Where death does not occur, criminal liability arises for attempted intentional homicide. Legal doctrine also considers inducing a person to euthanasia as a form of intentional homicide. In such cases, the motives of the instigator and the perpetrator may differ, but this divergence does not affect the legal qualification of the act.

10. Conclusion

Differentiation of criminal liability for crimes against life and health is essential for ensuring justice and the correct application of criminal law. Incorrect qualification of participants' actions poses a significant risk to legal certainty and individual responsibility. A consistent doctrinal approach and uniform judicial practice are necessary to address these challenges. Differentiated liability serves as an effective legal mechanism for restoring justice and maintaining the protective function of criminal law.

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The Concept of Traditional Aesthetics in Theatre

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Keywords	Abstract
traditional aesthetics theatre performance cultural heritage dramaturgy	<p>The article elaborates the concept of traditional aesthetics in theatre. Traditional aesthetics in theatre constitute foundational systems through which performance communicates cultural values, philosophical ideas, and collective memory. This article examines the concept of traditional aesthetics in theatre by analyzing its theoretical origins, defining characteristics, and continued relevance in contemporary performance practice. Using a qualitative, literature-based methodology, the study draws on classical aesthetic treatises such as Aristotle's Poetics and Bharata Muni's Natyashastra, alongside modern performance scholarship, to explore how traditional theatrical forms structure meaning. The analysis reveals that traditional aesthetics are characterized by codified performance techniques, symbolic and non-realist representation, ritual and mythic foundations, and an integrated relationship between text, movement, music, and space. These elements establish a shared aesthetic language between performers and audiences, enabling theatre to function as a culturally embedded and reflective practice rather than a mere imitation of everyday reality. The discussion further demonstrates that traditional aesthetics continue to inform contemporary theatre through preservation, adaptation, and intercultural experimentation, offering alternative models of creativity grounded in discipline and embodiment. The study concludes that traditional aesthetics remain a vital framework for understanding theatre as an artistic, cultural, and philosophical phenomenon in both historical and modern contexts.</p>

Introduction

Theatre, as one of the oldest forms of artistic expression, has consistently operated within aesthetic systems shaped by cultural, philosophical, and social traditions. Traditional aesthetics in theatre refer to enduring principles of form, beauty, and meaning that govern performance practices within specific historical and cultural contexts. These principles are not arbitrary; rather, they emerge

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from deeply rooted worldviews, ritual practices, and collective experiences that define how theatre is created, performed, and interpreted (Carlson, 1996).

Theatre has long served as a cultural mirror, reflecting the aesthetic values and philosophical assumptions of the societies in which it emerges. Traditional aesthetics in theatre refer to established systems of beauty, form, and meaning that have been transmitted across generations through performance conventions, dramaturgical structures, and actor training methods (Ahmedova, 2025). These aesthetic systems are deeply intertwined with cultural rituals, religious beliefs, and social hierarchies, shaping both the creation and reception of theatrical works.

From ancient Greek tragedy to classical Asian performance traditions, theatrical aesthetics have functioned as structured frameworks that regulate dramaturgy, acting styles, spatial organization, and audience engagement. Aristotle's *Poetics* represents one of the earliest systematic attempts to define theatrical aesthetics in Western thought, emphasizing concepts such as mimesis, catharsis, and structural unity (Aristotle, 1996). Similarly, in the Indian context, Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra* provides a comprehensive aesthetic theory that links performance to emotional experience (*rasa*), codified gesture, and spiritual fulfillment (Bharata Muni, 2001). These foundational texts demonstrate that traditional theatrical aesthetics are inseparable from philosophical inquiry and cultural ideology (Farzaliyeva & Seyidov, 2025).

In contrast to modern and postmodern theatre, which often emphasize innovation, fragmentation, and individual expression, traditional theatrical aesthetics prioritize continuity, formal discipline, and collective meaning. Classical Greek tragedy, Sanskrit drama, Japanese Noh, Chinese opera, and Elizabethan theatre each exemplify distinct traditional aesthetic principles while sharing a reliance on codified performance techniques and symbolic representation.

Traditional aesthetics in theatre are often characterized by stylization rather than realism. Unlike modern naturalistic theatre, which seeks to replicate everyday life, traditional forms prioritize symbolic representation and abstraction. Costumes, masks, gestures, and vocal patterns are employed not to imitate reality directly but to evoke essential truths and emotional states. As Zeami's writings on Noh theatre illustrate, aesthetic value lies in restraint, suggestion, and the cultivation of inner depth rather than outward spectacle (Zeami, 1984). This approach underscores the belief that theatre is a medium for contemplation and transcendence, not merely entertainment.

Another defining feature of traditional theatrical aesthetics is their close association with ritual and sacred practice. Many traditional theatre forms originated in religious ceremonies, seasonal festivals, or communal rites, blurring the boundaries between art, spirituality, and social function. Schechner (2013) argues that performance traditions cannot be fully understood without recognizing their ritual origins, as these roots shape aesthetic choices such as repetition, formalized movement, and audience participation. In this sense, traditional aesthetics operate as cultural memory systems, preserving collective values and cosmological beliefs.



In the context of globalization and contemporary performance, traditional aesthetics face both challenges and renewed interest. While modern and postmodern theatre movements have questioned fixed forms and canonical traditions, practitioners and scholars continue to revisit traditional aesthetics as sources of discipline, authenticity, and alternative modes of expression (Brook, 1968). The tension between preservation and innovation raises critical questions about the relevance of traditional aesthetics in contemporary theatre practice.

This article seeks to explore the concept of traditional aesthetics in theatre by examining its theoretical foundations, defining characteristics, and cultural significance (Sadikhova & Babayev, 2025). By drawing on classical aesthetic theory and modern performance scholarship, the study aims to demonstrate that traditional aesthetics remain a vital framework for understanding theatre not only as an artistic practice but also as a cultural and philosophical phenomenon (Mammadova & Abdullayev, 2025).

The purpose of this article is to examine the concept of traditional aesthetics in theatre, identify its core characteristics, and analyze its significance within both historical and contemporary contexts. By situating traditional aesthetics within broader aesthetic theory and performance studies, this article seeks to demonstrate their enduring relevance in theatrical practice.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research methodology based on textual and comparative analysis of primary and secondary sources related to theatre history, aesthetics, and performance theory. Key classical texts on aesthetics, such as Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra*, are examined alongside modern scholarly interpretations.

The methodological approach includes:

1. **Literature Review:** Analysis of foundational theoretical works on theatre aesthetics and performance traditions.
2. **Comparative Analysis:** Examination of aesthetic principles across selected theatrical traditions to identify shared and divergent features.
3. **Conceptual Synthesis:** Integration of findings into a coherent framework defining traditional theatrical aesthetics.

This method allows for an in-depth exploration of aesthetic concepts without empirical experimentation, which is appropriate given the philosophical and historical nature of the subject.

Results

The analysis of classical theoretical texts and established theatrical traditions reveals that traditional aesthetics in theatre are governed by coherent systems of artistic principles rather than



isolated stylistic choices. These systems shape performance at multiple levels, including dramaturgy, actor training, visual composition, and audience reception. The results are organized into key thematic dimensions that collectively define traditional theatrical aesthetics.

Codification of Performance Techniques

A central finding of this study is the extent to which traditional theatrical aesthetics depend on codified performance vocabularies. Movement, gesture, posture, vocal modulation, and facial expression are governed by established conventions that are transmitted through rigorous training systems. In classical Indian theatre, the *Natyashastra* outlines detailed classifications of gestures (*mudras*), bodily movements (*angas*), and emotional expressions (*bhavas*), creating a standardized aesthetic language shared by performers and audiences (Bharata Muni, 2001). Similarly, Japanese Noh theatre employs fixed movement patterns (*kata*) that prioritize precision and continuity over individual improvisation (Zeami, 1984).

This codification serves both aesthetic and pedagogical functions. It ensures stylistic coherence within a tradition while enabling the preservation of performance knowledge across generations. The emphasis on discipline and repetition reinforces the notion that aesthetic mastery in traditional theatre is achieved through long-term embodied practice rather than spontaneous creativity.

Emphasis on Symbolism and Non-Realism

The findings further indicate that traditional theatrical aesthetics favor symbolic and stylized modes of representation. Physical objects, costumes, and movements are imbued with layered meanings that extend beyond their literal appearance (Sadikhova, 2025). In Chinese opera, for instance, a whip may signify a horse, while specific color schemes in makeup denote moral qualities such as loyalty, treachery, or bravery. This reliance on symbolism reduces the need for elaborate scenery and shifts aesthetic focus toward interpretive engagement (Gulkhara & Kamran, 2025).

Unlike naturalistic theatre, which seeks visual and psychological realism, traditional aesthetics prioritize abstraction and suggestion. This approach aligns with broader philosophical perspectives that view theatre as a medium for expressing universal truths rather than reproducing everyday life. As a result, meaning emerges through convention and cultural literacy rather than illusionistic representation.

Centrality of Ritual and Myth

Another significant result is the foundational role of ritual and myth in shaping traditional theatrical aesthetics. Many performance forms originated as extensions of religious or communal rites, and their aesthetic structures retain ceremonial qualities. Repetition, formalized movement,



and rhythmic patterns reflect ritual practices designed to invoke spiritual presence or communal memory. Greek tragedy, for example, evolved from Dionysian rituals and maintained a choral structure that emphasized collective voice and moral reflection (Schechner, 2013).

This ritual dimension influences aesthetic evaluation within traditional theatre. Performances are often judged not solely on originality or emotional intensity but on fidelity to form, spiritual resonance, and the performer's ability to embody mythic or archetypal roles. Theatre, in this context, functions as a liminal space where performers and audiences engage with metaphysical or ethical concerns.

Aesthetic Integration of Music, Movement, and Text

The results also highlight the integrative nature of traditional theatrical aesthetics. Rather than separating dramatic text from physical and musical elements, traditional theatre treats performance as a holistic synthesis. Music, rhythm, gesture, and speech operate interdependently to produce aesthetic meaning (Babayev, 2025). In forms such as Kathakali and Noh, musical accompaniment dictates pacing and emotional tone, while movement and vocalization are inseparable from rhythmic structure.

This integration reinforces the aesthetic unity of traditional theatre and distinguishes it from text-dominated modern drama (Ahmedova, 2023). The performer's body becomes a central site of meaning-making, embodying narrative, emotion, and symbolism simultaneously.

Structured Audience Engagement

Traditional aesthetics also shape the relationship between performance and spectatorship. The audience is assumed to possess cultural knowledge that enables interpretation of symbolic gestures and formal conventions (Babayev et al, 2025). Emotional engagement is often mediated through aesthetic distance rather than direct identification. In Noh theatre, for instance, restrained expression and slow pacing encourage contemplation and introspection rather than immediate emotional release (Zeami, 1984).

This structured mode of audience engagement suggests that traditional aesthetics prioritize collective understanding over individual emotional response. The aesthetic experience is thus both intellectual and affective, grounded in shared cultural frameworks.

Continuity and Transmission of Aesthetic Values

Finally, the results indicate that traditional theatrical aesthetics function as mechanisms for cultural continuity. Through apprenticeship models, oral transmission, and embodied practice, aesthetic



values are preserved and reinforced. This continuity lends traditional theatre its authority and authenticity but also introduces resistance to change. While adaptation does occur, it is typically gradual and negotiated within the boundaries of established aesthetic norms.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that traditional aesthetics in theatre constitute comprehensive systems of artistic meaning rather than static or purely historical conventions. The codification, symbolism, ritual foundations, and integrated performance structures identified in the Results section suggest that traditional aesthetics operate as cultural frameworks that shape both artistic production and audience reception. This discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing aesthetic theory and contemporary theatre practice.

The strong emphasis on codification challenges modern assumptions that creativity in theatre must be rooted in spontaneity or individual expression. In traditional theatre, creativity emerges through disciplined engagement with established forms. As Grotowski (2002) argues, rigorous training and constraint can function as catalysts for artistic depth rather than limitations. Traditional aesthetics thus redefine creativity as refinement, mastery, and spiritual or emotional precision within predetermined structures. This perspective complicates dominant Western narratives that equate artistic innovation with constant formal rupture (Sadikhova & Babayev, 2025).

The symbolic and non-realist orientation of traditional aesthetics further highlights an alternative mode of theatrical meaning-making. Rather than producing illusionistic reality, traditional theatre relies on shared conventions that activate the audience's interpretive role. This aligns with semiotic approaches to performance, which view theatre as a system of signs governed by culturally specific codes (Carlson, 1996). The aesthetic experience, therefore, depends not only on what is presented on stage but on the audience's cultural literacy. This finding underscores the communal nature of traditional aesthetics and explains why such forms often resist direct transplantation into unfamiliar cultural contexts.

The ritual and mythic foundations identified in the Results section reinforce the view of theatre as a liminal practice situated between art and social ceremony. Schechner's (2013) theory of performance as restored behavior provides a useful lens for understanding how traditional aesthetics sustain cultural memory through repetition and reenactment. In this framework, aesthetic value is inseparable from ethical and spiritual dimensions. Theatre becomes a means of reaffirming collective identity and cosmological order, particularly in societies where performance is closely tied to religious or seasonal cycles.

At the same time, the persistence of ritualized aesthetics raises critical questions about adaptability and relevance in contemporary contexts. While traditional aesthetics offer depth and continuity, their reliance on fixed forms can create tension when addressing modern social issues or diverse audiences (Gulkhara & Farzaliyeva, 2025). However, as Brook (1968) suggests, traditional forms



need not be abandoned to remain relevant; rather, they can be reactivated through thoughtful reinterpretation. Contemporary directors often draw on traditional aesthetics to counteract the excesses of technological spectacle and re-center the actor's body as the primary expressive medium.

The integrative nature of traditional theatrical aesthetics—where text, movement, music, and rhythm form a unified whole—also has significant implications for modern performance training. Contemporary theatre education, particularly in Western contexts, often prioritizes textual analysis over embodied practice. The findings suggest that traditional aesthetics offer alternative pedagogical models that emphasize corporeal knowledge, musicality, and spatial awareness. Such approaches have influenced intercultural and physical theatre movements, including the work of Grotowski and later practitioners seeking holistic performance methodologies (Grotowski, 2002).

Finally, the role of the audience in traditional aesthetics invites reconsideration of spectatorship in contemporary theatre. Traditional forms often maintain aesthetic distance, encouraging reflection rather than emotional immersion. This contrasts with modern psychological realism but aligns with Brechtian notions of critical spectatorship, albeit from a different philosophical foundation. Traditional aesthetics thus provide historical evidence that theatre has long employed strategies of distancing to provoke intellectual and ethical engagement.

In summary, the discussion indicates that traditional aesthetics in theatre remain conceptually and practically relevant. Rather than representing obsolete artistic modes, they offer enduring frameworks for understanding performance as a disciplined, symbolic, and culturally embedded practice. Engaging critically with traditional aesthetics enables contemporary theatre practitioners and scholars to expand aesthetic possibilities while maintaining a dialogue with cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Traditional aesthetics in theatre represent a vital dimension of performance history and theory, characterized by codification, symbolism, ritual significance, and culturally specific audience engagement. While often contrasted with modern theatrical innovations, traditional aesthetic systems remain influential and relevant, providing valuable insights into the relationship between art, culture, and meaning.

By examining traditional aesthetics through a comparative and theoretical lens, this article underscores their importance not only as historical artifacts but as living practices that continue to shape contemporary theatrical expression. Preserving and critically engaging with these aesthetics contributes to a deeper understanding of theatre as a cultural and philosophical phenomenon. Through codified techniques, non-realist representation, and ritualized structures, traditional theatre communicates meaning in ways that transcend literal imitation and emphasize shared cultural understanding. The discussion highlights that such aesthetics continue to influence



contemporary theatre by offering alternative models of creativity rooted in discipline, embodiment, and symbolic depth.

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Geometric Ornamentation in Chalcolithic Pottery from Nakhchivan

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Keywords	Abstract
Chalcolithic ceramics geometric patterns regional interaction visual system	Geometric patterns on Chalcolithic ceramics from the Nakhchivan region are a stable visual component of local material culture. Despite a limited range of motifs, these patterns show strong compositional regularity, technical consistency, and typological continuity. Typological analysis indicates that the decorative elements form a coherent visual system grounded in standardised forms and production practices. From a cognitive perspective, this stability may be linked to repetitive gestures and motor routines in ceramic manufacture, supporting the stabilization of form and visual order. Simple, rhythmic geometric configurations further offer advantages for motor control and attentional organisation. Regional comparisons suggest that Nakhchivan's ceramic ornamentation developed in close interaction with the Urmia basin and the wider Near Eastern cultural sphere. Painted assemblages from Nakhchivan Tepe show affinities with the Dalma Tepe tradition, while material from Bülövqaya indicates connections with Halaf and Ubaid contexts. Overall, Chalcolithic ceramic ornamentation in Nakhchivan reflects processes shaped by both local continuity and interregional interaction.

Introduction

The Chalcolithic period in the Nakhchivan region is characterised by the intensive development of material culture, particularly in ceramic production. Among the most persistent and widely distributed features of Chalcolithic ceramics are geometric decorative patterns, which show notable continuity and standardisation over extended periods. The sustained reproduction of these patterns suggests they are unlikely to represent arbitrary ornamental choices. Instead, they can be understood as outcomes of recurrent behavioural routines and structured modes of engagement embedded in ceramic production practices (Bakhshaliyev, 2024, p. 56). From this perspective, Chalcolithic ceramics may be approached not only as indicators of technological development but

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also as material contexts through which shifts in cognitive organisation become archaeologically visible. Within traditional archaeological research, decorative patterns on ceramics have primarily been treated as typological and chronological markers. Such approaches have proven instrumental in identifying regional parallels and reconstructing networks of cultural interaction (Bakhshaliyev et al., 2018, pp. 18, 21; Bakhshaliyev, 2018, p. 97; Bakhshaliyev et al., 2025, p. 13), thereby contributing to broader reconstructions of Chalcolithic cultural trajectories. However, a strictly typological framework remains limited in its capacity to account for the relationships between decorative practices, production processes, embodied behaviour, and the cognitive mechanisms that underlie them (Malafouris & Renfrew, 2008, p. 382).

Recent studies by Vali Bakhshaliyev have examined Chalcolithic settlement patterns in Nakhchivan, primarily through analyses of material culture and habitation characteristics (Bakhshaliyev, 2022, pp. 53-150). This line of research foregrounds space as a socially constituted domain rather than a purely functional setting. Complementary interpretations further suggest that architectural forms within Chalcolithic settlements emerged through dynamic interactions with ideological frameworks and belief systems (Bakhshaliyev, 2021, p. 172). Taken together, these perspectives create a conceptual opening for interpreting ceramic ornamentation not merely as a descriptive archaeological attribute but as an active component within broader social, cognitive, and symbolic processes. At the same time, the limited availability of contextual data constrains the direct reconstruction of ancient worldviews from spatial and architectural evidence alone. Under such conditions, systems of ornamentation on ceramic vessels acquire particular interpretive significance. Decorative patterns provide one of the most accessible material domains through which symbolic modes of thought, cognitive models, and cosmological conceptions may be approached. Despite this potential, the mental and perceptual dimensions of Chalcolithic ceramic ornamentation in Nakhchivan have not yet been examined systematically.

In contemporary cognitive archaeology, material culture is no longer viewed as a passive outcome of human thought. Instead, sustained engagement with material forms is recognised as constitutive of modes of thinking (Malafouris & Renfrew, 2008, p. 382). From this perspective, material culture actively participates in the formation, stabilization, and transmission of cognitive processes over time (Malafouris, 2009, p. 258; Malafouris, 2010, p. 51). Studies of archaic systems of thought further indicate that repetition and formal order function as key mechanisms through which human communities experience the world as stable and intelligible (Frazer, 1912, p. 28). Recurrent visual forms, particularly within ritualised contexts, contribute to the maintenance of this perceived stability. In this study, geometric patterns observed on Chalcolithic ceramics from Nakhchivan are examined with respect to form, cognition, and perception. Rather than treating these patterns as decorative or purely symbolic elements, the analysis seeks to clarify their role as material means through which cognitive structures are enacted, reinforced, and sustained within Chalcolithic communities.



Typology of Geometric Patterns in Chalcolithic Ceramics

The typological analysis of geometric patterns on Chalcolithic ceramics from the Nakhchivan region is grounded in considerations of form, compositional organisation, and application technique. Rather than exhibiting extensive formal variability, the decorative repertoire of Chalcolithic ceramics from Nakhchivan is characterised by the recurrent use of a limited set of motifs, combined with a high degree of compositional regularity. This consistency suggests that geometric patterns should not be understood as arbitrary decorative additions but rather as elements of a stable, socially maintained visual tradition.

Geometric motifs applied to ceramic surfaces can be broadly classified as simple or composite. Simple motifs consist primarily of parallel lines, zigzag bands, and wavy linear elements. Composite motifs include superimposed triangles, contiguous rhomboid forms, grid-like arrangements, and intersecting linear structures. These motifs were rarely applied as isolated visual units. Instead, they were organized into continuous, repetitive sequences, indicating the presence of shared production practices and collectively transmitted decorative conventions (Baxşəliyev, 2018, p. 96).

From a typological perspective, the spatial distribution of geometric ornamentation on ceramic vessels is also significant. In most cases, decoration is concentrated along the rim and the upper portion of the vessel body, areas that are both visually prominent and readily perceptible during use. Painted vessels from the settlements of Nakhchivantepe (fig. 1) and Bülövqaya (fig.2) show that geometric patterns were arranged in distinct compositional schemes across different vessel zones. This variation suggests that decorative organisation did not arise from individual aesthetic preferences but followed shared, socially regulated compositional principles (Baxşəliyev & Baxşəliyev, 2023, p. 19). The typology of geometric ornamentation is closely related to ceramic production techniques. In Neolithic examples made from chaff-tempered clay, decorative elements were predominantly executed as broad bands and relatively simple linear combinations. By contrast, vessels produced from untempered clay and fired at higher temperatures during the Chalcolithic period exhibit denser, more rhythmically structured, and more precisely executed ornamental compositions. This developmental pattern points to a direct relationship between advances in ceramic technology and the emergence of increasingly controlled and standardised decorative schemes (Baxşəliyev, 2018, p. 92).



Figure 1: Painted pottery from the Nakhchivantepe.



Regional comparison further situates the geometric repertoire of Nakhchivan Chalcolithic ceramics within a broader cultural horizon. Ceramic assemblages attributed to the Dalma Tepe culture of the Urmia Basin display distinctive typological structures and decorative conventions (Hamlin, 1975, p. 121, Fig. 4), and Nakhchivan ceramics show close affinities with these (Baxşəliyev & Baxşəliyev, 2023, p. 7). In particular, materials from the Bülövqaya settlement are characterised by ornamental compositions featuring net-like triangular arrangements, contiguous rhombi, and intersecting linear elements. Comparable pattern types have also been documented at other Chalcolithic sites in Nakhchivan, as well as in the Urmia Basin and parts of Northern Mesopotamia (Baxşəliyev et al., 2025, p. 19). These similarities are best understood not as evidence of direct formal equivalence or unilinear diffusion, but as the outcome of shared visual strategies that emerged under comparable ecological and social conditions. From this perspective, the typology of geometric patterns in Nakhchivan Chalcolithic ceramics should not be treated merely as a classificatory system based on form. Instead, it constitutes an analytical framework through which ceramic production practices, visual standardisation, and mechanisms of cultural transmission can be examined. The proposed typological organisation thus provides a methodological foundation for the cognitive and neuroarchaeological interpretations developed in the following sections.

Cognitive and Symbolic Functions of Geometric Patterns

Interpretations of geometric patterns on ceramic vessels have generally been approached in archaeological scholarship through two principal theoretical perspectives. The first interprets patterned decoration as a visual medium through which affiliation, interaction, and social differentiation are communicated (Wobst, 1977, pp. 16-17; Wiessner, 1983, p. 256; Hegmon, 1992, p. 518). The second emphasizes the relationship between geometric form, perception, and memory, arguing that such motifs should not be understood as mere ornamentation but as material



expressions of cognitive processes (Renfrew & Zubrow, 1994, p. 187). In contemporary archaeological discourse, these perspectives are no longer treated as mutually exclusive explanatory frameworks. Instead, they are increasingly applied together within the same material contexts, reflecting a broader recognition that the social and cognitive dimensions of material culture are deeply interwoven (Wynn et al., 2024, pp. 485, 503, 1216). Within this integrated perspective, geometric patterns are understood not only as mechanisms of social communication and differentiation but also as material means through which thought is stabilized, reproduced, and transmitted within shared social environments (Malafouris, 2018, p. 755; Overmann & Wynn, 2019, p. 464).

Figure 2: Painted pottery from the Bulovkaya.



The socio-stylistic approach is grounded in classical theories of style, in which decorative patterns serve as media through which social groups articulate identity, affiliation, and difference. Within this framework, Wiessner emphasizes that stylistic choices are not arbitrary but are embedded in social relations and serve as carriers of social information (Wiessner, 1983, p. 268). Hegmon further develops this position by arguing that patterned decoration should not be regarded merely as an aesthetic preference but as an analytical domain through which social processes can be traced archaeologically (Hegmon, 1992, p. 518).

In the Chalcolithic ceramics of Nakhchivan, the repeated appearance of specific geometric motifs across multiple settlements is particularly significant. This repetition suggests that decorative practices were guided less by individual potters' preferences than by shared visual norms and conventions (Baxşəliyev, 2018, p. 95). From a cognitive archaeological perspective informed by Material Engagement Theory, these patterns are not conceived as ornaments designed solely in the mind. Instead, they emerge through sustained bodily action and socially embedded production practices that shape and stabilize modes of thinking.



Within this view of material culture as an active component of cognition, cognition is understood to emerge through the dynamic interaction of brain, body, and material forms, rather than residing exclusively within the brain (Malafouris & Renfrew, 2013, pp. 2-3, 17; Malafouris, 2018, p. 764). Accordingly, the repeated geometric patterns observed on ceramic surfaces should not be treated merely as finished visual outcomes. Instead, they can be understood as material manifestations of cognitive processes that take shape during production and are reinforced through repetition, embodied practice, and behavioural regularity. The repetitive hand movements involved in executing ornamentation contribute to stabilizing production behaviour and transform individual acts into shared visual representations preserved within collective memory. In the Nakhchivan assemblages, technical consistency, a limited range of motifs, and the sequential organisation of compositions closely align with this interpretive framework (Baxşəliyev & Baxşəliyev, 2023, p. 14). In this context, symmetry and repetition play a central role. Washburn conceptualises symmetry not merely as an aesthetic property but as an organising principle of perception, social order, and structured thought (Washburn & Crowe, 2004, p. 304). More recent studies similarly suggest that formally stable, repetitively structured visual forms play a key role in stabilizing cognitive processes, functioning as mechanisms through which knowledge is materially mediated and transmitted with continuity over time (Overmann, 2015, p. 4; Bruner, 2023, p. 18; De Cruze, 2024, pp. 98-99).

The symbolic functions of geometric patterns have been interpreted through several complementary analytical approaches. One emphasizes their role in expressing group identity and mediating social relationships (Wobst, 1977, p. 12; Wiessner, 1983, p. 257). A second associates geometric motifs with ritual behaviour, protective beliefs, and symbolic practices, situating patterned decoration within broader cosmological and ritual frameworks (Hodder, 1982, p. 227; Insoll, 2004, p. 158; David & Kramer, 2001, p. 171). A third perspective treats motifs as formally stabilized markers transmitted within social environments, thereby making specific spatial and temporal contexts recognisable in the archaeological record. Through processes of social transmission, repetition, and standardisation, visual forms acquire diagnostic value while enhancing perceptual differentiation (Sackett, 1977, p. 371; Lewis-Williams, 2002, p. 47).

In the case of Nakhchivan ceramics, the presence of geometric patterns exhibiting broad geographic parallels indicates complex historical processes that cannot be explained solely by direct cultural transmission. Instead, these correspondences are best understood as the outcome of multiple, overlapping mechanisms, including migration, interregional interaction, and local adaptation, which should be regarded as complementary rather than mutually exclusive explanatory models (Baxşəliyev et al., 2025, pp. 19-20). Alternative frameworks have likewise emphasized the circulation of shared visual repertoires through extensive networks of contact, with comparable forms adapted to distinct social and environmental contexts (Childe, 2003, p. 31; Kristiansen, 1998, p. 64). Other approaches have argued for independent emergence, suggesting that similar geometric forms may arise autonomously in different regions under comparable



conditions (Sackett, 1982, p. 73). A more controversial line of interpretation links specific geometric motifs to internally generated visual patterns produced by the human perceptual system. Lewis-Williams and Dowson have proposed that some formal elements may originate from entoptic visual phenomena (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1988, p. 202). This hypothesis has been subject to sustained critique, particularly on methodological grounds, with scholars cautioning against attributing similar formal structures universally to identical cognitive or neurophysiological processes (Dronfield, 1996, p. 379; Bahn, 1997, p. 65). Taken together, these approaches provide a conceptual framework for situating Chalcolithic ceramic ornamentation within broader discussions of cognition, perception, and material practice.

Interpreting Ceramic Ornamentation in a Neuroarchaeological Context

The primary analytical significance of the geometric patterns observed on Chalcolithic ceramics from Nakhchivan lies not in what these motifs explicitly depict, but in why particular forms were selectively maintained and repeatedly reproduced over extended periods of production. Rather than serving as representational images, these patterns draw attention to the processes through which visual forms were stabilized within ceramic-making traditions. Within contemporary archaeological scholarship, this issue has been addressed through a range of interpretive frameworks that differ in their methodological assumptions and explanatory scope.

From a neuroarchaeological perspective, cognition is not understood as a process confined solely to the brain. Instead, it is conceived as a dynamic system that emerges through sustained interaction between bodily movement and the material environment (Malafouris, 2009, p. 255; Malafouris, 2013, p. 3). Within this framework, the geometric patterns applied to ceramic surfaces should not be interpreted as material representations of pre-existing ideas. Instead, they constitute material traces of cognitive habits formed through the repetition of regulated, sequential actions during production.

The execution of ceramic ornamentation requires sustained motor coordination and controlled bodily movement. Repetitive engagement with such patterned actions contributes to the stabilization of behaviour, whereby specific formal configurations are maintained on vessel surfaces as normative visual structures. An explanation grounded in interaction with material culture is therefore more analytically productive in this context. As Malafouris emphasizes, material objects are not merely tools employed by humans but actively participate in shaping cognitive processes (Malafouris, 2013, p. 191). The long-term repetition of identical motifs across ceramic assemblages provides empirical support for this position. In such cases, stability is preserved not in the motif as an abstract visual form, but in the manner of its execution and in the embodied sequences of action through which it is produced.

The typological continuity observed in Chalcolithic ceramics from Nakhchivan can thus be understood as a precise instance of visual stabilization (Baxşəliyev, 2018, p. 93; Baxşəliyev &



Baxşəliyev, 2023, p. 8). From a complementary perspective, cognition is viewed as a distributed phenomenon that emerges through interaction with the surrounding environment. Within this model, knowledge is not localised within individual minds but distributed across people, material objects, and modes of production (Hutchins, 1995, p. 128). Archaeologically, this implies that ceramic ornamentation cannot be interpreted as the product of individual artisans' personal creativity. Instead, these patterns represent the surface manifestations of taught, repeated, and collectively maintained production practices.

Across multiple Chalcolithic settlements in the Nakhchivan region, the same categories of geometric motifs recur with notable consistency. The archaeological record thus indicates the existence of learned and transmitted technological routines embedded within the production process. Within a neuroarchaeological framework, such formal stability is not understood as a simple decorative preference. Instead, ornamentation is interpreted as the outcome of metaplastic processes shaped through long-term engagement with material practices. Repeated and formally simple geometric motifs are acquired through sustained body-object-environment interaction during production. These characteristics reduce cognitive load during learning and execution. While early stages of practice require heightened attention and motor control, repeated engagement gradually leads to behavioural automatization, allowing production to proceed with reduced conscious monitoring. Through this process, technical behaviour becomes standardised and transmissible at a collective level. As emphasized by Malafouris, such stabilization rests on the reciprocal interaction between neural plasticity and the formative role of material culture (Malafouris, 2010, p. 58).

A further dimension concerns social recognition. Stabilized visual forms generate a shared and widely recognizable stylistic framework, within which ceramic decoration functions as a socially legible marker linking material products to specific communities of practice (Wiessner, 1983, p. 257; Hegmon, 1992, p. 518).

At the same time, a cautious position has been articulated within the literature regarding cognitively oriented interpretations. Some scholars emphasize that cognitive processes cannot be directly inferred from archaeological material alone and caution that such approaches risk obscuring cultural variability (Wynn, 1989, p. 5; Killin, 2023, p. 540). Accordingly, within contemporary scholarship, neuroarchaeological interpretations are best understood not as definitive conclusions but as interpretive models grounded in material evidence and constrained by archaeological context.

The interpretive landscape is further complicated by regional interaction spheres involving the Urmia Basin and Northern Mesopotamia. Ceramic assemblages from Nakhchivantepe indicate that painted vessels were embedded within broader Near Eastern ceramic traditions, whereas stamped pottery exhibits stronger affinities with Neolithic traditions of the Karabakh region (Baxşəliyev & Baxşəliyev, 2023, p. 23). Ceramics from Bülövqaya, although broadly contemporary, display



closer ornamental affinities with Halaf and Ubaid traditions than with materials from Nakhchivantepe. These differences are not best explained through models of direct migration. Instead, they are more plausibly understood within a framework of long-term regional interaction, parallel production practices, and shared technological knowledge (Baxşəliyev et al., 2025, pp. 19-21).

Accordingly, the primary significance of geometric ornamentation on Chalcolithic pottery does not lie solely in its capacity to convey specific symbolic meanings. Instead, the critical issue concerns how these forms were learned, how they were repeatedly reproduced, and why they were maintained over time. Recurrent geometric motifs can thus be understood to contribute to the stabilisation of thought within a shared social environment. In the Chalcolithic context of Nakhchivan, ceramic ornamentation may therefore be interpreted as the outcome of dynamic interactions between cognition, embodied behaviour, and material culture.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that the geometric patterns observed on Chalcolithic ceramics from Nakhchivan constitute a structured and cognitively grounded visual system rather than the outcome of arbitrary decorative practice. When examined through an integrated typological, cognitive, and neuroarchaeological framework, these patterns reveal a limited repertoire of forms and motifs combined with a high degree of compositional and procedural stability. Such regularity indicates that geometric ornamentation functioned as a normalized visual system embedded within established traditions of ceramic production and decoration (Baxşəliyev, 2018, p. 94; Baxşəliyev & Baxşəliyev, 2023, p. 13).

From a cognitive perspective, this typological stability cannot be fully explained by aesthetic preference or social convention alone. Instead, the repeated gestures and ordered sequences involved in the production of geometric ornamentation point to its role in shaping and reinforcing habitual modes of cognition. Within this interpretive framework, material culture is not understood merely as an external outcome of thought, but as an active medium through which cognitive processes are formed, stabilized, and reproduced over time (Malafouris, 2013, p. 17; Malafouris, 2018, p. 760). A neuroarchaeological perspective further strengthens this interpretation by situating the production of geometric patterns within embodied networks of manual motor activity, sustained attention, and procedural memory. Repetitive geometric compositions facilitate learning processes, normalize behavior, and contribute to the standardization of production practices, thereby supporting the transmission of technical knowledge across generations (Hutchins, 1995, p. 129; Malafouris, 2010, p. 60).

In this context, the typological continuity observed in Nakhchivan Chalcolithic ceramics should not be interpreted solely as the persistence of cultural tradition. Instead, it can be understood as an indicator of the close relationship between production processes and cognitively stabilized models



operating within shared social environments. Regional comparison situates these findings within a broader cultural and historical context. Typological similarities identified in assemblages from the Urmia Basin and Northern Mesopotamia may, in some cases, reflect direct cultural contact and historical interaction. However, the overall structure of geometric ornamentation cannot be adequately accounted for by a single, linear model of cultural diffusion.

Instead, these parallels are more plausibly interpreted as arising under comparable ecological conditions and shared economic strategies. They may also reflect partial convergence in production habits formed within similar modes of social organisation, rather than direct and uniform cultural transmission (Baxşəliyev & Baxşəliyev, 2023, p. 24; Baxşəliyev et al., 2025, p. 20). Contemporary interpretive approaches likewise emphasize the value of multi-centred and diachronic models that accommodate convergent developments shaped by environmental, economic, and social factors.

At the same time, the methodological limitations of cognitive and neuroarchaeological interpretations must be explicitly acknowledged. Archaeological materials do not provide direct access to mental processes, and interpretations linking material patterns to cognition necessarily remain inferential. For this reason, such explanations are best framed not as definitive conclusions but as theoretically informed models grounded in observable material regularities (Wynn, 1989, p. 4; Killin, 2023, p. 550). Adopting this position enhances analytical rigour while maintaining openness to alternative explanatory frameworks.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the significance of geometric ornamentation in Nakhchivan Chalcolithic ceramics extends beyond questions of symbolic meaning alone. Its primary analytical value lies in structuring ceramic production traditions and in stabilizing collective, embodied forms of memory. From this perspective, geometric ornamentation can be understood both as a mechanism that contributes to cognitive stabilization and as the material expression of shared visual norms operating within Chalcolithic social environments.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the geometric motifs on Chalcolithic pottery from the Nakhchivan region exhibit a relatively limited typological range. Despite this apparent restriction, these motifs evolved into highly structured visual forms, characterised by consistent sequences of application, compositional stability, and long-term regional continuity. These features indicate that Chalcolithic ceramic ornamentation cannot be understood as arbitrary decoration. Instead, it represents the material expression of a collectively transmitted tradition of production and visual ordering.

When considered alongside cognitive and neuroarchaeological perspectives, typological observations suggest that geometric motifs served purposes beyond mere aesthetics or purely symbolic functions. Embedded within repetitive production practices, these motifs functioned as



material means through which cognitive routines were formed, stabilised, and reproduced over time. The persistence of patterned decoration is therefore more plausibly explained by the continuity of learned production behaviours and normative practices than by the transmission of fixed or invariant symbolic meanings.

From this perspective, geometric ornamentation in Nakhchivan Chalcolithic ceramics should not be interpreted solely as an indicator of cultural interaction or external influence. Instead, it offers an analytical entry point for examining how cognition was structured and stabilized within shared social environments through material practice. The archaeological record further indicates that these processes did not unfold uniformly across the region but emerged in different configurations across distinct chronological phases and cultural contexts.

Ceramic assemblages from Nakhchivantepe, dated to the Early Chalcolithic and associated with an early phase of the Dalma Tepe cultural horizon, suggest that local visual traditions developed primarily on an indigenous basis. At the same time, certain ornamental features in this assemblage reflect broader visual principles comparable to those documented in Halaf and Ubaid contexts. By contrast, painted pottery from the Bülövqaya settlement, dated to the early fifth millennium BCE, exhibits ornamental characteristics distinct from those of the Dalma Tepe complex, suggesting more direct engagement with broader Near Eastern ceramic traditions.

Taken together, these findings indicate that a single migration-based or diffusionist model cannot adequately explain the development of Chalcolithic ceramic ornamentation in Nakhchivan. Instead, the evidence supports an interpretation in which ornamentation emerged through culturally mediated interactions occurring at different times and with varying intensities, alongside the transmission of technical knowledge and learning practices. In this sense, geometric motifs can be understood as material instruments that contributed to the stabilization of social cognition and the shaping of visual thinking within Chalcolithic communities. Their long-term persistence across the region is thus more plausibly linked to the continuity of production traditions and collective memory than to the endurance of specific symbolic content.

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The Role of Infrastructure Innovations in Regional Development: Evidence from the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic

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Keywords	Abstract
regional growth infrastructure innovation digitalization energy efficiency	<p>In the modern global economy, infrastructure innovation has become a crucial determinant of regional competitiveness, economic resilience, and long-term sustainable development. This is particularly relevant for geographically constrained, landlocked, or peripheral regions, where innovative infrastructure can alleviate structural disadvantages, strengthen connectivity with external markets, and enhance the efficiency of resource allocation. By reducing transaction costs, accelerating the movement of goods and information, and improving institutional and technological capacity, infrastructure innovation contributes to both economic growth and social cohesion.</p> <p>This study examines the role of infrastructure innovation in promoting regional economic development in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, a region characterized by its unique geopolitical position and limited transport corridors. Using an econometric time-series modeling framework, the research analyzes the long-run and short-run relationships between innovation-oriented infrastructure indicators and regional economic growth. The empirical findings reveal a statistically significant and positive relationship between infrastructure innovation and economic performance, confirming that innovation-driven infrastructure policies serve as a key pillar of sustainable and competitive regional development.</p>

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, rapid technological change, and increasing spatial inequalities, regional development has become increasingly dependent on the quality, adaptability, and innovative capacity of infrastructure systems. Traditional approaches that regarded infrastructure merely as a physical backbone supporting production and distribution processes have evolved considerably. Contemporary economic theory and empirical evidence now emphasize

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infrastructure as a strategic enabler of innovation, knowledge diffusion, digital transformation, and institutional efficiency. Accordingly, infrastructure performs a multidimensional function, simultaneously influencing economic performance, social welfare, environmental sustainability, and regional competitiveness.

Innovative infrastructure systems contribute to regional development through multiple transmission mechanisms. First, they reduce transaction and logistics costs by improving transport efficiency and connectivity, thereby facilitating trade integration and expanding market access. Second, advanced energy infrastructure enhances productivity and resilience by ensuring a reliable, cost-effective, and sustainable energy supply. Third, digital infrastructure supports the diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICT), fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and integration into global value chains.

Finally, social infrastructure—including education, healthcare, and public services—strengthens human capital formation and social cohesion, both of which are essential prerequisites for long-term economic growth. Regions that successfully incorporate innovation into infrastructure planning tend to achieve higher productivity, stronger investment attractiveness, and improved social outcomes.

From a theoretical standpoint, the role of infrastructure innovation in regional development is strongly supported by endogenous growth theory, new economic geography, and regional innovation systems frameworks. Endogenous growth models emphasize the importance of knowledge accumulation, technological progress, and public capital in sustaining long-run growth. New economic geography highlights the role of infrastructure in reducing spatial frictions and fostering agglomeration effects, particularly in peripheral and isolated regions. Meanwhile, the regional innovation systems approach underscores the interaction between infrastructure, institutions, and local actors in generating innovation-driven development. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives indicate that infrastructure innovation is not merely a complementary element but a central driver of regional economic transformation.

The significance of innovative infrastructure becomes especially pronounced in geographically constrained and peripheral regions. Such areas frequently encounter structural disadvantages, including limited access to external markets, higher transportation costs, and reduced economies of scale. In these circumstances, conventional infrastructure expansion alone may be insufficient to overcome development barriers. Instead, innovation-oriented infrastructure solutions—such as smart transport systems, energy-efficient technologies, digital platforms, and integrated social services—are necessary to compensate for geographical isolation and enhance economic resilience. Consequently, infrastructure innovation emerges as a strategic policy instrument for reducing regional disparities and promoting inclusive growth.

The Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic represents a compelling and relatively underexplored case within this broader regional development discourse. Characterized by geographical isolation, a landlocked position, and limited direct access to international transport corridors, Nakhchivan faces distinct economic and logistical challenges. Resource constraints and external dependencies



further intensify the need for efficient and resilient infrastructure systems. Under such conditions, the region's development trajectory cannot rely solely on traditional growth drivers; rather, it requires an innovation-driven infrastructure strategy capable of maximizing internal potential while mitigating external limitations.

In recent years, the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic has implemented a series of infrastructure modernization initiatives aimed at addressing these challenges. Investments have focused on improving transport logistics, enhancing energy efficiency and sustainability, expanding digital connectivity, and strengthening social infrastructure. These efforts reflect a growing recognition among policymakers that infrastructure innovation is essential for stimulating investment, generating employment, improving public service delivery, and enhancing overall quality of life. Nevertheless, despite the strategic importance of these initiatives, comprehensive empirical research assessing their economic and social impacts within the specific context of Nakhchivan remains limited.

Against this background, the present study seeks to examine the role of infrastructure innovation in supporting regional development in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic through an integrated theoretical and econometric framework. The research analyzes how innovations in transport, energy, digital, and social infrastructure collectively influence regional economic growth and development dynamics over time. By applying time-series econometric techniques, the study provides empirical evidence on the magnitude and statistical significance of the relationship between infrastructure innovation indicators and regional economic performance.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it expands the literature on infrastructure-led regional development by focusing on a geographically constrained and institutionally distinct region. Second, it provides empirical insights into the effectiveness of innovation-oriented infrastructure policies in strengthening economic resilience and competitiveness. Third, the findings offer policy-relevant implications for regional development strategies, emphasizing the importance of targeted, integrated, and innovation-driven infrastructure planning. In doing so, the study establishes a solid analytical foundation for policymakers and researchers aiming to promote sustainable and inclusive regional development in Nakhchivan and comparable peripheral regions.

2. Literature review

The relationship between infrastructure development and economic growth has long been a central topic in economic theory and regional development research. One of the earliest and most influential empirical contributions was made by Aschauer (1989), who demonstrated that public infrastructure investment—particularly in transport, utilities, and public capital—has a significant and positive effect on productivity and overall economic performance. This pioneering work established infrastructure not merely as a supportive component but as a fundamental determinant of long-term economic growth. Subsequent studies expanded upon this perspective, confirming that infrastructure deficiencies can constrain private investment, reduce efficiency, and limit regional development potential.



The theoretical foundations of infrastructure-led growth were further reinforced by endogenous growth theory. Romer (1990) emphasized the importance of knowledge accumulation, technological innovation, and human capital in sustaining long-run economic growth, while Aghion and Howitt (1992) introduced the concept of creative destruction, identifying innovation as a central driver of productivity improvements. Within this theoretical framework, infrastructure—particularly when integrated with innovation and advanced technologies—functions as a catalyst for knowledge diffusion, research and development activities, and technological adoption. Consequently, infrastructure investment is increasingly regarded not only as capital formation but also as a mechanism that enhances innovation capacity.

Over time, the literature has moved beyond traditional physical infrastructure to encompass broader and more sophisticated concepts such as digital, smart, and green infrastructure. This evolution reflects structural transformations in the global economy, including digitalization, environmental sustainability concerns, and the rising significance of knowledge-based activities. Crescenzi and Rodríguez-Pose (2012) argue that infrastructure innovation plays a vital role in strengthening regional competitiveness by improving accessibility, reducing spatial frictions, and facilitating the diffusion of innovation across territories. Their findings suggest that innovative infrastructure can help reduce spatial inequalities by enabling less-developed regions to integrate more effectively into national and global economic systems.

International organizations have also made substantial contributions to this body of literature. According to the OECD (2015), innovation-oriented infrastructure policies are essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable regional growth. The OECD emphasizes that infrastructure planning should increasingly prioritize technological adaptability, environmental sustainability, and social inclusiveness rather than focusing exclusively on capacity expansion. Similarly, the European Commission and other multilateral institutions highlight the importance of smart infrastructure systems in supporting regional innovation ecosystems and strengthening resilience to economic shocks.

A growing body of empirical research specifically examines the role of infrastructure innovation in peripheral, landlocked, and transition regions. Such regions often experience structural disadvantages, including geographical isolation, limited market access, and elevated transaction costs. In this context, infrastructure innovation is viewed as a strategic instrument for overcoming spatial constraints and enhancing regional resilience. World Bank (2020) reports provide compelling evidence that investments in digital connectivity and modern energy infrastructure significantly improve market access, reduce regional disparities, and enhance economic adaptability, particularly in developing and transition economies.

Empirical studies from emerging economies further support these conclusions. Fagerberg (2018) emphasizes that technological upgrading and innovation-oriented infrastructure investments are crucial for productivity growth in late-developing regions. Khan et al. (2021) present econometric evidence demonstrating that renewable energy infrastructure and digitalization positively influence regional productivity, employment generation, and investment flows. These studies



underscore the growing importance of green and digital infrastructure as central elements of sustainable regional development strategies.

Despite the expanding scope of this literature, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing empirical research concentrates on national-level analyses or large metropolitan areas, while relatively limited attention is devoted to subnational, autonomous, or geographically isolated regions. Second, many studies examine individual types of infrastructure separately—such as transport or energy—rather than adopting an integrated approach that captures the combined effects of transport, energy, digital, and social infrastructure innovations. Third, region-specific institutional and geopolitical factors are often overlooked, limiting the applicability of generalized findings to distinctive regional contexts.

In particular, there is a noticeable lack of empirical research focusing on autonomous and geographically isolated regions such as the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Given its unique geopolitical position, restricted external connectivity, and specific development challenges, Nakhchivan constitutes an important case for analyzing how innovation-oriented infrastructure can support regional development under structural constraints. The absence of region-specific econometric evidence creates a gap between policy initiatives and empirical evaluation, thereby constraining evidence-based decision-making.

This study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive, region-specific econometric analysis of the relationship between infrastructure innovation and regional economic development in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. By integrating insights from classical growth theory, endogenous growth models, and contemporary regional development literature, the research contributes to a more refined understanding of infrastructure innovation as a driver of sustainable and competitive regional growth in geographically constrained regions.

3. Methodology and econometric model

3.1. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design based on time-series econometric analysis to investigate the impact of infrastructure innovation on regional economic development in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The selection of an econometric approach is motivated by the need to identify statistically significant relationships between infrastructure innovation indicators and regional economic performance over time. By applying a multivariate regression framework, the study captures both the combined and individual effects of different types of infrastructure innovation while controlling for key macroeconomic factors.

The methodological framework is grounded in endogenous growth theory and regional development economics, which emphasize the roles of public capital, innovation, and human capital as fundamental drivers of long-term economic growth. Infrastructure innovation is conceptualized not merely as a physical input but as a productivity-enhancing factor that facilitates technological diffusion, investment activity, and structural transformation.



3.2. Model Specification

To examine the impact of infrastructure innovations on regional economic development, the following econometric model is specified:

$$GDP_t = \alpha + \beta_1 INF_TR_t + \beta_2 INF_EN_t + \beta_3 INF_DIG_t + \beta_4 HUM_t + \beta_5 INV_t + \varepsilon_t$$

(1)

where:

- **GDP_t** – real regional gross domestic product, serving as a proxy for regional economic development;
- **INF_TR_t** – transport infrastructure innovation index, reflecting modernization and efficiency improvements in transport and logistics systems;
- **INF_EN_t** – energy infrastructure innovation, measured by the share of renewable energy in total energy production;
- **INF_DIG_t** – digital infrastructure development index, capturing broadband penetration, ICT usage, and digital connectivity;
- **HUM_t** – human capital indicator, representing education levels and workforce skills;
- **INV_t** – volume of fixed capital investment, reflecting investment activity and capital accumulation;
- **ε_t** – stochastic error term.

The coefficients β_1 – β_5 are expected to be positive, reflecting the hypothesis that infrastructure innovation, human capital, and investment exert a positive influence on regional economic output.

3.3. Estimation Method

The model is estimated using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method, which provides unbiased and efficient parameter estimates under the classical linear regression assumptions. Prior to estimation, the time-series properties of the variables are examined to prevent spurious regression results.

Stationarity Testing: The Augmented Dickey–Fuller (ADF) test is applied to evaluate the stationarity of each variable. The results indicate that the variables are either stationary in levels or become stationary after first differencing, thereby allowing for reliable regression estimation.

Multicollinearity Diagnostics: The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is employed to detect potential multicollinearity among the explanatory variables. All VIF values remain below the commonly accepted threshold, suggesting that multicollinearity does not present a significant concern.



Robustness: Robust standard errors are utilized to correct for potential heteroskedasticity, ensuring the reliability and consistency of the estimated coefficients.

3.4. Data Description

The analysis is based on official regional statistical data obtained from national and regional statistical authorities. All variables are measured on an annual basis and adjusted to ensure consistency and comparability over time.

Table 1. Description of variables

Variable	Description	Expected Effect
GDP	Regional economic output	—
INF_TR	Transport infrastructure innovation	Positive
INF_EN	Renewable energy infrastructure	Positive
INF_DIG	Digital infrastructure development	Positive
HUM	Human capital	Positive
INV	Fixed capital investment	Positive

Source: Compiled by the author based on official statistical data.

5. Empirical results

5.1. Econometric Estimation Results

The estimation results of the econometric model are reported in Table 2. The overall goodness-of-fit statistics suggest that the model performs effectively in explaining variations in regional economic output.

$R^2=0.78$

F-statistic=24.6

$p < 0.01, p < 0.05$

Table 2. Econometric estimation results

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic
INF_TR	0.31***	0.07	4.42
INF_EN	0.27***	0.06	4.10
INF_DIG	0.35***	0.08	4.58
HUM	0.19**	0.05	3.80
INV	0.22***	0.06	3.67
Constant	1.14	0.42	2.71

Source: Compiled by the author based on official statistical data.

5.2. Interpretation of Results

The empirical findings indicate that all explanatory variables exert a positive and statistically significant influence on regional economic development. The relatively high R^2 value suggests



that approximately 78% of the variation in regional GDP is explained by the model, demonstrating strong explanatory power. The F-statistic further confirms the overall statistical significance of the regression model.

Among the infrastructure variables, digital infrastructure (INF_DIG) exhibits the largest coefficient, emphasizing its dominant role in enhancing regional economic performance. This result indicates that improvements in digital connectivity and ICT infrastructure generate substantial productivity gains and facilitate economic integration, particularly in geographically constrained regions.

Transport infrastructure innovation (INF_TR) also demonstrates a strong positive effect, reflecting the importance of modern logistics systems and efficient transport networks in reducing transaction costs and improving regional accessibility. Similarly, renewable energy infrastructure (INF_EN) makes a significant contribution to economic growth, highlighting the role of energy efficiency and sustainability in strengthening regional resilience.

Control variables, including human capital (HUM) and fixed capital investment (INV), are also statistically significant. These findings confirm that infrastructure innovation operates synergistically with education, skills development, and investment activity to promote sustainable regional development.

4. Discussion

The empirical results of this study provide compelling evidence that infrastructure innovation plays a decisive and multidimensional role in promoting regional economic development in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The econometric estimations demonstrate that all major infrastructure components examined—digital infrastructure, transport infrastructure, and renewable energy infrastructure—have positive and statistically significant effects on regional economic performance.

These findings support the central hypothesis of the study and emphasize the strategic importance of innovation-oriented infrastructure as an effective mechanism for overcoming structural constraints, strengthening regional competitiveness, and fostering sustainable economic growth in geographically constrained regions.

Among the analyzed infrastructure dimensions, digital infrastructure emerges as the most influential driver of regional development. The magnitude and statistical significance of the estimated coefficient underline the critical importance of digital connectivity, broadband penetration, and the expansion of digital services in mitigating the disadvantages associated with geographical isolation. Enhanced digital infrastructure improves access to national and international markets, increases the efficiency of information flows, strengthens e-government and public service delivery, and encourages the development of digital entrepreneurship and innovation-driven enterprises. In the specific context of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic—where physical access to external markets is limited due to geopolitical and spatial constraints—digital connectivity effectively produces the “distance-reducing effect” emphasized in new



economic geography and endogenous growth theories. As a result, digital infrastructure partially compensates for geographical remoteness by enabling deeper economic integration and accelerating the diffusion of knowledge and technology across regional boundaries.

Transport infrastructure innovation also plays a significant and complementary role in supporting regional economic development. The positive impact of modernized transport networks and innovative logistics systems reflects their importance in lowering transaction costs, improving mobility, and enhancing the reliability and efficiency of supply chains. For peripheral and landlocked regions, inadequate transport infrastructure often constitutes a major obstacle to economic activity, investment attraction, and labor mobility. The findings suggest that investments in smart transport systems, advanced construction technologies, and integrated logistics platforms can substantially enhance regional accessibility and competitiveness. These results are consistent with recent empirical evidence indicating that innovation in transport infrastructure—rather than simple capacity expansion—yields higher economic returns by improving network efficiency and resilience (Askarova, 2025).

Renewable energy infrastructure innovation demonstrates a dual and strategically important function by simultaneously advancing economic growth and environmental sustainability objectives. The statistically significant positive relationship between renewable energy infrastructure and regional economic performance suggests that investments in green energy technologies strengthen energy security, reduce dependence on external energy sources, and lower long-term production costs. Furthermore, renewable energy infrastructure enhances regional resilience by reducing exposure to energy price volatility and supporting the transition toward a low-carbon development model. This finding aligns with broader global trends that emphasize integrating environmental sustainability into economic and infrastructure planning frameworks. The results are consistent with recent empirical studies demonstrating the positive growth effects of renewable energy and green infrastructure investments in regional and emerging economy contexts (Abdullayev, Asgerova, Abbasova, & Humbat, 2024).

The empirical evidence presented in this study is broadly consistent with previous research highlighting the role of infrastructure innovation in enhancing regional growth and competitiveness. Studies by Crescenzi et al. (2016) and the OECD (2019) similarly conclude that innovation-driven infrastructure policies are essential for reducing regional disparities, strengthening productivity, and improving economic performance in peripheral and less-developed regions. Importantly, the findings reinforce the argument that infrastructure should not be viewed merely as a static physical asset but rather as a dynamic system that enables innovation, knowledge spillovers, institutional efficiency, and structural transformation. This systemic perspective is particularly relevant for autonomous regions such as Nakhchivan, where coordinated infrastructure planning can generate cross-sectoral synergies.

Overall, the discussion emphasizes that innovation-oriented infrastructure policies are particularly critical for geographically constrained and institutionally distinct regions like the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The results suggest that a coordinated and integrated infrastructure



development strategy—combining digitalization, transport modernization, and renewable energy investment—can significantly enhance regional productivity, sustainability, and long-term economic resilience. Such an integrated approach enables regions to exploit complementarities among different infrastructure systems, thereby maximizing economic and social returns. The findings are also aligned with recent regional development research stressing the importance of holistic and innovation-driven infrastructure frameworks for achieving sustainable regional growth (Gulaliyev, Alesgerova, Askerova, & Novruzova, 2025).

From a policy perspective, these insights offer valuable guidance for regional policymakers and development planners. By prioritizing innovation-oriented infrastructure investments tailored to local structural conditions, policymakers can design more effective and resilient regional development strategies. In this context, the experience of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic provides important lessons for other autonomous, peripheral, and geographically isolated regions seeking to enhance economic performance and sustainability through infrastructure innovation.

8. Conclusion

This study provides robust empirical evidence that infrastructure innovation is a fundamental and strategic driver of regional development in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. By integrating transport, digital, and renewable energy infrastructure variables into a unified econometric framework, the research demonstrates that innovation-oriented infrastructure investments have a statistically significant and positive impact on regional economic growth, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. The findings confirm that infrastructure innovation functions not merely as a supportive input but as a core mechanism through which geographically constrained regions can enhance resilience and economic performance.

Digital infrastructure emerges as the most influential component, significantly mitigating the disadvantages associated with geographical isolation. Improvements in broadband access, digital connectivity, and digital services enhance market access, reduce information asymmetries, and increase the efficiency of both public administration and private sector activities. In this context, digital infrastructure acts as a “distance-reducing” mechanism, enabling economic integration and technological diffusion despite spatial and geopolitical constraints.

Transport infrastructure innovation also contributes substantially by improving mobility, strengthening logistics performance, and lowering transaction and transportation costs. Modern transport networks enhance trade flows, labor mobility, and investment attractiveness—factors that are particularly critical for peripheral and autonomous regions.

Renewable and energy-efficient infrastructure supports both economic resilience and environmental sustainability. Investments in green energy strengthen energy security, reduce external dependence, and lower long-term production costs while contributing to the transition toward low-carbon development.

From a policy perspective, the results highlight the importance of integrated and innovation-oriented infrastructure strategies that simultaneously address physical, digital, and energy systems.



Coordinated planning, institutional support, and investment incentives are essential for maximizing economic and social returns. In regions such as the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, such strategies are vital for overcoming structural constraints and fostering inclusive, sustainable growth.

Although the study relies on aggregate regional data, future research may extend the analysis through panel data, advanced econometric methods, or sector-specific and firm-level investigations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that infrastructure innovation constitutes a strategic pillar of long-term regional resilience, competitiveness, and sustainable development in geographically constrained regions.

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Media Representation and Sponsorship of Women's Sports in Azerbaijan: Challenges and Opportunities

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Keywords	Abstract
Sponsorship Media exposure Gender equality Cultural factors Women's sports.	This study investigates the factors influencing the sponsorship of female athletes, examining the role of athlete-related, media-related, consumer-related, and external factors. Through a survey of participants within the sports industry, the research highlights the key challenges and opportunities for female athletes in securing sponsorships. The findings emphasize the importance of performance perception, media exposure, fan engagement, and societal attitudes towards gender equality in sports. While performance and media coverage are identified as crucial elements in attracting sponsorship, the research also reveals the challenges posed by cultural stereotypes and consumer perceptions. Recommendations are made for increasing media visibility, fostering greater fan engagement, and addressing gender biases to create a more equitable environment for female athletes. The study contributes to the existing literature on sports sponsorship and gender equality, offering insights for sponsors, sports organizations, and policymakers in promoting female sports.

Introduction

In recent years, women's sports have gained more global visibility due to increased media attention and growing sponsorship investments. According to Forbes, women's sports received 15% of media share in 2022—a notable rise compared to previous years. Similarly, Sponsor United reported a 22% increase in sponsorship for women's professional sports from 2023 to 2024 (Forbes, 2023). These shifts signal a broader trend toward the recognition of female athletes worldwide.

Despite this progress, challenges remain, particularly in countries like Azerbaijan. While the country has developed significant sports infrastructure and hosted major international events (e.g.,

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European Games 2015, Islamic Solidarity Games 2017), media representation and sponsorship for women's sports remain limited. Traditional gender norms and sociopolitical factors continue to affect how female athletes are portrayed.

Although the Azerbaijani government has taken steps to promote women's participation—such as building modern facilities and encouraging international competition—the media coverage of female athletes is fragmented and sporadic. Campaigns like the International Judo Federation's "White Suits Girls" and Azercell's partnerships with female Olympians have been positive but remain isolated rather than systemic.

According to the Council of Europe's "Azerbaijan Gender Equality in Sport Leaflet" (2019), only 28% of sports federations in Azerbaijan use gender-sensitive communication strategies, and just 8% have set targets for gender representation in the media (Council of Europe. 2019). The underrepresentation is further deepened by the low number of women in leadership roles within sports organizations.

Sponsorship of women's sports in Azerbaijan also faces hurdles. While companies such as Pasha Holding (volleyball team Azerrail) and Tripsome (Baku Juniors Women's Football Team) offer some support, these cases are exceptions. Most sponsors favor events or teams over individual female athletes, partly due to their limited media visibility.

This study explores how media representation in Azerbaijan impacts sponsorship opportunities for female athletes. It analyzes the cultural and societal factors that shape their visibility and support, aiming to provide actionable insights. The goal is to offer recommendations for policymakers, media, and sports institutions to foster gender equity in Azerbaijani sports and contribute to broader global discussions on this issue.

Literature Review

The literature on sponsorship in women's sports has seen increasing interest, with studies highlighting various factors influencing sponsorship drivers and effectiveness. In particular, the role of societal shifts toward gender equality, the rise of digital media, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) has garnered attention. This section examines the literature on the evolving sponsorship landscape, the drivers of sponsorship in women's sports, and the impact of media portrayals and athlete marketability.

Sponsorship drivers in women's sports

Sponsorship in women's sports has grown alongside increasing societal awareness of gender equality. As visibility and fan interest rise, sponsors are more inclined to invest. Hazari (2018) notes that this trend is largely driven by the recognition of equality within the sports industry (Hazari, S. 2018). Increased media coverage and audience engagement have created a cycle that attracts further sponsorship.



According to the Women's Sport Trust (2023), 24.5 million people in the UK are aware of sponsorships in women's sports, highlighting their impact. Cultural movements like #MeToo and "This Girl Can" have influenced brand strategies, encouraging companies to support women's participation in male-dominated sectors. Cooky and LaVoi (2012) argue that such movements push brands toward socially responsible sponsorships aligned with progressive values (Cooky, C., LaVoi, N. M. 2012).

Social media has become a vital tool in sponsorship dynamics. Ferreira et al. (2021) found that athletes who engage with fans online enhance brand recognition (Ferreira 2021). Female athletes, in particular, build strong connections with audiences, and women's sports fans are nearly twice as likely to remember sponsoring brands (The Space Between, 2021).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) also plays a major role. Brands promoting gender equality through sports sponsorships improve both their image and community impact. Morgan's (2019) research shows that CSR and financial interests often align in women's sports sponsorship (Morgan, 2019). According to Babiak and Wolfe (2013), CSR-based partnerships generate shared value and ensure more stable, long-term support for athletes (Babiak, Wolfe, 2013), (Sanders, Winter, 2016).

Media representation and its influence on sponsorship

Media representation plays a key role in shaping public perceptions of female athletes and directly influences their sponsorship potential. McDonald et al. (2022) argue that media portrayal significantly affects athletes' marketability (McDonald, et al. 2022). As media visibility increases, so do sponsorship opportunities—particularly when coverage highlights athletic talent. In contrast, Lough and Geurin (2019) warn that the sexualization of female athletes, though it may attract media attention, can distort perceptions of their professionalism (Lough, Geurin, 2019).

Kane, LaVoi, and Fink (2013) emphasize that while such portrayals may boost short-term engagement, they are less effective for long-term brand partnerships based on athletic merit (Kane, et al. 2013). The pressure to post sexualized content on social media to gain sponsors and fans remains a problematic trend (Pocock, Skey, 2022). potentially undermining athletes' credibility and stability in sponsorship deals.

Social media is a powerful branding tool. Smith and Sanderson (2015) note that female athletes who share personal, emotional content build stronger connections with fans and sponsors (Smith, Sanderson, 2015). Geurin-Eagleman and Burch (2016) highlight the value of combining personal and promotional content, which allows brands to engage authentically with audiences (Geurin-Eagleman, Burch 2016).

However, maintaining an active online presence can be demanding. Howell et al. (2021) point out that the pressure to constantly post may affect performance and lead to burnout (Howell et al.



2021). Additionally, Thompson et al. (2014) warn that missteps or negative feedback online can harm an athlete's image and sponsorship appeal (Thompson, et al. (2014).

Conceptualizing sponsorship effectiveness in women's sports

Kim et al. (2015) propose a conceptual model of sponsorship effectiveness that outlines key antecedents and outcomes in women's sports sponsorship (Kim, et al. 2015). These antecedents fall into three categories: sponsor-related factors, athlete-related factors, and dyadic fit between the sponsor and the athlete.

Sponsor-related factors include brand visibility, audience perception of sponsor motives, media presence, and clarity of brand messaging. Effective sponsorship requires alignment between the sponsor's image and the athlete's public persona.

Athlete-related factors involve marketability, including social media engagement, public image, and involvement in CSR initiatives. Athletes who maintain a positive presence and connect with audiences are more likely to attract sponsors.

Dyadic fit refers to the alignment of values and image between the sponsor and the athlete. A strong fit enhances credibility and deepens the brand-athlete association.

Sponsorship effectiveness is ultimately measured through cognitive outcomes (e.g., brand awareness) and affective outcomes (e.g., favorable attitudes and increased brand preference) (Bennett, 1999).

Methodology

This study followed Saunders et al.'s (2019) "Research Onion" model to structure its methodological design (Saunders, et al. 2019). The model offers a layered framework, from philosophical stance to data collection methods, ensuring rigor and clarity.

An interpretivist philosophy was adopted, aligning with qualitative research aimed at exploring subjective experiences (Saunders, et al. 2019). This perspective emphasizes understanding how individuals make sense of their social realities, making it appropriate for investigating how Azerbaijani female athletes perceive sponsorship and media portrayal (Bryman, 2016), (Grix, J. (2010).

The study used an inductive approach, suitable for exploratory research without predefined hypotheses (Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). This allowed for flexible inquiry and theory generation based on participants' insights into media and sponsorship in women's sports.

Given the study's aim to explore perceptions and lived experiences, a qualitative research design was chosen (Creswell, Poth, 2018). This approach enabled in-depth examination of the nuanced and context-specific ways participants interpret sponsorship and media representation.



Data Collection & Analysis

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data came from a survey with open-ended questions, enabling rich, detailed responses (Patton, 2015). Secondary data included academic publications and industry reports, offering theoretical and contextual background.

Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data, helping identify recurring themes in participants' sponsorship and media portrayal accounts (Braun, Clarke 2006). (Guest, et al. 2012). Emerging patterns were compared with existing literature to draw deeper conclusions.

Reliability and validity

To ensure reliability, consistent procedures were followed throughout data collection and analysis (Roberts, et al. 2006). Content and construct validity were supported by grounding survey design in relevant literature and aligning it with the study's theoretical framework (Kane, 1992), (Yin, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Participants gave informed consent and were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage (Orb, et al. 2001). Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and data were securely stored for research purposes only (Appendix 1).

Findings

The findings of the survey that Azerbaijani female athletes participated in regarding media coverage and sponsorship of women's sports are shown in this section. An online survey disseminated via personal networks and social media platforms was used to collect the data.

General findings

The investigation sheds light on how the athletes view media attention, how it affects sponsorship prospects, and how it may affect female athletes' careers in general.

Table 1. Demographics and Sports Participation

Demographics	Number	Percentage
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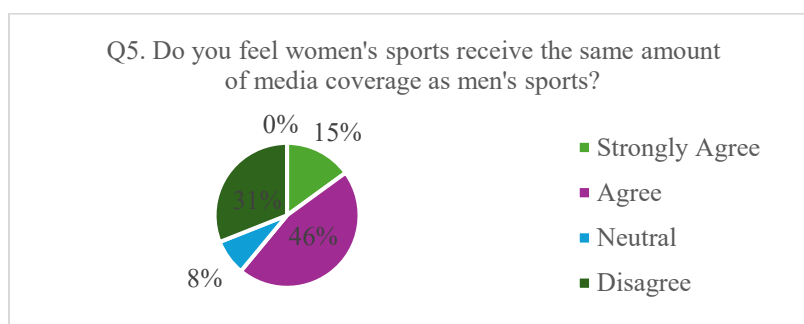


Gender	Male	0	0%
	Female	13	100%
Age	18 - 24	7	54%
	25 - 34	3	23%
	35 - 44	2	16%
	45 - 54	1	7%
	55+	0	0%
Years of Experience	1 - 5 years	4	31%
	6 - 10 years	5	38%
	10 - 15 years	2	15%
	16 - 20 years	1	8%
	20 + years	1	8%

The survey had a total of 13 respondents and the participants ranged in age from 18 to 47 years old. The wide age range makes it possible to fully comprehend the experiences that athletes have at various phases of their careers. The survey targeted a diverse group of female athletes engaged in various sports, including fencing, athletics, wrestling, basketball, and swimming. The years that each person had been involved in their chosen sport varied greatly. In particular, 31% of the respondents had been involved in their sports for 1-5 years, 38% for 6-10 years, 15% for 10-15 years, 8% for 16-20 years, and another 8% for more than 20 years. The distribution shows that the athletes that were surveyed had a wide range of experience levels.

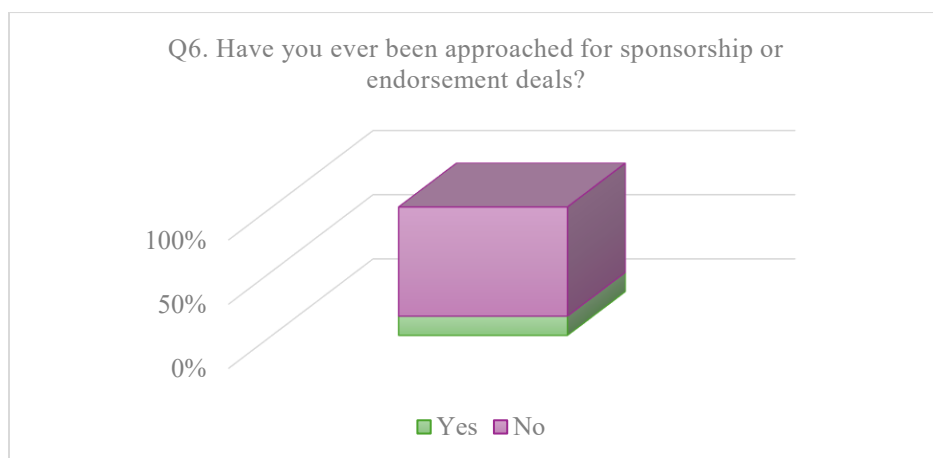


Figure 1. Media Coverage and Perception (Survey Question 5 Answers)



The survey investigated how athletes felt about the equal coverage of men's and women's sports in the media. The responses revealed a mixed perception. While 15% of the respondents strongly agreed and 46% agreed that women's sports receive the same amount of media coverage as men's sports, 31% disagreed, and 8% remained neutral. Notably, none of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 2. Sponsorship and Media Exposure (Survey Question 6 Answers)



Sponsorship and media representation: key findings

Survey results revealed that only 15% of respondents had ever been approached for sponsorship or endorsement deals, while 85% had not.

Regarding media representation, 85% reported no sponsorship offers even after appearing in media coverage. Only 15% received sponsorship approaches following media exposure.

Among those few who were approached post-media exposure, 8% reported being contacted within 1 week to 1 month, and another 8% within 3–6 months. Still, 85% had not received any sponsorship interest at all.

A vast majority (92%) believed that media exposure is vital in securing sponsorships for women athletes. No respondent ranked other factors higher, though 8% were uncertain about its impact.

On the value and frequency of sponsorships, 77% agreed that increased media visibility results in more deals, whereas 15% saw no effect, and 8% were unsure.

Respondents cited several reasons for limited sponsor interest: low media coverage, gender bias, perceptions of women's sports as less engaging, and declining audience interest—all contributing to the challenge of attracting sponsorships.

Table 2. Perception of Media's Role in Sponsorship

Question	What do you think is the reason(s) why sponsors show less interest in women's sports?
A1	I don't know.
A2	There is little coverage in the media
A3	Lower fan engagement and fewer viewers
A4	There are fewer female athletes.
A5	Given that throughout history men have been allowed to play sports while women have been banned, that is, sports have been a male-only activity, and over time the bans for women have been removed, yet today, male athletes receive more general attention than female athletes, and this is the reason why sponsors are more interested in men's sports than women's sports.
A6	I'm not sure why, but I think it's not about being man or women. I personally think that there needs to be more media representation on a professional level.
A7	I think that the majority favors men because they think that they will show better results than women in sports.
A8	Women's sports are considered uninteresting.
A9	I think they have the same interests, both women and men, I don't see any difference.
A10	Less demand for women's sports.
A11	The small number of women engaged in sports and the culture of different countries are obstacles to this.
A12	Less media coverage and less popularity.
A13	Less audience than men's sports.



Activity levels

The survey revealed diverse social media engagement among respondents: 8% very actively, 38% actively, 31% occasionally, 15% rarely, and 8% never use social platforms.

A strong majority (77%) believed social media is key to attracting sponsorship in women's sports. Among them, 31% rated it as extremely important, 46% very important, and 23% moderately important. No respondent considered it unimportant.

Regarding career impact, 31% of respondents felt media representation had positively influenced their careers through increased recognition and opportunities. However, 23% reported no impact, and 46% were unsure.

When asked about sponsors' priorities, 92% identified athletic performance and achievements as most important. This was followed by digital/social media presence (77%), media recognition (76%), sport popularity (76%), past sponsorship success (54%), and brand fit (38%).

Table 3. Suggestions for Better Support

Question	How can sports organizations and sponsors better support female athletes in their media campaigns and sponsorship initiatives? (Choose the answer that is most important to you)	
Options	Count	Percentage
Option 1. Increase funding and resources for media campaigns featuring female athletes.	8	62%
Option 2. Provide equal sponsorship opportunities and investment for female athletes.	4	31%
Option 3. Partner with media outlets to promote women's sports and athletes.	1	8%
Option 4. Offer mentorship and support programs to help female athletes navigate media exposure.	0	0%
Option 5. I don't know.	0	0%

To better support female athletes, 62% of respondents emphasized the need for increased funding and resources for media campaigns. 31% highlighted the importance of equal sponsorship opportunities, while 8% suggested stronger collaboration with media outlets to promote women's sports.

Related Findings

Word clouds serve as effective visual tools for representing textual data. They display frequently used terms, with size indicating frequency or emphasis, thus offering a quick grasp of central ideas (Liu, et al. 2014). As shown in **Figure 3**, a word cloud was generated from the survey responses



Theme	Sub-themes	Theme Description	Key Quotes
Athlete-Related Factors	Uncertainty	Limited knowledge of athletes.	<i>"I don't know the reason(s) why sponsors show less interest in women's sports."</i> <i>"I'm not sure why, but I think it's not about being man or woman..."</i>
	Perception of Performance	Views of athletes' abilities, affecting their appeal.	<i>"Majority ... think that men show better results than women in sports."</i> <i>"athletes' ... accomplishments and performance were the most significant element"</i>
Media-Related Factors	Exposure	The extent and quality of media coverage.	<i>"... media exposure plays a crucial role in securing sponsorship"</i> <i>"There is little coverage in the media"</i>
	Perceived Importance	The belief placed on women's sport media coverage	<i>"Leveraging social media platforms is important..."</i>
Consumer-Related Factors	Audience Engagement	The level of interaction between fans and athletes.	<i>"Lower fan engagement and fewer viewers"</i> <i>"... male athletes receive more general attention than female athletes ..."</i>
	Perception of Demand	Believed market interest.	<i>"Women's sports are considered uninteresting."</i> <i>"Less demand for women's sports"</i>
External Factors	Perception of Equality	Views on the fairness between genders.	<i>"I think that the majority favors men..."</i> <i>"Provide equal sponsorship opportunities and investment for female athletes is important"</i>
	Cultural Factors	Societal norms and stereotypes.	<i>"Given that throughout history men have been allowed to play sports while women have been banned..."</i>

Audience Engagement: Low fan interaction and viewership were viewed as obstacles: "Lower fan engagement and fewer viewers"; "... male athletes receive more general attention than female athletes ..."

Demand Perception: The belief that women's sports are less appealing persists: "Women's sports are considered uninteresting," creating a cycle of low interest and limited investment.



Gender Inequality: Many voiced concerns over systemic bias in media and sponsorship: “Provide equal sponsorship opportunities and investment for female athletes.”

Cultural Norms: Historical gender roles continue to influence current attitudes: “Throughout history men have been allowed to play sports while women have been banned...” This legacy contributes to ongoing inequalities in support and recognition.

Discussion

Uncertainty in the sponsorship of female athletes stems from a lack of transparency in sponsor decision-making. Without clear criteria, athletes struggle to understand how to market themselves, leading to frustration and missed opportunities (Caple et al. 2011), (McDonald, et al. 2022). This ambiguity discourages women from pursuing sponsorships, contributing to persistent underrepresentation (Duncan, Messner 1998). (Cooky, et al. 2015), (Jones, et al. 2008).

Perceptions of performance also influence sponsorship appeal. Despite 92% of surveyed respondents citing performance as a key factor, a bias persists that male athletes outperform females, undermining recognition of women's achievements (Billings et al. 2010). Skewed media portrayals reinforce this belief, affecting both audience and sponsor perceptions (Sato, et al. 2019), (Kim, et al. 2015).

Media exposure is critical. While 92% of respondents acknowledged its importance, and 77% linked it to better sponsorship prospects, female athletes often receive limited coverage. This “invisibility cycle” hampers recognition and funding. Sponsors tend to favor athletes with greater media presence (Kim, et al. 2015), (Lough, Geurin 2019).

Audience engagement is another key factor. Lower fan interaction with female athletes leads to reduced viewership and fewer sponsorships (Dai, et al. 2023). (Ferreira, 2021). Enhancing engagement through targeted campaigns, events, and storytelling is essential to building a stronger fan base.

Perceived demand also impacts investment. The notion that women’s sports attract less interest discourages support, creating a cycle of low visibility and diminished investment (Braunstein et al. 2008). Similarly, perceptions of inequality—endorsed by 31% of survey participants—reflect deep-seated biases in media representation (Duncan, Messner 1998).

Cultural narratives around gender roles further suppress the growth of women’s sports. Traditional stereotypes portray female athletes as less capable, limiting their visibility and support (Bruce, 2016), (Fink, 2015), (Kane, 2013). Challenging these norms is vital to fostering equity and transforming the sponsorship landscape.

Conclusions and Recommendations



This study identifies key barriers female athletes face in securing sponsorships, including limited media coverage, audience engagement gaps, and cultural perceptions. A major challenge is the lack of transparency in sponsorship decision-making, which creates uncertainty and limits athletes' ability to position themselves effectively.

Perceptions of performance, shaped largely by biased media portrayals, continue to favor male athletes, reducing recognition of women's achievements. Media coverage remains a crucial factor—yet female athletes often face a cycle of invisibility, limiting their appeal to sponsors. This imbalance reinforces the view that women's sports are less competitive and marketable.

Lower audience engagement further impacts sponsorship, as reduced fan interaction results in fewer commercial opportunities. Strengthening fan engagement through storytelling, campaigns, and community outreach is vital. Additionally, the perception of low demand for women's sports discourages investment and perpetuates underrepresentation.

Cultural attitudes and gender norms continue to shape these dynamics. Stereotypes and inequality in treatment hinder progress toward equity. Addressing these systemic issues requires collective effort.

In conclusion, improving sponsorship for female athletes demands greater transparency, expanded media exposure, and deeper audience engagement. Stakeholders—including sponsors, media, and sports organizations—must collaborate to promote gender equity. Continued research is essential to develop targeted strategies that enhance visibility, challenge stereotypes, and ensure female athletes receive the support they deserve.

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Proverbs As Linguistic Units Preserving the Value of Words

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Keywords	Abstract
Proverb Word Speech Culture linguistic worldview communicative ethics	Proverbs represent condensed expressions of collective wisdom that embody the ethical, cultural, and communicative values of a society. Among their thematic classifications, proverbs concerning the value of words occupy a distinctive position within the moral philosophy of speech communities. These proverbs articulate cultural perceptions of language, silence, and verbal responsibility, reflecting an understanding of speech as both a cognitive instrument and a moral force. The present study examines the linguistic, semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and cognitive features of proverbs that emphasize the value of words. Drawing on cross-linguistic examples, the research demonstrates that across cultures, words are perceived as indicators of intellectual capacity, reflections of moral integrity, and powerful agents capable of creation, healing, or destruction. Proverbs addressing speech behavior, communicative ethics, and the social consequences of language form a significant layer of intangible cultural heritage. The findings suggest that such proverbs reveal a universal awareness of language as a transformative social force and highlight the enduring relevance of verbal responsibility in human interaction.

Introduction

Language constitutes one of the defining characteristics of human existence. Through words, individuals articulate thoughts, convey emotions, construct social relationships, and transmit cultural values. The responsible and skillful use of language has historically been regarded as an indicator of intellectual refinement and moral maturity. Within this framework, proverbs that emphasize the value of words function as ethical guides, transmitting communicative norms and cultural expectations across generations.

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Proverbs are concise, metaphorical expressions of collective experience and represent a significant component of both linguistic structure and cultural memory. As stable phraseological units, they encode social norms, moral principles, and philosophical reflections in compact and memorable forms. Among the wide range of thematic categories, proverbs concerning “the word” occupy a particularly meaningful position. These proverbs address speech etiquette, communicative behavior, silence, truthfulness, and the ethical consequences of verbal expression.

In proverbial discourse, the “word” is not merely a linguistic sign; it is conceptualized as an action with social and moral implications. The symbolic status of the word reflects the recognition of language as a force capable of shaping interpersonal relationships and social harmony. As Malikova (2016) notes, proverbs frequently portray words as instruments of influence, capable of both constructive and destructive impact.

For example, traditional sayings such as “A sword wound heals, but a word wound does not” (Proverbs about the word, n.d.) illustrate the enduring belief that verbal harm may surpass physical injury in its long-term consequences. Similarly, expressions like “Words are the adornment of life” emphasize the aesthetic and ethical dimension of speech, while “Words are the hand that strikes” (Malikova, 2016, p. 25) metaphorically equates language with action and responsibility.

These examples demonstrate that words function not only as tools of communication but also as carriers of emotional weight and moral accountability. The wise and measured use of language is thus presented as foundational to social cohesion and ethical conduct.

This study aims to analyze the cultural, ethical, cognitive, and communicative dimensions of proverbs that preserve and transmit the value of words. By examining their lexical, semantic, syntactic, stylistic, and pragmatic characteristics, the research seeks to demonstrate how the concept of the “word” operates simultaneously as a linguistic category and as an ethical construct within diverse cultural traditions.

Materials and Methods

Corpus and Data Sources

The primary materials of this study are drawn from the corpus of Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings, supplemented by comparative examples from other linguistic traditions. The collected paremiological units were selected based on their thematic relevance to the concept of “word,” including proverbs addressing speech, silence, truthfulness, communicative responsibility, and moral expression. Sources include published collections of proverbs, linguistic research, and scholarly works in phraseology and paremiology.

Methodological Framework



The research applies a combination of descriptive-linguistic analysis, comparative analysis, and cognitive-functional approaches. The descriptive method enables the identification of structural and semantic characteristics of proverbs as stable linguistic units. Comparative analysis allows for the examination of similarities and differences across languages and cultures, highlighting the universality of the concept of the “word” as a moral and communicative phenomenon.

Formative, structural, and semantic-oriented analytical methods are employed to investigate the internal organization of proverbs. Particular attention is given to their lexical composition, syntactic structure, metaphorical mechanisms, pragmatic functions, and cognitive models. This methodological integration provides a comprehensive examination of proverbs as linguistic units that simultaneously function as cultural, ethical, and communicative constructs.

Relevance

Proverbs and sayings represent some of the oldest and most effective linguistic means reflecting the moral, ethical, and aesthetic values of a community. Their study remains highly relevant in contemporary linguistics, cultural studies, and education, as proverbs serve not only as repositories of linguistic structure but also as vehicles of collective cultural memory.

In modern scholarship, increasing attention is devoted to the semantic and functional properties of words as linguistic units. Within this context, proverbs provide invaluable material for understanding how societies conceptualize language, speech, and communicative responsibility. The investigation of proverbs about words is therefore significant for the preservation of linguistic heritage and the strengthening of national and cultural identity. Moreover, such research contributes to intercultural communication studies by demonstrating the shared moral foundations embedded in language traditions worldwide.

Scientific Significance

The present study contributes several novel perspectives to the field of linguistics and paremiology:

- It identifies and analyzes the functional characteristics of proverbs as structured linguistic units.
- It reveals both the denotative and connotative layers of meaning encoded within the concept of the “word.”
- It demonstrates how proverbs serve as instruments for preserving folk culture and reinforcing national identity.
- It establishes a theoretical basis for integrating paremiological material into educational and pedagogical practice.



Accordingly, the study holds scientific value both in theoretical linguistic research and in the practical application of proverbs within moral and educational contexts.

Discussion

Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Proverbs

The precise historical origin of proverbs remains unknown. The earliest recorded proverbs are believed to have appeared around 2000 BCE in ancient Sumer, Mesopotamia. Remarkably, proverbs with nearly identical structures and meanings occur across diverse regions of the world. Proverbs widespread among Turkic peoples also appear in English, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and numerous other languages. As noted by Qurbanova (2024), Francis Bacon once observed that the genius and spirit of a people are reflected in their proverbs (p. 782).

Although the exact origin, authorship, and date of specific proverbs are uncertain, each proverb emerges from a concrete historical and social context. As Jafarov (2007) emphasizes, proverbs arise from lived experiences and, over time, become increasingly abstract and generalized, sometimes losing their original contextual associations (p. 117). Their initial place of emergence may be unclear; however, their connection to particular linguistic and ethnic communities remains evident.

Bayramov (1978) distinguishes proverbs from other wise expressions by noting that, despite the anonymity of their authorship and origin, they continue to function actively in modern language, enriching it with vividness and expressiveness. He characterizes proverbs as predicative word combinations whose origin is unknown (p. 35).

In English-language scholarship, proverbs are frequently examined within phraseology. Amosova (1963) classifies them as “predicative structured phraseological units” (p. 135), while Kunin (1970) refers to them as “predicative phraseologisms” and includes them under the broader category of “communicative phraseological units” (pp. 29). Despite terminological differences, scholars consistently emphasize the semantic density and cultural depth of proverbs.

According to Pashayev (2016), various cultures have attributed distinctive metaphorical names to proverbs: Russians call them “instructive words” or “golden words,” Greeks and Romans describe them as “maxims of wisdom,” Italians refer to them as “the school of the people,” Spaniards as “the nature of the soul,” and the English and French as “the fruit of experience.” These characterizations underscore the universal recognition of proverbs as condensed repositories of collective experience.

Rzasoy (2013) argues that proverbs constitute an indispensable component of any ethnocosmic thinking system, and it is impossible to imagine a society’s cultural landscape without them (p. 3). Similarly, Ibrahimova (2024) notes that paremiological units reflect the stereotypes of national consciousness and characterize national culture (p. 29).



Adilov and Yusifov (2019) maintain that the inclusion of proverbs within phraseology is justified by their metaphorical and figurative nature (p. 40). Qadirova and Pirmammadova (2023) further describe proverbs as mirrors of the life of a people, encapsulating the formation and development of a nation's identity (p. 156).

Proverbs About Words as Ethical and Communicative Codes

Across cultures, proverbs concerning words, speech, language, silence, truth, and oratory occupy a distinctive position. They function as linguistic mirrors of ethical conduct and social responsibility, guiding individuals on how to speak, when to remain silent, and how to consider the consequences of speech.

Examples from different linguistic traditions demonstrate the universality of this awareness:

- English: *A word is enough to the wise.*
- Azerbaijani: *Söz var yaralar, söz var sağaldar.*
- Russian: *Слово не воробей, вылетит — не поймашь.*

These examples confirm that, regardless of linguistic or geographic differences, societies recognize the moral weight of speech. Proverbs about words therefore represent not merely linguistic expressions but philosophical reflections on human responsibility.

The concept of the word holds sacred and ethical value in many cultures. Azerbaijani proverbs vividly illustrate the constructive and destructive potential of speech:

- *Söz var xəstəni sağaldar, söz var adamı yaralar.*
- *Söz var iş bitirər, söz var baş itirər.*
- *Söz var ki, kəsdirir başı, söz var ki, kəsər savaşı* (Proverbs, 2013, p. 366).

These expressions emphasize that words may heal, resolve conflict, or bring destruction. Similarly, proverbs such as:

- *Söz qılıncdan kəsərlidir*
- *Söz həyatın bəzəyidir*
- *Söz insanın vuran əlidir* (Malikova, 2016, p. 25)

highlight the metaphorical power attributed to speech.

Moral education is strongly connected with linguistic behavior. Proverbs instruct individuals to think before speaking:

- *Sözü ağzında bışir, sonra çıxart.*



- *Sözün yaxşısı baldan şirin olar* (Malikova, 2016, p. 25).

Such expressions link ethical maturity with communicative responsibility. In educational contexts, they serve as tools for developing intercultural competence and moral awareness.

Other proverbs emphasize the broad social impact of words:

- *Güllə bir nəfəri, söz on nəfəri öldürər* (Malikova, 2016, p. 39).
- *Söz sözü çəkər* (Malikova, 2016, p. 158).

These illustrate the chain reaction and far-reaching consequences of speech.

Truthfulness occupies a particularly significant place in paremiological discourse:

- *Doğru söz acı olar* (Malikova, 2016, p. 158).
- *Doğru söz kin duruldar.*
- *Düz söz daşdan keçər* (Proverbs, 2004, pp. 92–97).

In these examples, the “truthful word” becomes synonymous with conscience, justice, and ethical integrity.

Conclusion

Proverbs that emphasize the value of words constitute a profound moral, linguistic, and cultural heritage shared across civilizations. As stable paremiological units, they encapsulate centuries of collective experience and preserve the ethical principles governing human communication. The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that proverbs about words function not merely as figurative linguistic expressions but as moral frameworks that regulate social interaction and communicative behavior.

The findings confirm that proverbs consistently affirm several fundamental principles:

- Words possess moral, emotional, and social power.
- Honest, kind, and measured speech enhances human dignity and reinforces social harmony.
- Thoughtful silence may, in certain contexts, be as meaningful and valuable as verbal expression.
- Words hold transformative capacity—they can unite or divide, heal or wound, construct or destroy—depending on intention and usage.

Across linguistic traditions, the concept of the “word” is not treated as a neutral linguistic sign but as an ethical instrument deeply embedded in cultural consciousness. Proverbs encode the



understanding that speech reflects not only intellect but also character. The responsible use of language is therefore presented as a defining attribute of moral maturity.

From a linguistic perspective, proverbs about words reveal the interaction between lexical meaning and cultural symbolism, demonstrating how denotative structures acquire rich connotative and pragmatic dimensions. From a cognitive standpoint, they reflect universal conceptual metaphors that equate words with physical force, healing, weaponry, or creative energy. From a pedagogical perspective, they serve as effective tools for moral education and communicative training.

Ultimately, proverbs remind us that language is not merely a system of signs but a living ethical force. To value words is to value human dignity, cultural continuity, and social responsibility. Respect for language thus becomes synonymous with respect for humanity itself.

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Neural Networks as Artists: Exploring AI in Contemporary Painting

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Keywords	Abstract
Neural Networks Artificial Intelligence in Art AI-Generated Painting	<p>The integration of neural networks into contemporary painting represents a profound transformation in artistic production, aesthetic theory, and creative authorship. This study examines how artificial intelligence (AI), particularly deep learning architectures such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs), generative adversarial networks (GANs), and diffusion models, functions within modern painting practices. Employing an interdisciplinary IMRAD framework, the research combines technical analysis of neural architectures, case studies of AI-generated artworks, and theoretical evaluation of creativity, authorship, and aesthetic agency. The findings indicate that neural networks enable stylistic emulation, generative image synthesis, semantic text-to-image translation, and large-scale visual recombination, thereby expanding both the visual and conceptual boundaries of painting. However, their outputs reflect procedural and statistical creativity rather than conscious intentionality. The study further demonstrates that AI reshapes artistic workflows by shifting emphasis from manual execution toward prompt engineering, system configuration, dataset curation, and algorithmic mediation. While AI-generated paintings have achieved institutional validation and market recognition, they simultaneously raise significant ethical and legal concerns regarding copyright ownership, dataset consent, artistic labor displacement, and cultural appropriation. Ultimately, neural networks function not as autonomous artists but as transformative creative media that redefine collaboration between human imagination and machine computation in contemporary art.</p>

1. Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into artistic practice represents one of the most significant paradigm shifts in contemporary visual culture. Throughout history, technological innovations have transformed artistic production—from the invention of oil paint and linear

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perspective to photography, cinema, and digital imaging software. However, the emergence of neural networks introduces a fundamentally distinct dynamic: systems capable of learning patterns autonomously, generating novel images, and simulating stylistic decision-making processes traditionally associated with human painters.

The intersection of artificial intelligence and visual art has become a defining feature of twenty-first-century creative practice (Sadikhova, 2024). Neural networks—computational models inspired by biological neural systems—enable machines to analyze vast image datasets, extract stylistic patterns, and generate painterly compositions with increasing technical sophistication. Since the widespread adoption of deep learning frameworks in the 2010s, artists, engineers, and researchers have employed algorithms to produce artworks that challenge conventional assumptions about creativity, authorship, originality, and aesthetic intention.

Neural networks, particularly deep learning architectures, are structured in layered systems that process input data hierarchically. Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) specialize in visual recognition tasks by detecting edges, textures, shapes, and higher-order compositional patterns. In the context of painting, this capacity allows algorithms to analyze brushstroke textures, chromatic relationships, compositional balance, and stylistic signatures across art historical periods (Sadikhova, 2022). Unlike traditional rule-based software, neural networks learn through exposure to training data, adjusting internal parameters via optimization processes that minimize predictive error. This adaptive mechanism allows the system to internalize complex aesthetic features embedded within massive image corpora.

The historical roots of AI-generated art can be traced to early computer art experiments in the 1960s, when artists and engineers collaborated to explore algorithmic drawing systems. However, these early experiments relied primarily on explicit programming and deterministic instruction sets rather than statistical learning. The contemporary surge in AI-assisted painting began after breakthroughs in deep learning around 2012, particularly in image classification and object recognition tasks. Soon thereafter, researchers demonstrated that convolutional neural networks could separate content and style representations within images, enabling automated stylistic transformation—a technique now widely known as Neural Style Transfer (Gatys et al., 2015). This development marked a decisive turning point in computational creativity by allowing algorithms to reinterpret existing images through the stylistic lens of canonical painters.

The introduction of Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) by Goodfellow et al. (2014) further accelerated artistic experimentation. GANs consist of two competing neural networks—a generator and a discriminator—engaged in adversarial training. Through iterative competition, the generator learns to produce increasingly realistic images that approximate the statistical distribution of training data. Unlike style transfer, which modifies existing images, GANs can synthesize entirely new compositions. A landmark cultural moment occurred when the French collective Obvious used a GAN trained on historical portrait datasets to create *Edmond de Belamy*,



which was subsequently auctioned at Christie's in 2018. The sale represented a pivotal moment of institutional recognition for AI-generated painting and intensified debates surrounding authorship, authenticity, and market valuation.

Subsequent developments in generative modeling introduced diffusion-based architectures, which iteratively refine random noise into coherent images through probabilistic denoising processes. Diffusion models have demonstrated superior image fidelity and semantic coherence compared to earlier GAN-based systems. Platforms such as DeepDream, DALL·E (OpenAI, 2023), and Midjourney popularized AI-generated imagery by enabling text-to-image synthesis. These systems translate natural language prompts into visually detailed compositions, effectively transforming linguistic description into painterly output.

The democratization of these tools significantly lowered technical barriers to participation in AI-assisted artmaking. Whereas early AI art required advanced programming expertise, contemporary interfaces allow designers, illustrators, and traditional fine artists to experiment with algorithmic image generation through intuitive prompt-based systems (Sadikhova, 2025). As a result, AI painting has shifted from a niche experimental practice to a widely accessible creative medium.

Beyond technical innovation, the rise of AI-generated painting intersects with broader theoretical debates in aesthetics and philosophy of art. Classical Western art theory frequently associates creativity with intentionality, emotional expression, and individual genius. The Romantic conception of the solitary painter—exemplified by artists such as Vincent van Gogh—foregrounds subjective experience and personal vision as central to artistic authenticity. In contrast, AI-assisted painting distributes creative agency across datasets, algorithms, computational processes, and human prompts. This distributed model challenges anthropocentric definitions of creativity and compels reconsideration of what constitutes artistic authorship.

AI-generated painting also complicates notions of originality. Neural networks are trained on vast archives of preexisting artworks, learning statistical patterns embedded within historical traditions. Critics argue that such systems merely recombine prior styles without genuine innovation. Supporters counter that recombination is itself a foundational mechanism of creativity, observable in human artistic development, where influence, adaptation, and stylistic synthesis are commonplace (Elbeyi, 2025). Thus, AI art situates itself within longstanding debates about imitation, appropriation, and transformation in art history.

Economically and institutionally, AI painting has begun reshaping creative industries. Galleries, museums, and auction houses increasingly exhibit algorithmically generated works, while technology companies invest heavily in generative visual systems. At the same time, ethical concerns intensify regarding dataset consent, intellectual property rights, labor displacement, and algorithmic bias. Legal frameworks worldwide struggle to determine whether AI-generated



paintings qualify for copyright protection and, if so, who holds ownership—the developer, the user, or the corporate entity controlling the model.

Technically, aesthetically, economically, and philosophically, neural networks operate at the intersection of tool and collaborator. They extend human creative capability while introducing non-human forms of pattern generation that may exceed direct human predictability. This hybrid dynamic requires interdisciplinary analysis bridging computer science, art theory, media studies, economics, and ethics.

This study therefore examines neural networks not merely as technological instruments but as active participants in contemporary painting practices. By analyzing their computational mechanisms, artistic applications, cultural implications, and institutional reception, the article seeks to clarify how AI reshapes definitions of creativity, authorship, artistic agency, and aesthetic value in the digital era (Gulkhara & Farzaliyeva, 2025).

2. Methods

This study adopts an interdisciplinary qualitative research design that integrates computational analysis, art historical inquiry, media theory, and aesthetic philosophy. The objective is to examine neural networks not merely as software tools but as operative systems embedded within contemporary painting practices. Accordingly, the methodological framework investigates both the technical architectures that generate visual outputs and the cultural, institutional, and theoretical contexts in which these outputs circulate.

The research is positioned at the intersection of computer science and art theory. Rather than treating neural networks solely as engineering artifacts, this study analyzes them as socio-technical systems whose outputs participate in aesthetic discourse, market valuation, and authorship debates.

2.1 Research Design

The research follows a multi-layered qualitative framework consisting of four interrelated analytical components:

1. **Technical Analysis** – Systematic examination of neural network architectures used in AI-driven painting applications, focusing on computational mechanisms and generative logic.
2. **Case Study Evaluation** – Investigation of selected AI-generated artworks and institutional exhibitions to contextualize technological innovation within artistic practice.
3. **Comparative Aesthetic Analysis** – Visual and stylistic comparison between AI-generated paintings and canonical traditional artworks.
4. **Theoretical Interpretation** – Application of aesthetic theory, authorship discourse, and computational creativity frameworks to interpret findings.



This integrated approach enables cross-disciplinary synthesis. Technical analysis provides understanding of algorithmic structures; case studies demonstrate real-world application; aesthetic comparison situates outputs within art historical traditions; theoretical interpretation connects empirical findings to philosophical debates regarding creativity and agency.

The qualitative design is particularly suitable because the study does not aim to measure quantitative performance metrics but rather to interpret aesthetic, cultural, and conceptual transformations resulting from AI integration into painting.

2.2 Literature Review Procedure

A systematic literature review was conducted to establish theoretical and technical foundations. Sources were collected from peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and interdisciplinary art theory publications. Major computational venues consulted included:

- NeurIPS (Neural Information Processing Systems)
- CVPR (Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition)
- IEEE Xplore
- ACM Digital Library

Humanities and interdisciplinary sources were retrieved through Google Scholar and JSTOR to incorporate aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural analysis.

The literature review was organized into five primary thematic categories:

- Neural Style Transfer and convolutional neural network (CNN) visualization
- Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) in creative practice
- Diffusion-based generative systems and text-to-image architectures
- Computational creativity theory
- Ethical and authorship discourse in AI-generated art

Sources were selected based on relevance to AI-generated visual production, citation impact, interdisciplinary significance, and methodological rigor. Priority was given to foundational technical papers (e.g., GAN architecture development, neural style transfer research) and influential aesthetic critiques discussing authorship, originality, and intentionality.

2.3 Selection of Case Studies

Case studies were selected according to the following criteria:

- Demonstrated use of neural network-based image generation



- Institutional recognition (gallery exhibitions, museum display, auction sale)
- Clear documentation of technical processes or architectural framework
- Presence of critical discourse regarding authorship, authenticity, or originality

Representative examples include:

- **Edmond de Belamy**, created by the French collective Obvious and auctioned at Christie's (2018), representing GAN-based generative synthesis.
- Early neural visualization works generated using DeepDream, illustrating convolutional network perceptual feedback.
- Text-to-image painting outputs from DALL·E and Midjourney, exemplifying diffusion-based generative systems.

These examples were deliberately selected to represent three distinct technological generations:

1. CNN-based visualization (feature extraction and perceptual hallucination)
2. GAN-based synthesis (adversarial generative modeling)
3. Diffusion-based probabilistic generation (text-conditioned image synthesis)

By spanning different architectural paradigms, the study traces the evolution of neural network painting systems across successive phases of AI development.

2.4 Technical Framework Analysis

To understand how neural networks simulate painterly processes, three primary computational architectures were examined in detail.

2.4.1 Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs)

CNNs were analyzed primarily in the context of neural style transfer and feature visualization. The study reviewed how convolutional layers encode hierarchical representations of visual information:

- Lower layers capture edges, contours, and simple textures.
- Intermediate layers encode patterns, color relationships, and repetitive motifs.
- Higher layers represent complex objects and compositional structures.

Particular attention was given to the use of **Gram matrix calculations** in neural style transfer algorithms. Gram matrices measure correlations between feature maps within convolutional layers, enabling extraction of stylistic patterns independent of spatial arrangement. By combining



a content image representation with style correlations derived from another artwork, the algorithm synthesizes hybrid images that preserve semantic structure while adopting stylistic texture.

This analysis demonstrates that CNN-based painting does not “understand” style semantically but encodes it statistically through feature correlation patterns.

2.4.2 Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs)

GAN analysis focused on the adversarial training mechanism between generator and discriminator networks. The generator attempts to produce synthetic images, while the discriminator evaluates whether images resemble real training data. Through iterative competition, the system converges toward visually plausible outputs.

Architectural variants were reviewed, including:

- **DCGAN (Deep Convolutional GAN)** – early stable convolutional architecture
- **StyleGAN** – improved architecture emphasizing style control and high-resolution synthesis

The study examined how latent space interpolation enables stylistic hybridization and controlled variation. By navigating latent vectors, artists can explore intermediate stylistic states that blend historical painting traditions or abstract visual features.

Dataset composition was also considered critical. The visual characteristics of GAN-generated outputs are strongly dependent on the training corpus, meaning that aesthetic identity is shaped by data selection. This raises both creative possibilities and ethical concerns related to dataset sourcing.

2.4.3 Diffusion Models

Diffusion-based generative models were analyzed for their probabilistic denoising mechanisms. These models begin with random noise and iteratively refine the image through a reverse-diffusion process, guided by learned probability distributions.

Text-conditioning mechanisms were examined, particularly transformer-based embeddings that encode semantic prompts into high-dimensional vectors. This enables systems to translate linguistic description into coherent visual imagery.

Technical documentation, research papers, and open-source repositories were consulted to verify algorithmic workflows and training procedures. Diffusion models were evaluated in terms of:

- Image fidelity
- Semantic alignment with prompts



- Control over stylistic parameters
- Scalability across large datasets

Diffusion architectures demonstrate greater stability and resolution compared to early GAN systems, making them dominant in contemporary AI-assisted painting platforms.

2.5 Visual and Aesthetic Analysis

A structured visual analysis protocol was applied to selected AI-generated paintings. Evaluation criteria included:

- **Composition** (balance, spatial organization, focal hierarchy)
- **Color theory application** (harmony, contrast, temperature dynamics)
- **Brushstroke simulation and texture rendering**
- **Stylistic coherence across visual elements**
- **Novelty, abstraction, and conceptual transformation**

Comparisons were conducted with canonical works by artists such as Vincent van Gogh and Pablo Picasso to assess degrees of stylistic mimicry versus transformation. The aim was not to measure aesthetic value quantitatively but to interpret how neural networks emulate, reinterpret, or hybridize established artistic languages.

The visual analysis was grounded in art historical methodology, emphasizing contextual interpretation rather than computational performance metrics. Particular attention was given to whether AI-generated paintings demonstrate:

- Structural imitation
- Stylistic recombination
- Emergent visual patterns not directly traceable to a single historical source

This interpretive approach situates neural networks within broader aesthetic discourse rather than evaluating them solely through technical benchmarks.

3. Results

The analysis reveals that neural networks influence contemporary painting across three interconnected dimensions: aesthetic production, creative workflow transformation, and institutional-cultural impact. Drawing from foundational technical literature and case-based observations, the findings indicate that AI systems do not merely replicate historical styles but generate hybrid visual languages shaped by algorithmic architecture, training data composition,



probabilistic optimization, and human input (Sadikhova & Babayev, 2025). Rather than functioning as passive emulators, neural networks operate as structured generative systems whose outputs reflect both computational constraints and user-directed parameters.

Across convolutional, adversarial, and diffusion-based models, the results demonstrate that AI-driven painting represents a transformation not only of artistic technique but also of authorship structure, aesthetic logic, and creative labor distribution.

3.1 Neural Style Transfer: Controlled Aesthetic Hybridization

Neural Style Transfer (NST), introduced by Gatys, Ecker, and Bethge (2015), demonstrated that convolutional neural networks (CNNs) can computationally separate and recombine content and stylistic representations within images. Lower convolutional layers encode local features such as edges, contours, and textures, while deeper layers capture higher-order semantic structures and object-level representations (Gatys et al., 2015).

Empirical visual analysis of NST outputs reveals that the method effectively simulates painterly surface characteristics, including:

- Swirling brushstroke textures
- High-contrast chromatic modulation
- Dynamic directional movement in composition

When applied to canonical painters such as Vincent van Gogh, NST produces visually recognizable stylistic emulation. However, despite accurate replication of surface-level aesthetics, emotional intentionality, symbolic meaning, and historical context remain absent. The network does not “interpret” artistic content; it statistically recombines feature correlations derived from training layers.

This confirms theoretical claims that NST performs probabilistic style approximation rather than autonomous creative invention (McCormack et al., 2019). The algorithm operates within mathematically defined constraints—specifically Gram matrix-based style correlations—rather than subjective artistic intention.

The key finding is that neural style transfer functions as a controlled aesthetic hybridization tool, dependent on pre-existing visual data and guided by optimization parameters rather than conceptual agency (Gatys et al., 2015).

3.2 GAN-Based Painting: Emergent Visual Forms



Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), introduced by Goodfellow et al. (2014), marked a fundamental shift from style transformation toward image synthesis. Unlike NST, GANs do not require an initial content image; instead, they generate entirely new compositions by sampling from learned probability distributions.

GAN architecture consists of two competing neural networks:

- A **generator**, which synthesizes candidate images
- A **discriminator**, which evaluates authenticity relative to training data

Through adversarial training, the generator progressively improves image realism. This dynamic enables GAN systems to produce portraits, landscapes, and abstract compositions not directly traceable to a single source image.

Analysis of GAN-generated portraits—including *Edmond de Belamy* by the French collective Obvious—demonstrates stylistic blending derived from historical portrait datasets. The 2018 Christie’s auction of this work signaled a milestone in institutional recognition of AI-generated painting (Christie’s, 2018). Importantly, the work’s aesthetic character reflects averaged stylistic patterns from Baroque and Renaissance portrait traditions rather than identifiable authorship.

Further examination of Creative Adversarial Networks (CAN) suggests that GAN variants can be optimized to deviate from dominant stylistic norms, introducing controlled novelty within learned distributions (Elgammal et al., 2017). However, observed distortions—blurred facial boundaries, asymmetrical anatomical features, or spatial incoherence—are typically artifacts of statistical modeling rather than intentional abstraction.

GANs demonstrate a form of generative autonomy within probabilistic constraints, producing novel but dataset-bound imagery (Goodfellow et al., 2014; Elgammal et al., 2017). While outputs may appear inventive, they remain conditioned by training corpus composition and optimization dynamics.

3.3 Diffusion Models: Semantic-to-Visual Translation

Diffusion models represent a significant advancement in generative image synthesis. Unlike GANs, which rely on adversarial competition, diffusion systems iteratively denoise random noise guided by learned probability distributions and text-conditioned embeddings.

Contemporary implementations such as DALL·E translate natural language prompts into high-resolution painterly outputs (OpenAI, 2023). This introduces a crucial transformation: language becomes a primary generative input.

Comparative output analysis reveals several consistent characteristics:

- Strong semantic alignment between textual prompts and visual results



- Complex lighting simulation and atmospheric depth
- Convincing painterly texture synthesis
- Multi-style integration within a single compositional frame

The transition from GAN-based systems to diffusion architectures reflects improvements in:

- Image stability
- High-resolution fidelity
- Prompt adherence
- Stylistic controllability

Manovich (2019) argues that such systems expand the aesthetic field by operationalizing language as a direct driver of visual creation. Diffusion models function as **semantic interpreters**, converting conceptual language into structured painterly imagery (OpenAI, 2023; Manovich, 2019).

This shift marks a conceptual transformation: painting becomes increasingly mediated by textual articulation. Creative authorship partially relocates from manual brushwork to linguistic precision.

3.4 Emergence of a Distinct AI Aesthetic

Across CNN-, GAN-, and diffusion-based systems, recurring visual characteristics suggest the emergence of a distinct “AI aesthetic.” This aesthetic is not tied to a single historical tradition but reflects computational optimization patterns.

Observed features include:

- Hyper-detailed microtextures
- Statistically averaged facial symmetry
- Surreal object blending across semantic categories
- Repetition of learned visual tropes
- Algorithmically balanced compositions

These patterns correspond with optimization behaviors described in deep learning theory (Goodfellow et al., 2016). Neural networks minimize loss functions that reward coherence, clarity, and dataset conformity. Consequently, outputs frequently display high compositional balance.



While AI systems can simulate stylistic fragmentation reminiscent of Pablo Picasso or other modernist painters, they often gravitate toward compositional equilibrium due to dataset bias toward aesthetically balanced imagery.

McCormack et al. (2019) emphasize that such outputs represent **procedural creativity** rather than experiential expression. Neural networks generate a hybrid aesthetic shaped by statistical learning, feature optimization, and dataset distribution rather than lived artistic experience.

Thus, AI painting exhibits both imitation and emergent formal properties, forming a recognizable computational visual signature.

3.5 Transformation of Artistic Workflow

The results indicate a significant transformation in artistic production processes.

Three primary shifts are observed:

1. Acceleration of Ideation

Neural networks enable rapid generation of compositional alternatives. Artists can explore hundreds of visual permutations within minutes, dramatically reducing ideation time.

2. Prompt-Based Iteration

Creative control increasingly shifts from manual execution to linguistic refinement. Artists engage in iterative prompt engineering, modifying descriptive parameters to influence visual outcomes (Sadikhova, 2025).

3. Curatorial Emphasis

Selection, refinement, and post-processing become central creative acts. The artist's role expands toward system configuration, dataset choice, and output evaluation.

This redistribution of creative labor aligns with theories of distributed authorship in computational art (McCormack et al., 2019). Artists increasingly function as orchestrators, system designers, and curators rather than sole image-makers.

AI systems therefore restructure artistic workflow, foregrounding conceptual direction, system orchestration, and iterative refinement over manual brush-based production.

3.6 Institutional and Market Validation

The institutional acceptance of AI-generated painting—particularly the Christie's auction of AI artworks—demonstrates formal market validation (Christie's, 2018). Galleries, museums, and academic institutions increasingly incorporate AI-generated works into exhibitions and scholarly discourse.



However, valuation often reflects technological novelty as much as aesthetic merit. Media fascination with algorithmic authorship contributes to what Manovich (2019) describes as the intersection of artistic production and technological spectacle economies.

Neural network paintings have thus transitioned from experimental computational artifacts to recognized cultural commodities. At the same time, this institutional validation intensifies ethical debates concerning authorship rights, dataset consent, and labor displacement.

The results suggest that neural networks are no longer peripheral tools but central actors in contemporary painting ecosystems—reshaping aesthetic production, creative labor distribution, and cultural valuation systems simultaneously.

4. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that neural networks significantly reshape contemporary painting across aesthetic, conceptual, technological, and institutional domains. However, their role remains conceptually complex: they operate simultaneously as technical instruments, collaborative agents, aesthetic systems, and cultural provocateurs. This discussion situates the empirical results within broader theoretical, philosophical, and ethical frameworks, addressing how neural networks challenge established definitions of creativity, authorship, artistic identity, and cultural production.

4.1 Rethinking Creativity: Procedural vs. Intentional Agency

Traditional theories of art frequently define creativity as the product of conscious intention, emotional depth, and subjective experience (Sadikhova & Babayev, 2025). Romantic conceptions of artistic genius—epitomized by figures such as Vincent van Gogh—frame artistic production as an expression of inner psychological states and lived emotional intensity. Within this paradigm, creativity is inseparable from human consciousness and experiential authenticity.

Neural networks fundamentally challenge this anthropocentric framework by generating visually compelling and historically novel paintings without consciousness, emotion, or self-awareness. McCormack, Gifford, and Hutchings (2019) characterize computer-generated art as exhibiting *procedural creativity*, wherein novelty emerges from algorithmic systems rather than subjective intention. This distinction is reinforced by Boden's (1998) influential framework differentiating psychological creativity (P-creativity)—novelty relative to an individual mind—from historical creativity (H-creativity)—novelty relative to cultural history.

The present study's findings support this theoretical distinction. GANs and diffusion models generate new combinations within learned probability distributions, producing historically novel visual outputs. However, these combinations arise from statistical optimization processes and gradient-based parameter adjustment rather than intentional self-expression.



Thus, neural networks demonstrate *synthetic originality* but not *experiential authorship*. Their outputs may appear innovative, yet they lack reflexive awareness of meaning. Creativity, in this computational context, becomes an emergent property of system architecture rather than a manifestation of inner consciousness.

4.2 Distributed Authorship and Collaborative Production

The study's findings indicate that authorship in AI-generated painting is not singular but distributed among multiple human and technical agents:

- Dataset curators who determine visual training corpora
- Algorithm designers who construct neural architectures
- Model trainers who configure optimization processes
- Prompt engineers who articulate conceptual instructions
- Artists who select, refine, and contextualize outputs

This distributed configuration aligns with theories of collaborative and networked creativity in digital media (Manovich, 2019). Rather than replacing artists, AI systems reorganize creative labor and redistribute artistic agency. The painter increasingly functions as a conceptual director, system orchestrator, or curator of computational processes.

The case of *Edmond de Belamy*, produced by the collective Obvious and auctioned at Christie's, exemplifies this distributed authorship model. While the GAN generated the final image, human participants selected the dataset, configured the architecture, curated outputs, and embedded the work within art market discourse (Christie's, 2018). Authorship thus becomes layered and relational rather than singular.

Elgammal et al. (2017) propose that Creative Adversarial Networks can deviate intentionally from established styles by optimizing for novelty. However, even in such systems, "intentional deviation" reflects human-defined objectives embedded within algorithmic design. Neural networks operate within boundaries established by human parameters and data constraints.

Consequently, AI-generated painting exemplifies *collaborative computational authorship*, in which agency is distributed across socio-technical networks.

4.3 The Emergence of an Algorithmic Aesthetic

The results identified recurring visual characteristics—hyper-detailed microtextures, statistically averaged symmetry, surreal semantic blending, and compositional coherence—that suggest the emergence of a distinct "algorithmic aesthetic." This phenomenon supports Manovich's (2019)



claim that AI art introduces new formal properties rooted in data aggregation and computational optimization.

Unlike traditional painters such as Pablo Picasso, who consciously disrupted visual conventions through intentional stylistic fragmentation, neural networks optimize toward statistical plausibility. Their distortions—blurred contours, anomalous anatomical structures, improbable object juxtapositions—are not expressive gestures but artifacts of probabilistic modeling and training distribution biases (Goodfellow et al., 2016).

Yet paradoxically, these artifacts increasingly function as stylistic signatures. What begins as computational limitation becomes aesthetic identity. The system's constraints—optimization bias, dataset averaging, latent interpolation—generate recognizable visual traits that differentiate AI-generated imagery from traditional painting.

This suggests a significant theoretical insight: although neural networks lack intention, their structural limitations produce consistent formal tendencies that can be interpreted as stylistic coherence. The machine's architecture becomes its aesthetic framework.

4.4 Ethical and Legal Implications

The integration of neural networks into painting raises substantial ethical and legal challenges that extend beyond aesthetic theory.

1. Copyright Ownership

Legal systems across jurisdictions diverge in their treatment of AI-generated works. Many copyright frameworks require demonstrable human authorship, complicating claims over AI-produced images. Questions arise regarding whether authorship resides with:

- The developer of the algorithm
- The dataset curator
- The prompt engineer
- The end-user

This ambiguity destabilizes traditional intellectual property structures.

2. Dataset Consent

Training neural networks on copyrighted artworks without explicit permission has generated controversy among contemporary artists. Concerns focus on unconsented stylistic extraction and potential appropriation. Ethical AI art practices therefore demand transparency regarding dataset sources and model training methodologies.



3. Economic Displacement

Automation of illustration, concept art, and commercial design workflows introduces potential displacement within creative labor markets (Farzaliyeva & Abdullayev, 2025). While AI expands creative accessibility, it may simultaneously restructure economic opportunity within artistic industries.

McCormack et al. (2019) emphasize that authenticity in computational art depends upon process transparency and acknowledgment of training data. Ethical integration of neural networks into painting thus requires responsible dataset curation, disclosure practices, and institutional accountability.

4.5 AI as Medium Rather Than Artist

A central philosophical debate concerns whether neural networks should be regarded as artists. The results suggest that, despite remarkable generative capacity, systems such as DALL·E remain dependent upon human-defined parameters, training corpora, and optimization functions (OpenAI, 2023).

From a philosophical perspective, essential attributes of artistic agency—intentionality, self-awareness, contextual understanding, and moral responsibility—remain absent in current AI systems. Neural networks process symbolic input and statistical patterns but do not possess phenomenological experience.

Boden (1998) argues that creativity involves generative rule-based systems capable of exploring conceptual spaces. Neural networks indeed navigate high-dimensional visual spaces through latent representation and diffusion sampling. However, such exploration is bounded by dataset structure and optimization objectives.

Meaning arises not from the machine but from human interpretation. Therefore, it is more conceptually accurate to frame neural networks as **creative media technologies**—comparable to photography or digital imaging software—rather than autonomous artists.

4.6 Cultural and Institutional Transformation

The validation of AI-generated painting within galleries, museums, and auction houses signals a broader cultural transformation. The Christie's sale of *Edmond de Belamy* symbolized institutional acceptance but simultaneously commodified technological novelty (Christie's, 2018).

Manovich (2019) observes that AI art operates at the intersection of artistic experimentation and technological spectacle. Its valuation often derives from narratives of innovation and disruption rather than purely aesthetic evaluation.



Over time, normalization of AI tools may reduce novelty-driven valuation, integrating neural networks into routine artistic workflows. What currently appears revolutionary may eventually become infrastructural.

Thus, neural networks do not merely generate images; they reshape institutional frameworks, market structures, and cultural narratives surrounding creativity.

5. Conclusion

Neural networks have emerged as transformative agents in contemporary painting, redefining how images are conceived, generated, curated, and interpreted. Through architectures such as convolutional neural networks, generative adversarial networks, and diffusion models, AI systems can emulate stylistic traditions, synthesize novel compositions, and translate textual concepts into painterly form with unprecedented efficiency.

However, as this study demonstrates, their creativity remains procedural rather than intentional. The aesthetic outputs of these systems arise from statistical learning, probabilistic modeling, and optimization dynamics rather than conscious experience or emotional depth. Neural networks exhibit synthetic originality but not experiential authorship.

Simultaneously, AI has restructured artistic workflows. Creative emphasis shifts from manual technique toward conceptual direction, prompt design, system configuration, and curatorial selection. Authorship becomes distributed across human and computational agents, challenging traditional narratives of individual genius and originality.

Institutionally, AI-generated painting has moved from experimental novelty to recognized cultural commodity. Yet ethical concerns regarding copyright, dataset consent, and labor displacement persist, requiring ongoing scholarly and regulatory engagement.

Ultimately, neural networks should be understood not as autonomous artists but as powerful creative media. They extend the boundaries of aesthetic production while remaining embedded within human-defined conceptual and ethical frameworks. Their integration into contemporary painting expands artistic possibility while demanding sustained theoretical, cultural, and philosophical reflection.

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The Concept of Human Education in the Works of L. N. Tolstoy: A Pedagogical and Psychological Analysis

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Keywords	Abstract
moral education in Tolstoy's works love compassion human psychology	The article analyzes the concept of human education in the works of Leo Tolstoy from pedagogical and psychological perspectives. The aim of the study is to identify the stages of moral formation in the writer's works <i>What Men Live By</i> , <i>The Death of Ivan Ilyich</i> , <i>Youth</i> , and <i>Master and Man</i> , and to scientifically explain the role of love, compassion, and conscience in the educational process. Methodologically, the research applies a comparative-analytical approach, pedagogical-psychological interpretation of the literary text, and characterological analysis of the protagonists. The analysis demonstrates that Tolstoy interprets human education not merely as the transmission of knowledge but as the awakening of inner moral potential. The writer presents the human life path—from childhood to death—as a continuous process of moral development and emphasizes that true human value is embodied in conscience and compassion, regardless of social status. The study concludes that Tolstoy's humanistic worldview possesses significant theoretical and practical relevance for modern pedagogy and psychology and serves as a conceptual model defining the main directions of moral education.

Introduction

Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy was born on September 9, 1828, in Yasnaya Polyana, Tula Province of the Russian Empire, into a noble family. From early childhood, both the intellectual atmosphere of his family environment and the early loss of his parents contributed to the formation of his deep, thoughtful, and sensitive character. He first received home education and later studied at Kazan

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University in the faculties of Oriental Studies and Law; however, due to inner spiritual searches, he did not complete his formal education.

Methods

The study employs a comparative-analytical approach, hermeneutic analysis of literary texts, and pedagogical-psychological interpretation. The characterological features of the protagonists are systematically examined, and their moral transformations are analyzed within the context of developmental stages. Additionally, through conceptual generalization, the fundamental principles of the model of human education in Tolstoy's works are identified.

Literature Review

The works of Leo Tolstoy have been extensively studied in world and Azerbaijani literary scholarship. Research has primarily focused on the writer's realism, psychological depth, and humanistic philosophy. For example, M. Guliyev interpreted Tolstoy's humanistic views within the framework of moral perfection and conscience, while R. Alizade examined the system of moral values in Russian classical literature from a comparative perspective. In Turkish literary studies, M. Kaplan and Y. Dursun analyzed Tolstoy's psychological realism and the internal transformation of human character. Although existing studies mainly concentrate on philosophical and literary aspects, a systematic pedagogical-psychological analysis of his works remains relatively limited. In this regard, the present research aims to comprehensively evaluate the concept of human education in Tolstoy's literary heritage.

Discussion

A significant turning point in the life of Leo Tolstoy occurred when he went to the Caucasus and began military service. The years he spent there provided him with fundamental observations about human character, war, death, honor, and the meaning of life. These experiences enriched his later works with psychological realism and philosophical depth (Dursun, Y. 2017). His first successes began with the autobiographical novellas *Childhood*, *Boyhood*, and *Youth*, which demonstrate the writer's particular attention to the moral formation of the individual.

When Tolstoy married, his wife, Sophia Bers, was 18 years old. This marriage put an end to his longing for a settled life. On the day of their wedding, he gave his wife his diaries—describing his previous life, particularly his relationships with female servants working in their household—so that she would learn about his past mistakes. Despite his former moral weaknesses, their marriage lasted until the end of his life. They had thirteen children, three of whom died.

The most productive period of his творчество dates to the 1860s–1870s. With the novel *War and Peace*, Tolstoy combined epic depictions of historical events with deep psychological analysis, creating a new stage in world literature (Kaplan, 2015). In *Anna Karenina*, he presented love, family, society, and moral relationships in a complex and multifaceted manner. From this period



onward, Tolstoy emerged not only as a writer but also as a moral and religious thinker. His wife was his greatest assistant in writing his works; notably, he revised *War and Peace* nine times.

After some time, he experienced an even more severe spiritual crisis. The poverty and miserable condition of the broad masses—especially Russian peasants—deeply saddened him. He distributed all his wealth to the peasants and began living as they did. He dressed plainly and even sewed his own clothes. The only unchanging aspect of his life was his tireless writing. *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Master and Man*, *The Power of Darkness*, *What I Believe*, *Confession*, and other works were products of this period.

In his final years, Tolstoy sharply criticized social contradictions, class inequality, and official religious institutions, advocating a simple lifestyle, pacifism, and moral purity (Əlizadə, 2012). His ideas led to the formation of a movement known as “Tolstoyanism,” which had significant socio-philosophical influence worldwide. Family disagreements, public pressure, and personal spiritual quests complicated his last years. Influenced by radical views on property, he distributed his wealth among the peasants, which caused conflicts within his family. His book *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, promoting Christian anarchism, led to his excommunication from the Orthodox Church. In the final stage of his life, after leaving home in distress, he died on November 20, 1910, at the Astapovo railway station during a journey. Through both his monumental novels and his reflections on moral perfection, Tolstoy left an indelible mark on world literature and secured a prominent place in the moral history of humanity (Babayev, 2003).

Leo Tolstoy is one of the greatest writers in world literature to explore the human spiritual world, inner turmoil, and the true essence of life. His works stand out not only as artistic masterpieces but also for their pedagogical and psychological value. The characters he created—their life paths, mistakes, suffering, transformations, and processes of self-realization—constitute rich material for pedagogical research. Fundamental questions such as how a person grows, what influences shape character, when and how moral awakening occurs, and what sustains human life occupy a central place in Tolstoy’s творчество. In this regard, *What Men Live By?*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, and *Youth* most vividly reflect the writer’s humanistic ideas. These works portray different stages of moral development: childhood and family upbringing, the internal struggles of youth, and the confrontation of the mature individual with life and the reality of death.

The educational views of Leo Tolstoy are grounded in humanism. He does not regard education merely as the transmission of knowledge; rather, he argues that its primary purpose is to awaken the seed of goodness within the human being. According to Tolstoy, goodness exists in every individual, and the task of the educator is to bring this goodness to light. Educating not through force but through love, not through severity but through understanding, not through coercion but through personal example constitutes his fundamental principle. These ideas are realized not only theoretically but also through vivid characters in his artistic world.



In *What Men Live By?*, Tolstoy demonstrates that the foundation of human life is love and compassion. The protagonist, Semyon, is a poor shoemaker, yet he possesses a spiritual wealth absent in many wealthy individuals. He is not crushed by life's hardships because conscience and mercy are strong within him. One day, while returning home, he sees a stranger freezing in the cold and takes him into his house (Lev Tolstoy, 2014). Together with his wife Matryona, he helps the man, Michael. The stranger smiles when he is first given food. Michael begins living with them and becomes Semyon's assistant.

Later, a wealthy man orders boots from expensive leather, but Michael instead makes slippers. Soon after, a servant arrives to inform them that the wealthy man has died and takes the slippers. Another day, a woman arrives with two girls; one has a physical disability. After they leave, Michael smiles again, and it is revealed that he is an angel sent by God to learn three truths: what dwells in man, what is not given to man, and what men live by (Lev Tolstoy, 2014). These truths—that love sustains human life, that humans cannot foresee their destiny, and that people are created for compassion—form the foundation of Tolstoy's pedagogical worldview. Semyon's kindness and humanity enable the angel to learn these truths, and in the end, the angel regains his divine form and ascends to heaven.

The central message of the story is that wealth does not sustain human life—love, compassion, and humanity do. Tolstoy shows that true strength lies not in material riches but in purity of heart. From a pedagogical perspective, Semyon's family represents an ideal model: family members treat one another with love and understanding, and children learn compassion by observing parental behavior. Psychologically, this illustrates the development of empathy, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility in children. The angel's regaining of his wings upon witnessing human love symbolizes that love elevates the individual and prevents alienation. Thus, the work is not only a religious-philosophical tale but also a lesson in moral education.

In contrast, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* portrays a darker and more crisis-ridden stage of moral life. The story offers a striking answer to what should truly fill human existence. Ivan Ilyich spends his life pursuing external success—status, career, comfort, and social recognition. He builds relationships based on superficiality and constructs a masked existence. However, when he falls ill and confronts death, he realizes the emptiness of his life (Lev Tolstoy, 2010). His family and acquaintances remain indifferent to his suffering. Only one character—the servant Gerasim—demonstrates genuine morality. Gerasim shows compassion, provides both physical and emotional support, accepts life as it is, and understands death as a natural process. Through this contrast, Tolstoy emphasizes that authentic humanity lies not in social position but in sincerity, empathy, and moral awareness.

From a pedagogical and psychological perspective, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is a profound lesson. First and foremost, it offers an analysis of spiritual emptiness. The principle that guided Ivan Ilyich's life—"external propriety, internal emptiness"—corresponds in psychology to what is



known as the “mask theory.” Individuals often conceal their genuine emotions in order to conform to societal expectations, and over time this leads to inner psychological exhaustion. Ivan’s psychological collapse stems precisely from this conflict. In his final moments, he recognizes the mistakes of his life and, albeit too late, understands that what truly sustains human existence is love and sincerity (Lev Tolstoy, 2010). Here, Leo Tolstoy emphasizes that human education is a lifelong process. Although some individuals realize the truth only at the end of life, this does not diminish the value of their moral awakening.

The character of Gerasim represents an ideal model of moral education. Though socially of low status, he is spiritually elevated. His simplicity, purity of heart, sincerity, and self-sacrifice embody Tolstoy’s ideal human type. From a pedagogical standpoint, such a character can be presented to children and young people as a moral exemplar. Gerasim demonstrates that human worth is determined not by social position but by moral integrity.

The work *Youth* reflects the early stages of personal formation, particularly the psychological challenges of adolescence and young adulthood. The text has an autobiographical character, as Tolstoy critically and openly examines his own youth. He portrays a young man who at times is overly self-confident, at other times deeply insecure, emotionally sensitive, and troubled by social comparisons—traits consistent with psychological descriptions of adolescence. In the narrative, the young Tolstoy constantly analyzes himself, evaluates his actions, and is often excessively self-critical. This process of self-reflection and self-awareness is a crucial factor in personality development (Lev Tolstoy, 2018).

From a pedagogical perspective, one of the most significant aspects of *Youth* is the process of learning through mistakes. Tolstoy clearly shows that errors committed in youth contribute to personal maturation. Rather than punishing children and adolescents, guiding them to understand the causes of their mistakes is presented as a fundamental principle of education. The personal crises and internal struggles of the young protagonist provide vivid illustrations of developmental stages in human psychology. Issues such as lack of self-confidence, emotional instability, and identity confusion are extensively depicted, making the work valuable material for educators and psychologists alike.

Tolstoy’s short story *Master and Man* reveals the human spiritual world, inner transformation, and the essence of social relationships. In this narrative, the author presents the contradictions of human character, the gap between wealth and morality, and the true value of self-sacrifice through subtle psychological observation. The artistic power of the work lies not in its brevity but in the depth of its meaning (Lev Tolstoy, 2022).

The plot of *Master and Man* begins when the merchant Vasili Andreyevich sets out on a harsh winter day to purchase a profitable piece of land. He travels with his servant Nikita and, throughout the journey, thinks only of his own financial gain. As the snowstorm and frost intensify, they lose



their way; however, Vasili Andreyevich's greed prevents him from turning back. Nikita, loyal and patient, obeys his master, yet gradually weakens under the severity of nature. When they are stranded in the blizzard, Nikita faces the danger of freezing to death. At this critical moment, a transformation occurs within Vasili Andreyevich: he shields his servant with his own body in order to save him. As a result, Nikita survives, but Vasili Andreyevich loses his life. His death becomes both a physical end and a moment of moral elevation—at the point of death, the merchant realizes the futility of his life and comes into contact with his conscience.

From a pedagogical and psychological perspective, the analysis of the story is built upon the contrast between Vasili Andreyevich and Nikita. Although Vasili Andreyevich holds a high social status, he is spiritually weak, greedy, and egoistic. At the beginning of the story, he evaluates human relationships in purely material terms. Nikita, despite being poor, is honest, pure-hearted, and self-sacrificing. Through these two characters, Leo Tolstoy demonstrates that moral greatness lies not in wealth but in character and conduct. Nikita's loyalty and forgiving nature serve as ethical models from a pedagogical standpoint.

Psychologically, the most significant aspect of the narrative is Vasili Andreyevich's inner transformation. The change that occurs in his consciousness at the moment of death symbolizes the shift from greed to conscience, from egoism to compassion. This transformation illustrates how the human psyche can be reshaped under extreme conditions. The harshness of nature—the blizzard, darkness, and frost—acts as a mirror reflecting the inner world of the characters. Being lost in the storm represents not only a physical ordeal but also a moral trial, confronting the individual with his true self.

Tolstoy emphasizes that social inequality is merely an external framework, whereas true superiority is revealed through moral qualities. The master's self-sacrifice to save his servant constitutes the culmination of this idea. It conveys both a humanistic message and a moral lesson to the reader: a person's value is measured by the good they do.

Master and Man is ultimately a story about discovering the inner light within oneself. Tolstoy shows that even in the most difficult trials, at the very threshold of death, compassion can awaken within a person and elevate them spiritually.

Although these four works may appear different, they are closely interconnected. *What Men Live By?* reveals the moral foundation of human life; *Youth* explains how this foundation is formed and how self-awareness develops; *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* illuminates the psychological transformation of the mature individual in the face of death; and *Master and Man* demonstrates that moral awakening may emerge in the most extreme moments of trial. Together, these works complete the moral and psychological evolution of the individual from childhood to death (Lev Tolstoy, 2022).



In the works of Leo Tolstoy, love, compassion, conscience, simplicity, and integrity occupy a central place. He regards moral development as the most essential purpose of human life. Tolstoy holds a distinctive position in pedagogy because he places the inner world of the individual at the center of education. According to him, true teaching and upbringing consist in awakening the goodness within a person. From a psychological perspective, the internal struggles experienced by his characters provide invaluable examples for understanding the developmental stages of the human psyche (Quliyev, 2005).

In conclusion, Tolstoy's works *What Men Live By?*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *Youth*, and *Master and Man* together form a comprehensive system encompassing the entirety of human moral life. These works demonstrate that education is built not solely on knowledge but on love and understanding; that human worth lies not in material wealth but in spirituality; and that the meaning of life is found not in external success but in the purification of the inner self. Each of the four works portrays different stages of the moral journey from birth to death and is therefore of significant importance for pedagogy. Tolstoy's humanistic ideas remain relevant today and continue to serve as one of the most influential sources on moral education.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing analysis, it can be concluded that Tolstoy's literary and philosophical legacy offers a profound humanistic vision of education and moral development. His works demonstrate that the true foundation of human education lies in the cultivation of love, compassion, and conscience as essential ethical values. For Tolstoy, moral integrity and spiritual growth outweigh social status, external success, or material wealth.

Furthermore, the inner transformation of his characters functions not merely as a narrative device, but as an artistic representation of psychological and moral evolution. Through this transformation, Tolstoy illustrates that genuine education is inseparable from self-reflection and ethical awakening. Education, therefore, is portrayed as a continuous, lifelong process of moral self-awareness and self-improvement.

Finally, Tolstoy's humanistic philosophy retains contemporary relevance and may serve as a conceptual and methodological foundation for modern pedagogical theories that emphasize ethical responsibility, personal growth, and the holistic development of the individual.

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Types of Fermatas and Their Expressive Techniques in Conducting Practice

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Keywords	Abstract
Fermata Conducting technique Musical expressiveness Choral performance	A fermata is a musical sign placed over a note, chord, or rest to indicate that the sound or silence should be held longer than its written value. Because its duration is not fixed, the fermata becomes one of the most flexible and powerful means of musical expressiveness, especially in choral and ensemble performance where timing must be coordinated collectively. This article analyzes the main types of fermatas and explains their expressive and technical realization in conducting practice. The study differentiates between cut-off (final) fermatas, where the conductor ends both sound and musical movement, and non-cut-off (continuation) fermatas, where the release simultaneously functions as an upbeat for further motion. Fermatas over barlines and over rests are also examined as devices that create caesura, contrast, tension, and rhetorical emphasis. Special attention is given to expressive preparation through ritardando, gradual tempo reduction, and dynamic shaping, which often make the fermata feel emotionally inevitable. The article also discusses how articulation (legato, non-legato, staccato) and dynamic technique interact with fermata execution. Methodologically, the work combines analytical description, comparative interpretation, and pedagogical observation to support practical recommendations for conducting training.

I. Introduction

Expressive means are central to musical communication because they transform written notation into living sound. Tempo nuance, dynamic shaping, articulation, and strategically placed silences allow performers to reveal phrase structure, highlight climaxes, and guide the listener's emotional attention (Gabrielsson, 2003; Palmer, 1997). In ensemble music—especially choral performance—these expressive means must be coordinated collectively. Here the conductor functions not only as a timekeeper but also as a mediator of musical meaning: through gesture, breathing cues, and

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bodily tension–release patterns, the conductor clarifies structure, controls energy, and unifies interpretation. Empirical studies show that conductor gesture influences what audiences perceive and what performers prioritize, confirming that visual information can shape musical understanding alongside sound (Kumar & Morrison, 2016).

Among the most powerful expressive devices is the fermata—a sign placed over a note or rest indicating that the sound or silence should be held longer than its written value. Unlike fixed rhythmic values, fermata duration is not strictly measured; it is determined by performance context and artistic intention. This flexibility makes the fermata a key tool for rhetorical emphasis: it can confirm cadential closure, intensify a climactic moment, create suspense through silence, or separate contrasting sections. Research on timing and coordination suggests that such “unmeasured” pauses demand shared interpretive control, especially when multiple performers must align their continuation after silence (Luck & Toiviainen, 2006; Zamm et al., 2021).

The aim of this article is to analyze the types of fermatas and examine their expressive and technical realization in conducting practice. The study addresses the following questions: What are the main types of fermatas? How do conducting gestures differ according to fermata type? How does fermata influence musical expression? Methodologically, the article employs analytical description of conducting technique, comparative discussion of fermata contexts, and pedagogical observation based on rehearsal and training practice.

II. Theoretical Foundations of Fermata

1. Definition and Symbol

A fermata is a conventional musical sign written above a notehead, chord, or rest to indicate prolongation beyond the notated duration. In practical terms, the fermata interrupts ordinary metric predictability: the beat continues to exist conceptually, but its surface flow is suspended or stretched. Historically, fermatas became closely associated with cadences, rhetorical closure, and dramatic emphasis, yet their use is not limited to endings. In both choral and instrumental music, composers apply fermatas to intensify phrase boundaries, underline harmonic resolution, and create expressive “breathing spaces” that function as musical punctuation.

From the standpoint of performance psychology, expressive timing is not an ornament added after the fact; it is a structural resource. Performers often shape tempo in relation to phrase architecture, with slowing near boundaries and greater stability mid-phrase (Demos et al., 2016). In this sense, fermata can be understood as an extreme or focused form of boundary articulation—either prepared by tempo modification (*ritardando*, relaxation of pulse) or introduced suddenly for contrast. The emotional preparation of a fermata frequently depends on what precedes it: a gradual reduction of motion can make the fermata feel inevitable, while an unprepared fermata can create shock, suspense, or a sharp rhetorical interruption.

In conducting, the fermata is realized through a combination of holding gesture, controlled physical stillness, and a clearly defined release or continuation cue. The conductor’s task is to preserve ensemble unity during the suspension and to ensure that singers or players re-enter



together. Since visual communication strongly affects performer coordination and listener perception, fermata execution becomes a crucial moment where gesture must be especially unambiguous (Kumar & Morrison, 2016; Luck & Toiviainen, 2006).

2. Misconceptions

A common misconception is the “double length” rule—the belief that a fermata automatically doubles the duration of the note or rest. In reality, fermata duration depends on multiple factors: the tempo and character of the piece, the written note value under the fermata, the acoustic and expressive needs of the moment, and the technical demands of ensemble breathing and coordination. A fermata over a whole note in a moderate tempo may indeed feel convincing when held roughly “twice as long,” but a fermata over a short value (quarter or eighth) can require proportionally greater extension to become perceptible as expressive suspension rather than mere hesitation. Conversely, in fast or rhythmically energized music, an overly long fermata may break continuity and weaken the intended effect.

Therefore, fermata realization is fundamentally a matter of artistic judgment. The conductor must sense how long the musical idea needs to “speak” and how much silence or sustain the ensemble can support without losing focus. Coordination studies show that timing pauses is a real performance challenge: musicians may shorten and stabilize silences when they must align with partners, which illustrates that expressive freedom is always negotiated with ensemble clarity (Zamm et al., 2021). In pedagogical terms, teaching fermata means teaching controlled flexibility: the performer must feel freedom, while the ensemble experiences certainty.

III. Classification of Fermatas

1. Cut-Off Fermata

The most frequent fermata appears at the end of a piece or at the end of a formal section. Its function is typically closure: it confirms harmonic resolution, stabilizes the final sonority, and allows the listener to register completion. In conducting terms, this type is often the simplest because musical motion does not resume afterward. The conductor sustains the final sound with a clear holding posture—maintaining energy and intonation—then executes a decisive cut-off gesture that ends both sound and movement.

Technical execution. The conductor should “freeze” the beat pattern at the fermata point while keeping internal pulse awareness. The right hand maintains the sense of sustained tone (often by a firm, contained gesture), while the left hand can shape diminuendo or reinforce resonance depending on the musical context. The cut-off should be coordinated with breath and ensemble consonants so that final releases remain unified. Gesture character varies by dynamic: in **forte**, the cut-off is typically clearer and more energetic; in **piano**, it is softer and more elastic, avoiding abruptness that could cause unwanted noise or tension.



Expressive meaning. The final fermata can create solemnity, triumph, tenderness, or suspense depending on harmony and timbre. It often functions as a “musical period” at the level of discourse: the conductor invites the ensemble to sustain meaning, not merely duration.

Psychological impact. The final fermata also stabilizes attention. For performers, it provides a controlled moment of heightened listening—intonation, blend, resonance—before release. For listeners, it frames the ending as significant and memorable, increasing the feeling of completeness (Gabrielsson, 2003).

2. Non-Cut-Off Fermata

A second important type occurs when music continues immediately after the fermata. Here the fermata is not an ending but a rhetorical suspension that leads into renewed motion. This fundamentally changes the conducting task: the gesture must extend the sound or silence without breaking the logic of meter and without confusing the next entrance.

Core principle. When motion resumes after the fermata, the conductor must ensure that the release gesture also functions as an upbeat (auftakt) for what follows. The ensemble should feel not only “stop” but also “prepare to continue.” Practically, conductors often employ a repeated-beat or “extra-beat” strategy: the fermata point is held, then the conductor gives a clear preparatory impulse aligned with the next metric unit so that performers re-enter together.

Breath gesture and continuity. Because breathing is a primary coordination tool in choir, the conductor’s preparatory cue must include a visible inhalation signal or “breath-like” gesture. Research on ensemble synchronization emphasizes that performers rely on visual timing cues to align attacks and continuations (Luck & Toiviainen, 2006). Therefore, the continuation fermata demands a particularly readable gesture trajectory and timing.

Pause after fermata. Sometimes the fermata is followed by a brief rest. Even then, the type remains “continuation-oriented” because the conductor’s release is still interpreted as preparation for the next entrance. The main difference is gesture character: the cut-off becomes slightly more accented and “breath-loaded” to reflect both the release and the immediate need to restart cleanly.

3. Fermata Over Barline

A fermata placed over a barline typically indicates a sudden interruption in motion—often functioning like a short caesura. Its musical meaning is frequently contrastive: it can separate episodes, prepare a change of tonality or texture, or intensify a dramatic shift. Unlike a cadential fermata, it may appear in the middle of a work and does not always require tempo preparation.

Technique. The conductor should stop the motion precisely at the barline point, hold briefly (often shorter than a cadential fermata), and then provide a clear “restart” gesture for the new measure or new character. The clarity of restart is crucial because the ensemble’s internal pulse may be disrupted by the sudden break. Visual cueing becomes the stabilizing reference, consistent with



findings that conductor gesture shapes performer orientation and perceived structure (Kumar & Morrison, 2016; Vines et al., 2006).

4. Fermata Over a Rest

A fermata over a rest extends silence, often producing heightened tension, suspense, or reflective space. In choral music it may reinforce textual meaning (a pause before a key word) or create a breath of dramatic stillness. In instrumental music it can shape phrasing by separating ideas more strongly than an ordinary rest.

Sezura effect and tension-building. The extended rest functions like punctuation—sometimes comparable to a rhetorical pause in speech. Coordination research demonstrates that timing such silences is a genuine interactive problem: musicians must anticipate not only when silence begins but also when it ends (Zamm et al., 2021). Thus, the conductor’s role is to “hold” silence as an active expressive state, not as absence.

Conducting execution. The conductor often cuts off the preceding sound with a compact wrist action, then maintains stillness to sustain the fermata-rest. The restart is delivered with a clear upbeat, frequently accompanied by a visible breathing cue. The longer the silence, the more essential it becomes that the ensemble reads the conductor as the shared temporal reference.

IV. Expressive Preparation of Fermata

In artistic performance, a fermata rarely functions as a purely “mechanical” extension of a note or rest. Most often it is perceived as the natural result of what precedes it. For this reason, effective fermata execution usually begins before the fermata sign itself appears. The conductor prepares it through subtle changes of tempo, dynamic direction, and bodily energy, allowing the ensemble to experience the approaching suspension as emotionally justified rather than accidental.

A common preparatory technique is *ritardando*—a controlled slowing of tempo in the measures leading into the fermata. This gradual tempo reduction should not be confused with loss of pulse; instead, it is a deliberate stretching that preserves rhythmic clarity while reducing forward momentum. In choral practice, such preparation is often coordinated with breathing: the conductor’s gesture becomes slightly broader, the rebound softer, and the beat “opens,” signaling that the phrase is nearing its point of arrival. When done convincingly, the fermata feels like an inevitable culmination of musical thought.

Dynamic shaping strengthens this inevitability. If the musical logic calls for climax, the conductor may prepare the fermata with a crescendo and increased physical tension, making the held sonority feel weighty and emotionally charged. If the goal is tenderness or contemplation, the approach may involve *diminuendo*, lighter contact, and a more inward, delicate gesture. In both cases, the conductor communicates not only duration but also the quality of time—whether it is suspenseful, triumphant, pleading, or reflective.



A useful contrast can be drawn between prepared fermatas and unprepared (sudden) fermatas that occur in the middle of a piece. Prepared fermatas are typically preceded by clear musical indicators—cadential harmony, phrase closure, *ritardando*, or dynamic shaping—so the ensemble anticipates suspension. Unprepared fermatas, by contrast, may interrupt ongoing motion without warning, creating dramatic surprise or a rhetorical “break.” Here the conductor’s responsibility is intensified: the stopping gesture must be unmistakable, yet the ensemble must remain mentally “alive” during the hold so that continuation, when required, is secure and together.

V. Articulation and Fermata in Conducting

Fermata technique cannot be fully separated from articulation, because the way sound is produced and connected determines how a sustained note (or silence) is perceived. Legato, non-legato, and staccato are not only matters of instrumental or vocal technique; they are also encoded in the conductor’s gesture. A fermata placed within different articulatory contexts will therefore require different physical and expressive solutions.

1. Legato Technique

Legato conducting is defined by continuity. The gesture line is smooth and unbroken, and the transitions between beats feel like flowing motion rather than a chain of impacts. Technically, the conductor avoids “jumping” at the contact point: the hand meets the conducting plane with control and then continues, as if drawing a continuous curve. In moderate or slow tempos, the hand may momentarily “settle” at the beat point without striking it, preserving softness and vocal/instrumental blend.

Legato also depends heavily on wrist flexibility. A supple wrist allows the conductor to maintain motion while adjusting weight, producing a gesture that feels elastic rather than rigid. In forte legato, the gesture may be broader and more energized, with clear direction and stronger muscular tone, but still without harsh impacts. In piano legato, the gesture becomes smaller and more plastic, emphasizing smoothness and gentle continuity. When a fermata appears in a legato phrase, the conductor must keep the legato “thread” alive during the hold: the sustained note should feel like extended singing, not like frozen time.

2. Non-Legato

Non-legato lies between legato and staccato. Beats are separated, but not sharply detached. In gesture, this produces a slightly broken line: each beat has a clear arrival, followed by a moderate rebound. The motion may show a controlled “bounce,” but the bounce is not aggressive; it serves clarity rather than accent. Non-legato requires freedom in the elbow, allowing the forearm to move naturally and preventing stiffness in the shoulder.

When a fermata occurs under non-legato conditions, the conductor must decide whether to preserve separation (ending the sound cleanly before the hold) or to sustain through the hold with



a more legato-like support. In choral settings, this often depends on text and harmony: a fermata on a cadential consonant may favor a clean release, while a fermata on a vowel-rich sonority may favor sustained resonance.

3. Staccato Technique

Staccato requires accented points and clear detachment. The gesture travels to the beat point with sharper intent, followed by an elastic rebound away from the plane. This “two-part” behavior—attack and release—makes staccato fundamentally different from legato’s continuous line. In many cases, especially in crisp staccato, the conductor uses a two-phase upbeat: a preparatory impulse that sets the character, followed by a precise beat that produces the articulation.

The wrist is central: staccato is most convincing when the wrist is active, elastic, and rhythmically stable. In forte staccato, the gesture may be larger, with more physical tension and clearer accents, but it must not become convulsive or uncontrolled. In piano staccato, the gesture becomes smaller, more economical, and extremely precise; articulation is achieved through clarity and rebound rather than force. Control of small amplitude is essential: too wide a motion can blur the rhythm, while too stiff a motion can destroy elasticity.

In fermata contexts, staccato often implies that the sound is intentionally detached before the hold, making the silence or sustain more dramatic. The conductor must therefore manage contrast: the fermata becomes expressive not only through length, but through the articulatory “edge” that precedes it.

VI. Dynamics as an Expressive Conducting Tool

1. Concept of Dynamic Technique

Dynamic control is one of the most subtle areas of conducting because gesture volume does not automatically equal sound volume. A large gesture can still produce piano if it communicates softness of energy, and a small gesture can produce forte if it communicates concentrated intensity. What truly shapes dynamics is the conductor’s ability to transmit internal tension—a physical embodiment of musical intensity that performers can read and reproduce. This includes the degree of muscular tone, the speed of motion, the quality of rebound, and the expressive intention in the body’s posture.

2. Forte Technique

As a general rule, forte is supported by larger gesture space and more energetic impulse. The arm and torso may show increased readiness, and the beat points are clearer and more decisive. However, forte must not become noisy or uncontrolled. Convulsive or exaggerated movements can cause ensemble instability and harsh tone. Effective forte is confident and organized: the conductor “contains” power rather than throwing it.

3. Piano Technique



Piano typically requires smaller gestures and a softer, more plastic motion. The conductor's hands appear lighter, the rebound gentler, and the overall posture calmer. A common choral technique is directing the palm toward the ensemble or toward a specific section to encourage a quieter, more supported sound. The conductor's face and breath also matter: relaxed inhalation and calm focus help prevent singers from tightening or pushing.

4. Subito Effects

Sudden dynamic changes (*subito forte*, *subito piano*) demand preparation. Even when the sound change is immediate, the conductor must prepare it through a characterful upbeat one beat earlier. The gesture should already contain the new dynamic "temperature," so the ensemble experiences the shift as intentional rather than surprising.

5. Crescendo & Diminuendo Exercises

Teaching crescendo and diminuendo can involve clear physical models: changing gesture planes, gradually extending or shortening the arm, and applying a contrast principle (soft–hard, calm–sharp). The goal is to develop control over intensity without losing tempo stability. When dynamics are trained in this systematic way, fermatas become more expressive, because the conductor can shape the approach (build or relax), sustain the hold with meaningful tension, and release with stylistic logic.

VII. Pedagogical Methodology in Teaching Fermata and Dynamics

A practical methodology for teaching fermata and dynamic control should combine technical clarity with gradual artistic awareness. In early training stages, it is useful to begin with separate hand practice. The student learns to maintain stable meter with the primary hand while experimenting with expressive shaping in the other. This prevents overload and helps develop independence without tension in the conducting apparatus.

Another key principle is the gradual reduction of movement size. Students often begin with large, full-arm patterns to understand spatial direction and beat placement. Over time, the teacher guides them from shoulder-led motion to elbow-led motion and finally to wrist-based refinement. This shoulder → elbow → wrist progression develops economy and precision, which are essential for piano nuances, subtle *ritardando* preparation, and controlled fermata holds.

At the beginning, students should also be advised to avoid emotional exaggeration. Overacting can create irregular tempo, unclear entrances, and unnecessary physical tension. Instead, the student should learn "clean technique" first: accurate beat points, balanced rebound, and readable preparatory cues. Once this foundation is stable, expressive goals can be added—such as shaping toward fermata, managing silence, and coordinating release.

Pedagogically, the use of piano accompaniment is highly effective. Simple melodic sequences (ascending/descending patterns) allow the student to practice crescendo, diminuendo, and tempo flexibility in a controlled environment. Later, simple song material can be introduced so that



technical skills are linked to phrasing, text, and formal structure. At this stage, fermata teaching should include both ending fermatas (clear cut-off) and continuation fermatas (release as upbeat), emphasizing ensemble breathing and coordinated re-entry.

Finally, technical drills should not be overused. Once the student demonstrates basic control, instruction should transition toward real musical analysis: identifying phrase boundaries, cadences, climaxes, and rhetorical contrasts. In this way, fermata and dynamics stop being “effects” and become elements of interpretive thinking.

VIII. Conclusion

Fermata is one of the most important tools of musical expressiveness because it reshapes ordinary time and gives special weight to sound or silence. In conducting practice, the fermata is not merely a longer note or rest; it is a rhetorical and emotional event that can confirm closure, suspend expectation, intensify climax, or separate contrasting musical ideas. Its effectiveness depends on both the conductor’s technical control and interpretive sensitivity.

The article has emphasized a clear distinction between cut-off (final) fermatas and non-cut-off (continuation) fermatas. In the cut-off type, the conductor sustains the final sonority and ends musical motion with a decisive release gesture. In the continuation type, the conductor must preserve meter and transform the release into an upbeat so that the ensemble continues together. Additional contexts—such as fermatas over barlines or rests—require special attention to sudden stopping, expressive silence, and secure restarting.

Another central point is the importance of gesture elasticity. Whether shaping legato continuity, non-legato clarity, or staccato rebound, the conductor’s body must communicate a living musical intention rather than rigid mechanics. Similarly, dynamic control is not a simple matter of large or small gestures; it involves transmitting intensity through coordinated physical tension and release, supported by clear preparatory cues, especially in subito changes and gradual crescendos or diminuendos.

From an educational perspective, effective training requires step-by-step development: independent hands, progressive reduction of gesture size, controlled use of accompaniment, and timely transition from drills to musical analysis. The artistic effectiveness of fermata depends not on its duration, but on the conductor’s ability to transform silence and sound into meaningful musical expression.

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Does Watching Netflix Teach Better English Than Textbooks?

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Keywords	Abstract
Netflix English language learning textbooks audiovisual media	This article examines whether watching Netflix can teach English more effectively than traditional textbooks. It compares the pedagogical strengths of textbooks with the authentic and immersive qualities of audiovisual media in English language learning. Textbooks provide structured grammar instruction, organized vocabulary development, and systematic practice of the four main language skills. By contrast, Netflix exposes learners to real-life dialogues, natural pronunciation, idiomatic expressions, diverse accents, and culturally meaningful contexts. The article also discusses the role of subtitles, learner motivation, active versus passive viewing, and the challenges of unsystematic media-based learning. It argues that although Netflix offers valuable support for listening comprehension, vocabulary growth, and socio-cultural competence, it cannot fully replace textbooks because it lacks clear progression, explicit explanation, and corrective feedback. The study concludes that the most effective model of English language learning is a balanced approach that combines textbook-based instruction with purposeful audiovisual exposure. Such integration can improve both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence in contemporary language education.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, English language learning is no longer confined to traditional classroom materials. For decades, textbooks have served as the principal medium for teaching English in formal educational contexts, offering learners carefully structured grammar instruction,

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controlled vocabulary input, and sequenced practice tasks. However, the rapid development of digital technologies and streaming platforms has introduced new forms of language exposure that increasingly influence how learners acquire linguistic knowledge. Among these, Netflix has emerged as one of the most widely used sources of informal English input, especially among younger learners and independent language users (Alm, 2021; Dizon, 2018; Topal, 2024).

Unlike textbooks, which are intentionally designed to simplify and organize linguistic material, Netflix presents English as it is used in authentic communicative situations. Through films, series, and documentaries, learners are exposed to natural pronunciation, spontaneous dialogues, idiomatic expressions, colloquial structures, and diverse cultural contexts. This type of audiovisual input creates a more immersive learning environment and may support listening comprehension, vocabulary growth, and pragmatic awareness in ways that conventional materials often cannot fully provide (Muñoz, 2020; Vanderplank, 2016).

At the same time, the educational value of Netflix remains a subject of debate. While audiovisual media may increase learner motivation and provide access to real-life language use, they do not always guarantee systematic progression, grammatical accuracy, or measurable language development. Passive viewing, for example, may result in entertainment rather than effective learning. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate both the opportunities and the limitations of entertainment-based language exposure.

The present article examines whether watching Netflix can teach English better than textbooks. It compares the pedagogical role of textbooks with the immersive and authentic nature of audiovisual media, with particular attention to vocabulary acquisition, listening development, pronunciation awareness, and learner engagement. The article argues that Netflix should not be regarded as a full replacement for textbooks, but rather as a valuable complementary tool within a balanced and pedagogically informed approach to English language learning.

2. Textbooks as the Structural Foundation of English Learning

Textbooks have traditionally occupied a central position in English language teaching because they provide a structured, systematic, and pedagogically guided framework for language learning. In formal educational settings, textbooks function not only as sources of content but also as instruments of curricular organization. They introduce grammar points in a logical sequence, present vocabulary in controlled thematic units, and offer exercises designed to reinforce comprehension, accuracy, and retention. This makes them especially valuable for learners who require a clear and progressive pathway from basic to more advanced levels of proficiency.

One of the major strengths of textbooks lies in their methodological design. Grammar is usually taught step by step, allowing learners to understand core structures such as verb tenses, sentence patterns, articles, modals, and prepositions in an organized way. Vocabulary is often selected according to frequency, communicative function, or topic, making it easier for students to acquire lexical items gradually and use them in context. In addition, textbooks typically include reading texts, writing activities, listening tasks, and speaking exercises that ensure balanced development



of the four major language skills. In this sense, textbooks support not only knowledge acquisition but also skill integration.

Another important advantage of textbooks is their reliability and pedagogical consistency. Since they are commonly produced by educational specialists and aligned with specific learning outcomes, textbooks help teachers maintain coherence in instruction and assessment. They are particularly effective in classrooms where learners need explicit explanations, controlled practice, and feedback-based correction. As Alisoy and Sadiqzade (2024) emphasize in their discussion of technology and language education, even when digital tools are introduced into teaching, structured pedagogical guidance remains essential for meaningful learning. Similarly, Sadiqzade (2024) notes that alternative language-learning media may enrich learning, but they are most effective when integrated into an instructional framework rather than used in isolation.

Despite these strengths, textbooks also reveal certain limitations. Their language is often simplified and pedagogically adapted, which may result in dialogues and examples that do not fully reflect the spontaneity and unpredictability of real-life communication. Learners who rely heavily on textbooks may develop grammatical competence yet still struggle to understand fast, informal, or culturally embedded speech outside the classroom. In many cases, textbook conversations sound artificial when compared with authentic spoken English in films, interviews, or casual social interaction. This gap between instructional language and living language has encouraged educators and researchers to explore the role of audiovisual media as a complementary resource for second language acquisition (Muñoz, 2020).

Therefore, textbooks should be seen as the structural foundation of English learning rather than as a complete solution to all linguistic needs. They are highly effective in building accuracy, organization, and progression, but they may need to be supplemented by more authentic forms of language exposure in order to prepare learners for real communicative situations.

3. Netflix and Audiovisual Media as Sources of Authentic Language

In contrast to textbooks, Netflix and other audiovisual platforms expose learners to English in its natural, socially embedded, and communicative form. This is one of the main reasons why audiovisual media have attracted increasing attention in language education research. Through films, television series, documentaries, and other streaming content, learners encounter real-life dialogues, conversational rhythm, pronunciation variation, emotional tone, and culturally meaningful language use. Rather than studying isolated sentences or controlled exercises, they observe how language functions in dynamic interaction, which can make learning more realistic and memorable (Alm, 2021; Dizon, 2018).

A major benefit of Netflix-based learning is exposure to authentic spoken English. In many classroom textbooks, spoken language is simplified to suit learners' levels, but Netflix provides access to spontaneous speech that includes hesitation, interruption, humor, slang, idiomatic expressions, and natural intonation. This kind of input helps learners become familiar with the rhythm and texture of real communication. It also allows them to hear different accents and speech



styles, including British, American, Australian, and other English varieties. As a result, learners may develop greater listening flexibility and phonological awareness than they would through textbook recordings alone (Topal, 2024; Vanderplank, 2016).

Another important feature of audiovisual media is the contextual support they provide. In audiovisual input, meaning is conveyed not only through words but also through facial expressions, gestures, setting, action, and emotional context. This multimodal environment can make unfamiliar language easier to understand and may help learners infer meaning without relying entirely on direct translation. Muñoz (2020) points out that audiovisual input offers a rich field for second language acquisition because it combines verbal and non-verbal cues, creating a more holistic language experience. This can be particularly beneficial for vocabulary learning, since new words are often remembered more effectively when linked to visual situations and narrative contexts.

Subtitles also play a significant role in making Netflix a useful learning tool. English subtitles, in particular, can help learners connect spoken and written forms of language, notice pronunciation patterns, and recognize vocabulary more easily. Research has shown that captioned viewing may improve listening comprehension and support incidental vocabulary acquisition (Rodgers & Webb, 2017; Dizon & Thanyawatpokin, 2021; Vanderplank, 1988). When learners hear a phrase and simultaneously see it in written form, they are better able to process fast speech, segment connected sounds, and retain lexical items. This makes subtitles an important bridge between passive viewing and active language learning.

Furthermore, Netflix often increases learner motivation. Many learners are more willing to spend time engaging with films or series than with traditional exercises, and this increased exposure can produce meaningful language gains over time. Shahril and Abdullah (2022) found that learners generally perceive Netflix and subtitles positively as tools for English improvement, especially in relation to listening and vocabulary. Dizon (2018) similarly observed that using Netflix as a language-learning resource can enhance learner engagement and promote autonomous study habits.

Nevertheless, the benefits of Netflix depend largely on how it is used. Simply watching content for entertainment may not lead to substantial language development unless learners interact with the material in a more conscious and reflective way. Even so, as a source of authentic input, audiovisual media clearly offer dimensions of pronunciation, contextual meaning, cultural exposure, and communicative realism that textbooks alone often cannot provide. For this reason, Netflix represents not a rival to language education, but a powerful extension of it.

4. Active vs. Passive Learning: The Cognitive Issue

One of the most important questions in evaluating Netflix as a language-learning tool is whether learners engage with it actively or passively. Although audiovisual media provide rich and authentic input, exposure alone does not automatically lead to effective language acquisition. In many cases, learners watch films or series for entertainment without consciously focusing on



vocabulary, sentence structure, pronunciation, or discourse patterns. As a result, the learning process may remain superficial, and the potential pedagogical value of the material may not be fully realized.

In contrast, textbooks are generally associated with active learning. They require learners to complete exercises, answer questions, analyze grammar, and produce written or spoken output. This type of engagement supports attention, repetition, and conscious processing, all of which are essential for long-term retention. Learners working with textbooks are more likely to notice formal language patterns and practice them systematically. Because of this, textbook-based learning often leads to stronger explicit knowledge of grammar and usage.

Netflix, however, can also become an effective educational resource when learners interact with it actively rather than passively. Active viewing may include pausing to repeat expressions, writing down unfamiliar words, comparing spoken language with subtitles, imitating pronunciation, and reviewing selected scenes more than once. These strategies help transform entertainment into language practice and encourage deeper cognitive involvement. Alm (2021) notes that streaming media can move from casual exposure to more focused learning when learners intentionally engage with the content. Similarly, Dizon and Thanyawatpokin (2021) demonstrate that subtitle-supported viewing can improve vocabulary learning and listening comprehension when learners process the material attentively.

Another important issue is output. Watching Netflix may strengthen comprehension, but it does not automatically develop productive skills such as speaking and writing. Without follow-up activities, learners may recognize many expressions yet remain unable to use them independently. This limitation is particularly significant in formal educational contexts, where measurable performance and communicative production are important goals. Therefore, Netflix is most effective when combined with tasks such as summarizing scenes, discussing characters, retelling dialogues, shadowing speech, or writing vocabulary journals.

From a cognitive perspective, then, the problem is not Netflix itself but the mode of learner engagement. Passive watching may produce limited gains, whereas active, reflective, and repeated interaction with audiovisual content can contribute meaningfully to language development. This distinction suggests that the success of Netflix-based learning depends less on the platform and more on the strategies that learners apply while using it.

5. The Role of Subtitles in Language Learning

Subtitles are among the most significant features that make Netflix and other streaming platforms pedagogically useful for language learners. They create a bridge between spoken and written language, enabling learners to connect pronunciation, spelling, word boundaries, and meaning more effectively. In language-learning contexts, subtitles are not simply a technical aid for understanding content; they can also function as a powerful support for listening development, vocabulary acquisition, and language awareness.



When learners watch English-language content with English subtitles, they receive the same linguistic message through two channels at once: auditory and visual. This dual input helps them notice how words sound in connected speech and how they appear in written form. Such exposure is especially useful because natural spoken English often differs from the slow, clearly articulated pronunciation found in textbooks or classroom recordings. Learners frequently struggle with fast speech, reductions, linking, and informal pronunciation. Subtitles reduce this difficulty by allowing them to follow the dialogue more accurately and identify words they might otherwise miss (Rodgers & Webb, 2017; Vanderplank, 1988).

Research has shown that captioned or subtitled viewing can support incidental vocabulary learning. Learners often remember words more successfully when they hear them in context while simultaneously seeing them written on screen. Dizon and Thanyawatpokin (2021) found that subtitle-supported viewing can positively influence both vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension. Likewise, Vanderplank (2016) emphasizes that captioned media provide learners with repeated and meaningful exposure to language forms in a natural communicative setting. This is particularly beneficial when learners encounter high-frequency vocabulary, common phrases, and conversational patterns across multiple episodes or films.

However, the use of subtitles also raises some pedagogical concerns. If learners rely too heavily on subtitles in their first language, their attention may shift away from the English audio itself. In such cases, the activity may become closer to reading translation than listening to English. Even English subtitles, while useful, can sometimes become a crutch if learners focus only on the written text and do not train their ears to process speech independently. Therefore, subtitles should be used strategically. For lower-level learners, subtitles may provide necessary support, while more advanced learners may gradually reduce subtitle dependence in order to strengthen direct listening skills.

Subtitles are thus neither inherently beneficial nor harmful; their value depends on how they are used. When integrated thoughtfully, they can improve comprehension, highlight language patterns, and support vocabulary growth. In this sense, subtitles represent one of the strongest pedagogical advantages of audiovisual media and one of the main reasons why Netflix can contribute meaningfully to English language learning.

6. Global Accents, Informal Registers, and Socio-Cultural Competence

One of the major advantages of Netflix as a language-learning resource is its exposure to the diversity of English as it is used across different regions, social groups, and communicative settings. Traditional textbooks generally present standardized and simplified forms of English, often favoring either British or American norms in carefully controlled dialogues. While this approach is useful for instructional clarity, it may not fully prepare learners for the variety and unpredictability of real-world communication. By contrast, Netflix offers access to English in multiple accents, registers, and cultural contexts, thereby helping learners develop a more flexible and socially informed understanding of the language.



Exposure to different accents is especially valuable in contemporary English learning. Through films and series, learners may hear not only standard American or British English, but also regional, international, and socially marked varieties of pronunciation. This experience broadens listening competence and reduces dependence on one idealized form of speech. Topal (2024) and Alm (2021) suggest that such audiovisual exposure can improve learners' ability to cope with natural variation in spoken English. In practical terms, this means that students may become better prepared for communication with different speakers in academic, professional, or global contexts.

Audiovisual media also introduce learners to informal registers that textbooks often underrepresent. In real-life speech, people use contractions, idiomatic phrases, slang, fillers, hesitations, interruptions, and emotionally expressive language. Netflix presents these features within authentic communicative situations, allowing learners to see not only what is said, but also when, how, and why it is said. This contributes to pragmatic and socio-cultural competence, since learners begin to understand the relationship between language form, context, tone, and social meaning. For example, they may notice how politeness, irony, humor, disagreement, or intimacy are expressed in ways that textbooks cannot easily simulate.

At the same time, this strength may also create risks. Informal and highly contextualized language is not always appropriate in academic or professional settings. Learners who imitate expressions from films or series without understanding register differences may use slang or casual phrases in unsuitable contexts. In addition, some audiovisual content includes culturally specific references that may be difficult to interpret accurately without background knowledge. Therefore, the authenticity of Netflix is both an advantage and a challenge: it enriches language learning, but it also requires critical awareness and guidance.

For this reason, socio-cultural competence should be viewed as an important dimension of English learning alongside grammar and vocabulary. Netflix can help learners move beyond formal correctness toward a more nuanced understanding of how English functions in social life. It teaches not only language forms, but also the cultural and interpersonal meanings attached to them. When combined with structured explanation and reflection, this exposure can make learners more adaptable, culturally aware, and communicatively competent users of English.

7. Challenges of Netflix-Based Learning

Despite its many advantages, Netflix-based language learning also presents several important challenges that prevent it from functioning as a complete substitute for textbooks. The first and most obvious limitation is the lack of systematic structure. Unlike textbooks, which are organized according to level, topic, grammar progression, and pedagogical sequence, Netflix content is created primarily for entertainment rather than instruction. As a result, learners are exposed to language in an unplanned and uneven way. They may encounter advanced idioms before mastering basic structures, or hear highly contextualized expressions without sufficient explanation. This can make learning fragmented and difficult to measure.



Another challenge is the absence of direct feedback. In traditional classroom learning, textbooks are typically accompanied by teacher guidance, correction, and practice tasks that help learners identify and overcome errors. When learners watch Netflix independently, however, they may misunderstand vocabulary, pronunciation, or usage without realizing it. Incorrect assumptions can become repeated and gradually fossilized, especially if learners imitate phrases without fully understanding meaning, tone, or context. In this sense, exposure alone does not guarantee accurate acquisition.

A further problem concerns learner control and discipline. Streaming platforms offer an enormous variety of content, which may motivate some learners but overwhelm others. Instead of encouraging focused learning, this abundance may lead to distraction, inconsistent habits, or purely entertainment-driven viewing. Learners may spend hours watching content without engaging deeply with the language itself. Shahril and Abdullah (2022) note that students generally view Netflix positively, but positive perception does not automatically result in effective learning outcomes. The educational value depends on intentionality, repetition, and strategy.

Moreover, not all language presented in films and series is appropriate for learners' communicative needs. Some programs contain slang, taboo expressions, sarcasm, or culturally specific humor that may be difficult to interpret or unsuitable for formal use. Without guidance, learners may absorb expressions that sound natural in fictional dialogue but inappropriate in academic, professional, or intercultural settings. This creates a gap between exposure and usable competence.

For these reasons, Netflix-based learning should be treated with caution. It can enrich English acquisition significantly, but it also lacks the structured sequencing, feedback, and explicit instruction that textbooks provide. Therefore, its greatest value lies not in replacing traditional learning, but in supplementing it with authentic and motivating language exposure.

8. Toward a Hybrid Model of English Learning

Given the strengths and weaknesses of both textbooks and Netflix, the most effective approach to English language learning appears to be a hybrid model that combines structured instruction with authentic audiovisual exposure. Rather than framing the issue as a choice between textbooks and streaming media, it is more productive to consider how the two can complement one another. Each addresses a different dimension of language acquisition, and together they offer a broader and more balanced learning experience.

Textbooks provide the essential framework for language development. They organize grammar systematically, introduce vocabulary in manageable stages, and offer exercises that encourage accuracy, repetition, and measurable progress. This structure is especially important for beginners and intermediate learners, who need clarity, guidance, and carefully sequenced input. Without such foundations, learners may struggle to interpret authentic English or use it correctly. In this respect, textbooks remain indispensable for building formal competence and linguistic confidence.

Netflix, by contrast, contributes what textbooks often lack: immersion, realism, and emotional engagement. It helps learners hear how English sounds in everyday interaction, exposes them to



diverse accents and registers, and places language within meaningful social and cultural contexts. This kind of input can strengthen listening comprehension, pronunciation awareness, vocabulary recognition, and pragmatic understanding. When learners encounter language forms in living use after studying them in textbooks, their knowledge may become more flexible, memorable, and communicatively relevant.

A hybrid model also supports different modes of learning. For example, learners may first study a grammatical structure or thematic vocabulary set through textbook exercises and then observe similar forms in a film or series episode. Likewise, they may watch a scene on Netflix, notice repeated expressions, and later analyze them through written practice. This interaction between structured study and authentic exposure helps bridge the gap between explicit knowledge and real-life use. Alm (2021) suggests that streaming media can move from extensive viewing to more focused language learning, while Dizon and Thanyawatpokin (2021) demonstrate that subtitle-assisted viewing can produce measurable linguistic benefits when used purposefully.

In practical educational settings, this hybrid model can be implemented through tasks such as scene analysis, vocabulary logs, shadowing exercises, discussion questions, listening journals, and comparison between textbook dialogues and authentic speech. Such activities transform Netflix from a passive entertainment source into a pedagogically guided resource. At the same time, they prevent textbooks from becoming too detached from natural communication.

Thus, the future of English language learning may depend not on replacing old methods with new ones, but on integrating them intelligently. A hybrid model recognizes that language learning is both a structured academic process and a social, cultural, and communicative experience. By combining textbooks and Netflix, learners can benefit from both accuracy and authenticity, both instruction and immersion.

9. Conclusion

The comparison between textbooks and Netflix in English language learning reveals that both approaches offer significant but different advantages. Textbooks remain essential because they provide structure, clarity, systematic progression, and opportunities for controlled practice. They help learners build grammatical knowledge, develop vocabulary step by step, and progress within an organized educational framework. For this reason, they continue to play a central role in formal language instruction.

Netflix, on the other hand, offers access to authentic spoken English, natural pronunciation, diverse accents, idiomatic expressions, and culturally rich communicative contexts. It exposes learners to the living language in ways that textbooks alone often cannot. Through subtitles, repeated exposure, and contextualized dialogue, audiovisual media can strengthen listening comprehension, vocabulary recognition, motivation, and socio-cultural awareness. However, these benefits are most effective when learners engage actively rather than passively and when viewing is supported by reflection and follow-up practice.



Therefore, Netflix cannot fully replace textbooks as a complete tool for English learning. Its lack of systematic progression, corrective feedback, and explicit instruction limits its ability to function independently as a primary educational method. Nevertheless, it can serve as a highly valuable supplement to traditional language study. The most effective approach is a balanced one in which textbooks provide the structural foundation and Netflix supplies authentic, engaging, and immersive language input.

In contemporary English education, the question is not whether Netflix is better than textbooks, but how both can be used together to create deeper, more flexible, and more meaningful language learning.

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Iran–United States Relations: Historical Dynamics, Strategic Rivalry, and Prospects for Diplomacy

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Keywords	Abstract
Iran United States Geopolitics Middle East nuclear diplomacy sanctions international relations	The relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States constitutes one of the most persistent and consequential geopolitical rivalries in contemporary international politics. Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, diplomatic relations between the two countries have been defined by ideological confrontation, economic sanctions, strategic competition, and regional proxy conflicts. This article examines the historical evolution, ideological foundations, and geopolitical dynamics of Iran–United States relations through qualitative historical analysis informed by theoretical perspectives from structural realism, constructivism, and geopolitical studies. The study traces key turning points including the 1953 coup d'état, the Pahlavi-era strategic alliance, the Iranian Revolution, the hostage crisis, the Iran–Iraq War, post–Cold War missed opportunities, and nuclear diplomacy culminating in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The article further evaluates the role of economic sanctions, proxy conflicts, identity narratives, and domestic political constraints in sustaining bilateral hostility. The study argues that despite recurring diplomatic initiatives, structural mistrust rooted in competing security perceptions and adversarial identity constructions continues to reproduce the rivalry. The article concludes by examining possible diplomatic pathways and the conditions necessary for sustainable détente between Tehran and Washington.

1. Introduction

Relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America represent one of the most complex and enduring geopolitical rivalries in the modern international system. Although the two countries maintained cooperative diplomatic and strategic relations throughout much of

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the twentieth century, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 fundamentally transformed the nature of bilateral interactions. In the decades since, Iran and the United States have experienced sustained hostility characterized by political confrontation, economic coercion, proxy warfare, and strategic competition across the broader Middle East and beyond (Axworthy, 2016; Pollack, 2004).

The antagonistic character of this relationship is shaped by several interrelated factors. These include deeply rooted historical grievances, incompatible ideological frameworks, regional power competition, and conflicting security perceptions. From the perspective of the United States, Iran has frequently been characterized as a revisionist regional power whose policies challenge American strategic interests, threaten the security of key allies including Israel and Saudi Arabia, and undermine the existing regional order (Gause, 2014). Conversely, Iranian political discourse consistently portrays the United States as an interventionist hegemonic power that seeks to compromise Iran's sovereignty, contain its regional influence, and reshape its domestic political system (Arjomand, 2013; Ramazani, 2013).

The significance of Iran–U.S. tensions extends well beyond the bilateral dimension. The rivalry carries profound implications for regional stability in the Middle East, global energy markets, and international efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. Armed conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen have all been shaped, to varying degrees, by the strategic competition between Tehran and Washington. Moreover, the dispute over Iran's nuclear program has constituted one of the most prominent and consequential issues in international diplomacy throughout the twenty-first century (Parsi, 2017; Mousavian, 2012).

Understanding the historical evolution and structural dynamics of this rivalry is therefore essential for analyzing contemporary Middle Eastern geopolitics and for evaluating the prospects of diplomatic engagement. This article seeks to examine the roots of the Iran–United States rivalry by exploring its historical origins, ideological narratives, and geopolitical dimensions across multiple phases. The study applies theoretical perspectives from structural realism and constructivism in order to explain why antagonism between the two states has persisted despite periodic diplomatic openings. In doing so, the article aims to contribute to scholarly debates regarding the relative weight of material power competition versus ideational factors in sustaining international rivalries.

2. Literature Review

Scholarly research on Iran–United States relations has expanded considerably over the past several decades, encompassing historical, geopolitical, ideological, and diplomatic dimensions. This body of literature can be organized around four major thematic clusters: historical analyses, geopolitical and regional studies, ideological and identity-based research, and nuclear diplomacy scholarship.



Historical analyses constitute the foundational layer of the field. A substantial body of work examines the long-term impact of pivotal events such as the 1953 coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Abrahamian (2013) provides a detailed account of the 1953 intervention, arguing that Operation Ajax represented not merely a geopolitical maneuver but a formative trauma that shaped Iranian collective memory and political consciousness for generations. Kinzer (2008) similarly contends that the coup became a powerful symbol of Western imperialism and contributed to deep-rooted anti-American sentiment across multiple social and political strata in Iran. Milani (2010) traces how the revolutionary movement of 1978–1979 drew upon this historical memory to mobilize broad-based opposition to the Pahlavi monarchy and its perceived dependence on Washington. Bill (1988) offers one of the most comprehensive accounts of the entire arc of American–Iranian relations from the early twentieth century through the revolution, emphasizing the tragedy of mutual misperception.

A second cluster of scholarship focuses on geopolitical dynamics and regional power competition in the Middle East. Gause (2014) characterizes the contemporary Middle Eastern order as a form of “new Cold War,” structured around rivalry between regional powers and competing ideological alliances. Within this framework, Iran and the United States support opposing political actors and security architectures across the region. Byman (2020) examines Iran’s regional strategy in detail, documenting how Tehran has cultivated a network of non-state allies and militia forces to project influence beyond its borders. Pollack (2004) provides an American policy-oriented perspective, analyzing decades of strategic miscalculation and the persistent failure of both coercive and diplomatic approaches.

Third, a growing body of constructivist and identity-focused research examines the ideological dimension of Iran–U.S. tensions. Arjomand (2013) argues that the Islamic Republic’s revolutionary identity plays a central role in shaping its foreign policy orientation, with anti-Western rhetoric and resistance to perceived imperialism functioning as key components of regime legitimacy. Sadjadpour (2009) offers a focused analysis of Supreme Leader Khamenei’s worldview, demonstrating how ideological commitments constrain pragmatic diplomatic flexibility at the highest levels of Iranian decision-making. Keddie (2006) provides essential historical context for understanding how Iran’s revolutionary ideology emerged from longer patterns of modernization, foreign intervention, and political contestation.

Finally, research on nuclear diplomacy has become an important and rapidly growing subfield. Parsi (2017) provides a detailed account of the negotiations leading to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, arguing that diplomatic engagement between Iran and the United States is achievable when political leadership on both sides prioritizes pragmatic compromise over ideological rigidity. Mousavian (2012), drawing on his experience as a former Iranian nuclear negotiator, offers an insider perspective on the dynamics of nuclear talks and the domestic political constraints faced by Iranian negotiators.



Despite the breadth of existing scholarship, significant debates persist regarding the relative causal weight of structural geopolitical competition versus ideological confrontation in sustaining the rivalry. Many studies tend to privilege one explanatory dimension over others, resulting in partial accounts. This article contributes to the field by integrating insights from both realist and constructivist frameworks, applying them systematically across the full historical arc of Iran–United States relations.

3. Methodology

This study employs qualitative historical analysis as its primary methodological approach. The research draws upon a wide range of secondary sources, including scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy analyses, and institutional reports. The historical narrative is organized chronologically across distinct phases of Iran–United States relations, enabling the identification of patterns, continuities, and ruptures over time.

The analytical framework combines insights from two major theoretical traditions in international relations: structural realism and constructivism. This approach, sometimes described as theoretical triangulation, allows the study to examine both the material and ideational dimensions of the rivalry. Realist analysis illuminates the security dilemma dynamics, power competition, and strategic calculations that structure bilateral interactions. Constructivist analysis reveals how identity narratives, ideological commitments, and historical memory shape threat perceptions and constrain diplomatic options. By integrating these perspectives, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive explanation of why the Iran–United States rivalry has proven so resistant to resolution.

The scope of the analysis extends from the earliest diplomatic contacts in the nineteenth century through the post-JCPOA period, with particular attention to critical junctures that reshaped the bilateral relationship. The study acknowledges the inherent limitations of relying on secondary sources and the challenges of interpreting politically sensitive events from contested perspectives.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Structural Realism and the Security Dilemma

Realist theory, particularly in its structural variant, emphasizes the role of power competition and security imperatives in shaping state behavior within an anarchic international system. Kenneth Waltz (1979) argues that in the absence of a central authority, states must rely on their own capabilities to ensure survival, producing recurrent patterns of balancing, competition, and conflict. Mearsheimer (2001) extends this logic, contending that great powers are inherently driven to maximize their relative power position.



From a structural realist perspective, tensions between Iran and the United States can be understood as a manifestation of the security dilemma. Jervis (1978) defines the security dilemma as a situation in which actions taken by one state to enhance its own security are perceived as threatening by another state, triggering escalatory cycles of mutual suspicion. The United States maintains extensive military alliances and forward-deployed forces across the Persian Gulf region in order to contain Iranian influence and protect strategic interests including energy security and allied governments. Iran, in response, has developed asymmetric military capabilities, including ballistic missile programs and strategic partnerships with non-state actors such as Hezbollah, as instruments of deterrence and regional power projection (Takeyh, 2009). These dynamics generate a self-reinforcing cycle of threat perception and military preparation that sustains geopolitical competition.

4.2 Constructivism: Identity, Ideology, and Narrative

Constructivist theory, as articulated by Wendt (1999), highlights the centrality of ideas, identities, and intersubjective meanings in constituting international relations. From this perspective, the structure of the international system is not purely material but is shaped by shared understandings and social practices. Anarchy, Wendt famously argues, is “what states make of it”—meaning that rivalry and enmity are not inevitable consequences of systemic structure but are constructed through patterns of interaction and identity formation.

In the case of Iran and the United States, ideological perceptions play a crucial and often decisive role in sustaining hostility. Iranian revolutionary ideology, as it crystallized after 1979, portrays the United States as the embodiment of Western imperialism, cultural aggression, and moral decadence. Anti-American discourse has become deeply embedded within the political culture and institutional fabric of the Islamic Republic, functioning as a source of regime legitimacy and a constraint on diplomatic flexibility (Milani, 2010; Sadjadpour, 2009). Conversely, American political discourse has consistently framed Iran as a rogue state, a sponsor of terrorism, and a destabilizing force in the Middle East. These competing narratives construct adversarial identities that are reproduced through domestic political processes, media representations, and institutional practices.

4.3 Integrating Perspectives

Neither realism nor constructivism alone provides a fully satisfactory explanation of the Iran–United States rivalry. Realism accounts for the structural incentives driving competition but struggles to explain why specific diplomatic openings have failed even when material conditions appeared favorable. Constructivism illuminates the role of identity and ideology but risks underestimating the material constraints and security calculations that shape state behavior. This



article therefore adopts an integrative approach, applying both frameworks to different phases and dimensions of the relationship in order to capture the full complexity of the rivalry.

5. Early Relations and the Foundation of Engagement

Diplomatic relations between Iran and the United States date back to the nineteenth century, a period in which the two countries had minimal direct political interactions. Unlike European imperial powers such as Britain and Russia, which exercised extensive political and economic influence over Iranian affairs, the United States initially occupied a marginal position in Persian geopolitics. American involvement in Iran during this period was primarily cultural and humanitarian in character. American missionaries, educators, and medical professionals established schools and hospitals that contributed to educational modernization and cultural exchange (Bill, 1988).

In the early twentieth century, Iran's government sought to balance the competing influences of Britain and Russia by cultivating ties with the United States as a perceived neutral third party. In 1911, the Iranian parliament invited American financial advisor Morgan Shuster to help reform the country's fiscal administration and reduce its dependence on foreign creditors. Although Shuster's reform efforts were ultimately obstructed by Russian and British opposition, his mission symbolized Iran's strategic interest in leveraging American engagement as a counterweight to European imperialism (Abrahamian, 2008).

During the Second World War, Iran was jointly occupied by British and Soviet forces, and American troops were deployed to facilitate supply routes to the Soviet Union. In the postwar period, Cold War dynamics drew the two countries closer together. The United States increasingly viewed Iran as a strategic ally in the containment of Soviet expansion, while the young Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sought American support to consolidate his authority and modernize the Iranian state. This convergence of interests laid the groundwork for a strategic alliance that would define bilateral relations for the next three decades (Keddie, 2006).

6. The 1953 Coup and Its Legacy

One of the most consequential events in the history of Iran–United States relations occurred in August 1953, when a coup d'état orchestrated by the Central Intelligence Agency and British intelligence services overthrew the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. Mossadegh had nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951, seeking to reclaim national sovereignty over Iran's most valuable natural resource. The nationalization threatened Western economic interests and intensified the broader geopolitical struggle of the early Cold War (Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004).



The covert operation, designated Operation Ajax by the CIA and Operation Boot by British intelligence, resulted in Mossadegh's removal from power and the restoration of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's full authority. While the coup achieved its immediate strategic objectives—securing Western access to Iranian oil and preventing a perceived leftward drift in Iranian politics—it produced lasting and deeply consequential political repercussions. Many Iranians came to view the intervention as definitive proof of Western willingness to subvert democratic governance in pursuit of imperial interests (Kinzer, 2008; Abrahamian, 2013).

Scholars widely agree that the 1953 coup profoundly shaped Iranian political consciousness. The event became embedded in national collective memory as a foundational narrative of foreign domination and democratic betrayal. Over subsequent decades, this historical memory served as a powerful mobilizing resource for opposition movements of various ideological orientations, including secular nationalists, leftists, and Islamist activists (Keddie, 2006).

From a constructivist perspective, the coup's significance extends beyond its immediate political consequences. It contributed to the construction of an enduring narrative framework within which the United States came to be understood as a hostile external force fundamentally opposed to Iranian sovereignty and self-determination. This narrative would later become a central pillar of revolutionary ideology after 1979, shaping the identity of the Islamic Republic and its orientation toward the Western world (Milani, 2010).

The coup also strengthened authoritarian governance in Iran. In the aftermath of Mossadegh's overthrow, the Shah increasingly centralized political authority and expanded the coercive apparatus of the state. The secret police known as SAVAK, established in 1957 with assistance from American and Israeli intelligence agencies, became a feared instrument of political repression. While the Shah pursued ambitious modernization programs and economic reforms under the rubric of the White Revolution, growing inequality, political exclusion, and cultural alienation fueled dissatisfaction among religious leaders, intellectuals, bazaar merchants, and segments of the urban middle and working classes (Axworthy, 2016; Abrahamian, 2008).

7. The Pahlavi Era and the Strategic Alliance (1953–1978)

Following the 1953 coup, Iran emerged as one of the most important American strategic partners in the Middle East. The Pahlavi monarchy served as a key pillar of the Western security architecture during the Cold War, functioning as a bulwark against Soviet influence in the strategically vital Persian Gulf region. The United States provided extensive military, economic, and technical assistance to Iran, transforming the country into one of the most heavily armed states in the developing world (Bill, 1988).

The strategic partnership deepened significantly during the presidency of Richard Nixon. Under the Nixon Doctrine, which sought to reduce direct American military involvement abroad by



empowering regional allies, Iran was designated as the primary guardian of Western interests in the Persian Gulf. The Shah was granted virtually unrestricted access to American weapons systems, and Iran's military expenditures expanded dramatically throughout the 1970s. This arrangement served American strategic interests by outsourcing regional security responsibilities while simultaneously reinforcing the Shah's domestic authority and regional ambitions (Pollack, 2004).

However, the close alignment between the Shah and Washington generated significant domestic opposition within Iran. Many Iranians perceived the Pahlavi regime as excessively dependent on American patronage and insufficiently responsive to national aspirations. The Shah's modernization programs, while producing economic growth and infrastructural development, also generated social dislocations, cultural tensions, and deepening inequality. Rapid urbanization, the displacement of traditional economic structures, and the perceived imposition of Western cultural norms alienated significant segments of Iranian society, including the influential clerical establishment led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (Keddie, 2006; Arjomand, 2013).

From a realist perspective, the Pahlavi-era alliance represented a rational alignment of security interests within the bipolar Cold War structure. However, the very closeness of the strategic relationship contributed to the conditions that ultimately produced its collapse. By so thoroughly identifying with the Shah's regime, the United States became implicated in the failures and repressions of the Pahlavi state, ensuring that the revolutionary movement that eventually toppled the monarchy would carry with it a powerful anti-American dimension (Sick, 1991).

8. The Iranian Revolution and the Diplomatic Rupture

8.1 The 1979 Revolution

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 constituted one of the most transformative political upheavals of the twentieth century. The revolutionary movement was driven by a remarkably broad coalition that included religious leaders, secular intellectuals, leftist organizations, students, bazaar merchants, and industrial workers united by opposition to the Shah's authoritarian rule and his close alignment with the United States. Under the charismatic leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Pahlavi monarchy was overthrown and replaced by the Islamic Republic of Iran, a political system that combined republican institutions with the authority of Shia religious jurisprudence through the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (Abrahamian, 2008; Arjomand, 2013).

The revolution fundamentally transformed Iran's foreign policy orientation. The new government repudiated the strategic alliance with the United States and adopted an explicitly anti-hegemonic posture, emphasizing independence from both Western and Soviet blocs. Anti-American rhetoric became a constitutive element of revolutionary ideology, and the United States was officially designated as the "Great Satan" in the political vocabulary of the new regime (Milani, 2010).



8.2 The Hostage Crisis and the Severance of Relations

Relations between Iran and the United States deteriorated catastrophically in November 1979, when revolutionary students seized the American Embassy in Tehran and held fifty-two American diplomats hostage for 444 days. The immediate trigger for the embassy seizure was the decision by the Carter administration to admit the deposed Shah into the United States for medical treatment, which Iranian revolutionaries interpreted as evidence of continued American support for the fallen monarch and potential plans for a repeat of the 1953 coup (Sick, 1991).

The hostage crisis became one of the defining diplomatic confrontations of the late twentieth century and carried profound consequences for bilateral relations. The United States responded by freezing billions of dollars in Iranian assets and imposing comprehensive economic sanctions. Diplomatic relations were formally severed in April 1980 and have not been restored to the present day (Crist, 2012).

The crisis also fundamentally reshaped political narratives in both countries. In the United States, the hostage crisis produced a lasting image of Iran as a hostile, irrational revolutionary regime that violated fundamental norms of international diplomacy. In Iran, the embassy takeover was framed by revolutionary factions as a legitimate act of resistance against foreign domination and a decisive assertion of national sovereignty. These conflicting interpretations hardened mutual distrust and entrenched the adversarial identities that continue to characterize the relationship (Parsi, 2017).

8.3 Theoretical Analysis

From a constructivist standpoint, the revolution and the hostage crisis represent a critical juncture in the social construction of enmity between Iran and the United States. The events of 1979–1981 crystallized adversarial identities on both sides and established powerful narrative frameworks that have proven extraordinarily resistant to revision. For the Islamic Republic, opposition to the United States became a foundational element of state identity and political legitimacy. For the United States, the trauma of the hostage crisis produced deeply negative affective associations with Iran that have influenced public opinion and policy decisions for decades (Sadjadpour, 2009).

From a realist perspective, the revolution represented a dramatic shift in the regional balance of power. The loss of Iran as a strategic ally deprived the United States of its most important regional partner and created a new source of instability and opposition in the Persian Gulf. The subsequent American turn toward Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies as replacement pillars of regional security restructured the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East in ways that continue to shape strategic dynamics (Gause, 2014).

9. The Iran–Iraq War and Strategic Realignment (1980–1988)



The Iran–Iraq War, which lasted from September 1980 to August 1988, represented another critical phase in the evolution of Iran–United States relations. Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein launched a military invasion of Iran shortly after the revolution, seeking to exploit the perceived vulnerability of the new regime and to contain the spread of revolutionary ideology to Iraq’s Shia majority population. The resulting conflict became one of the longest and deadliest conventional wars of the twentieth century, producing an estimated one million casualties and causing immense economic devastation on both sides (Crist, 2012).

Although the United States initially declared neutrality, Washington gradually adopted a policy of strategic tilt toward Iraq. American policymakers, operating within a realist logic of balancing, calculated that an Iranian victory would pose a greater threat to regional stability and Western interests than an Iraqi one. The United States provided Iraq with intelligence, logistical support, and diplomatic cover, while simultaneously pursuing covert channels of communication with Iran in the episode that became known as the Iran-Contra affair (Pollack, 2004).

For Iran, the war profoundly reinforced perceptions that the United States was an implacable adversary committed to undermining the Islamic Republic by any available means. The American naval intervention in the Persian Gulf during the later stages of the war, culminating in the accidental downing of Iran Air Flight 655 in July 1988 which killed 290 civilians, deepened Iranian grievances and contributed to lasting distrust. The war also shaped Iran’s subsequent strategic doctrine, encouraging the development of asymmetric military capabilities, missile programs, and regional alliances as instruments of deterrence against technologically superior adversaries (Takeyh, 2009).

10. The Post–Cold War Period and Missed Opportunities (1989–2001)

The end of the Cold War and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 created conditions that, in retrospect, appeared favorable for a gradual improvement in Iran–United States relations. Under Presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989–1997) and Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005), Iran pursued cautious diplomatic overtures toward the West. Rafsanjani prioritized postwar reconstruction and economic pragmatism, signaling a willingness to moderate revolutionary fervor in favor of national interest (Ehteshami & Zweiri, 2007).

Khatami’s presidency represented the most significant attempt at diplomatic rapprochement during this period. His call for a “Dialogue of Civilizations” was widely interpreted as an invitation to redefine the terms of engagement between Iran and the Western world. The Khatami government also provided quiet cooperation to the United States following the September 11, 2001 attacks, assisting American efforts against the Taliban in Afghanistan and participating in the Bonn Conference on Afghan reconstruction (Parsi, 2017).



However, these diplomatic openings failed to produce lasting improvement. In January 2002, President George W. Bush designated Iran as part of an “Axis of Evil” alongside Iraq and North Korea, effectively closing the window of diplomatic opportunity that had opened after September 11. The designation stunned and demoralized reformist forces in Iran while strengthening hardline factions that had always argued that engagement with the United States was futile. This episode illustrates how domestic political dynamics and ideological commitments on both sides can override structural opportunities for détente (Takeyh, 2009; Pollack, 2004).

From both realist and constructivist perspectives, the post–Cold War period represents a case study in the persistence of rivalry despite changed structural conditions. The end of bipolarity removed the original Cold War rationale for American–Iranian competition, yet the rivalry persisted because it had become embedded in institutional practices, identity narratives, and domestic political structures on both sides. The failure to capitalize on diplomatic openings during this period deepened mutual cynicism and raised the threshold for future engagement.

11. Proxy Conflicts and Regional Competition

11.1 Iran’s Regional Strategy and the Axis of Resistance

Since the 1980s, Iran has developed an extensive network of regional alliances and partnerships with non-state actors that collectively constitute what Iranian policymakers describe as the “axis of resistance.” This network includes Hezbollah in Lebanon, various Shia militia groups in Iraq, the Houthi movement in Yemen, and Palestinian militant organizations. These alliances serve multiple strategic functions: they provide Iran with strategic depth beyond its borders, enhance its deterrence posture against technologically superior adversaries, and expand its capacity to project influence across the region (Byman, 2020).

11.2 Theaters of Competition

Proxy competition between Iran and the United States has been particularly intense in several regional theaters. In Iraq following the 2003 American invasion, Iran cultivated deep relationships with Shia political parties and militia organizations, becoming one of the most influential external actors in Iraqi politics. In Syria, Iran provided extensive military, financial, and logistical support to the government of Bashar al-Assad during the civil war, while the United States backed various opposition groups. In Yemen, the Houthi movement’s ties to Iran became a focal point of regional tensions, particularly as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates intervened militarily with American support (Crist, 2012; Byman, 2020).

11.3 Theoretical Implications



From a realist perspective, Iran's regional strategy represents a rational response to its relative conventional military weakness vis-à-vis the United States and its regional allies. By cultivating asymmetric capabilities and proxy relationships, Iran has developed a cost-effective means of projecting power and deterring direct military confrontation. From a constructivist perspective, the axis of resistance also serves an important identity function, enabling the Islamic Republic to project itself as the champion of an alternative regional order opposed to Western hegemony (Ramazani, 2013).

12. Nuclear Diplomacy

12.1 Origins of the Nuclear Dispute

Iran's nuclear program became a major international concern in 2002, when dissident groups revealed the existence of previously undisclosed nuclear facilities at Natanz and Arak. Western governments, led by the United States, suspected that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities under the guise of a civilian energy program. Iranian authorities consistently maintained that their nuclear activities were exclusively peaceful and oriented toward energy diversification and technological development. The dispute triggered successive rounds of negotiations, United Nations Security Council resolutions, and increasingly stringent international sanctions (Mousavian, 2012).

12.2 The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

After years of diplomatic stalemate, intensive negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 group—comprising the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany—culminated in 2015 in a landmark agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Under the JCPOA, Iran accepted significant constraints on its nuclear program, including limitations on uranium enrichment levels and quantities, the redesign of the Arak heavy water reactor, and enhanced verification and inspection arrangements by the International Atomic Energy Agency. In return, multilateral and national economic sanctions were progressively lifted (Parsi, 2017).

The JCPOA represented a rare instance of successful diplomatic engagement between Iran and the United States and was widely regarded as a significant achievement of multilateral diplomacy. Many analysts viewed the agreement as a potential foundation upon which broader diplomatic normalization might eventually be constructed.

12.3 U.S. Withdrawal and the Maximum Pressure Campaign

In May 2018, President Donald Trump announced the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and the reimposition of comprehensive economic sanctions on Iran under a policy framework described as “maximum pressure.” The stated objectives of this policy included



compelling Iran to negotiate a more restrictive nuclear agreement, curtail its regional activities, and end its missile development programs (Katzman, 2021).

The withdrawal produced a severe escalation in bilateral tensions. Iran responded incrementally by reducing its compliance with various provisions of the JCPOA, expanding uranium enrichment activities, and accelerating its nuclear research. The period following the withdrawal also witnessed a series of dangerous military confrontations, including attacks on oil tankers in the Persian Gulf, strikes on Saudi oil infrastructure attributed to Iranian-backed forces, and the American assassination of Major General Qassem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Quds Force, in January 2020. The Soleimani strike represented the most direct military confrontation between the two countries in decades and brought the region to the brink of open war (Crist, 2012).

12.4 Subsequent Diplomatic Efforts

Efforts to revive the JCPOA or negotiate a successor agreement have continued intermittently but have thus far failed to produce a breakthrough. The Biden administration expressed willingness to return to the agreement, and indirect negotiations took place in Vienna through European intermediaries. However, mutual preconditions, expanded Iranian nuclear capabilities, domestic political constraints in both countries, and the introduction of new issues such as Iran's drone transfers have complicated diplomatic progress. As of the time of writing, the nuclear file remains unresolved and continues to represent one of the most consequential challenges in international diplomacy.

13. Economic Sanctions: Instruments, Impact, and Limitations

Economic sanctions have constituted one of the most prominent and persistent instruments employed by the United States to influence Iranian policy behavior. Over four decades, Washington has constructed an increasingly elaborate sanctions architecture targeting Iran's financial sector, oil exports, petrochemical industry, shipping, insurance, and access to international payment systems. The scope and severity of American sanctions, particularly secondary sanctions that penalize third-country entities transacting with Iran, have made them among the most comprehensive economic coercion regimes in modern history (Katzman, 2021).

The economic consequences of sanctions for Iran have been substantial. Periods of intensified sanctions enforcement have been associated with significant currency depreciation, elevated inflation, reduced foreign direct investment, and contraction in oil export revenues. The maximum pressure campaign imposed after 2018 was particularly devastating, reducing Iran's oil exports to historically low levels and restricting its access to foreign exchange reserves.

However, the strategic effectiveness of sanctions as a tool for altering Iranian state behavior remains deeply contested. While sanctions have imposed significant economic costs, they have not



produced fundamental changes in Iran's regional policies, military programs, or political system. Indeed, some analysts argue that sanctions have strengthened regime narratives of external siege and economic warfare, reinforcing public support for resistance and reducing domestic pressure for compromise (Takeyh, 2009).

Iran has also pursued strategies of sanctions adaptation, including the development of alternative economic partnerships with countries such as China and Russia, the expansion of regional trade networks, and the cultivation of non-oil economic sectors. These developments illustrate both the limitations of unilateral economic coercion and the capacity of targeted states to develop countermeasures over time (Ehteshami & Zweiri, 2007).

14. Identity, Ideology, and the Politics of Mistrust

Ideological narratives and identity constructions play a critical and often underappreciated role in sustaining the Iran–United States rivalry. The persistence of adversarial identities on both sides creates what constructivist scholars describe as an “enmity structure”—a pattern of social relations in which each party defines its own identity partly in opposition to the other (Wendt, 1999).

Within the Islamic Republic, revolutionary ideology frames the United States as the primary external threat to Iranian sovereignty, Islamic governance, and regional justice. This narrative draws upon historical experiences of foreign intervention—most notably the 1953 coup and American support for Iraq during the 1980–1988 war—and is continuously reinforced through state media, educational curricula, and political rhetoric. Supreme Leader Khamenei's persistent skepticism toward engagement with Washington reflects and reinforces this ideological orientation at the highest level of decision-making (Sadjadpour, 2009).

Within the United States, Iran has been discursively constructed through categories such as “rogue state,” “sponsor of terrorism,” and “axis of evil”—labels that frame the Islamic Republic as fundamentally irrational, dangerous, and unfit for normal diplomatic engagement. These threat constructions have been amplified by domestic political dynamics, including the influence of pro-Israel advocacy organizations, Gulf-aligned interest groups, and partisan competition over foreign policy credibility.

These competing identity narratives do not merely reflect underlying material conflicts; they actively constitute and reproduce the rivalry by limiting the range of politically feasible policy options. Leaders who advocate engagement risk being accused of weakness or naivety, while acts of confrontation are rewarded with political credibility. This dynamic creates a structural bias toward escalation and against compromise, independent of the specific issues under negotiation (Milani, 2010; Parsi, 2017).

15. Prospects for Diplomatic Engagement



Despite decades of hostility and mutual recrimination, the historical record demonstrates that diplomatic engagement between Iran and the United States is not inherently impossible. The JCPOA negotiations, conducted under the Obama and Rouhani administrations, proved that pragmatic cooperation could emerge when political leadership on both sides perceived sufficient mutual benefit and was willing to invest political capital in pursuing compromise (Parsi, 2017).

Drawing upon the historical analysis presented in this article, several conditions appear necessary for meaningful diplomatic progress. First, confidence-building measures would need to be undertaken to address the profound deficit of mutual trust that characterizes the relationship. Such measures might include incremental sanctions relief in exchange for verifiable nuclear constraints, prisoner exchanges, and the establishment of reliable channels of communication to manage crises and prevent miscalculation.

Second, any sustainable diplomatic framework would need to address the regional dimension of the rivalry. Iran's regional alliances and the security concerns of American allies in the Persian Gulf cannot be treated as entirely separate from the nuclear file. A comprehensive diplomatic architecture would therefore need to incorporate mechanisms for regional security dialogue and conflict management.

Third, both sides would need to recognize and account for the domestic political constraints that limit diplomatic flexibility. In Iran, the authority of the Supreme Leader and the influence of hardline factions within the security establishment represent significant obstacles to sustained engagement. In the United States, partisan polarization, congressional prerogatives, and the influence of allied governments create their own set of constraints.

Fourth, the role of third-party actors deserves attention. European governments, China, and Russia have all played roles in mediating or complicating Iran–United States diplomacy at various points. A durable diplomatic framework would likely require the active support, or at minimum the acquiescence, of these external stakeholders.

The choice between incremental engagement and comprehensive grand bargain models remains a subject of scholarly and policy debate. Incrementalism offers the advantage of lower political risk and the possibility of building trust gradually, but it is vulnerable to disruption by domestic political changes and external shocks. A comprehensive approach might address the root causes of rivalry more directly but demands a level of political will and mutual commitment that has rarely been available in either capital.

16. Conclusion

The Iran–United States rivalry stands as one of the most consequential and enduring geopolitical contests of the modern era. This article has traced the evolution of the relationship from its



cooperative origins in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through the transformative rupture of 1979 and the subsequent decades of confrontation, demonstrating that the rivalry is sustained by a mutually reinforcing combination of material power competition and ideational conflict.

Structural realist analysis reveals that the rivalry is grounded in concrete security dilemma dynamics, regional power competition, and competing strategic interests in the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East. Constructivist analysis demonstrates that adversarial identities, ideological narratives, and historical memory play equally important roles in reproducing enmity and constraining diplomatic flexibility. The interplay between these material and ideational factors explains why the rivalry has proven so resistant to resolution, even during periods when structural conditions appeared favorable for détente.

Key historical junctures—the 1953 coup, the Iranian Revolution, the hostage crisis, the Iran–Iraq War, the post–Cold War missed opportunities, and the rise and collapse of the JCPOA—have each added new layers of grievance, mistrust, and political symbolism to the relationship. These accumulated layers make any future diplomatic initiative necessarily more complex and politically costly than its predecessors.

Nevertheless, the JCPOA experience demonstrates that engagement remains possible when sufficient political will exists on both sides. Sustainable improvement in relations will ultimately depend on the willingness of leaders in Tehran and Washington to invest in long-term confidence-building, to manage domestic political constraints, and to develop broader regional dialogue mechanisms that address the legitimate security concerns of all parties.

This study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The reliance on secondary sources, while appropriate for a historical synthesis of this scope, means that the analysis does not incorporate primary archival materials or original interview data. Future research could usefully complement this work through detailed case studies of specific diplomatic episodes, comparative analysis with other enduring rivalries, and empirical investigation of public opinion dynamics in both countries.

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Digital Transformation and the Education System: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Perspectives

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Keywords	Abstract
digital transformation education system digital pedagogy educational technology digital learning artificial intelligence in education connectivism	<p>Digital transformation has emerged as one of the most influential forces reshaping contemporary societies, fundamentally altering economic structures, governance models, and patterns of social interaction. Within this broader transformation, the education system occupies a uniquely central position, as it is simultaneously affected by digital change and responsible for preparing individuals to navigate the digital age. The integration of digital technologies into educational processes has redefined teaching methods, learning environments, institutional structures, and the relationship between educators and learners. Technologies including artificial intelligence, big data analytics, cloud computing, virtual learning environments, and mobile learning platforms have created unprecedented opportunities for personalized instruction, global collaboration, and expanded access to knowledge. However, digital transformation in education extends well beyond technological adoption; it represents a profound cultural, pedagogical, and institutional shift that requires rethinking traditional educational paradigms, redefining the role of educators, and cultivating new competencies among learners. The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated this process, exposing both the potential and the limitations of digital education systems worldwide. This article examines the concept of digital transformation within the education system through qualitative analysis informed by theoretical frameworks including connectivism, constructivism, and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge model. The study traces the historical development of educational technology, analyzes the opportunities and risks associated with digitalization, evaluates its impact on teaching methods, institutional management, and learning outcomes, and discusses the ethical, social, and cultural dimensions of digital</p>

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education. The article argues that successful digital transformation in education requires a holistic strategy integrating technological infrastructure, pedagogical innovation, institutional reform, and ethical responsibility.

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has been characterized by rapid technological advancement and the emergence of a fundamentally digital society. Digital technologies have transformed virtually every sphere of human activity, including communication, commerce, governance, healthcare, and culture. Among the most profoundly affected sectors is education. The education system, traditionally organized around physical classrooms, printed materials, and teacher-centered instruction, is undergoing a comprehensive transformation driven by the integration of digital technologies into every dimension of its operation (Westerman et al., 2014; Selwyn, 2016).

Digital transformation in education refers not merely to the adoption of new technological tools but to a fundamental reconfiguration of educational practices, institutional structures, and pedagogical philosophies. It encompasses the use of information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, learning management systems, online learning platforms, and digital resources to enhance the quality, accessibility, and relevance of teaching and learning processes. Teachers are no longer conceived solely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators of learning who guide students through complex information environments. Students, in turn, are expected to develop new competencies including digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving (Castells, 2010; Tapscott, 2009).

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated the digitalization of education worldwide. Educational institutions at every level were compelled to adopt online learning platforms and digital tools with unprecedented speed, revealing both the transformative potential and the structural limitations of digital education. While digital technologies enabled the continuation of instruction during extended lockdowns, the pandemic also exposed deep inequalities in access to technology, digital literacy, and supportive learning environments (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2020).

The significance of digital transformation in education extends beyond questions of technological adoption. It raises fundamental issues concerning equity, quality, ethics, and the purpose of education itself in a rapidly changing world. Understanding the opportunities, risks, and structural dynamics of this transformation is therefore essential for designing sustainable educational strategies that serve the needs of diverse learners and societies.

This article examines the role of digital transformation in reshaping education systems. It explores the theoretical foundations and historical development of digital education, analyzes its impact on



teaching and learning processes, evaluates the opportunities and challenges it presents, and discusses its ethical and social dimensions. The study aims to contribute to a more integrated understanding of how education systems can navigate digital transformation in ways that are both innovative and humanistically grounded.

2. Literature Review

Scholarly research on digital transformation in education has expanded rapidly in recent years, drawing upon diverse disciplinary perspectives including education science, information technology, organizational studies, and public policy. The existing literature can be organized around four major thematic areas: conceptual and definitional work, technological innovation and pedagogical change, equity and access, and ethical dimensions.

A foundational body of work addresses the conceptual framework of digital transformation itself. Westerman et al. (2014) define digital transformation as the use of technology to radically improve the performance or reach of organizations, emphasizing that it requires strategic leadership rather than mere technological adoption. Kane et al. (2015) reinforce this perspective, arguing that strategy, not technology, drives successful transformation. Vial (2019) provides a comprehensive review of digital transformation literature across sectors, proposing an integrative framework that identifies key building blocks including digital technologies, disruption, strategic responses, and organizational outcomes. Applied to education, this framework underscores that transformation involves far more than deploying devices or platforms; it requires rethinking institutional culture, governance, and pedagogical philosophy.

A second cluster of scholarship examines how specific technologies are reshaping educational practice. Dede (2014) analyzes the role of digital teaching platforms in fostering educational innovation, documenting how learning management systems, multimedia resources, and collaborative tools have altered the dynamics of classroom instruction. Siemens (2005) offers a theoretical contribution through the development of connectivism, a learning theory specifically designed for the digital age that emphasizes networked knowledge construction. Mishra and Koehler (2006) propose the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework, which has become one of the most widely applied models for understanding how teachers can effectively integrate technology into content-specific instruction. Luckin et al. (2016) explore the application of artificial intelligence in education, documenting the potential of intelligent tutoring systems, automated assessment, and adaptive learning platforms.

Third, a growing body of research addresses questions of equity, access, and the digital divide. Warschauer (2004) provides an influential analysis of technology and social inclusion, arguing that meaningful access requires not only physical infrastructure but also digital literacy, relevant content, and supportive institutional environments. The OECD (2021) and UNESCO (2021) have



published comprehensive reports documenting persistent digital inequalities in education across and within countries, with the COVID-19 pandemic serving as a stark illustration of these disparities. The World Bank (2020) offers data on remote learning implementation during the pandemic, highlighting the wide variation in readiness and capacity across different educational contexts.

Finally, an emerging strand of literature examines the ethical, social, and cultural implications of digital education. Williamson (2017) provides a critical analysis of big data in education, raising concerns about surveillance, algorithmic governance, and the commodification of educational data. Selwyn (2016) offers a balanced assessment of the promises and limitations of educational technology, cautioning against techno-deterministic narratives and emphasizing the social and political dimensions of digital education. Floridi (2014) contributes a broader philosophical framework for understanding the ethics of information technologies, which is increasingly being applied to educational contexts.

Despite the richness of existing scholarship, much of the literature tends to focus on either technological capabilities or social critiques in isolation. This article seeks to bridge these perspectives by providing an integrated analysis that combines theoretical, historical, practical, and ethical dimensions of digital transformation in education.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative analytical approach based on a comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature, institutional reports, and policy documents. The research draws upon peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, international organization reports, and policy analyses from sources including the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank.

The analytical framework integrates insights from three complementary theoretical traditions: connectivism, which addresses the distinctive characteristics of learning in networked digital environments; constructivism, which emphasizes the active role of learners in knowledge construction; and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge model, which provides a framework for understanding effective technology integration in teaching. This multi-theoretical approach enables the study to examine digital transformation in education from both technological and pedagogical perspectives.

The study is organized thematically and chronologically, tracing the historical development of educational technology before analyzing contemporary transformations and their implications. The scope encompasses primary, secondary, and higher education contexts, with attention to developments in both the Global North and Global South. The study acknowledges the limitations inherent in a literature-based methodology, including potential publication bias and the rapid pace of technological change that may outstrip the available scholarly evidence base.



4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Connectivism

Connectivism, as articulated by Siemens (2005), represents one of the most significant theoretical contributions to understanding learning in the digital age. Siemens argues that traditional learning theories—behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism—were developed before the pervasive influence of digital technologies on knowledge creation and dissemination. Connectivism proposes that learning in the digital era occurs through the formation and traversal of networks connecting individuals, organizations, and digital resources. Knowledge, from this perspective, is not merely stored within individuals but is distributed across networks, and the capacity to navigate these networks becomes a core learning competency.

For digital education, connectivism provides a theoretical justification for pedagogical approaches that emphasize collaborative learning, networked knowledge construction, and the development of information navigation skills. It supports the design of learning environments in which students learn to identify, evaluate, and synthesize information from diverse digital sources rather than passively receiving pre-packaged knowledge from a single authoritative source.

4.2 Constructivism and Digital Learning

Constructivist learning theory, rooted in the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, and their successors, emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment and with other learners. Digital learning environments are particularly well-suited to constructivist pedagogical principles because they facilitate interactive, collaborative, and experiential learning activities. Online discussion forums, collaborative document editing tools, simulation-based learning, and project-based digital assignments all create opportunities for students to engage in active knowledge construction (Selwyn, 2016).

The alignment between constructivist theory and digital learning environments is not accidental; many of the most successful educational technology platforms have been explicitly designed on constructivist principles. However, scholars caution that the mere availability of digital tools does not guarantee constructivist learning outcomes. The pedagogical design of learning activities, the role of the educator as facilitator, and the assessment methods employed all influence whether technology-enhanced learning actually promotes deep understanding or merely reproduces surface-level information processing.

4.3 Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK)

The TPACK framework, developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006), provides an influential model for understanding how teachers can effectively integrate digital technologies into their



instructional practice. The framework identifies three core knowledge domains—technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge—and argues that effective technology integration occurs at the intersection of all three. Teachers who possess TPACK understand not only how to use specific technologies but also how those technologies interact with particular pedagogical strategies and specific content domains.

TPACK has become one of the most widely applied frameworks in educational technology research and teacher training programs. It provides a useful analytical lens for understanding why technology integration succeeds in some contexts and fails in others, and it underscores the critical importance of professional development that addresses technological, pedagogical, and content dimensions simultaneously rather than in isolation.

5. Conceptual Foundations: Digitization, Digitalization, and Digital Transformation

Clarity regarding the conceptual distinctions between digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation is essential for analyzing the changes occurring in education systems. These three concepts, though frequently conflated in public discourse, describe qualitatively different processes with distinct implications for institutional change (Kane et al., 2015; Vial, 2019).

Digitization refers to the conversion of analog information into digital formats. In education, this includes the transformation of printed textbooks into electronic documents, the scanning of archival materials into digital databases, and the recording of lectures for online distribution. Digitization is a necessary precondition for more advanced forms of digital change, but it does not by itself alter the fundamental processes or structures of education.

Digitalization refers to the use of digital technologies to improve or streamline existing processes and services. In educational contexts, digitalization encompasses the adoption of learning management systems for course administration, electronic assessment tools for grading, and digital communication platforms for interaction between students and instructors. Digitalization enhances efficiency and convenience but typically operates within existing institutional frameworks and pedagogical models.

Digital transformation, by contrast, represents a deeper and more comprehensive structural change. It involves the fundamental rethinking of educational models, pedagogical approaches, and institutional governance in response to the possibilities created by digital technologies (Westerman et al., 2014). Digital transformation implies not merely doing existing things more efficiently with technology but doing fundamentally different things—reconceiving what education means, how learning occurs, and how institutions organize themselves around these processes. It is this deeper transformative dimension that constitutes the primary focus of the present article.



6. Historical Development of Digital Education

The relationship between technology and education has a longer history than is commonly recognized, and understanding this trajectory provides essential context for analyzing contemporary digital transformation. Each generation of educational technology has introduced new possibilities while also generating distinctive challenges and limitations.

The earliest forms of educational technology included radio and television programs designed to deliver instructional content to large audiences beyond the reach of traditional classrooms. Educational broadcasting, which gained prominence in the mid-twentieth century, represented the first systematic attempt to leverage mass media for pedagogical purposes. While these technologies expanded access to information, they were fundamentally unidirectional and offered limited opportunities for interaction or individualized instruction.

The emergence of personal computers in the 1980s marked a significant turning point. Computer-assisted instruction enabled students to interact with educational software, engage in individualized practice exercises, and receive immediate feedback. Early educational computing was limited by the cost and availability of hardware and by the relatively rudimentary state of instructional software design, but it established the principle that technology could support individualized learning pathways (Dede, 2014).

The development and commercialization of the internet in the 1990s further transformed educational possibilities. The internet enabled online communication, digital libraries, virtual learning environments, and distance education programs. Educational institutions began to offer online courses, expanding access to learners who could not attend traditional classes due to geographical, financial, or personal constraints. The emergence of the World Wide Web created an entirely new information ecosystem that fundamentally altered how knowledge was created, stored, disseminated, and accessed (Castells, 2010).

The early twenty-first century witnessed the rapid proliferation of mobile technologies and social media platforms, which created new modalities for collaborative and informal learning. Smartphones and tablets enabled students to access educational resources at any time and from any location, further decoupling learning from fixed physical spaces and schedules. The launch of massive open online courses beginning around 2012 represented a particularly visible manifestation of this trend, attracting millions of learners worldwide and generating extensive debate about the future of higher education (Anderson, 2008).

More recently, emerging technologies including artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, blockchain, and advanced learning analytics have begun to reshape educational systems in more fundamental ways. Artificial intelligence supports intelligent tutoring systems, automated assessment, and adaptive learning platforms that can adjust instructional content to individual



learner needs in real time (Luckin et al., 2016). Virtual and augmented reality technologies offer immersive learning experiences that allow students to explore environments and conduct experiments that would be impractical or impossible in traditional settings. Blockchain technology has been explored as a means of creating secure, transparent, and portable systems for storing academic credentials and verifying qualifications. These developments represent the current frontier of educational technology and carry significant implications for the future organization of education systems.

7. Digital Transformation in Teaching and Learning Processes

7.1 From Teacher-Centered to Learner-Centered Education

Digital transformation has catalyzed a fundamental shift in pedagogical orientation. Traditional educational models were largely organized around teacher-centered instruction in which knowledge flowed primarily in one direction, from instructor to student. The integration of digital technologies has facilitated and accelerated a transition toward learner-centered approaches that emphasize active participation, collaborative inquiry, and personalized learning experiences (Selwyn, 2016; Tapscott, 2009).

Learning management systems such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Canvas have become foundational infrastructure for digitally enhanced education. These platforms enable educators to organize course materials, manage assignments, track student progress, facilitate asynchronous discussion, and provide feedback—all within integrated digital environments that students can access regardless of time or location. The ubiquity of these systems in higher education and their growing adoption in primary and secondary settings reflect the depth of institutional change that digital transformation has produced (Dede, 2014).

7.2 Blended and Online Learning Models

The development of blended and fully online learning models represents one of the most visible manifestations of digital transformation in education. Blended learning integrates traditional face-to-face instruction with digital learning activities, creating hybrid educational experiences that leverage the strengths of both modalities. The flipped classroom model, in which students access lecture content online before class sessions dedicated to discussion and active learning, exemplifies this approach and has been widely adopted across educational levels and disciplines.

Fully online learning, facilitated by video conferencing platforms, asynchronous discussion tools, and digital assessment systems, has expanded access to education for learners who face geographical, financial, or logistical barriers to traditional attendance. The rapid scaling of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated both its potential and its limitations,



generating a wealth of empirical evidence and practical experience that continues to inform institutional strategy.

7.3 Artificial Intelligence and Personalized Learning

Artificial intelligence has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies in contemporary education. AI-powered educational platforms can analyze students' learning patterns, identify areas of difficulty, provide customized feedback, and generate adaptive learning pathways that adjust content difficulty and sequencing to individual learner needs. These capabilities represent a significant advance in the longstanding educational aspiration of personalized instruction (Luckin et al., 2016; OECD, 2021).

However, the application of artificial intelligence in education also raises important questions about transparency, accountability, and the appropriate role of algorithmic systems in pedagogical decision-making. The effectiveness of AI-based learning systems depends critically on the quality of their design, the representativeness of their training data, and the pedagogical soundness of the instructional models they implement.

7.4 Collaborative Technologies and Global Learning

Digital transformation has also facilitated new forms of collaborative learning that transcend institutional and geographical boundaries. Video conferencing platforms, collaborative document editing tools, online discussion forums, and shared digital workspaces enable students to collaborate on projects, exchange perspectives, and engage in interactive learning activities with peers around the world. These capabilities support the development of competencies increasingly valued in the global knowledge economy, including intercultural communication, teamwork, and collaborative problem-solving (Castells, 2010).

8. Opportunities of Digital Transformation in Education

Digital transformation presents a range of significant opportunities for education systems, institutions, educators, and learners. Perhaps the most consequential of these is the expanded accessibility of education. Digital technologies enable learners to access educational resources from virtually any location, reducing geographical barriers and creating pathways to learning for populations historically underserved by traditional educational institutions. Online platforms, open educational resources, and massive open online courses have extended the reach of educational provision to millions of learners worldwide (Anderson, 2008).

A second major opportunity lies in the personalization of learning experiences. Digital technologies allow educators and institutions to adapt instructional content, pacing, and assessment to the needs and abilities of individual learners. Adaptive learning systems, supported by artificial



intelligence and learning analytics, can monitor student progress in real time and adjust educational content accordingly, creating more responsive and effective learning environments (OECD, 2021).

Third, digital transformation enhances the efficiency of educational administration and institutional management. Digital platforms streamline processes such as enrollment, course scheduling, grading, communication, and resource allocation, enabling institutions to operate more efficiently and to redirect resources toward core educational activities.

Fourth, digital technologies promote innovation and creativity in educational practice. Interactive simulations, virtual laboratories, gamified learning platforms, and multimedia resources enable students to engage with complex concepts in dynamic and experiential ways that may enhance understanding, retention, and motivation (Tapscott, 2009). These tools support pedagogical approaches that prioritize active learning and authentic problem-solving.

Fifth, digital transformation contributes to the development of essential competencies for the twenty-first century. Integration of digital technologies into educational processes helps students develop digital literacy, information management skills, computational thinking, and the capacity for effective online communication and collaboration—all competencies that are increasingly critical in modern economies and societies (Castells, 2010).

Finally, digital transformation supports the infrastructure of lifelong learning. In an era of rapid technological and economic change, the capacity for continuous skill development and knowledge acquisition is essential. Digital learning platforms provide flexible opportunities for professional development and continuing education throughout the lifespan, supporting individuals in adapting to evolving labor market demands.

9. Challenges and Risks of Digital Transformation in Education

Despite its substantial opportunities, digital transformation in education also presents significant challenges and risks that must be addressed through deliberate institutional and policy responses. The most prominent of these is the digital divide. Not all learners have equal access to digital technologies, reliable internet connectivity, or supportive learning environments. Disparities in access exist along lines of socioeconomic status, geographic location, gender, and disability, and they risk exacerbating existing educational and social inequalities rather than reducing them (Warschauer, 2004; UNESCO, 2021).

A second critical challenge concerns the professional development of educators. Many teachers received their training in pre-digital educational environments and may lack the technological competencies, pedagogical knowledge, or institutional support required to effectively integrate digital tools into their instructional practice. The TPACK framework underscores that effective technology integration requires simultaneous mastery of technological, pedagogical, and content



knowledge—a combination that demands sustained and well-designed professional development programs (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Third, cybersecurity and data privacy represent growing areas of concern. Educational institutions collect increasingly large volumes of personal data, including academic records, behavioral analytics, biometric information, and communication metadata. Protecting this data from unauthorized access, misuse, and commercial exploitation is an urgent institutional and regulatory responsibility (Williamson, 2017).

Fourth, excessive reliance on digital technologies may produce negative psychological and social consequences. Research has raised concerns about digital fatigue, reduced attention spans, diminished face-to-face social interaction, and the potential erosion of the relational and emotional dimensions of education that are central to student development and well-being. The challenge for education systems is to harness the benefits of digital tools while preserving the human interactions that remain foundational to effective teaching and learning.

Fifth, questions about the quality and credibility of online education persist. The rapid proliferation of online courses, micro-credentials, and digital learning platforms has generated legitimate concerns about academic standards, assessment integrity, accreditation, and the verification of learning outcomes. Ensuring that the expansion of digital education does not come at the cost of educational quality is a central challenge for institutions and regulatory bodies alike.

10. The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Catalyst for Digital Transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic constituted the most significant external shock to global education systems in modern history. Between March and April 2020, school and university closures affected approximately 1.6 billion learners worldwide, compelling educational institutions to transition to remote instruction with unprecedented speed (World Bank, 2020). This forced experiment in digital education produced outcomes that were profoundly uneven across countries, institutions, and student populations.

In contexts where digital infrastructure, institutional capacity, and teacher preparedness were relatively strong, the transition to remote learning proceeded with manageable disruption. Learning management systems, video conferencing platforms, and digital assessment tools enabled the continuation of instruction, and in some cases accelerated innovation in pedagogical practice. Many educators and institutions discovered new possibilities for flexible, hybrid, and technology-enhanced teaching that they have continued to develop in the post-pandemic period (UNESCO, 2021).

However, the pandemic also laid bare the depth of digital inequality in education. In many low-income countries and underserved communities, students lacked access to reliable internet



connectivity, appropriate devices, or quiet study environments. Teachers in these contexts often lacked training and support for online instruction. The result was significant learning loss disproportionately concentrated among already disadvantaged populations, widening educational gaps along socioeconomic, racial, and geographic lines (World Bank, 2020).

The pandemic experience has thus functioned as both an accelerator and a stress test for digital transformation in education. It demonstrated the potential of digital technologies to maintain educational continuity under extreme conditions while simultaneously revealing the fragility of digital education systems that lack inclusive infrastructure, adequate teacher preparation, and equitable access policies. The lessons of the pandemic period are likely to shape educational technology policy and institutional strategy for years to come.

11. Ethical and Social Dimensions of Digital Education

Digital transformation in education raises fundamental ethical and social questions that extend well beyond issues of technological efficiency. As digital technologies become increasingly embedded in educational processes, questions of privacy, surveillance, algorithmic governance, equity, and the purpose of education itself require sustained critical attention.

One of the most pressing ethical concerns involves the collection and use of educational data. Learning analytics and artificial intelligence systems generate detailed profiles of student behavior, performance, and engagement. While these data can inform pedagogical improvement, they also raise serious questions about data ownership, informed consent, transparency, and the potential for surveillance. The increasing involvement of commercial technology companies in educational data ecosystems adds additional layers of concern regarding data commodification and corporate influence over educational priorities (Williamson, 2017; Floridi, 2014).

Algorithmic bias represents another significant ethical challenge. AI systems used in educational contexts—including automated grading tools, admissions algorithms, and adaptive learning platforms—may inadvertently reproduce or amplify social biases embedded in their training data. Without careful attention to issues of fairness, transparency, and accountability, algorithmic systems risk generating discriminatory outcomes that disproportionately affect already marginalized student populations.

Digital transformation also affects the nature of knowledge production and dissemination. The abundance of online information, while creating unprecedented opportunities for learning, has also facilitated the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and unreliable sources. The cultivation of digital literacy and critical thinking skills—enabling learners to evaluate sources, identify bias, and distinguish evidence-based claims from unfounded assertions—has therefore become an essential educational priority.



Furthermore, digital education must attend to questions of cultural diversity, linguistic inclusion, and accessibility. Educational technologies designed primarily for dominant language groups and cultural contexts may marginalize learners from minority or indigenous communities. Universal design principles and culturally responsive technology development are necessary to ensure that digital education serves all learners equitably (Warschauer, 2004).

12. Strategic Approaches for Successful Digital Transformation

Achieving sustainable and equitable digital transformation in education requires comprehensive, coordinated strategies that address technological, pedagogical, institutional, and ethical dimensions simultaneously. Piecemeal approaches that focus exclusively on technology procurement without attending to the broader ecosystem of change are unlikely to produce lasting improvement.

First, the development of robust digital infrastructure is a prerequisite for meaningful transformation. Reliable internet connectivity, modern hardware, secure digital platforms, and technical support systems must be available to all learners and educators, with particular attention to underserved communities and regions. Public investment in educational digital infrastructure is essential and must be sustained over time rather than limited to one-time procurement cycles.

Second, sustained investment in educator professional development is critical. Teachers must be equipped not only with technical skills but with the pedagogical knowledge required to design effective technology-enhanced learning experiences. Programs grounded in the TPACK framework, which integrates technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, have demonstrated effectiveness in preparing educators for the demands of digital instruction (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Third, educational institutions should adopt innovative pedagogical approaches that leverage the distinctive capabilities of digital technologies. Blended learning, flipped classroom models, project-based learning, collaborative inquiry, and adaptive instruction all represent promising approaches, but their successful implementation depends on institutional support, curricular alignment, and ongoing evaluation.

Fourth, governments and regulatory bodies must develop policy frameworks that promote digital inclusion, protect data privacy, ensure the quality of digital education, and establish standards for emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence in educational settings. Effective regulation requires ongoing dialogue between policymakers, educators, technology developers, and learner communities.

Fifth, partnerships between educational institutions, technology companies, research organizations, and civil society can accelerate innovation and ensure that digital education



development is responsive to diverse stakeholder needs. However, such partnerships must be structured to preserve institutional autonomy, protect learner interests, and prevent undue commercial influence over educational priorities.

Finally, all digital transformation strategies must be grounded in ethical principles and humanistic values. Technology should serve as a tool for enhancing human development, creativity, and social connection—not as a substitute for the relational, emotional, and moral dimensions of education that remain irreplaceable.

13. Future Perspectives

The trajectory of digital transformation in education points toward increasingly sophisticated integration of emerging technologies into learning processes and institutional systems. Several developments are likely to shape the educational landscape in the coming decades.

Artificial intelligence will continue to expand its role in education, enabling more refined forms of adaptive learning, intelligent tutoring, and automated assessment. As AI systems become more capable, fundamental questions about the appropriate division of labor between human educators and algorithmic systems will become increasingly pressing. The challenge will be to deploy AI in ways that augment rather than replace the uniquely human capacities of teachers—including empathy, mentorship, ethical judgment, and the ability to inspire (Luckin et al., 2016).

Immersive technologies, including virtual reality, augmented reality, and mixed reality, are likely to transform experiential learning by enabling students to explore environments, conduct experiments, and engage in simulated professional practice that would be impractical or impossible in traditional settings. As these technologies become more affordable and accessible, their integration into mainstream education will accelerate.

The concept of micro-credentials, digital badges, and blockchain-verified qualifications may reshape the credentialing landscape, potentially challenging the dominance of traditional degree programs and creating more flexible, modular pathways to professional competence. These developments carry significant implications for the structure and purpose of educational institutions.

At the same time, the growing awareness of digital inequality, data ethics, and the limitations of purely technological solutions will likely generate increased demand for more humanistic, equitable, and critically informed approaches to educational technology. The most successful education systems of the future will likely be those that combine technological sophistication with deep commitment to equity, human development, and democratic values.

14. Conclusion



Digital transformation constitutes one of the most significant and complex developments in the evolution of modern education systems. The integration of digital technologies into educational processes has created unprecedented opportunities for expanding access, personalizing learning, fostering innovation, and developing the competencies required for participation in a digital society. At the same time, digital transformation presents substantial challenges, including persistent digital inequality, data privacy and security concerns, the need for comprehensive educator professional development, and the potential erosion of the relational and humanistic dimensions of education.

This article has argued that digital transformation in education is not merely a technological process but a multidimensional phenomenon that requires simultaneous attention to infrastructure, pedagogy, institutional governance, and ethical responsibility. Theoretical frameworks including connectivism, constructivism, and TPACK provide valuable analytical lenses for understanding how digital technologies interact with learning processes and educational practice, but the success of transformation ultimately depends on the commitment of all stakeholders—governments, institutions, educators, technology developers, and learner communities—to designing educational futures that are both innovative and just.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a powerful catalyst and cautionary experience, demonstrating both the transformative potential and the structural vulnerabilities of digital education systems. The lessons of this period underscore the necessity of investing in inclusive infrastructure, equitable access, and sustained professional development—not as optional supplements to technological deployment, but as essential components of any viable digital transformation strategy.

Future research should continue to investigate the long-term impact of digital transformation on learning outcomes, institutional structures, and educational equity, with particular attention to the experiences of learners in underserved contexts. Comparative studies across countries and education levels, longitudinal analyses of technology integration, and critical investigations of algorithmic governance in education represent productive directions for advancing scholarly understanding.

Ultimately, the future of education in the digital age will be determined not by the sophistication of available technologies but by the wisdom, equity, and humanistic commitment with which societies choose to deploy them.

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Theoretical-Historical Approaches to Globalization and National Identity in Theatre

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Keywords	Abstract
Theatre globalization national identity hybridity	This article examines how globalization influences the performative construction and transformation of national identity in theatre through a theoretical-historical perspective. Theatre is approached as a dynamic cultural space where national identity is not only represented but also negotiated, contested, and redefined. Using a qualitative and interpretive methodology, the study combines historical periodization, literary and performance analysis, and comparative case studies across four major stages: the rise of national theatre in the eighteenth century, the growth of nationalist dramaturgy in the nineteenth century, the transnational movements of the twentieth century, and contemporary globalized theatre. The analysis demonstrates that globalization does not erase national identity in theatre; instead, it reshapes it into hybrid, multilayered, and context-dependent forms. The study also reveals that national motifs often re-emerge in response to global cultural pressures, while diasporic and transnational performances highlight the fluid and negotiated character of belonging. In addition, state institutions and cultural policies continue to play a significant role in balancing local specificity with global engagement. Ultimately, theatre is shown to function both as a mirror and as a mediator of national identity in the global era.

1. Introduction

Theatre has long functioned as a critical arena for the performative construction, negotiation, and contestation of national identity. As a medium that synthesizes visual, linguistic, and embodied elements, theatrical performance engages audiences in the collective making of meaning, reinforcing, interrogating, or destabilizing prevailing conceptions of nationhood. In an era defined

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by accelerating globalization, theatre is increasingly shaped by transnational flows of artistic practices, ideological discourses, and diverse audiences, prompting fundamental questions about how national identity is staged, sustained, and transformed amid deepening global interconnectedness (Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996).

Classical theories of nationalism provide an essential conceptual foundation for this inquiry. Anderson's (1983) theorization of nations as "imagined communities" underscores the socially constructed character of national belonging—a process vividly instantiated in theatrical productions that narrativize shared histories, cultural symbols, and collective myths. Gellner (1983) situates the rise of nationalism within the broader dynamics of modernization and institutional consolidation, foregrounding the role of cultural institutions, including national theatres, in promoting and sustaining cohesive national narratives. In postcolonial contexts, theatre frequently serves as a site of cultural resistance, reclaiming indigenous narratives from colonial frameworks while negotiating the demands of contemporary global influences (Smith, 1991).

Globalization has profoundly accelerated the circulation of theatrical forms and performance vocabularies. The resulting intercultural exchange has given rise to hybrid theatrical productions that integrate local traditions with international techniques, yielding new modes of identity expression that are simultaneously rooted in particular cultural contexts and oriented toward cosmopolitan audiences (Castells, 1997; Robertson, 1992). Digital platforms and international festivals further extend the reach of theatre beyond national borders, complicating the relationship between local cultural specificity and global visibility (Giddens, 1990).

Theatre also constitutes a space in which power, politics, and social ideologies intersect with questions of identity (Mammadova & Abdullayev, 2025). Performances may reinforce dominant national narratives or challenge hegemonic conceptions of nationhood, functioning as forums for dialogue on multiculturalism, migration, and postcolonial subjectivity (Javid & Sadikhova, 2025). Contemporary practices increasingly reflect these tensions, incorporating themes of global inequality, environmental crises, and transnational solidarity into works that interrogate both national and global responsibilities. This trajectory highlights theatre's capacity to respond dynamically to shifting socio-political and cultural contexts, establishing it as an ideal medium for investigating the relationship between globalization and national identity (Aslanova, 2025).

Moreover, the temporality and materiality of theatrical performance afford unique insights into the processes of collective memory and national mythmaking. By staging historical events, commemorating significant cultural figures, or representing collective trauma, theatre enables communities to perform identity both retrospectively and prospectively, linking past, present, and imagined futures (Anderson, 1983). Globalized influences introduce new narrative strategies—fragmented storytelling, multimedia integration, and non-linear dramaturgies—that challenge



traditional representations of coherent national identity and invite audiences to reflect on the multiplicity of cultural belonging (Bhabha, 1994).

Globalization theorists, including Giddens (1990) and Robertson (1992), emphasize the dual dynamics of universalization and particularization, concepts that illuminate how national identity in theatre adapts under transnational pressures. Bhabha's (1994) notion of cultural hybridity and Appadurai's (1996) framework of global cultural flows further elucidate how theatre becomes a site where local and global influences converge, producing complex, layered performances that negotiate identity across multiple registers.

Against this background, the central research question guiding this study is: How have the processes of globalization influenced the representation, negotiation, and transformation of national identity in theatre across different historical periods?

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology that integrates historical research, literary and performance analysis, and comparative theatre studies. The research design is interdisciplinary, drawing on political sociology, cultural studies, and performance theory to provide a comprehensive account of how theatrical practices reflect and shape national identity across historical and contemporary contexts (Farzaliyeva & Seyidov, 2025).

The analysis is organized according to a periodized historical framework encompassing four key phases: (1) the emergence of national theatre in the eighteenth century, (2) the consolidation of nationalist dramaturgy during the nineteenth century, (3) the internationalization and transnational movements of the twentieth century, and (4) contemporary globalized theatrical practices shaped by digital media and cross-cultural collaboration. This temporal structure facilitates the identification of both continuity and transformation in the theatrical representation of national identity.

Primary sources include dramatic texts, production notes, archival theatre reviews, and performance recordings, which furnish direct evidence of the ways national identity is enacted and communicated to audiences (Gulkhara & Kamran, 2025). Secondary sources encompass scholarly monographs, journal articles, and critical essays that provide contextual analysis and theoretical interpretation. The selection criteria prioritize works that explicitly engage with themes of nationalism, globalization, hybridity, and identity in theatrical practice.

Analytical procedures involve the thematic coding of recurring motifs, including cultural symbolism, historical representation, language use, and audience reception. Comparative analysis examines differences and convergences across geographic regions, theatrical traditions, and historical periods to assess the effects of global influences on national identity formation (Javid,



2023). Particular attention is devoted to diasporic and transnational theatre, investigating how these performances negotiate hybridized identities while sustaining connections to national narratives.

The study integrates liberal, critical, and constructivist theoretical frameworks to achieve a multidimensional analysis. Liberal perspectives inform the examination of cultural exchange and cosmopolitan theatrical forms; critical perspectives illuminate structural inequalities, cultural commodification, and neo-imperial dynamics; and constructivist perspectives foreground the socially constructed and performative character of identity, highlighting how theatre actively produces and transforms national narratives.

Acknowledged limitations include the interpretive nature of qualitative research and potential biases inherent in the selection of archival materials. These are addressed through the triangulation of multiple sources and analytical perspectives, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive examination of the interplay between globalization and national identity in theatrical contexts.

3. Results

The analysis of theatre in the context of globalization reveals several interconnected trends in the performance, negotiation, and transformation of national identity.

The hybridization of theatrical forms constitutes one of the most significant findings. Global cultural flows have facilitated the convergence of traditional and international performance styles, producing works that simultaneously articulate local and global sensibilities (Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996). Contemporary adaptations of canonical dramatic texts frequently incorporate multimedia elements, transnational dramaturgical techniques, or multilingual performance, generating hybridized productions that engage both domestic and international audiences.

A second prominent trend is the resurgence of national themes during periods of heightened globalization. National theatre institutions frequently foreground local history, folklore, and linguistic heritage as a counterpoint to perceived cultural homogenization (Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1991). Historical case studies demonstrate that nineteenth-century nationalist dramaturgy in Europe deployed theatre as a vehicle for consolidating emergent nation-states, while contemporary productions in postcolonial settings reaffirm national identity through the staging of historical narratives and cultural rituals (Gellner, 1983).

Diasporic and transnational theatre constitutes a further significant trend, illustrating how migration and international collaboration engender multilayered identities. Works by diasporic playwrights, particularly those from South Asian and Caribbean contexts, frequently explore the tension between homeland and host culture, producing complex narratives of identity that resonate with transnational audiences (Castells, 1997; Robertson, 1992). These performances foreground



the performative character of identity, demonstrating that national belonging can be both fluid and enduring.

The influence of digital media has further transformed theatrical practice. Online streaming, international festival circuits, and digital collaboration enable performances to reach global audiences, amplifying both cosmopolitan and nationalist messages (Giddens, 1990). However, this globalization of theatrical dissemination raises critical questions about authenticity, commodification, and the potential attenuation of local cultural specificity (Harvey, 1989).

Finally, state and institutional support remains central to shaping national identity in theatre (Sabir, 2023). National theatre companies, funding bodies, and cultural policy frameworks mediate the balance between global engagement and local cultural preservation, demonstrating that the state continues to exercise a significant role in cultural production even within a globalized sphere (Ohmae, 1995; Polanyi, 1944). Collectively, these findings indicate that theatre functions as a dynamic site where globalization and national identity intersect, producing hybrid, adaptive, and contextually negotiated performances rather than effecting a straightforward erosion of national culture.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the complex, dialectical relationship between globalization and national identity within theatrical practice. Rather than constituting a zero-sum dynamic in which global integration necessarily diminishes national particularity, theatre reveals that national identity is both resilient and adaptive in the face of transnational pressures. The emergence of hybridized performance forms exemplifies Bhabha's (1994) concept of cultural hybridity, in which "third spaces" facilitate the negotiation of local and global influences, enabling theatre to mediate multiple layers of identity simultaneously. Appadurai's (1996) framework of global cultural "scapes"—including ethnoscares, mediascapes, and ideoscapes—provides a further analytical lens for understanding how cultural flows circulate through theatrical practice, reshaping narratives of belonging while preserving culturally specific markers.

The resurgence of national themes in response to globalized theatrical forms corroborates Anderson's (1983) theorization of imagined communities. Theatre operates as a performative vehicle for shared historical memory, collective myths, and cultural symbols, reinforcing national cohesion even amid intensifying transnational exchange (Babayev et al., 2025). Smith's (1991) ethno-symbolist perspective further elucidates why such cultural persistence is significant: national identity is anchored in enduring historical traditions and shared cultural symbols, which theatre effectively mobilizes for contemporary audiences.

Diasporic and transnational performances illuminate the fluidity of national identity, consonant with Castells' (1997) analysis of networked societies in which identity is socially constructed and



negotiated across multiple temporal and spatial contexts. Globalization does not efface national identity but rather stimulates its rearticulation, producing multilayered, adaptive, and contextually specific performances. Harvey's (1989) concept of time-space compression provides a complementary framework, clarifying how accelerated communication and mobility intensify both cultural exchange and the tensions between global and local identity narratives.

At the institutional level, national theatre organizations and state cultural policies mediate the effects of globalization, balancing the preservation of local cultural heritage with engagement in global networks (Ohmae, 1995; Polanyi, 1944). This finding reinforces the proposition that the state continues to shape cultural identity even within globally interconnected systems, demonstrating that globalization and national identity operate in a mutually constitutive rather than antagonistic relationship.

In synthesis, the discussion reveals theatre as a microcosm of broader social and cultural processes, illustrating how national identity persists, transforms, and negotiates its position within globalized cultural flows (Gulkhara & Farzaliyeva, 2025). The interplay between hybridization, the resurgence of local themes, diasporic performance, and institutional mediation reflects a complex, multidimensional, and context-dependent configuration of identity under conditions of globalization.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the theoretical-historical relationship between globalization and national identity in theatre, demonstrating that theatrical practice constitutes a dynamic space in which identity is performed, contested, and reconstituted. The analysis reveals that globalization does not straightforwardly erode national identity; rather, it generates hybridized, multilayered, and contextually negotiated performances that reflect both local traditions and transnational influences. Through the convergence of diverse performance styles, diasporic narratives, and digital media dissemination, theatre attests to the adaptability of national identity in an increasingly interconnected world (Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996).

Historical analysis confirms that periods of intensified global exchange frequently coincide with the resurgence of national themes, as theatrical institutions foreground cultural memory, folklore, and linguistic heritage to assert collective identity (Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1991). Diasporic and transnational performances further illuminate the fluidity of identity, demonstrating how globalized theatre mediates tensions between homeland and host culture while fostering hybrid forms of belonging (Castells, 1997; Robertson, 1992).

The role of institutions and the state remains pivotal in this dynamic. National theatres, funding frameworks, and cultural programming continue to mediate the impact of globalization, balancing the preservation of local cultural specificity with participation in global networks (Ohmae, 1995;



Polanyi, 1944). This suggests that globalization and national identity are mutually constitutive processes rather than oppositional forces.

In conclusion, theatre provides a distinctive analytical lens through which to apprehend the evolving relationship between global integration and national belonging. National identity in theatre is neither static nor diminished by globalization; it is performed, negotiated, and redefined through hybridized, adaptive, and contextually responsive practices. This study affirms the enduring significance of theatre as both a mirror and a mediator of cultural identity in the contemporary global era, and invites further empirical and comparative research into the specific mechanisms through which theatrical practice shapes and is shaped by the forces of globalization.

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The Role of Field Doublets in the Formation of Phraseology in the German Language

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Keywords	Abstract
field doublets phraseology German language idioms lexical variation semantic specialization diachronic linguistics	This study examines the role of field doublets in the formation and development of phraseological units in the German language. Field doublets—lexical items that share a common semantic field but differ in origin, stylistic value, or historical development—are analyzed as a key mechanism underlying idiomatic expression. Drawing on qualitative corpus analysis, lexicographic data, and diachronic investigation, the study explores how doublets interact with processes of phraseological fixation, variation, and semantic specialization. The findings demonstrate that phraseological systems tend to select only one member of a doublet pair, typically favoring high-frequency, stylistically neutral, and native Germanic forms. This selective entrenchment contributes to the stability and rigidity of idioms while limiting lexical substitution. Simultaneously, doublets support functional differentiation across registers, thereby enhancing the expressive capacity of the lexicon. The study also highlights the conservative nature of phraseology, which preserves historically older lexical elements. Overall, the interaction between field doublets and phraseology reflects a balance between lexical diversity and structural stability in German.

1. Introduction

Phraseology—the study of fixed expressions such as idioms, collocations, and set phrases—occupies a central position in understanding the richness and cultural depth of a language (Aslanova, 2025). As Burger (2015) emphasizes, phraseological units constitute an essential component of linguistic competence, reflecting grammatical structure as well as cultural conventions and communicative norms. In the German language, phraseology has been

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extensively investigated as a subsystem of the lexicon that bridges vocabulary, syntax, and pragmatics.

Within this framework, the concept of field doublets has attracted growing scholarly attention. Field doublets refer to pairs or groups of lexical items belonging to the same semantic field but differing in origin, stylistic value, or historical development. For example, native Germanic words frequently coexist with Latinate or French borrowings, producing lexical alternatives such as *anfängen* vs. *beginnen* or *Frage* vs. *Interrogation*. As Fleischer (1997) and Barz (2007) observe, such lexical duplications are not redundant; rather, they enrich the expressive potential of the language and contribute to stylistic differentiation.

The interaction between field doublets and phraseology is particularly significant. As Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) note, phraseological units tend to favor certain lexical items over others, leading to the stabilization of specific variants within idiomatic expressions. This process reflects broader tendencies in language use, where frequency, familiarity, and cultural salience determine which elements become fixed in collective memory. Moreover, the historical layering of the German lexicon—shaped by sustained contact with Latin, French, and other languages—has produced a rich system of doublets that influence phraseological formation. Piirainen (2012) highlights that idioms often preserve older or more prototypical lexical items, thereby functioning as linguistic “archives” of earlier stages of the language.

Despite the recognized importance of both phraseology and lexical variation, the specific role of field doublets in the formation of German phraseological units remains insufficiently explored (Gataullina et al., 2017). Most studies have focused either on idioms as fixed expressions or on lexical doublets as isolated phenomena, without systematically examining their interaction. This article therefore aims to address this gap by investigating how field doublets contribute to the emergence, variation, and stabilization of phraseological units in German. By integrating insights from lexicology, phraseology, and historical linguistics, the study seeks to demonstrate that field doublets constitute a key mechanism in the development of German phraseology, shaping both the structure of idiomatic expressions and their stylistic and semantic diversity (Babayev, 2022).

2. Methods

This study adopts a multi-method qualitative approach, combining corpus linguistics, lexicographic analysis, and historical-comparative techniques to investigate the role of field doublets in German phraseology. The methodological framework draws on established approaches in phraseological research, particularly those outlined by Burger (2015) and Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005).

2.1 Corpus Selection and Analysis

The empirical basis of the study consists of data drawn from contemporary and historical German language corpora, including written sources (literary works, newspapers, and academic texts) and spoken sources (transcribed conversations and media broadcasts). A targeted sampling method was employed to extract phraseological units containing or related to lexical doublets within the same



semantic field (Gataullina et al., 2017). Instances were identified through keyword searches involving known doublet pairs, such as *anfängen/beginnen*, *Ende/Finale*, and *sterben/versterben*. Each occurrence was analyzed in context to determine whether it forms part of a fixed or semi-fixed expression, its stylistic register (formal, neutral, or colloquial), and its frequency and distribution across genres (Javid, 2025).

2.2 Identification and Classification of Field Doublets

Field doublets were defined as lexemes sharing a semantic core but differing in etymology, stylistic marking, or usage domain (Alisoy, 2024). The classification followed criteria proposed by Fleischer (1997) and Barz (2007), distinguishing among etymological doublets (native vs. borrowed forms), stylistic doublets (formal vs. colloquial variants), and functional doublets (specialized vs. general usage). A database of representative doublet pairs was compiled and used as the basis for further phraseological analysis (Ulduz, 2022).

2.3 Lexicographic and Phraseographic Sources

Authoritative German dictionaries and phraseological reference works were systematically consulted to verify the status of expressions as idioms or fixed collocations. These sources provided information on the degree of idiomaticity, lexical fixedness, stylistic labeling, and historical usage. Cross-referencing multiple sources ensured the reliability of the identified phraseological units and helped distinguish between productive combinations and established idioms.

2.4 Comparative Phraseological Analysis

For each identified doublet pair, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine whether both variants appear in phraseological constructions, whether one variant is preferred or exclusively fixed in idioms, and how meaning and stylistic tone differ between variants. This step involved close semantic analysis and contextual interpretation, enabling the identification of patterns of lexical selection within phraseological units.

2.5 Diachronic and Etymological Investigation

To account for historical influences, selected doublet pairs were traced diachronically using etymological dictionaries and historical corpora. This analysis aimed to determine the origin and period of entry of each lexical item, shifts in meaning and usage over time, and the stage at which phraseological fixation occurred. The diachronic perspective, consistent with approaches advocated by Piirainen (2012), made it possible to interpret phraseological units as outcomes of long-term lexical competition and stabilization.

2.6 Analytical Framework

The collected data were interpreted using a functional-semantic framework, with particular attention to the role of frequency and entrenchment in idiom formation, the influence of stylistic markedness on lexical selection, and the degree of compositionality versus idiomaticity. Rather



than relying on quantitative statistical modeling, the study prioritizes depth of analysis and interpretive accuracy, aiming to reveal underlying linguistic mechanisms (Zeynalova & Ismayil, 2023). While the methodology ensures a comprehensive qualitative overview, certain limitations must be acknowledged: corpus data may not fully capture regional or dialectal variations (Ismayil, 2021), frequency observations remain indicative rather than statistically exhaustive, and the selection of doublet pairs is representative but not exhaustive. Despite these constraints, the triangulation of corpus, lexicographic, and historical data provides a robust basis for the analysis.

3. Results

The analysis provides a detailed picture of how field doublets function within German phraseology. The findings confirm that doublets are not distributed randomly across idiomatic expressions but follow identifiable patterns shaped by frequency, stylistic marking, and historical development (Sabir, 2015).

3.1 Asymmetrical Distribution in Phraseological Fixation

A central finding is the clear asymmetry between members of a doublet pair. In the majority of cases, only one variant becomes entrenched in phraseological units, while the other remains marginal or entirely excluded. For example, *den Anfang machen* is fully idiomatic, whereas **den Beginn machen* is unattested in idiomatic use. Similarly, *zu Ende gehen* functions as a standard phraseological unit, while **zu Finale gehen* lacks idiomatic status. This finding supports Burger's (2015) observation that phraseological systems tend toward lexical stability and economy: the preferred variant is typically shorter, more frequent, and stylistically neutral.

3.2 Preference for Native Germanic Lexical Elements

The data reveal a strong tendency for phraseological units to favor native Germanic lexemes over borrowed or Latinate equivalents. The expression *ins Leben rufen* is fully standard, whereas a hypothetical Latinate alternative (**ins Existenz rufen*) is not idiomatic. Likewise, *Hand und Fuß haben* persists as a fixed expression, with no comparable construction using formal or foreign-derived synonyms. This pattern reflects what Fleischer (1997) identifies as the “colloquial anchoring” of phraseology, wherein everyday, historically entrenched vocabulary forms the basis of idiomatic expressions.

3.3 Register-Specific Distribution of Doublets

Field doublets contribute to a clear division of labor across stylistic registers. Colloquial and idiomatic expressions strongly prefer informal or native variants (e.g., *loslegen*, *draufgehen*, *aufhören*), whereas formal and institutional contexts allow or favor Latinate or elevated forms (e.g., *beginnen*, *versterben*, *beenden*). However, phraseological fixation overwhelmingly occurs in the informal or neutral register. As Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) note, idioms are typically rooted in spoken language and only later extend into formal usage.

3.4 Partial Doublet Integration in Variant Patterns



In certain cases, both members of a doublet pair appear in phraseological constructions, but with different meanings or pragmatic functions. For instance, *eine Entscheidung treffen* and *einen Beschluss fassen* both function as phraseological units, yet they differ in semantic nuance and register. By contrast, *in Gang setzen* forms an idiomatic construction, while *initiieren* does not enter similar fixed expressions. Here, the doublets occupy complementary niches rather than competing directly, demonstrating that phraseological systems can accommodate variation without losing structural stability.

3.5 Semantic Specialization Within Phraseological Contexts

Doublets frequently undergo semantic narrowing when incorporated into phraseological units. The word *Zug* in *am Zug sein* develops a metaphorical meaning distinct from its literal sense, and potential doublet equivalents (e.g., *Bewegung*, *Transport*) do not enter similar idiomatic constructions. This indicates that phraseology not only selects among doublets but also actively reshapes their meanings, reinforcing specific semantic associations.

3.6 Role in Intensification and Binomial Structures

Field doublets also contribute to binomial and reduplicative phraseological structures, where semantic overlap enhances emphasis. Expressions such as *null und nichtig*, *ganz und gar*, and *Art und Weise* exemplify this pattern. Although not all such pairs constitute strict etymological doublets, they function analogously by combining semantically related elements. As Barz (2007) observes, such constructions increase rhetorical force and memorability—key features of phraseological units.

3.7 Diachronic Stability and Conservation Effects

The diachronic analysis reveals that phraseological units frequently preserve older lexical variants even after newer doublets emerge. The expression *Fersengeld geben*, for instance, retains archaic lexical elements that are no longer productive in the general lexicon. Newer synonyms do not replace these components within the idiom. This finding confirms Piirainen's (2012) characterization of idioms as “linguistic fossils,” preserving earlier stages of the lexicon and acting as a stabilizing force that resists lexical change.

3.8 Frequency and Entrenchment as Determinative Factors

Corpus observations indicate that frequency plays a decisive role in determining which member of a doublet pair becomes phraseologically fixed. High-frequency items are more likely to appear in repeated collocations, undergo semantic bleaching, and become entrenched as idioms. Less frequent or more specialized doublet members rarely achieve this level of entrenchment. Even when two lexical items function as near synonyms, substitution within phraseological units is typically impossible without loss of idiomatic meaning (Aslanova, 2017). For example, *ins Gras beißen* cannot be replaced by **ins Grün beißen*, and *Nägel mit Köpfen machen* does not permit lexical variation. This underscores the rigidity of phraseological structures and the limited functional interchangeability of doublets once an expression is fixed.



4. Discussion

The findings reinforce the view that field doublets are not peripheral phenomena but structurally significant elements in the formation and stabilization of German phraseology. Their role becomes particularly evident when examined through the interaction of frequency, stylistic markedness, semantic specialization, and historical persistence.

A key principle emerging from the analysis is that of selective entrenchment. Although doublets coexist at the lexical level, phraseological systems tend to “choose” only one variant for fixation. This selection is not arbitrary but reflects usage-based principles grounded in cognitive and corpus linguistics. As Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005) emphasize, idioms are shaped by repeated usage patterns, where frequency and familiarity determine their degree of conventionalization. Bybee (2010) similarly argues that high-frequency constructions become cognitively entrenched, increasing their resistance to variation. In this sense, field doublets undergo a process of competition in which only the most entrenched form achieves phraseological fixation.

Closely related to selective entrenchment is the tension between variation and stability. Field doublets introduce lexical variation into the language system, yet phraseology operates as a stabilizing force. As Burger (2015) argues, idioms are characterized by a high degree of fixedness that limits internal variation and substitution. This observation aligns with the broader theoretical position that idiomatic expressions resist lexical replacement even when synonyms are available. Thus, while doublets expand lexical choice at the systemic level, phraseological units narrow that choice through conventionalization.

The analysis further confirms that doublets reflect stylistic stratification across registers. Native Germanic forms dominate in everyday and idiomatic usage, whereas borrowed or Latinate forms tend to be associated with formal or technical contexts. This distribution is consistent with observations by Fleischer (1997) and Barz (2007), who emphasize that phraseology is deeply rooted in colloquial communication. Piirainen (2012) additionally notes that idioms rely on culturally shared knowledge and imagery, which further favors familiar, native lexical material over abstract or learned borrowings.

The role of semantic conventionalization also merits attention. When a lexical item becomes part of a phraseological unit, its meaning frequently undergoes metaphorical extension or specialization. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrate in their work on conceptual metaphor, such semantic shifts are grounded in embodied and culturally shared experiences. Once a metaphorical meaning becomes conventionalized within an idiom, alternative doublet forms are effectively excluded, even if they are semantically similar at the literal level. This explains the rigidity of many German idioms and their resistance to lexical substitution.

From a diachronic perspective, the study confirms that phraseological units function as repositories of linguistic history. As Piirainen (2012) observes, idioms frequently preserve archaic or otherwise less productive lexical elements, functioning as “linguistic fossils.” This observation is supported by Keller’s (1994) account of language change as an emergent phenomenon shaped by usage and convention. Field doublets illustrate this process clearly: while newer lexical items enter the



language through borrowing or innovation, older variants may remain entrenched within phraseological units, creating a stratified lexicon.

Furthermore, the presence of doublets contributes to functional differentiation within semantic fields. Rather than simply duplicating meaning, doublets frequently specialize across contexts. One variant may dominate in idiomatic expressions, while another is reserved for formal discourse or technical usage. This complementary distribution aligns with the principle of communicative efficiency. As Barz (2007) notes, such differentiation enhances the expressive richness of the lexicon while maintaining clarity in usage.

These findings carry important implications for applied linguistics. In the domain of language acquisition, learners must acquire not only vocabulary but also phraseological competence. As Schmitt (2000) emphasizes, mastery of formulaic language is essential for fluency and natural communication. Field doublets pose a particular challenge, as learners may incorrectly assume interchangeability between synonyms, leading to non-idiomatic usage. In translation studies, the constraints imposed by phraseological fixation require translators to prioritize functional equivalence over formal similarity. Baker (1992) highlights that idioms must often be translated using equivalent expressions in the target language rather than literal renderings. The presence of doublets further complicates this process, as translators must recognize which variant is phraseologically appropriate.

Finally, the study suggests productive directions for future research. While the present analysis is primarily qualitative, integrating quantitative corpus-based methods—as advocated by Biber et al. (1998)—could provide more precise measurements of frequency and distribution. Additionally, cross-linguistic comparisons may reveal whether similar patterns of doublet selection and phraseological fixation occur in other languages, particularly within the Germanic language family.

5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that field doublets play a crucial and multifaceted role in the formation and development of phraseology in the German language. While doublets introduce lexical variation by providing alternative forms within the same semantic field, phraseological systems exhibit a clear tendency toward selection, stabilization, and restriction. As shown throughout the analysis, only one member of a doublet pair typically becomes entrenched in idiomatic expressions, reflecting patterns of frequency, familiarity, and stylistic neutrality.

The findings confirm key theoretical positions proposed by Burger (2015) and Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005), particularly regarding the fixedness and conventionalization of phraseological units. At the same time, the study highlights the importance of historical and cognitive factors, as emphasized by Piirainen (2012), in explaining why certain lexical variants persist within idioms while others do not. Ultimately, field doublets reveal the dynamic interplay between lexical diversity and phraseological stability. They enrich the German lexicon while simultaneously illustrating the restrictive nature of idiomatic usage. This dual function underscores the importance



of integrating lexicology, phraseology, and historical linguistics in future research, particularly through corpus-based and cross-linguistic approaches, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of language structure and use (Babayev et al., 2025).

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Toponymic Legends of the Goycha and Zangezur Regions

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Keywords	Abstract
Western Azerbaijan Toponymic Legends Collective Memory Ethnogeography Goycha Zangezur Folklore Ashig	This article explores the ethno-cultural significance of toponymic legends within the Western Azerbaijani regions of Goycha and Zangezur. By examining oral traditions, folk etymologies, and the “memory of the land,” the study analyzes how geographic names serve as historical archives for the Azerbaijani population. The research highlights the duality of these legends: as both mystical narratives involving giants, heroes, and sacred springs, and as empirical evidence of long-term habitation. Special attention is given to the role of the Ashig (folk minstrel) tradition in preserving these names through centuries of migration and social change. Ultimately, the paper argues that the toponymy of Goycha and Zangezur constitutes a “spiritual map” that remains a central pillar of Azerbaijani collective identity.

Introduction

The relationship between a people and their geography is never merely physical; rather, it is profoundly linguistic and mythological. In the context of Western Azerbaijan—particularly the historic regions of Goycha and Zangezur—the landscape is imbued with what may be described as “living names.” Every peak, valley, and spring carries a narrative explaining its origin, often blending historical reality with elements of the supernatural. These narratives, commonly referred to as toponymic legends, function as a primary mechanism for preserving the historical and cultural memory of a community (Khalilov, 2018).

Goycha, widely recognized as the spiritual center of the Ashig musical tradition, and Zangezur, characterized by its rugged terrain, fortresses, and ancient stone monuments, represent two distinct yet interconnected folkloric zones. For the Azerbaijani people, these regions are not merely geographical entities but symbolic landscapes shaped by the legends of *Dede Korkut*, the

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resonance of heroic epics, and the lyrical expressions of folk poets such as Ashig Alesker (Bayat, 2003).

However, toponymy in these regions extends beyond storytelling; it operates as a cultural defense mechanism. In the face of historical transformations, displacement, and the renaming of geographical features, oral tradition serves as a resilient and enduring record. When local inhabitants recount why a mountain is called “Aghdagh” or why a spring bears the name of a saint, they assert a form of historical continuity that transcends shifting political boundaries (Geybullayev, 1991).

This article aims to categorize the dominant motifs of Goycha and Zangezur folklore, with particular emphasis on hydronymic myths and their cultural significance. In the folklore of Western Azerbaijan, Goycha is not merely a geographic location but a spiritual landscape. The hydronymic myths—legends associated with water bodies—form a foundational element of this identity. The lake is frequently depicted as a celestial mirror, a source of divine inspiration, and a symbol of moral purity.

An analysis of the folklore of the Goycha and Zangezur regions reveals several distinctive features that differentiate them within the broader framework of Turkic and Caucasian traditions. These features function as cultural “markers” of Western Azerbaijani identity, combining the harshness of mountainous environments with the lyrical sensibility of lake-centered traditions.

The key characteristic features may be outlined as follows:

1. The Primacy of Ashig Art as a Historical Record

In these regions, the Ashig (folk minstrel) serves not merely as a performer but as a custodian of collective memory.

- **The Goycha School:** Known for its technical sophistication and philosophical depth, particularly under the influence of Ashig Alesker, whose works often include *gozelleme* (odes to nature) portraying Lake Goycha as a living, inspirational entity.
- **Improvisation:** A defining feature is *deyişmə*—a poetic duel between Ashigs—where performers demonstrate their knowledge of history, geography, and folklore through improvisational verse.

2. “Petrification” Motifs (Stone Folklore)

Zangezur, in particular, is characterized by a strong “lithic” (stone-centered) cultural consciousness.

- **Living Statues:** Folklore often presents ancient stone figures, such as rams and horses, as petrified guardians or warriors.
- **Anthropomorphism:** Mountains and rocks are frequently attributed human qualities, including emotions such as grief, anger, and protectiveness.



3. Toponymic Narrative Anchoring

One of the most distinctive features of the region's folklore is its precise geographical grounding. Unlike abstract or universal narratives, these stories are closely tied to specific locations.

- Folklore is anchored in identifiable places—"at the foot of Mount Ishikhli" or "by the spring of Cold Water."
- This localization transforms geographical features into cultural landmarks, reinforcing historical presence and identity.

4. Dualism of Heroism and Melancholy

The emotional tone of the folklore oscillates between two contrasting yet complementary dimensions:

- **Epic Resilience (Heroic Dimension):** Narratives featuring figures such as the Alps (mythical giants) and Koroğlu reflect the defensive and resilient spirit of communities living in mountainous terrain.
- **The "Garib" Sentiment (Lyrical Dimension):** A pervasive sense of longing (*hasret*) and nostalgia is expressed in *bayaty* (folk quatrains), often portraying the homeland with the emotional depth reserved for a lost loved one.

5. Hydro-Spiritualism

In the Goycha basin, water assumes both physical and spiritual significance.

- **Sacred Springs:** The region is characterized by numerous healing springs, often associated with sacred sites and believed to be protected by supernatural forces.
- **The Lake as a Moral Mirror:** Folklore frequently portrays Lake Goycha as reflecting the moral and spiritual condition of the people—becoming turbulent in times of conflict and serene during periods of harmony.

Summary of Regional Distinctions

The distinctions between Goycha and Zangezur folklore can be summarized through their dominant symbolic systems and cultural expressions.

- **Dominant Medium:** Goycha emphasizes music and verse (the saz), while Zangezur foregrounds myth and monument (stone).
- **Spiritual Center:** Goycha is centered around the lake, symbolizing horizontal infinity, whereas Zangezur is defined by mountain peaks, representing vertical authority.
- **Key Character:** The wise poet (Ozan/Ashig) dominates Goycha, while the giant or warrior (Alp) is central to Zangezur.



- **Nature Motif:** Goycha reflects purity and introspection, while Zangezur embodies strength and echo.

6. The “Dede Korkut” Connection

The folklore of these regions represents a living continuation of *The Book of Dede Korkut*. Many place names and tribal narratives directly correspond to Oghuz Turkic epic traditions, positioning the region as a “living museum” of ancient mythological consciousness (Bayat, 2003).

To deepen the analysis of Western Azerbaijani folklore, two central pillars emerge: the poetic legacy of Ashig Alesker in Goycha and the system of animal totems and heroic symbolism in Zangezur.

The “Alesker Effect”: Goycha as a Poetic Sanctuary

In Goycha, folklore is inseparable from the figure of Ashig Alesker (1821–1926). Although historically real, he has transcended into a semi-mythical cultural archetype.

- **Nature as Divine Dialogue:** Alesker’s poetry transforms geography into a symbolic language. Descriptions of fragrant mountain air or crystal-clear springs are not merely aesthetic; they function as acts of cultural “naming” that sacralize the land.
- **Master–Apprentice Continuity:** The *ustad–shagird* (master–apprentice) tradition ensures the transmission of oral heritage. This system preserves the distinct “Goycha style,” characterized by a reflective, often melancholic musical tempo.
- **The Myth of the “Saz-Chest”:** Folklore attributes mystical qualities to the saz, suggesting that its melodies can heal illness or calm storms, reflecting deep connections to shamanistic traditions.

Animal Totems and Heroic Symbolism in Zangezur

In contrast, Zangezur’s folklore is rooted in ancient Turkic totemic systems, particularly the ram, horse, and wolf.

- **The Cult of the Ram (Qoç):** Stone ram monuments found in cemeteries symbolize bravery and youth (*yiğitlik*). Folk beliefs suggest these figures transmit strength and courage.
- **The Horse as a Companion:** In heroic narratives, the horse—such as Koroğlu’s Grāt—is depicted as an intelligent and almost supernatural ally, emphasizing the historical importance of mobility and warfare.
- **The Gray Wolf (Bozkurt):** The wolf appears as a guide and protector, reflecting its central role in Turkic mythological origins and identity (Seyidov, 1994).

The Synthesis: “The Spirit of the Land”

These symbolic systems together form a unified worldview:



- **The Saz (Music):** The “voice” of the landscape
- **The Stone (Sculpture):** The “memory” of the landscape
- **The Spring (Water):** The “soul” of the landscape
- **The Fortress (Ruins):** The “will” of the landscape

Thus, Western Azerbaijani folklore represents a culture of continuity. Whether expressed through the melodic patterns of Ashig music or the silent endurance of stone monuments, the land itself functions as a living witness to history, ethics, and collective resilience.

The Primordial Origin: The Overflowing Spring

A recurring motif in Goycha hydronymy is the myth of the “Sacred Source” or “Forgotten Lid.”

- **The Legend:** A young maiden, having drawn water, forgets to close the spring with its stone lid. The water overflows, submerging the valley and forming Lake Goycha.
- **Symbolism:** This narrative portrays the lake as a living entity—both a blessing and a manifestation of nature’s uncontrollable power.

Purity and the “White Wave”

The theme of purity is central in Goycha folklore, especially in *bayaty* traditions.

- **The Moral Mirror:** The lake is believed to reflect the moral condition of society. In times of injustice, it becomes turbulent; in times of harmony, it regains clarity.
- **Ritual Practice:** During the pre-Novruz *Chaharshanbe* rituals, people performed water-crossing ceremonies, believing that water purified both body and spirit.

The Cradle of the Saz: Poetic Inspiration

Goycha’s hydronymy is deeply linked to poetic creativity.

- **The Master’s Vision:** Ashigs, especially Alesker, perceived the rhythm of the lake’s waves as a source of poetic meter.
- **Spiritual Geography:** The lake is viewed as a bridge between the physical and metaphysical worlds, where reflections symbolize a doubling of reality and sacred harmony.

Key Hydronymic Symbols in Goycha Folklore

- **Blue (Göy):** Represents sky, eternity, and Turkic cosmology
- **The Silver Trout:** Symbolizes hidden abundance and vitality
- **The Unfrozen Spring:** Represents continuity and the enduring warmth of ancestral life



The Melancholy of the “Lost Water”

In contemporary interpretations, hydronymic myths have acquired an additional emotional dimension—*gariblik* (exile and longing).

The “Blue Sea” is no longer only a physical entity but a symbol of a lost homeland. Its waters now carry collective memory, preserved through songs, narratives, and oral traditions, reflecting both cultural continuity and historical displacement.

The Oronymic (Mountain) Legends of Zangezur

In the rugged topography of Zangezur, mountains are not merely geological formations; rather, they are perceived as living, breathing ancestors. The oronymic legends (mountain-related myths) of this region portray peaks as sentient guardians—warriors who have stood watch over the Azerbaijani people for centuries (Seyidov, 1994).

Within Zangezur folklore, the boundary between a mountain and a hero is often indistinct. The jagged silhouettes of the Lesser Caucasus are frequently described as “Koroğlu’s back” or as “sleeping giants” of the Oghuz Turks.

- **The Guard of the Border:** Mountains such as Kaputjukh and Ishikhli are personified as “sentinel fathers.” Folklore suggests that these peaks “grow taller” during times of war to conceal local populations within their mist, and “shrink” during times of peace to allow sunlight to warm the valleys.
- **The Concept of “Dagh” (Mountain) as Honor:** In oral poetry and regional dialects, referring to a person as a “mountain” represents the highest form of praise. The mountain symbolizes stability, strength, and moral steadfastness, while the expression “to lean against the mountain” signifies reliance on ancestral heritage.

The oronymy of Zangezur is also deeply connected to both pre-Islamic and Islamic spiritual traditions. Many peaks are regarded as *pirs* (sacred sites).

- **Mount Ishikhli (The Radiant Mountain):** According to legend, a divine light descends upon this peak. Those who ascend with pure intentions are believed to receive *nura* (divine illumination).
- **The Legend of the “Stone Guardians”:** Clusters of standing stones found along Zangezur ridges are interpreted as transformed beings—either invaders punished by the mountain or shepherds who chose petrification over betrayal.

The “Zang” and the Echo: Communication through Altitudes

The very name *Zangezur* itself reflects oronymic significance. While its etymology remains debated, a widely accepted folk interpretation links it to a system of acoustic communication.



- **The Bronze Bells:** Folklore recounts that bronze bells (*zang*) were placed on mountain peaks. When danger approached, these bells would resonate across the range—from Goyyan to Kaputjikh—serving as an early warning system.
- **The “Zur” (Power):** The suffix *zur* is commonly interpreted as strength or force. Thus, Zangezur may symbolically be understood as the “strength of the echo,” emphasizing both natural defense and collective vigilance.

The Mountain as a Witness

In *bayaty* (folk quatrains), mountains are often addressed as conscious witnesses to historical events:

Mən aşiq, uca dağlar,
Başı barlı-quca dağlar.
Gələni bura qoymaz,
Keçəni qoca dağlar.

*(I am a lover of the high mountains,
Mountains crowned with abundance.
They do not let the enemy pass,
These ancient, sheltering mountains.)*

This form of personification serves an important psychological function. Even in conditions of displacement, mountains are imagined as enduring guardians, preserving collective memory and awaiting the return of their people.

Comparison of Key Zangezur Peaks in Folklore

- **Kaputjikh:** Represents wisdom and authority
- **Ishikhli:** Symbolizes light and spiritual purity
- **Goyyan:** Embodies vigilance and defense
- **Murovdagh:** Reflects resilience against natural and human challenges

The Interaction of Language and Land: The Linguistic Architecture of the South Caucasus

Toponymic systems in Goycha and Zangezur are not arbitrary; they emerge from a deep interaction between Azerbaijani Turkic linguistic structures and the physical environment. In these regions, language functions as a cognitive framework that organizes and interprets the landscape (Khalilov, 2018).

The Logic of Turkic Toponymy

Azerbaijani toponyms in the South Caucasus follow a descriptive and functional logic rooted in nomadic and pastoral traditions:



- **“Yal” (Mane):** Used for mountain ridges resembling the mane of a horse
- **“Dirsək” (Elbow):** Refers to sharp bends in terrain or river paths
- **“Göz” (Eye):** Denotes the source of a spring (*bulağın gözü*), symbolizing the “vision” of the earth
- **“Arxaç” (Fold):** Indicates flat pastoral zones used for livestock

Color Symbolism in the Landscape

Color terms in Western Azerbaijani toponymy carry deep symbolic meanings derived from Proto-Turkic cosmology:

- **“Ağ/Ak” (White):** Purity, sanctity, and sometimes the northern direction
- **“Göy/Gök” (Blue/Green):** Sky, divinity, and eternity
- **“Qara” (Black):** Strength, magnitude, or density rather than mere color

Folklore as Cultural Memory

By analyzing these linguistic and mythological structures, it becomes evident that folklore transforms geographic space into a meaningful homeland (*Vətən*). To an external observer, Zangezür’s mountains are geological formations; to the cultural insider, they are sentinels of history. Similarly, Lake Goycha is not simply a body of water but a symbolic “Blue Mirror” reflecting poetic and emotional identity.

Toponymic legends function as a form of cultural “DNA,” preserving collective memory even in the context of displacement. In this framework, the landscape is not passive but actively participates in historical narration.

The Goycha Region as a Symphony of Water and Stone

Goycha is not merely a geographical basin; it is historically regarded as the cradle of Ashig art—a space where nature and poetic expression are inseparably intertwined. In this region, the natural environment assumes an active, almost performative role, where water and stone become central narrative elements.

The Myth of the Primordial Flood: The Formation of Lake Goycha

The origin of Lake Goycha is interpreted in folklore not as a geological occurrence but as a symbolic event shaped by human action and divine intervention.

- **The Overflowing Spring:** According to legend, a sacred spring once lay at the center of a fertile valley. A young maiden, representing purity, forgot to replace the stone lid covering the spring, allowing the water to overflow uncontrollably.



- **The “Blue” Transformation:** The resulting flood created the lake, whose name derives from the Turkic word *Gök* (blue/sky). The lake is thus perceived as a reflection of the heavens—a “fragment of the sky” embedded within the earth.

Mount Aghdagh: The Protective Elder of the Peaks

Rising above the basin, Mount Aghdagh (“The White Mountain”) occupies a central place in the heroic folklore of Western Azerbaijan.

- **The Personified Guardian:** Unlike distant and impersonal mountain ranges, Aghdagh is depicted as a *Dede* (Grandfather)—a protective elder watching over nearby communities.
- **The Breath of the Mountain:** Folklore suggests that when invaders or “foreign winds” approached, Aghdagh would “breathe” a dense white mist, concealing local inhabitants and disorienting enemies. Even today, sudden fog is interpreted in oral tradition as the mountain “shielding its children.”

The Inscriptions of the Saz: A Musical Geography

One of the most distinctive features of Goycha folklore is the melodic interpretation of geography.

- **Living Monuments to the Ashigs:** Various rocks, cliffs, and meadows are named after Ashigs, particularly Ashig Alesker. These sites are believed to be places where significant poetic works were composed.
- **Geopolitics of Melody:** This phenomenon reflects a form of “musical toponymy,” where landscapes are named according to rhythm, sound, or poetic association. Thus, the terrain itself is perceived as a musical composition, transforming movement through space into a symbolic reading of cultural memory.

The Moral Landscape

In these legends, both water and stone function as moral agents.

- It is widely believed that impure intentions can disturb the natural order: lake water may turn murky, while stones are said to “weep” or “resonate” in response to injustice.
- This belief system reflects an ecological ethics, where the environment is treated as a conscious participant in human morality.

The Zangezur Region: Fortresses, Giants, and the Echo of History

If Goycha represents the lyrical dimension of Western Azerbaijani folklore, Zangezur embodies its heroic and defensive aspect. The region’s mountainous terrain has shaped narratives emphasizing resilience, protection, and ancestral strength.

The Etymology of Resonance: The “Zang” of the Mountains

The name *Zangezur* itself is embedded in folkloric interpretation.



- **The Sound of the Bell:** According to legend, the name derives from “Zang-ezur” (the sound of the bell). Bronze bells were believed to be placed on mountain peaks, creating an early warning system against approaching enemies (Namazov, 2002).
- **The Echo of Defense:** This interpretation portrays the mountains as an integrated defensive network, amplifying sound through natural acoustics.

Govur-Gala: The Architecture of Giants

The ruins of ancient fortresses, known as Govur-Gala, are prominent in Zangezur folklore.

- **The Alp Tradition:** These massive stone structures are attributed to the Alps (mythical giants) described in *The Book of Dede Korkut*. Their scale suggests construction beyond human capability, reinforcing their mythological origin (Bayat, 2003).
- **A Pre-Islamic Echo:** The term “Govur” refers to ancient peoples, emphasizing the deep historical layers embedded within the region’s cultural memory.

Stone Statues: The Petrified Guardians of the Steppe

Zangezur is also known for its zoomorphic stone monuments.

- **The Frozen Heroes:** Beyond their archaeological significance, folklore interprets these statues as heroes who transformed into stone to protect their homeland (Seyidov, 1994).
- **Symbolism:** The ram symbolizes strength and fertility, while the horse represents mobility and the nomadic spirit. These statues are believed to remain spiritually active, guarding the land.

The Socio-Cultural Function of Toponymic Legends

Toponymic folklore in Western Azerbaijan serves essential cultural functions:

1. **Identity Preservation:** Naming geographical features after ancestors or tribal groups establishes a direct connection between people and land (Khalilov, 2018).
2. **Moral Instruction:** Many legends function as ethical narratives, reinforcing values such as honesty, purity, and respect for nature.
3. **Resistance to Erasure:** Oral traditions preserve original place names even when official names change, ensuring continuity of historical memory (Hajiyeva, 2021).

Comparison of Regional Motifs: Goycha vs. Zangezur

- **Primary Element:**
 - Goycha – Water (lake, springs)
 - Zangezur – Stone (mountains, fortresses)



- **Central Symbol:**
 - Goycha – The Blue Mirror / Purity
 - Zangezur – The Bronze Bell / The Giant
- **Common Hero:**
 - Goycha – The Poet (Ashig Alesker)
 - Zangezur – The Warrior (Alp)
- **Dominant Tone:**
 - Goycha – Lyrical and melancholic
 - Zangezur – Heroic and defensive

Time and Space in Western Azerbaijani Folklore

In this folkloric system, time and space function as active and dynamic elements rather than passive settings.

The Concept of Space: The Sacred and the Sentient

Space is structured into three primary zones:

- The **Center** (village, hearth)
- The **Periphery** (mountains, pastures)
- The **Otherworld** (caves, deep waters, ruins)
- **Space as a Living Witness:** Mountains such as Aghdagh and Kaputjukh are portrayed as conscious entities that observe and protect.
- **Verticality:** Elevated spaces represent purity and heroism, while lower spaces correspond to everyday life and hidden forces.
- **Petrification:** In Zangezur, space often represents “frozen action,” where transformation into stone preserves historical memory.

The Concept of Time: Cyclical and Eternal

Time in these narratives is not linear but cyclical and symbolic.

- **Mythic Time (Ulu Zaman):** Events from the past are perceived as continuously present. Stories of Ashigs and epic heroes are experienced as timeless realities.
- **Nature’s Clock:** Time is measured through seasonal cycles, such as migration between *yaylaq* (summer pastures) and *qishlaq* (winter settlements).



The “Stagnant” Time of Ruins

Ruins such as Govur-Gala represent “stagnant time,” where the past is preserved in physical form. These sites function as symbolic gateways connecting present-day observers with mythic history.

The Chronotope of the Homeland

The intersection of time and space—referred to as the *chronotope*—reveals distinct patterns:

- **Goycha:**
 - Space is fluid and reflective (lake-centered)
 - Time is melodic and flowing
- **Zangezur:**
 - Space is rigid and fortified (mountain-centered)
 - Time is monumental and enduring
- **Connection:**
 - Goycha is experienced through sound (music)
 - Zangezur is experienced through sight (monuments)

The “Garib” and the Construction of Atemporal Space

A critical element within these toponymic narratives is the profound transformation of time and space experienced through exile. In the folklore and collective memory of displaced Western Azerbaijanis, the physical geography of Goycha and Zangezur undergoes a transition into what may be termed the “atemporal.” Because physical return is often impossible, the homeland is no longer perceived within linear, historical time; instead, it is preserved in a state of “perpetual spring” or “eternal beauty” within the narrative imagination (Hajiyeva, 2021).

Within this folkloric reconstruction, the homeland is transformed into a form of utopian space—derived from the Greek *ou-topos*, meaning “no-place.” It exists beyond the reach of temporal decay, administrative transformation, or environmental change. This “frozen” landscape fulfills a crucial psychological and cultural function: it preserves Azerbaijani heritage in an idealized and immutable form. By removing the homeland from the flow of time, the narratives of the *Garib* (the exile or stranger) ensure that the cultural identity associated with these regions remains intact and uncorrupted.

In this sense, space becomes a sanctuary of memory—a symbolic domain where the mountain bells of Zangezur continue to resonate and the springs of Goycha never cease to flow. This imagined geography provides a permanent spiritual anchor for a displaced community, reinforcing continuity despite physical separation (Khalilov, 2018).



The “Spiritual Geography”

In the folklore of Goycha and Zangezur, time and space converge to create what may be described as a “spiritual geography.” Movement across the land is not merely spatial but historical and symbolic. A traveler does not simply traverse physical distance; rather, they move through layers of myth, memory, and cultural meaning.

For example, when a site is named “The Fountain of the Forty Maidens,” the location immediately evokes a specific mythic temporality. The name functions as a narrative trigger, collapsing past and present into a unified symbolic experience. Through such naming practices, history is not preserved as a sequence of dates but as a living, animated landscape in which “the stones speak and the water remembers.”

Thus, toponymy becomes a mechanism through which cultural memory is continuously reactivated and transmitted across generations.

Conclusion

The toponymic legends of the Goycha and Zangezur regions represent far more than a collection of regional narratives; they constitute the foundational framework of a collective Azerbaijani identity. These legends function as a bridge between the physical environment and the spiritual consciousness of a people, where the lyrical “blue” myths of Goycha’s waters and the heroic “stone” narratives of Zangezur’s mountains converge.

Through these narratives, Western Azerbaijanis have historically transformed a challenging physical landscape into a deeply meaningful and sanctified homeland (*Vətən*). This transformation reveals an essential socio-linguistic insight: geography is not solely a product of physical terrain but is equally shaped by language, myth, and collective memory (Khalilov, 2018).

While Goycha contributes a lyrical and aesthetic dimension—expressed through Ashig traditions and hydronymic myths—Zangezur provides a parallel narrative of endurance and resilience. Its legends of petrified guardians, resonant mountain bells, and ancient fortresses serve as enduring symbols of cultural continuity.

Together, these dual traditions perform a vital socio-cultural function: they operate as an indelible cultural archive. In the context of displacement and the loss of tangible heritage, this “oral map” remains preserved within collective consciousness. Even when physical access to the land is restricted, the conceptual geography of the homeland endures.

By continuing to name springs, peaks, and settlements in songs, proverbs, and oral narratives, the community ensures that the land continues to “speak” its original Azerbaijani identity. Toponyms such as Goycha, Basarkechar, Gorus, and Sisian are not merely geographical markers; they are vessels of historical memory containing the cultural DNA of a displaced people.



Ultimately, these toponymic legends demonstrate that a homeland is never entirely lost as long as its narratives persist. As long as its stories are transmitted to future generations and its names are spoken with reverence, the cultural essence of the land remains alive. While physical landscapes may change and political borders may shift, the “toponymic soul” of Goycha and Zangezur endures as a permanent and defining element of the Azerbaijani cultural horizon.

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Pronunciation Difficulties Among Azerbaijani Learners of English: A Phonetic Analysis

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Keywords	Abstract
English pronunciation Azerbaijani learners phonetic interference pronunciation difficulties phonetic training EFL learners	<p>English pronunciation represents one of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a foreign language, particularly for learners whose native language differs significantly from English in its phonological and articulatory structure. Azerbaijani learners frequently encounter persistent pronunciation difficulties related to unfamiliar consonant sounds, complex vowel distinctions, and suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm, and connected speech. These challenges are largely influenced by native language interference, as learners tend to transfer established phonetic patterns and articulatory habits from their first language into English speech production. The present study aims to identify and analyze the primary pronunciation difficulties experienced by Azerbaijani learners of English and to examine the phonetic and linguistic factors contributing to these challenges. Special attention is given to problematic consonant contrasts, vowel production accuracy, and the development of appropriate stress and rhythm patterns in spoken English. The analysis demonstrates that structural differences between the Azerbaijani and English phonological systems play a significant role in shaping learners' pronunciation and may lead to reduced intelligibility and communicative effectiveness. The findings emphasize the importance of systematic phonetic training, increased phonological awareness, and targeted instructional support in improving pronunciation skills. Strengthening learners' phonetic competence can contribute to clearer, more intelligible speech and enhance their ability to communicate effectively in academic and professional contexts.</p>

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Introduction

English pronunciation remains one of the most persistent and challenging aspects of learning English as a foreign language, particularly in contexts where learners have limited exposure to authentic spoken input (Foote et al., 2016; Toçi, 2020). Unlike grammar and vocabulary, which can often be acquired through explicit instruction and visual input, pronunciation requires learners to develop new articulatory habits and acquire sensitivity to unfamiliar phonological patterns.

This challenge is especially evident among EFL learners whose native language phonological system differs significantly from that of English. Learners frequently encounter difficulties in producing unfamiliar phonemes, applying appropriate stress patterns, and maintaining natural rhythm and intonation as a result of first language influence (Plailek & Essien, 2021). These pronunciation difficulties are often deeply rooted in previously established articulatory settings, which may interfere with accurate sound production and contribute to persistent pronunciation errors.

Moreover, insufficient exposure to authentic spoken English further contributes to the continuation and reinforcement of these errors. Over time, such patterns may become fossilized, negatively affecting both intelligibility and overall communicative effectiveness (Derwing & Munro, 2015). In addition, inadequate pronunciation can reduce learners' confidence and limit their ability to participate fully in academic and professional communication. Therefore, the development of accurate pronunciation is essential for achieving effective communicative competence.

Problem Statement and Aim of the Study

Despite prolonged exposure to English instruction, pronunciation continues to represent one of the most problematic areas of proficiency for many EFL learners, particularly in educational environments where authentic spoken interaction remains limited (Foote et al., 2016). Unlike grammatical or lexical competence, which can often be developed through visual input and explicit explanation, pronunciation requires learners to modify deeply established articulatory habits and acquire unfamiliar phonetic patterns. As a result, pronunciation errors frequently persist even at higher levels of language proficiency and may significantly reduce intelligibility and communicative effectiveness (Toçi, 2020).

This issue is especially evident among Azerbaijani learners of English. The phonetic and phonological systems of Azerbaijani and English differ considerably, creating substantial challenges in both the perception and production of English speech sounds (Plailek & Essien, 2021). In particular, English phonemes that are absent from the Azerbaijani sound system, such as /θ/ and /ð/, as well as contrasts like /v/ and /w/, tend to cause consistent and systematic errors. These difficulties arise largely because learners rely on articulatory patterns shaped by their native language, which may not correspond to the phonetic requirements of English (Plailek & Essien, 2021; Derwing & Munro, 2015). Consequently, learners often substitute unfamiliar sounds with



those that are more familiar within their native phonological framework, leading to deviations from target-like pronunciation.

Furthermore, pronunciation difficulties extend beyond the production of individual sounds and involve broader suprasegmental features, including stress, rhythm, and connected speech. The development of phonetic fluidity, which involves the ability to produce smooth transitions between sounds, reduce unstressed syllables, and adjust consonant articulation in natural speech, plays a crucial role in achieving intelligible and fluent communication (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). When these features are insufficiently developed, learners' speech may sound unnatural or heavily accented, even when their grammatical accuracy is relatively strong.

In view of these challenges, a closer examination of pronunciation difficulties among Azerbaijani learners of English is necessary. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the most common pronunciation problems encountered by Azerbaijani learners and to analyze the phonetic and linguistic factors that contribute to these difficulties. Particular attention is given to the influence of the native language on English pronunciation patterns and to the role of phonetic competence in the development of effective oral communication.

Literature Review

Pronunciation is widely regarded as a central component of communicative competence in second language acquisition. Unlike grammar and vocabulary, which can often be developed through explicit instruction and visual reinforcement, pronunciation requires learners to adjust deeply ingrained articulatory routines and acquire unfamiliar phonetic patterns (Toçi, 2020). This process involves not only recognizing new sounds but also developing the motor control necessary for their accurate production. As a result, pronunciation tends to remain a persistent source of difficulty, even among learners who demonstrate relatively strong grammatical and lexical knowledge.

A substantial body of research has shown that many pronunciation errors originate from differences between the phonological systems of the native and target languages. When learners encounter unfamiliar sounds, they frequently rely on existing phonetic categories from their first language, substituting them for target language sounds that are perceived as similar (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Such substitutions often become systematic and resistant to change, particularly in contexts where opportunities for corrective feedback and authentic spoken interaction are limited. Consequently, these pronunciation patterns may continue to influence speech production long after other aspects of language proficiency have improved.

In addition to segmental features, researchers have increasingly emphasized the importance of suprasegmental aspects of speech, including stress, rhythm, and connected speech. These features contribute significantly to the naturalness and intelligibility of spoken language and are closely associated with the development of phonetic fluency (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). The ability to



link sounds smoothly, reduce unstressed syllables, and adjust articulatory transitions allows speakers to produce more coherent and natural speech. In contrast, the absence of such features may result in speech that, although grammatically accurate, lacks fluency and is more difficult for listeners to process.

Within the Azerbaijani context, pronunciation challenges are particularly evident due to substantial differences between the phonetic structures of Azerbaijani and English. Learners frequently experience difficulty producing English sounds that are absent from their native phonological system, especially interdental consonants such as /θ/ and /ð/, as well as distinctions like /v/ and /w/ (Plailek & Essien, 2021). These difficulties reflect not only phonological differences but also the influence of established articulatory habits, which shape learners' perception and production of foreign language sounds.

Recent research has also highlighted the importance of pedagogical factors in pronunciation development. Effective instruction requires systematic attention to phonetic awareness, articulatory training, and guided pronunciation practice (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Instructional approaches that combine theoretical knowledge with practical application enable learners to develop greater control over speech production and improve overall intelligibility. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that structured pedagogical frameworks and targeted phonetic training can facilitate measurable improvements in learners' pronunciation accuracy, particularly when instruction focuses on problematic sound categories and promotes active learner engagement (Mirzayev, 2023; Mirzayev, 2024a).

Taken together, these findings indicate that pronunciation difficulties among Azerbaijani learners arise from a complex interaction of phonetic, linguistic, and instructional factors. A comprehensive understanding of these influences provides an essential foundation for identifying common pronunciation problems and for developing more effective approaches to pronunciation instruction. These theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for examining pronunciation difficulties in specific linguistic contexts, including Azerbaijani learners.

Recent studies conducted in Azerbaijani university contexts have further confirmed the persistence of pronunciation difficulties among EFL learners and emphasized the effectiveness of eclectic and phonetic-focused instructional approaches in improving pronunciation accuracy and phonological competence (Mirzayev, 2023; Mirzayev, 2024a). In particular, targeted phonetic instruction has been shown to enhance learners' control of vowel production and overall pronunciation clarity (Mirzayev, 2024b). Similarly, the application of eclectic teaching strategies has demonstrated positive effects on students' pronunciation development, communicative confidence, and fluency in tertiary education settings (Mirzayev, 2024c; Mirzayev, 2025a). Furthermore, interactive pronunciation teaching techniques have been found to increase student motivation and contribute to more effective pronunciation learning outcomes (Mirzayev, 2025b).



Analysis of Azerbaijani Learners' Pronunciation Problems

One of the most persistent pronunciation challenges among Azerbaijani learners of English concerns the production of interdental consonants, particularly /θ/ and /ð/. Because these phonemes are absent from the Azerbaijani phonological system, learners frequently replace them with more familiar sounds such as /s/, /t/, /z/, or /d/. Consequently, words such as *think* and *this* may be realized as *sink* or *tink*, and *zis* or *dis*, respectively. This pattern reflects the transfer of established articulatory routines from the native language, which do not involve the interdental placement of the tongue required for these English sounds (Plailek & Essien, 2021). Such substitutions can reduce intelligibility and, in certain contexts, contribute to communication breakdown. Similar pronunciation-related misunderstandings have also been observed in translation and interpreting contexts, where phonetic inaccuracies may lead to misinterpretation of meaning (Mirzayev, 2025).

A further area of difficulty involves the contrast between the consonants /v/ and /w/. In Azerbaijani, /w/ does not operate as an independent phoneme in the same functional capacity as in English, which often leads learners to substitute /v/ in its place. As a result, words such as *west* and *wine* may be pronounced as *vest* and *vine*. This substitution illustrates the influence of the native phonological framework and highlights the challenge of acquiring unfamiliar articulatory configurations (Plailek & Essien, 2021). Evidence from phonetic training contexts suggests that overcoming such difficulties requires targeted and sustained pronunciation practice supported by systematic phonetic instruction (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Asadova, 2024).

Vowel production represents another significant source of difficulty. The English vowel system is both larger and more complex than that of Azerbaijani, incorporating phonemic distinctions based on vowel length and quality that are not always present in the learners' native language. Consequently, learners may fail to maintain contrasts between vowels such as /ɪ/ and /i:/, producing words like *ship* and *sheep* with insufficient differentiation. These inaccuracies can affect not only intelligibility but also listener perception of proficiency. However, research indicates that systematic phonetic instruction, combined with consistent and focused practice, can support the gradual development of more accurate vowel articulation (Mirzayev, 2024a). Similar vowel-related pronunciation difficulties have also been observed among Azerbaijani university students, particularly in distinguishing close vowel contrasts, which highlights the importance of focused phonetic training in developing accurate vowel articulation (Mirzayev, 2024b).

Beyond individual sounds, Azerbaijani learners often encounter difficulty with suprasegmental features, particularly stress and rhythm. English relies on variable stress patterns and the reduction of unstressed syllables, whereas Azerbaijani tends to exhibit more regular and predictable stress distribution. As a result, learners may produce speech in which syllables receive relatively equal prominence, diminishing the natural rhythmic variation characteristic of English. Developing appropriate stress and rhythm requires learners to adjust temporal patterns of speech and to incorporate vowel reduction, both of which are essential components of phonetic fluency (Celce-



Murcia et al., 2010). Recent pedagogical research also suggests that structured instructional frameworks that promote cognitive engagement can significantly enhance pronunciation learning outcomes (Mirzayev, 2024).

In addition, features of connected speech such as linking, assimilation, and reduction pose further challenges for many learners, particularly those whose first language phonological system differs substantially from English (Asadova, 2023). Learners who articulate words in isolation, without the phonetic adjustments typical of fluent speech, may produce utterances that sound fragmented or overly deliberate. Mastery of connected speech requires the integration of perceptual sensitivity and articulatory coordination, enabling speakers to produce continuous and natural-sounding speech (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Taken together, these findings suggest that pronunciation difficulties among Azerbaijani learners are shaped by the interaction between native language influence and the structural complexity of English phonology. These challenges extend across both segmental features, such as consonants and vowels, and suprasegmental features, including stress, rhythm, and connected speech. Addressing these issues effectively requires systematic phonetic training, increased exposure to accurate pronunciation models, and sustained opportunities for guided practice in classroom contexts (Asadova, 2024). Previous research conducted in Azerbaijani higher education contexts has similarly emphasized that systematic phonetic instruction and eclectic teaching approaches play a crucial role in helping learners overcome persistent pronunciation difficulties and achieve greater pronunciation accuracy (Mirzayev, 2023; Mirzayev, 2025a). In pronunciation pedagogy, eclectic teaching approaches that combine multiple instructional techniques have also been shown to support the development of phonological awareness and pronunciation accuracy among university learners (Mirzayev, 2024).

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that pronunciation continues to pose a substantial challenge for Azerbaijani learners of English, primarily as a result of structural differences between the phonological systems of the two languages. These differences influence both segmental aspects of speech, including the accurate production of interdental consonants and vowel distinctions, and suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm, and connected speech. As the analysis indicates, many of these difficulties can be attributed to the transfer of established articulatory patterns from the native language, which do not always align with the phonetic and phonological requirements of English.

The results further underscore the critical role of systematic phonetic instruction in addressing these persistent challenges. The development of accurate pronunciation extends beyond passive exposure and requires deliberate engagement with phonetic features, targeted articulatory training, and heightened awareness of speech production mechanisms. Instructional approaches that



provide structured and sustained pronunciation practice can support learners in gradually modifying entrenched articulatory habits, thereby enhancing both intelligibility and overall communicative effectiveness.

Moreover, the findings highlight the need to position pronunciation as an integral component of language education rather than a peripheral or supplementary element. Greater pedagogical emphasis on phonetic development can enable learners to achieve clearer, more natural speech and strengthen their capacity to function effectively in academic, professional, and intercultural contexts.

In summary, a detailed understanding of the pronunciation difficulties encountered by Azerbaijani learners offers valuable insights for improving instructional practices and supporting more effective learning outcomes. Continued and focused attention to pronunciation development remains essential for facilitating higher levels of spoken English proficiency and for promoting more confident and effective oral communication.

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Quarshie Nana Osei. African Pharmakon: The Asylum as Shrine from Slavery to the Return. University of Chicago Press. 2025. 309 pp

Book Review

 ¹ Jonathan Okoe

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Nana Osei Quarshie's book, *African Pharmakon: The Asylum as Shrine from Slavery to the Return*, makes a significant intervention. Quarshie reconstructs the longue durée history of mental health from the 15th to the 21st centuries. He reframes how concepts of mental illness were applied to Africans during the era of enslavement and forced migration in slave markets, ships, and shrines. He reframes the decolonization of psychiatry as a process that began in the Atlantic era and continued into the postcolonial period (4). Quarshie argues that psychiatry did not colonize the African mind but was instead grafted onto a long history of shrine-based mental healing.

The book consists of an introduction, five chapters, four interludes, and a conclusion. Chapter One provides a brief background to the Ga polity in the context of the Atlantic Slave Trade, from its contact with the Portuguese to its internal struggles with vassal states such as the Akwamu. Later, the Asante entered the picture in the eighteenth century, affecting Ga political autonomy. Quarshie discusses spiritual pawning, in which Ga Kinsmen sent their mentally distressed relatives to be relieved of spirits to whom they were indebted. Quarshie argues that spiritual pawning was long practiced by Africans to manage distress, like madness, long before the colonial asylum was introduced. These spaces served as sites for healing and refuge, and many Africans enslaved by Europeans passed through shrines and native prisons. In Chapter Two, Quarshie foregrounds how the colonial asylum functioned as an extension of shrine-based healing. He argues, "Accra's colonial asylum also materialized the grafting of colonial psychiatric care to West African therapeutic worlds." (67) He shows how the African staff members' daily interactions with patients reproduced Atlantic-era rituals or repertoires of logging, herbal healing, and panyaring and pawning. These practices formed the basis on which the colonial asylum was grafted. Quarshie

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also highlights how missionary logic in the 19th century reinforced shrine-based logic—Christian and shrine-based beliefs in the spiritual causation of affliction, including sickness or mental illness. He also shows how family members petitioned the colonial government for the confinement or release of their relatives admitted to the asylum.

In Chapter Three, Quarshie demonstrates how the traditional leaders reworked colonial psychiatry and embedded it within the body politic, where lunacy became a political category, and immigrants were manhunted by the police. He shows how Kumase's traditional elites petitioned the colonial government to expel the town's lunatics. He demonstrates how, during the late colonial period, the political elites reworked this logic to address postwar anxieties and migration issues. He states, "But African politicians in late-colonial Ghana also viewed migrants from the north as proper subjects for mental hospital confinement because of the alleged disturbances they were accused of causing to the public peace." (139) Quarshie examines how psychiatric knowledge was applied to everyday policing and surveillance. Chapter Four investigates the Consciencism, Africanization, and Ghanaianization trajectory that Kwame Nkrumah pursues after independence with the assistance of E.B. Foster. He shows how Nkrumah was deeply concerned with mind politics, where E.B. Foster helped in the reorganization of psychiatric services in the country. Quarshie demonstrates how psychiatry becomes an integral part of nation-building and political instruction. He shows how postcolonial psychiatry still hinges on a colonial-era trajectory. Chapter Five examines the proliferation of prayer camps nationwide and the mass expulsions carried out by the Busia administration. Quarshie shows that the logic of prayer camps draws on shrine-based healing traditions. He uses this to show the therapeutic pluralism that emerges. The conclusion reiterates the book's central argument. He also shows that mass expulsion persists in contemporary times. He further demonstrates that the Year of Return, established in 2019, was a call for those displaced by Atlantic slavery to return home. Quarshie shows how internal migrants and the poor are marginalized, but are calling for returnees. This offers a sharp critique.

Historiographically, Quarshie reframes the history of mental health as a tool that did not colonize the African mind. This stands in contrast to Franz Fanon's claim. He shows how colonial psychiatry reworked the shrine-based healing that was practiced in the Atlantic era through to the 21st century. He shifts the analysis beyond the colonial and postcolonial psychiatry literature, which frames colonial psychiatry's hegemony, and extends it to include the precolonial era. The book's strength lies in its use of rich archival data, interviews, and ethnographic sensibilities. This is the first work on Ghana to situate the history of mental health within the history of slavery. However, it would have been useful to see Quarshie's position on the impact of the Islamic mental healing trajectory during the period he describes. More discussion of the post-Nkrumah period would also have been valuable.



This book is an important contribution to medical history, the history of psychiatry, the history of slavery, African history, Atlantic history, and medical anthropology. This book is accessible and will be valuable for graduate students and anyone interested in slavery and mental health.

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