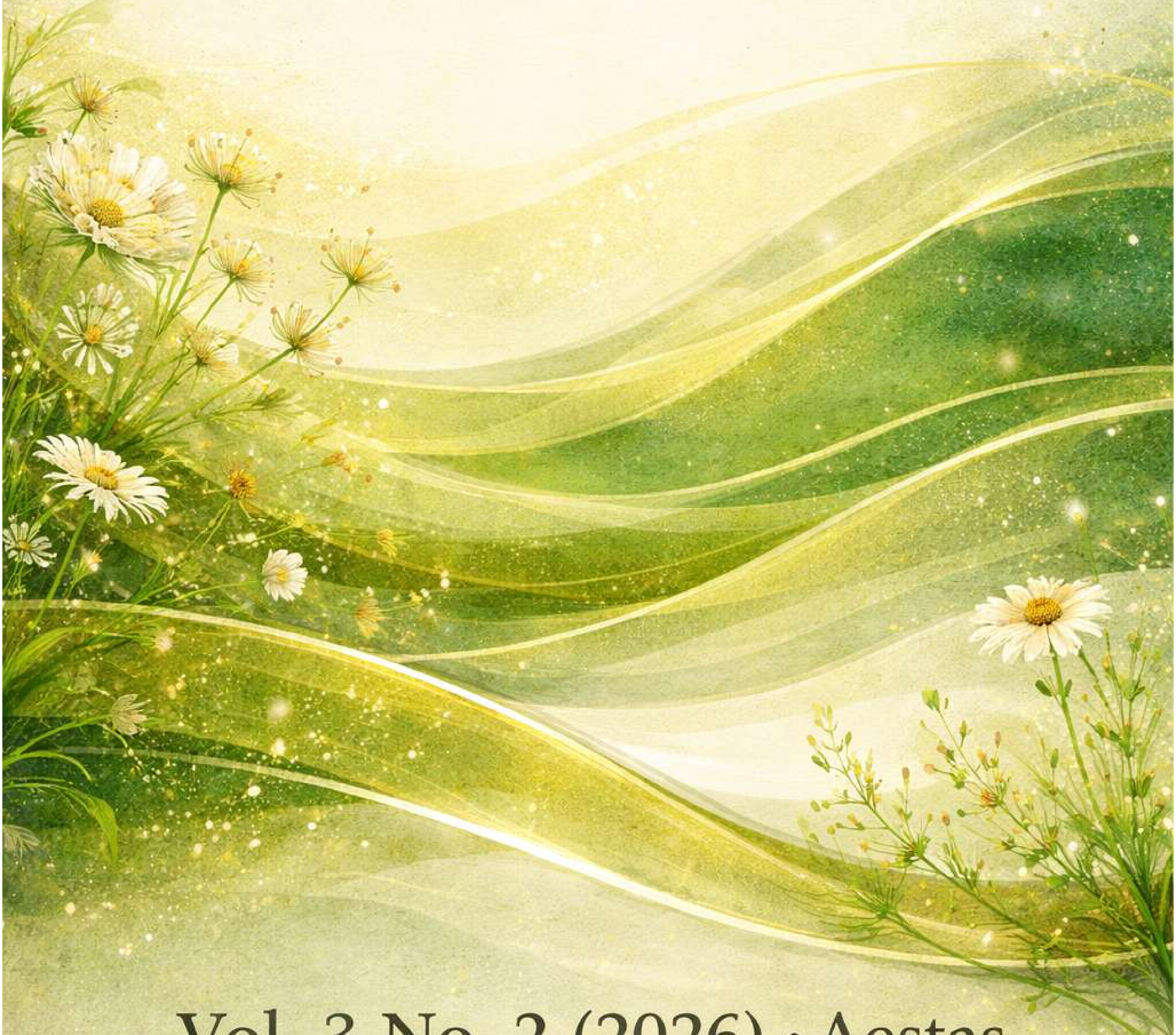
ISSN 3030-1718

ACTA GLOBALIS HUMANITATIS ET LINGUARUM



Vol. 3 No. 2 (2026) • Aestas

Vilnius, Lithuania

ACTA GLOBALIS HUMANITATIS ET LINGUARUM

The Journal of Humanities and Linguistics

Vol. 3 · No. 2 (2026)

ISSN 3030-1718

DOI prefix 10.69760

Diamond Open Access · Peer-Reviewed · CC BY 4.0

Editor-in-Chief: Hasan Alisoy

Vilnius, Lithuania

editor@egarp.lt · https://egarp.lt/index.php/aghel/index

ACTA GLOBALIS HUMANITATIS ET LINGUARUM
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026) · ISSN 3030-1718

About the Journal

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum is a peer-reviewed, international academic journal registered in Lithuania. It is dedicated to fostering innovative research and interdisciplinary dialogue across the humanities. The journal publishes high-quality articles in the fields of linguistics, literature, philosophy, history, cultural studies, social sciences, and ethics.

Frequency: 4 issues per year

Format: A4

Languages: Submissions are accepted in English and other major academic languages.

Registration: The journal is officially registered and published in Lithuania.

Open Access: Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum is a Diamond Open Access journal. There are no submission charges and no article processing fees. All articles are freely available online under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 (CC BY 4.0) license to promote the global exchange of knowledge. Authors retain copyright of their work.

Peer Review

All submissions undergo a rigorous double-anonymous peer-review process to ensure the highest academic standards.

Responsibility and Copyright

The editorial board does not take responsibility for the content of the materials published in the journal. By submitting an article, authors confirm the originality of their work and assume full responsibility for any copyright issues.

For further details and submissions, visit https://egarp.lt/index.php/aghel/index.

ACTA GLOBALIS HUMANITATIS ET LINGUARUM
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026) · ISSN 3030-1718

Editorial Office

Salomėjos Nėries g. 57, Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mail: editor@egarp.lt
Web: https://egarp.lt/index.php/aghel/index

ISSN 3030-1718 · DOI prefix 10.69760 · Diamond Open Access · CC BY 4.0

ACTA GLOBALIS HUMANITATIS ET LINGUARUM
ISSN 3030-1718 · Diamond Open Access · CC BY 4.0
Vilnius, Lithuania

Volume 3, Issue 2 (2026)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Articles

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Normality After Knowledge: A TNK Account of Contemporary Pathologies

[1] **Euclides Souza**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002001

Abstract

This paper proposes a formal and non-normative account of normality grounded in the Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK). Against statistical, psychological, moral, and epistemic conceptions, it is argued that normality is not a property of agents, beliefs, or systems, but a nullificatory stabilization of contradiction within language and practice. By treating contemporary domains—semantic paradoxes, spiritual discourse, mental disorders, non-orthodox physics, libidinal action, and social coordination—as manifestations of structurally unavoidable inconsistency, this study demonstrates that appeals to "normality" function as meta-negations that close action without resolving meaning. Normality, thus reconceived, is neither truth nor health, but a contingent operational threshold produced through nullification.

Keywords: *Normality, Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK), Contradiction, Epistemic Closure*

1. Introduction

The concept of normality occupies a central yet profoundly unstable position in contemporary thought. It permeates psychology, epistemology, logic, physics, the philosophy of language, and everyday social interaction, frequently operating as an implicit criterion of legitimacy, rationality, or acceptability. Despite its ubiquity, normality is rarely subjected to rigorous conceptual scrutiny. Instead, it is commonly assumed to refer to statistical regularity, cognitive health, semantic coherence, or social conformity, depending on the disciplinary context. These meanings are not merely diverse; they are often mutually incompatible. What is considered normal within one domain—semantic inconsistency, quantum indeterminacy, libidinal irrationality, or spiritual belief—may be classified as pathological or deviant within another. This fragmentation suggests that normality is not a descriptive property of the world but a functional construct whose theoretical status remains insufficiently examined.

[1] Souza, E. English Teacher, Speak Up English Course, Brazil. Master in Philosophy of Language. Email: kidinho_dc@hotmail.com —. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3421-7692

Classical and contemporary philosophy have already problematized the apparent neutrality of normality. In the philosophy of medicine, Georges Canguilhem demonstrated that the normal is irreducibly normative rather than descriptive, inseparable from value judgments embedded in life practices (Canguilhem, 1991). In social theory, Michel Foucault showed that normality functions as an instrument of power, produced and enforced through institutional mechanisms rather than discovered as a natural fact (Foucault, 1975). These analyses undermine the idea that normality can serve as a stable epistemic foundation; instead, they reveal it as a historically contingent and operational category shaped by discursive, political, and pragmatic constraints.

The instability of normality becomes even more evident when examined through the lens of language and logic. Semantic paradoxes, such as those discussed by Saul Kripke (1975), along with later developments in paraconsistent and dialetheist logics (Priest, 2006), demonstrate that meaningful linguistic systems need not be globally consistent. In such contexts, inconsistency is not a sign of semantic failure but a structural feature of expressive adequacy. Consequently, the expectation that normal language must be free of contradiction is revealed as an unjustified idealization rather than a necessary condition for meaning.

A similar displacement of normality occurs in contemporary physics. Quantum mechanics, from its earliest formulations, abandoned classical notions of determinacy, locality, and intuitive coherence while remaining empirically successful. Concepts such as complementarity and indeterminacy, associated with Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, institutionalized forms of theoretical “abnormality” as standard scientific practice. Here again, what would once have been regarded as epistemically pathological becomes functionally indispensable. Normality, in this domain, no longer coincides with intuitive intelligibility but with operational viability.

In psychology and theories of action, the notion of normality is further destabilized by the central role of non-rational motivation. From classical psychoanalysis to contemporary neuroscience, it has become increasingly evident that human action is not primarily governed by rational justification but by affective, libidinal, and pre-reflective forces (Freud, 1920; Damasio, 1994). Within this context, rational consistency appears not as the norm of action but as an exception. This insight is further developed within the Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK), where arbitrariness and libidinal attraction are not treated as defects to be corrected but as fundamental drivers of action. As argued by Souza (2025a, 2025b), what mobilizes the subject is not justification but attraction without reasons—an operative arbitrariness that precedes and persists beyond all rationalization.

TNK provides a formal framework capable of integrating these dispersed critiques of normality. Drawing on the classical skeptical insight expressed in Agrippa’s Trilemma, TNK assumes that any sufficiently complex knowledge system is structurally incapable of achieving ultimate justification. Knowledge is inevitably confronted with infinite regress, circularity, or arbitrary stopping points. Under such conditions, contradiction is not an anomaly but an unavoidable feature of epistemic closure. The nullification operator, central to TNK, does not resolve contradictions nor hierarchize truths. Instead, it functions as a meta-negation that suspends knowledge claims in their entirety, allowing action to proceed without epistemic justification (Souza, 2025a).

Within this framework, normality can no longer be understood as coherence, truth, rationality, or conformity. Rather, it emerges as the residual state produced when contradiction is locally neutralized in order to enable linguistic, social, or practical continuity. Normality is not what is correct, but what remains after nullification renders inconsistency operationally tolerable. It is, therefore, not an epistemic category but a functional one: a stabilizing effect within an irreducibly contradictory field of meanings.

The aim of this paper is to redefine normality along these lines—not as a property of agents, beliefs, or systems, but as a consequence of nullification within the Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK). By doing so, it seeks to unify phenomena that are typically treated as unrelated—semantic paradoxes, mental disorders, spiritual entities, non-classical physical theories, and libidinally driven action—under a single formal perspective. The apparent crisis of normality in contemporary society is thus reinterpreted not as cultural or moral degeneration, but as the increasingly explicit manifestation of the structural conditions under which meaning, knowledge, and action remain possible.

2. Normality and Semantic Paradox

The expectation that normal language must be logically consistent has long functioned as an unexamined presupposition in both philosophy and common sense. Classical logic treats contradiction as a pathological condition, and semantic theories traditionally assume that meaningful discourse must be governed by determinate truth conditions. However, the persistence of semantic paradoxes reveals the fragility of this assumption. Sentences that generate self-reference, circularity, or truth-value indeterminacy do not merely occur at the margins of language; rather, they arise from the very expressive resources that make language capable of generality, negation, and semantic ascent. The liar paradox and its variants exemplify this phenomenon, demonstrating that inconsistency is not an external disturbance but an internal consequence of semantic closure.

The work of Saul Kripke (1975) marked a decisive shift in the understanding of semantic paradoxes by demonstrating that natural language semantics cannot be fully captured by classical bivalent models without either trivialization or the exclusion of meaningful sentences. Kripke's fixed-point approach does not eliminate paradoxical constructions but instead suspends their evaluation, allowing language to remain operational at the cost of global determinacy. Subsequent developments in paraconsistent and dialetheist logics further radicalized this insight by rejecting the principle that contradiction necessarily entails semantic collapse (Priest, 2006). What these approaches share is the recognition that semantic normality cannot be equated with consistency.

From the perspective of the TNK, semantic paradoxes expose the impossibility of grounding meaning in a contradiction-free system. Language is not abnormal because it generates paradoxes; rather, paradoxes reveal the true structure of linguistic normality as inherently unstable. The nullification operator formalizes the way natural language already functions in practice: paradoxical sentences are not resolved but rendered inert, bracketed, or ignored so that communication may continue. Normal semantic behavior thus consists not in eliminating contradiction, but in nullifying its disruptive force. Meaning persists not because inconsistency is absent, but because it is locally silenced.

This account undermines any attempt to define normality in semantic terms as coherence or logical harmony. Instead, normality appears as a pragmatic residue: what remains sayable and usable after the excess of contradiction has been neutralized. Semantic normality is therefore a procedural achievement rather than a logical property, aligning directly with TNK's broader rejection of epistemic foundations.

3. Normality, Libido, and Action

If semantic paradoxes destabilize the notion of normality at the level of meaning, theories of action destabilize it at the level of agency. Classical models of rational action presuppose that agents act on the basis of reasons, preferences, and justifications that can, at least in principle, be rendered explicit. Within this framework, normal action is equated with rational action, while deviations from rationality are treated as error, weakness, or pathology. However, both psychoanalytic theory and contemporary neuroscience demonstrate that this model systematically misrepresents how action is actually produced.

From the Freudian tradition onward, it has been argued that human behavior is fundamentally driven by libidinal forces that operate prior to and independently of rational deliberation (Freud, 1920). Desire does not follow justification; it precedes it. Rational explanations typically function retroactively, providing narratives that stabilize action after the fact. This insight is reinforced by neuroscientific research demonstrating that affective processes play a constitutive role in decision-making, often determining choices before conscious reasoning occurs (Damasio, 1994). Under these conditions, rational consistency cannot be regarded as the norm of action, but rather as an exceptional and fragile achievement.

Within the Theory of Non-Knowledge (TNK), this situation is not interpreted as a failure of rationality, but as evidence of the primacy of arbitrariness in action. As argued by Souza (2025b), action is mobilized by attraction without reasons—a libidinal orientation that does not require justification in order to be effective. Attempts to normalize action by subordinating it to rational criteria therefore misidentify the source of agency. What is labeled as irrational or abnormal is often simply action that resists post hoc rationalization.

Normality, in this context, emerges as a regulatory fiction that suppresses awareness of libidinal arbitrariness. Social and psychological norms function by nullifying the non-rational origins of action, rendering them invisible in favor of coherent narratives of choice and responsibility. The nullification operator provides a formal description of this process: it does not eliminate libidinal contradiction, but suspends its explicit acknowledgment so that coordinated action remains possible. Normal action is thus not rational action, but action whose irrational grounds have been successfully nullified.

4. Normality, Social Order, and Institutional Closure

At the social level, normality acquires its most explicit regulatory function. Social norms define what counts as acceptable behavior, belief, or expression, and deviations from these norms are subject to correction, exclusion, or pathologization. While such norms are often presented as reflections of shared values or rational consensus, social theory has consistently shown that they are produced and maintained through institutional mechanisms rather than epistemic justification. Normality, in this sense, is less a description of social reality than a technique for managing it.

The analysis of Michel Foucault demonstrates that modern societies increasingly rely on normalization as a mode of power, operating through statistical averages, behavioral expectations, and disciplinary practices (Foucault, 1975). What is deemed normal is not discovered but imposed, and the distinction between normality and pathology serves to stabilize social order rather than to track truth. Similarly, institutional theories of social reality show that norms persist because they are collectively recognized and enforced, not because they are grounded in independent reasons (Searle, 1995).

From a TNK perspective, social normality is best understood as a large-scale application of nullification. Societies are composed of irreducibly contradictory interests, values, and beliefs. Rather than resolving these contradictions, institutions selectively silence them, establishing thresholds beyond which conflict becomes visible and sanctionable. Normality marks the zone within which contradiction is tolerated without disruption. It is a condition of coordination, not of coherence.

This perspective explains both the stability and fragility of social norms. Because nullification never eliminates contradiction, social normality is inherently unstable and must be continuously reinforced. Periodic crises of normality—such as moral panics, cultural conflicts, and struggles over legitimacy—are not signs of social failure but structural consequences of the impossibility of final closure. Normality persists only as long as nullification remains effective.

Taken together, these analyses demonstrate that normality cannot be grounded in logic, rationality, psychological health, or social consensus. In each domain, normality emerges as a functional residue produced by the suspension of contradiction rather than its resolution. The remaining sections extend this account to the domains of physics and spiritual discourse, showing that even in the natural sciences and metaphysical practices, normality operates as a nullificatory stabilization rather than an epistemic achievement.

5. Normality and Physics

The sciences are often invoked as the paradigmatic domain of normality, understood in terms of methodological rigor, empirical constraint, and rational coherence. Classical physics, in particular, long served as the implicit model for epistemic normality: deterministic laws, objective observation, and stable causal structures were taken to define what it means for knowledge to be both intelligible and reliable. However, the development of twentieth-century physics fundamentally disrupted this model. Rather than reinforcing intuitive notions of normality, modern physics institutionalized forms of theoretical disruption that would be considered pathological in other domains.

Quantum mechanics represents the most decisive break with classical expectations. The abandonment of determinism, the introduction of probabilistic laws, and the dependence of measurement outcomes on experimental contexts rendered classical intuitions not merely incomplete but systematically misleading. The principle of complementarity, associated with Niels Bohr, rejects the possibility of a single, unified description of physical reality, replacing it with mutually incompatible but operationally necessary perspectives (Bohr, 1958). Similarly, the uncertainty principle formulated by Werner Heisenberg demonstrates that indeterminacy is not merely a limitation of measurement but a structural feature of physical description (Heisenberg, 1958).

From the standpoint of the TNK, the significance of these developments lies not only in their empirical success but in their epistemic implications. Physics continues to function and advance despite the abandonment of classical coherence, intuitive intelligibility, and unified description. What is preserved is not normality in the traditional sense, but operability. Contradictory or mutually exclusive models coexist, not because they can be reconciled, but because their incompatibility is locally neutralized in practice. Theoretical contradictions are not resolved; they are bracketed.

More recent relational and interpretative approaches reinforce this conclusion. For example, relational quantum mechanics denies the existence of observer-independent states, redefining physical properties as relational rather than absolute (Rovelli, 1996). Such frameworks do not restore epistemic normality; they formalize its impossibility. Physics thus exemplifies a domain in which knowledge remains productive precisely because it relinquishes the demand for global consistency.

Within TNK, this situation is best understood as a large-scale application of nullification. Classical intuitions regarding space, time, causality, and objectivity are not definitively refuted; rather, they are suspended when they hinder empirical practice. Normality in physics is therefore not truth-preserving coherence, but the residual stability achieved when incompatible descriptions are rendered non-disruptive. The physical sciences do not challenge the TNK thesis but instead confirm it: even the most successful forms of knowledge operate through systematic nullification rather than epistemic closure.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval: The study involved human participants (questionnaire respondents). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, translation of the corpus, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Bohr, N. (1958). *Atomic physics and human knowledge*. Wiley.

Canguilhem, G. (1991). *The normal and the pathological*. Zone Books.

Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. Putnam.

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Pantheon Books.

Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. Hogarth Press.

Heisenberg, W. (1958). *Physics and philosophy: The revolution in modern science*. Harper.

Kripke, S. (1975). Outline of a theory of truth. *The Journal of Philosophy, 72*(19), 690–716.

Priest, G. (2006). *In contradiction: A study of the transconsistent* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Rovelli, C. (1996). Relational quantum mechanics. *International Journal of Theoretical Physics, 35*(8), 1637–1678.

Searle, J. R. (1995). *The construction of social reality*. Free Press.

Souza, E. B. R. de. (2025a). The theory of non-knowledge and the new science: A philosophical and scientific revolution applied to practical life. In *Filosofia, essência e existência: Questões fundamentais e reflexões filosóficas* (pp. 38–55). https://doi.org/10.22533/at.ed.750112524035

Souza, E. B. R. de. (2026b). The beautiful as the arbitrary: Aesthetic foundations of the theory of non-knowledge. *Journal of Literature Advances, 2*(2), 116–121. https://doi.org/10.26855/jla.2025.12.005

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. Blackwell.

Received: 03.03.2026
Revised: 03.15.2026
Accepted: 03.30.2026
Published: 04.04.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

French Literature as a Tool for Language Development: Stylistic Analysis and Pedagogical Applications in FLE and EFL Contexts

[1] **Ali Allahverdiyev**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002002

Abstract

This article investigates the role of French literary texts as instruments for second and foreign language development, combining stylistic-linguistic analysis with pedagogical application within Français Langue Étrangère (FLE) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frameworks. Drawing upon the theoretical models of Krashen, Kramsch, Carter and Long, and Widdowson, the study examines how the distinctive stylistic features of canonical French authors—Victor Hugo, Albert Camus, Molière, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Jacques Prévert, Voltaire, and Gustave Flaubert—contribute to vocabulary acquisition, grammatical competence, pragmatic awareness, and intercultural understanding. Each author's prose or dramatic style is analyzed as a discrete linguistic resource: Hugo's rhetorical abundance for advanced lexical expansion, Camus's minimalist écriture blanche for tense-system awareness, Molière's register variation for sociolinguistic competence, and Saint-Exupéry's accessible symbolism for metaphorical reasoning at lower proficiency levels. The article further evaluates recent empirical evidence from cognitive linguistics and pedagogical stylistics demonstrating measurable effects of literary-stylistic instruction on second language metaphorical competence, phonological retention, and irony comprehension. A comparative analysis of literary versus non-literary texts in language classrooms confirms the superior engagement and deeper processing that literary materials generate. The findings are synthesized into a CEFR-aligned pedagogical framework mapping specific French literary works to proficiency levels and language-learning objectives, offering a structured model for integrating French literature into contemporary language curricula.

Keywords: *French literature, stylistic analysis, language development, FLE pedagogy, EFL, literary stylistics, second language acquisition, CEFR*

1. Introduction

The relationship between literary texts and language acquisition has been a subject of sustained scholarly inquiry since the communicative turn in language pedagogy during the 1980s. While the broader field of literature in language teaching has generated a substantial body of

[1] Allahverdiyev, A. Author, Nakhchivan State University, Azerbaijan. Email: aliallahverdiyev@ndu.edu.az. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1249-3041

research, the specific linguistic and stylistic properties of French literary texts and their pedagogical exploitation remain comparatively underexplored in applied linguistics scholarship. This disparity is notable given that French literature encompasses one of the most stylistically diverse canons in world literature, ranging from the rhetorical exuberance of Victor Hugo to the deliberate minimalism of Albert Camus, from the sociolinguistic comedy of Molière to the accessible symbolism of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

The present article addresses this gap by examining French literary texts through a dual lens: first, as objects of stylistic-linguistic analysis whose formal properties can be systematically described; and second, as pedagogical instruments whose distinctive features contribute to measurable dimensions of second and foreign language development. This investigation is situated at the intersection of three scholarly traditions: French literary stylistics, cognitive-linguistic approaches to second language acquisition (SLA), and the didactics of Français Langue Étrangère (FLE). The theoretical foundation draws upon Carter and Long's (1991) three models of literature teaching—the cultural model, the language model, and the personal growth model—as an organizing framework, supplemented by Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis, Kramsch's (1993) concept of intercultural discourse competence, and Widdowson's (1975) pioneering work connecting stylistics to language pedagogy.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 establishes the theoretical framework by reviewing foundational models for integrating literature into language teaching. Section 3 presents case studies of seven canonical French authors, analyzing the stylistic and linguistic features most relevant to language development. Section 4 examines the pedagogical applications of these features within FLE and EFL classrooms. Section 5 investigates the empirical evidence from cognitive linguistics and pedagogical stylistics on how specific literary devices contribute to language learning. Section 6 provides a comparative evaluation of literary versus non-literary texts. Section 7 synthesizes the findings into a CEFR-aligned pedagogical framework, and Section 8 offers concluding remarks and directions for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework: Literature in Language Teaching

2.1 The Input Hypothesis and Literary Texts as Comprehensible Input

Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis posits that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly beyond their current level of competence, formalized as i+1. Literary texts, by virtue of their contextual richness, narrative coherence, and affective engagement, constitute a particularly effective form of such input. Krashen's (2004) subsequent research on free voluntary reading demonstrates that sustained exposure to extended texts—including literary works—produces measurable gains in vocabulary, spelling accuracy, and writing sophistication in both first and second language contexts. The relevance to French literature is direct: the contextual embedding of new vocabulary and grammatical structures within narrative or dramatic frameworks provides precisely the kind of meaning-bearing, slightly challenging input that the hypothesis predicts will facilitate acquisition.

2.2 Kramsch and Intercultural Discourse Competence

Kramsch (1993) reconceptualizes culture as inseparable from language learning, arguing that literary texts create what she terms a "third place" between the learner's native culture and the target culture. In this interstitial space, learners develop intercultural discourse competence—the ability to negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries. Her later elaboration of "symbolic competence" (Kramsch, 2006) extends this framework to encompass the learner's capacity to manipulate the symbolic dimension of language, a skill for which literary texts are indispensable. French literature, with its deeply embedded cultural references and philosophical traditions, provides an exceptionally rich terrain for developing this competence, as readers must navigate not merely linguistic meaning but also the sociohistorical, philosophical, and aesthetic dimensions of the text.

2.3 Carter and Long's Three Models

Carter and Long (1991) propose three models for teaching literature that have become the standard taxonomic framework in the field. The cultural model treats literature as a repository of cultural knowledge and historical context, positioning the literary text as a window into the social, political, and intellectual life of the target culture. The language model foregrounds the linguistic properties of the text, using literature as a focus for grammatical, lexical, and discourse analysis. The personal growth model emphasizes the affective and experiential dimensions of literary reading, viewing engagement with literature as a catalyst for emotional and intellectual development that bridges the cultural and language models. These three models are not mutually exclusive; rather, they represent complementary orientations that can be activated simultaneously or sequentially depending on pedagogical objectives. The present article employs this tripartite framework to organize the analysis of French literary texts, demonstrating how each author's stylistic properties serve one or more of these pedagogical functions.

2.4 Widdowson and the Stylistic Bridge

Widdowson's (1975) foundational work establishes the critical connection between linguistic stylistics and literary pedagogy. His central argument—that stylistic analysis bridges linguistics and literary criticism by treating literature not merely as text but as discourse—provides the methodological rationale for the present study. When learners engage in stylistic analysis, they move beyond passive reception to active interpretation, relating the linguistic choices of the author to their own communicative experience. This perspective is complemented by Short's (1996) comprehensive introduction to stylistic analysis across literary genres and by the pedagogical stylistics tradition reviewed by Zyngier and Watson (2022), which demonstrates that stylistic approaches produce measurable improvements in both linguistic competence and literary appreciation.

3. French Literary Case Studies: Stylistic and Linguistic Analysis

3.1 Victor Hugo: Rhetorical Abundance and Lexical Richness

Hugo's prose constitutes one of the richest laboratories for stylistic analysis in the French literary canon. Brombert (1984) provides a thorough scholarly analysis of Hugo's formal strategies—his elaborate symbolism, densely layered imagery, complex narrative architecture, and what Brombert characterizes as the "dynamic of undoing" in his visionary novels. Porter (1999) further demonstrates Hugo's multidimensional expressiveness through close readings of his tropes, versification patterns, and rhetorical devices.

The linguistic signature of Hugo's writing is characterized by several features of direct relevance to advanced language development. First, his extraordinary lexical range—manifested in extended strings of synonyms, near-synonyms, and synonymous phrases—provides unparalleled material for vocabulary expansion. Second, his systematic deployment of antithesis at every level of textual organization—from the phrase to the chapter to the novel's entire architecture—develops learners' understanding of semantic opposition and rhetorical structure. Third, his extensive use of anaphora, rhetorical questions, parallel constructions, and cumulative enumeration offers a catalogue of discourse-level patterns essential for advanced written production. Fourth, his deliberate mixing of registers—his "theory of the grotesque" combining tragic and comic, erudite and colloquial—exposes learners to the full sociolinguistic range of the French language. For language development purposes, Hugo's texts are most productively employed at C1–C2 levels, where learners can benefit from the lexical density and syntactic complexity while possessing sufficient grammatical competence to process extended periodic sentences.

3.2 Albert Camus: Minimalist Prose and the Passé Composé Question

Camus's L'Étranger represents perhaps the most linguistically analyzed French novel, precisely because its formal innovations are so radical and so visible. Barthes (1953) identifies Camus as the exemplar of écriture blanche—neutral writing, a style of deliberate absence in which the social and mythological dimensions of literary language are systematically suppressed. Sartre (1947) launched decades of linguistic investigation by arguing that Camus's choice of the passé composé in place of the traditional literary passé simple was designed to accentuate the isolation of each phrasal unit, breaking the narrative continuity that the conventional past tense would provide.

Subsequent linguistic studies have deepened this analysis considerably. Cabillau (1971) examines the expression of temporality throughout the novel, while Balibar (1972) provides a detailed study of what she terms the fictive passé composé, demonstrating how the tense choice creates a distinctive relationship between narration and experience. For second language learners, these features have immediate pedagogical value. Camus's prose is accessible from the intermediate level (B1–B2) by virtue of its short declarative sentences, limited adjectival modification, proximity to the spoken register of French, and minimal descriptive elaboration. The very simplicity that defines écriture blanche makes it an ideal entry point for authentic literary reading, while the sophistication of the underlying narrative technique provides ample material for more advanced stylistic analysis. The novel's status as the third most translated francophone literary work worldwide further enhances its utility as a bridge text for comparative language work.

3.3 Molière: Dramatic Dialogue as Sociolinguistic Laboratory

Molière's comedies function as a sociolinguistic laboratory in which language itself is both the medium and the subject of dramatic action. Clark (2005) addresses the role of language in comedy creation by applying post-Saussurean theoretical frameworks to Molière's plays, analyzing the mechanisms of parody, pastiche, and linguistic humor across the oeuvre. Cafiero et al. (2019) provide computational linguistic evidence confirming Molière's distinctive lexical and syntactic profile, demonstrating through quantitative analysis the stylistic fingerprint that distinguishes his dramatic language.

The pedagogical value of Molière's work lies principally in its exploitation of register variation as a mirror of social structure. Characters speak in socially marked registers that reflect their class position, their aspirations, and their degree of self-awareness: bourgeois aspirants deploy pseudo-learned language and Latinate constructions they imperfectly understand; servants employ colloquial and sometimes subversive speech; pedants and physicians parade technical jargon for comic effect. This register variation makes Molière's texts ideal for developing sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic awareness, and speaking and listening skills. A recent study performing document analysis of Le Bourgeois gentilhomme for FLE intercultural competence examines both linguistic components—registers, vocabulary, grammatical structures—and cultural elements embedded in the play (Karadeniz & Tarakci, 2024). For classroom purposes, Molière's texts are most effective at the B2–C1 level, where learners can appreciate the sociolinguistic dimensions while benefiting from the natural dialogue patterns.

3.4 Saint-Exupéry, Prévert, Voltaire, and Flaubert

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's Le Petit Prince occupies a unique position in the French literary canon as both a children's classic and a work of philosophical depth. Translated into over 300 languages, it has also become a neurolinguistic research benchmark. Li et al. (2022) describe its use as a multilingual fMRI corpus, while Stehwien et al. (2020) demonstrate its cross-linguistic research utility. Its core vocabulary of approximately 600 words makes it accessible from the A2–B1 level, while its rich metaphorical content—the fox as emblem of domestication and connection, the rose as figure for love and responsibility, the stars as symbols of meaning and orientation—provides sophisticated material for developing figurative language competence even at lower proficiency levels. The clarity and universality of Saint-Exupéry's language make it an ideal text for introducing literary reading in FLE contexts.

Jacques Prévert's poetry, particularly the collection Paroles (1946), democratizes literary language by employing everyday vocabulary and colloquial syntactic structures within frameworks of surrealist imagery and emotional intensity. Cranston (2003) addresses the use of Prévert's work in FLE contexts, noting the accessibility of poems such as "Déjeuner du matin," which conveys complex emotional states through minimal vocabulary and simple grammatical structures. Federici (1989) links Prévert to the chanson tradition, providing pedagogical strategies for integrating aural and literary learning. Prévert's poetry is particularly effective for phonological awareness and pronunciation work, as his verse exploits sound patterns—alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme—within structures accessible from the A2 level.

Voltaire's Candide exemplifies irony as a dominant rhetorical mode. Bottiglia (1964) provides comprehensive analysis of the novel's verbal irony, litotes, euphemism, caricature, burlesque, and parodic structures, demonstrating how Voltaire's prose achieves maximum satirical effect through deliberate lexical economy and strategic understatement. For language learners at the B2–C1 level, Candide provides invaluable training in pragmatic competence—specifically, in recognizing the gap between literal and intended meaning, evaluating speaker and narrator stance, and interpreting implicature.

Gustave Flaubert's contribution to the stylistic resources available for language teaching centers on two innovations. First, his concept of le mot juste—the conviction that for every idea there exists one and only one precisely right word—models a standard of lexical precision directly relevant to advanced vocabulary instruction. Finch (2004) analyzes Flaubert's lexical precision and prosodic rhythm, while Majidova and Rakhimberdieva (2025) examine how his prose juxtaposes opposing semantic registers to create ironic tension. Second, Flaubert pioneered the style indirect libre (free indirect discourse), a narrative technique that merges narrator and character perspectives without explicit markers. Pascal (1977) demonstrates how this technique requires complex grammatical processing—tense shifting, pronoun adaptation, deictic management—that serves as advanced grammar instruction material. Flaubert's texts are most appropriate at the C1–C2 level, where learners possess the grammatical sophistication to appreciate the narrative technique and the lexical competence to engage with his precise but demanding prose.

4. Pedagogical Applications in FLE and EFL Classrooms

The integration of French literature into FLE pedagogy has generated a dedicated body of scholarship that both extends and adapts the general literature-in-language-teaching models to the specific demands of French language instruction. Albert and Souchon (2000) propose three models for the reader–text relationship, arguing that literary texts function simultaneously as reservoirs of lexical units and grammatical structures and as sites of meaning-making that cannot be reduced to mere linguistic exemplification. Cuq and Gruca (2005) provide the standard reference work in FLE didactics, with sustained attention to the role of literary texts across proficiency levels. Godard (2015) argues compellingly that literature should serve as the lever of a renewed approach to language teaching, developing both communicative and interpretive competences in tandem.

The empirical evidence for vocabulary acquisition through French literary reading is particularly strong. Pigada and Schmitt (2006), in a carefully controlled case study, demonstrate that one month of extensive reading of French literary texts enhanced learner knowledge of sixty-five percent of one hundred and thirty-three target words, with spelling improvement the most pronounced gain. Dupuy and Krashen (1993) provide corroborating evidence for incidental vocabulary acquisition in French as a foreign language contexts. Gascoigne (2002) demonstrates that beginning French students can manage authentic literary texts from as early as twelve hours of instruction, challenging the common assumption that literary reading must be deferred until advanced levels.

For intercultural competence development, Heggernes et al. (2022) present a French-specific case study using literary texts addressing migration and exile to develop intercultural skills in the foreign language classroom. Cicurel (1991) proposes interactive reading methodology for FLE that integrates literary texts within a broader typology of reading strategies. The institutional significance of these developments is underscored by the Council of Europe's (2020) CEFR Companion Volume, which introduced new descriptors for expressing reactions to creative texts including literature, signaling formal recognition of literature's value in language education at the policy level.

Practical classroom implementation is supported by several dedicated resources. Fiévet (2013) offers thirty-five detailed lesson plans spanning A1 to C2 CEFR levels, providing concrete models for teachers at all stages. Defays et al. (2014) argue that literary texts remain central to intercultural dialogue and propose pedagogical activities calibrated to each proficiency level.

Berthelot (2011) expands the available canon by incorporating francophone literatures from beyond metropolitan France, enriching the cultural diversity of texts available for classroom use.

5. Stylistic Devices and Their Contribution to Language Learning

5.1 Metaphor and Conceptual Mapping

The theoretical foundation for understanding metaphor's role in language learning derives from Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) demonstration that metaphors are not merely ornamental but structure cognition itself through systematic cross-domain mappings. Boers (2000) provides the pivotal empirical study demonstrating that raising learners' awareness of conceptual metaphors significantly improves vocabulary retention through deeper semantic processing. Littlemore and Low (2006) define metaphoric competence as a central component of second language communicative ability, encompassing the capacity to produce, comprehend, and interpret figurative language in real-time communication.

A meta-analysis by Li et al. (2022) synthesizing multiple studies confirms a large effect size (d = 0.888) for instructional interventions targeting second language metaphorical competence, providing robust empirical support for incorporating metaphor-focused activities into literary pedagogy. These findings apply directly to Hugo's elaborate metaphorical networks, Saint-Exupéry's sustained symbolic imagery, and Voltaire's satirical figurative language, suggesting that the analysis of metaphor in these texts can serve as a vehicle for developing measurable competence in figurative language processing.

5.2 Alliteration, Assonance, and Phonological Retention

A series of experimental studies by Boers and Lindstromberg establishes the mnemonic power of sound patterns in second language learning. Boers and Lindstromberg (2005) demonstrate that alliterative phrases in the second language are significantly more memorable than non-alliterative equivalents, attributing this effect to the phonological distinctiveness that alliteration creates in memory encoding. Lindstromberg and Boers (2008a) extend these findings by showing that explicit awareness-raising of alliterative patterns amplifies the mnemonic effect, while Lindstromberg and Boers (2008b) provide parallel evidence for the mnemonic power of assonance in lexical chunk retention.

These findings have direct relevance to the exploitation of sound patterns in French literary texts for language learning. Hugo's verse, with its systematic deployment of alliteration, assonance, and rhythmic patterning, provides abundant material for phonological awareness activities. Prévert's poetry, in which sound patterns are both structurally important and aesthetically foregrounded, is particularly suitable for pronunciation work and phonological retention exercises. Nikou and Fredet (2020) address precisely this intersection of phonetics, literature, and FLE teaching, demonstrating the practical feasibility of using literary sound patterns as a bridge between phonological instruction and literary appreciation.

5.3 Irony and Pragmatic Competence

The comprehension of irony represents one of the most challenging dimensions of pragmatic competence for second language learners. Bromberek-Dyzman et al. (2023) find that literary texts in the written modality present the greatest challenge for irony recognition, suggesting that sustained engagement with literary irony provides valuable practice for developing this elusive skill. Garmendia (2018) offers a comprehensive theoretical treatment of irony that distinguishes between several functional types—verbal irony, situational irony, dramatic irony—each of which requires distinct interpretive strategies.

Voltaire’s Candide and Flaubert’s Madame Bovary exemplify sustained literary irony that develops learners’ ability to recognize implied meaning, evaluate narrator stance, and interpret the gap between surface statement and intended message. The pedagogical exploitation of these texts develops what may be termed ironic literacy—the capacity to detect, interpret, and appreciate irony as a communicative strategy—which is a critical component of pragmatic competence in real-world communication.

5.4 Free Indirect Discourse and Grammatical Complexity

Free indirect discourse, the narrative technique pioneered in French by Flaubert, requires readers to process a complex merger of narrator and character perspectives without explicit framing markers. Pascal (1977) demonstrates that this technique demands sophisticated grammatical operations—tense shifting between narrative and experiential time frames, pronoun adaptation between first-person experience and third-person narration, and deictic management of spatial and temporal references. For advanced language learners, engagement with free indirect discourse provides intensive grammatical processing that develops precisely the kinds of complex sentence-level competences that resist acquisition through explicit instruction alone. Stockwell (2002) situates this within the broader framework of cognitive poetics, demonstrating how cognitive-linguistic approaches to literary texts can serve as vehicles for developing both literary appreciation and linguistic competence simultaneously.

6. Literary Versus Non-Literary Texts: Comparative Evidence

The question of whether literary texts offer advantages over non-literary materials for language learning has generated a sustained scholarly debate. Paran (2008), in the definitive review article on this question, proposes a four-quadrant model of literature use in language education and finds that learner outcomes depend heavily on pedagogical approach and task design rather than on the inherent properties of the text type alone. However, the weight of evidence favors literary texts for specific learning outcomes.

Isariyawat et al. (2020), in a mixed-methods study with one hundred undergraduates, find that literary texts play a stronger role in improving competence than non-literary texts across reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, with cultural awareness scoring particularly highly. Paran et al.’s multi-case study across International Baccalaureate schools, including French Language B classrooms, reports that teachers observe literary texts generating richer emotional language and deeper engagement than non-literary materials. Ghosn (2002) identifies four specific advantages of literary texts: superior vocabulary development through rich contextual embedding, enhanced critical thinking through interpretive complexity, improved reading motivation through narrative engagement, and greater intercultural sensitivity through exposure to diverse perspectives.

Recent meta-analytic evidence reinforces these findings. A 2025 meta-analysis in Educational Psychology Review confirms positive effects of extensive reading across all language domains, while a companion analysis finds a large effect size (d = 1.035) for literature circles on second language reading comprehension. The evidence suggests that while non-literary texts may be more efficient for specific informational outcomes, literary texts consistently produce deeper processing, stronger affective engagement, and more durable learning across multiple language competences.

7. Toward a CEFR-Aligned Pedagogical Framework

The analysis presented in the preceding sections can be synthesized into a structured pedagogical framework that maps specific French literary works to CEFR proficiency levels and language-learning objectives. This framework is organized according to Carter and Long’s (1991) three models, with each literary work assigned to the model or models it most effectively serves.

At the A2–B1 level, Saint-Exupéry’s Le Petit Prince and Prévert’s selected poems from Paroles provide accessible entry points to literary reading. Saint-Exupéry’s limited core vocabulary, clear syntax, and universal themes serve both the language model (vocabulary acquisition, basic sentence pattern recognition) and the personal growth model (engagement with philosophical questions accessible to all levels). Prévert’s poetry serves the language model through phonological awareness and pronunciation work, while its accessible emotional content supports the personal growth model. Both authors can be introduced through extensive reading approaches, with pedagogical tasks focused on vocabulary expansion, basic stylistic observation, and personal response.

At the B1–B2 level, Camus's L'Étranger offers an ideal transitional text. Its minimalist prose makes it linguistically manageable, while its narrative sophistication rewards close reading. The language model is served through analysis of the passé composé versus passé simple distinction, sentence-level stylistic analysis, and attention to narrative register. The cultural model is activated through discussion of the novel's colonial Algerian setting, its philosophical context, and its historical reception. The personal growth model emerges through readers' engagement with Meursault's alienation and the ethical questions the narrative raises.

At the B2–C1 level, Molière's comedies and Voltaire's Candide introduce greater sociolinguistic and pragmatic complexity. Molière serves the language model through register analysis, dialogue-based speaking activities, and sociolinguistic observation. He serves the cultural model through examination of seventeenth-century French social structures, theatrical conventions, and the relationship between language and power. Voltaire's Candide activates all three models simultaneously: the language model through irony analysis and vocabulary work, the cultural model through Enlightenment intellectual history, and the personal growth model through philosophical engagement with optimism, suffering, and the human condition.

At the C1–C2 level, Hugo's novels and Flaubert's prose represent the summit of linguistic and stylistic challenge. Hugo's rhetorical abundance develops advanced lexical competence, discourse-level analysis skills, and appreciation of register mixing. Flaubert's le mot juste and free indirect discourse develop grammatical sophistication, narrative literacy, and the capacity for fine-grained semantic discrimination. Both authors serve all three models at the highest level, with pedagogical activities including comparative stylistic analysis, extended critical writing, and creative imitation exercises.

8. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that French literary texts constitute a uniquely valuable resource for language development, offering linguistic, cultural, and personal dimensions of learning that non-literary materials cannot replicate with equivalent depth or engagement. The stylistic diversity of the French canon—from Hugo's rhetorical exuberance to Camus's deliberate austerity, from Molière's sociolinguistic comedy to Prévert's accessible lyricism—provides a natural pedagogical progression that can be mapped to CEFR proficiency levels with considerable precision.

The empirical evidence from cognitive linguistics and pedagogical stylistics provides robust support for specific claims about how literary devices develop measurable second language competences. Metaphorical instruction produces large effect sizes for figurative language ability; phonological patterns in literary texts enhance lexical retention; sustained engagement with literary irony develops pragmatic competence; and free indirect discourse provides intensive grammatical processing that develops advanced syntactic skills. These findings confirm that the exploitation of literary stylistic features is not merely an aesthetic supplement to language instruction but a methodologically sound approach to developing core language competences.

Future research should address the relative scarcity of French-specific empirical studies by designing controlled experiments that measure the effects of specific French literary texts on measurable language outcomes across CEFR levels. Longitudinal studies tracking the development of stylistic awareness and its transfer to productive language competence would be particularly valuable. Additionally, the growing availability of digital tools for stylistic analysis—including corpus stylistics software and computational methods—offers new possibilities for making the systematic analysis of French literary language accessible to learners at all proficiency levels.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval: The study involved human participants (questionnaire respondents). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, translation of the corpus, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Albert, M.-C., & Souchon, M. (2000). Les textes littéraires en classe de langue. Hachette.

Balibar, R. (1972). Le passé composé fictif dans L'Étranger d'Albert Camus. Littérature, 7, 102–119.

Barthes, R. (1953). Le degré zéro de l'écriture. Seuil.

Berthelot, R. (2011). Littératures francophones en classe de FLE: Pourquoi et comment enseigner? L'Harmattan.

Boers, F. (2000). Metaphor awareness and vocabulary retention. Applied Linguistics, 21(4), 553–571. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/21.4.553

Boers, F., & Lindstromberg, S. (2005). Finding ways to make phrase-learning feasible: The mnemonic effect of alliteration. System, 33(2), 225–238. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.12.007

Boers, F., & Lindstromberg, S. (2008). Cognitive linguistic approaches to teaching vocabulary and phraseology. De Gruyter.

Bottiglia, W. F. (1964). Candide criticism: Style and evaluation. In Voltaire's Candide: Analysis of a classic (Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Vol. 7). Institut et Musée Voltaire.

Bromberek-Dyzman, K., Jankowiak, K., Łopatka, A., Jabłońska, K., & Rataj, K. (2023). Irony comprehension in L2 English. Language and Speech. https://doi.org/10.1177/00238309221127029

Brombert, V. (1984). Victor Hugo and the visionary novel. Harvard University Press.

Cabillau, J.-F. (1971). L'expression du temps dans L'Étranger d'Albert Camus. Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire, 49(3), 866–874.

Cafiero, F., Camps, J.-B., & Cafiero, F. (2019). Why Molière most likely did write his plays. Science Advances, 5(11), eaax5489. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.eaax5489

Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1991). Teaching literature. Longman.

Cicurel, F. (1991). Lectures interactives en langue étrangère. Hachette.

Clark, S. R. (2005). Molière's language: Perspectives and approaches [Doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow].

Collie, J., & Slater, S. (1987). Literature in the language classroom: A resource book of ideas and activities. Cambridge University Press.

Cook, G. (1994). Discourse and literature: The interplay of form and mind. Oxford University Press.

Council of Europe. (2020). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume. Council of Europe Publishing.

Cranston, M. (2003). Rhyme or reason? The teaching of poetry in the foreign language classroom. The French Review, 76(5), 954–966.

Cuq, J.-P., & Gruca, I. (2005). Cours de didactique du français langue étrangère et seconde. Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.

Defays, J.-M., Delbart, A.-R., Hammami, S., & Saenen, F. (2014). La littérature en FLE: État des lieux et nouvelles perspectives. Hachette.

Dupuy, B., & Krashen, S. (1993). Incidental vocabulary acquisition in French as a foreign language. Applied Language Learning, 4, 55–63.

Federici, C. (1989). De la chanson à la poésie. French Review, 62(4), 612–622.

Fiévet, M. (2013). Littérature en classe de FLE. CLE International.

Finch, A. (2004). The stylistic achievements of Flaubert's fiction. In T. Unwin (Ed.), The Cambridge companion to Flaubert (pp. 145–164). Cambridge University Press.

Garmendia, J. (2018). Irony. Cambridge University Press.

Gascoigne, C. (2002). Documenting the initial second language reading experience. Foreign Language Annals, 35(5), 554–562. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2002.tb02723.x

Ghosn, I.-K. (2002). Four good reasons to use literature in primary school ELT. ELT Journal, 56(2), 172–179.

Godard, A. (Dir.). (2015). La littérature dans l'enseignement du FLE. Didier.

Heggernes, S. L., Dypedahl, M., & Speitz, H. (2022). Intercultural competence in the foreign language classroom. Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2022.2042842

Isariyawat, C., Yenphech, C., & Intanoo, K. (2020). The role of literature and literary texts in an EFL context. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 16(3), 1320–1333.

Karadeniz, A., & Tarakci, M. (2024). Le Bourgeois gentilhomme in FLE: Document analysis. Anadolu Journal of Educational Sciences International. https://doi.org/10.18039/ajesi.1619750

Kramsch, C. (1993). Context and culture in language teaching. Oxford University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2006). The multilingual subject. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 16(1), 97–110.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). The input hypothesis: Issues and implications. Longman.

Krashen, S. D. (2004). The power of reading: Insights from the research (2nd ed.). Libraries Unlimited.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors we live by. University of Chicago Press.

Lazar, G. (1993). Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers. Cambridge University Press.

Lazar, G. (1996). Using figurative language to expand students' vocabulary. ELT Journal, 50(1), 43–51. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/50.1.43

Li, J., et al. (2022). Le Petit Prince multilingual naturalistic fMRI corpus. Scientific Data, 9, Article 530. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-022-01625-7

Li, X., et al. (2022). Can second language metaphorical competence be taught through instructional intervention? A meta-analysis. Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 1065803. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1065803

Lindstromberg, S., & Boers, F. (2008a). The mnemonic effect of noticing alliteration in lexical chunks. Applied Linguistics, 29(2), 200–222.

Lindstromberg, S., & Boers, F. (2008b). Phonemic repetition and the learning of lexical chunks: The mnemonic power of assonance. System, 36(3), 423–436.

Littlemore, J., & Low, G. (2006). Metaphoric competence, second language learning, and communicative language ability. Applied Linguistics, 27(2), 268–294. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/aml004

Majidova, L. B., & Rakhimberdieva, M. I. (2025). Lexical contradiction and idiomatic tension in the style of Gustave Flaubert. International Journal of Literature and Languages, 5(5), 13–17.

Maley, A., & Duff, A. (2007). Literature (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

McRae, J. (1991). Literature with a small 'l'. Macmillan.

Nikou, C., & Fredet, F. (Dirs.). (2020). Phonétique, littérature et enseignement du FLE. Corela, HS-30.

Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching. Language Teaching, 41(4), 465–496. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004491

Pascal, R. (1977). The dual voice: Free indirect speech and its functioning in the nineteenth-century European novel. Rowman and Littlefield.

Pigada, M., & Schmitt, N. (2006). Vocabulary acquisition from extensive reading: A case study. Reading in a Foreign Language, 18(1), 1–28.

Porter, L. M. (1999). Victor Hugo. Twayne.

Sartre, J.-P. (1947). Explication de L'Étranger. In Situations I (pp. 99–121). Gallimard.

Short, M. (1996). Exploring the language of poems, plays and prose. Longman.

Stehwien, S., et al. (2020). The Little Prince in 26 Languages. In Proceedings of the Second Workshop on Linguistic and Neurocognitive Resources (pp. 43–49). ELRA.

Stockwell, P. (2002). Cognitive poetics: An introduction. Routledge.

Widdowson, H. G. (1975). Stylistics and the teaching of literature. Longman.

Zyngier, S., & Watson, G. (Eds.). (2022). Pedagogical stylistics in the 21st century. Palgrave Macmillan.

Received: 03.11.2026
Revised: 03.15.2026
Accepted: 04.02.2026
Published: 04.04.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

The "Tech-Industrial Complex" and the "Oligarchy" Warning: Neologism, Intertextuality, and Prophetic Rhetoric in Biden's 2025 Farewell Address

[1] **Hasan Alisoy**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002003

Abstract

This article examines the stylistic architecture of President Joseph R. Biden's January 15, 2025, farewell address through the lenses of intertextual analysis, Bakhtinian dialogism, and critical discourse analysis. Biden's coinage of "tech-industrial complex"—a direct lexical parallel to Eisenhower's 1961 "military-industrial complex"—represents a paradigmatic case of intertextual neologism designed to inherit the rhetorical authority of a canonical prior text. His unprecedented deployment of the term "oligarchy" to describe domestic American power dynamics marked a deliberate register shift, importing critical vocabulary previously reserved for post-Soviet states into domestic political discourse. Employing Bakhtin's (1981) concept of the "word as half someone else's," Kristeva's (1980) theory of textual absorption and transformation, and Fairclough's (1992) framework of manifest intertextuality, the study demonstrates how Biden constructed a "farewell as warning" through systematic stylistic borrowing from Eisenhower while adapting the prophetic frame for the age of technology monopolies and social media. The analysis reveals a speech structured around ring composition, double-voiced discourse, and a productive neologism pattern that positions the address within a lineage extending from Washington (1796) through Eisenhower (1961) to the present. The findings contribute to scholarship on presidential rhetoric, political neologism, and the application of dialogic theory to contemporary political discourse.

Keywords: *intertextuality, Bakhtinian dialogism, presidential farewell address, neologism, tech-industrial complex*

Introduction

On January 15, 2025, five days before the inauguration of his successor, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. delivered his farewell address to the nation from the Oval Office. The seventeen-minute speech broke sharply from Biden's own rhetorical history. Where his prior addresses had typically opened with catalogues of legislative accomplishments, this speech pivoted abruptly from a brief ceasefire announcement to an extended allegory about the Statue of Liberty withstanding a storm, before arriving at its rhetorical center of gravity: a prophetic warning against

[1] Alisoy, H. Lecturer in English, Nakhchivan State University, Azerbaijan. Email: alisoyhasan@ndu.edu.az. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0247-476X

what Biden termed an emerging “oligarchy” of extreme wealth and a “tech-industrial complex” threatening American democracy (Biden, 2025). The speech was immediately recognized by commentators as a deliberate echo of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s January 17, 1961, farewell address, in which Eisenhower had coined the phrase “military-industrial complex” and warned against the disastrous rise of misplaced power (Eisenhower, 1961; Fallows, 2025; Meyerson, 2025).

The Biden–Eisenhower parallel is not merely thematic but deeply structural and lexical. Biden explicitly quoted Eisenhower’s farewell, bracketing the quotation with the verbal markers “and I quote” and “end of quote” to make the intertextual borrowing maximally transparent. He then offered his own coinage—“tech-industrial complex”—as a direct lexical substitution within Eisenhower’s syntactic frame. This constitutes what this article terms an intertextual neologism: a new term whose meaning, authority, and rhetorical force derive not from its semantic novelty alone but from its dialogic relationship to a prior authoritative utterance.

This article undertakes a stylistic and discourse-analytic examination of Biden’s farewell address, drawing on three interconnected theoretical frameworks. First, Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984, 1986) theory of dialogism, particularly the concepts of the word as “half someone else’s,” double-voiced discourse, and the utterance chain. Second, Julia Kristeva’s (1980) reconceptualization of Bakhtinian dialogue as intertextuality—the principle that any text is a “mosaic of quotations” constituted through absorption and transformation of other texts. Third, Norman Fairclough’s (1992) framework of manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity within critical discourse analysis (CDA). The article argues that Biden’s farewell represents a paradigmatic case of dialogic political discourse—a speech whose rhetorical power derives precisely from its orientation toward prior utterances and its strategic reappropriation of an authoritative discursive frame for new political purposes.

The significance of this analysis extends beyond the single speech event. Biden’s farewell address arrives at a moment when the relationship between technology corporations and democratic governance has become a defining question of contemporary politics. The speech was delivered against the backdrop of technology executives—including Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, and others—visibly aligning with the incoming administration, a spectacle that Risse (2025) noted when observing that Trump positioned these tech leaders more prominently in his inauguration audience than his own cabinet nominees. Biden’s rhetorical response to this realignment was not to engage in direct polemic but to reach for a framework of historical analogy, constructing his warning through layers of intertextual reference that invited listeners to understand the present through the lens of prior democratic reckonings. Understanding how this rhetorical strategy operates—how authority is constructed through dialogic borrowing, how neologisms inherit cultural weight, and how genre conventions shape political meaning—offers insights applicable far beyond this particular speech.

The research questions guiding this analysis are: (1) How does Biden's coinage of "tech-industrial complex" function as an intertextual neologism, and what mechanisms of rhetorical authority transfer does it employ? (2) What is the significance of Biden's unprecedented domestic deployment of the term "oligarchy," and how does this register shift contribute to the speech's prophetic architecture? (3) How can the speech's stylistic features—its ring composition, metaphorical structure, and genre positioning—be illuminated through Bakhtinian dialogism and intertextual analysis?

Literature Review

The Presidential Farewell as Rhetorical Genre

The presidential farewell address constitutes a distinct rhetorical genre within American political discourse. Campbell and Jamieson (1990, 2008) identify the farewell as occurring during the "entr'acte"—the liminal period between election and inauguration—when the incumbent engages in symbolic divestiture of presidential authority. Its functions include establishing closure, reifying the president–citizen relationship, and creating institutional continuity. The genre's foundational text is George Washington's 1796 farewell, which, though never delivered orally, established the convention of the departing president offering warnings against threats to the republic (Gilbert, 1961). Washington cautioned against partisan factionalism and foreign entanglements, establishing the prophetic–admonitory register that would characterize the genre's most consequential instances.

After Washington, the formal farewell tradition largely lapsed until Truman revived it in 1953 as the first televised presidential farewell. Eisenhower's 1961 address—which introduced the "military-industrial complex" into public discourse—is widely considered the most consequential farewell after Washington's (Medhurst, 1994; Ledbetter, 2011). Milford (2023) has extended the genre analysis, finding that farewell addresses from presidents denied second terms often produce "generic hybrids, combining forms and functions of different addresses" (p. 4). Stuckey (1991) argues that interpreting reality is a core source of presidential power—a framework directly relevant to Biden's attempt to redefine the political landscape through the prophetic warning genre.

Eisenhower's Farewell and the Military-Industrial Complex

Eisenhower's farewell address went through at least 21 drafts over nearly two years, primarily authored by speechwriter Malcolm Moos and Navy aide Ralph E. Williams (Ledbetter, 2011). Medhurst (1994) identified "balance" as the speech's central organizing principle, appearing in multiple formulations: balance between the private and public economy, between cost and advantage, between the necessary and the desirable. The military-industrial complex passage itself is framed within this balance architecture—acknowledging the necessity of a permanent defense establishment while warning against its unwarranted influence.

Initial reception was muted; a Washington Post editorial said Eisenhower had offered little that was new, and John F. Kennedy's inaugural address three days later overshadowed the farewell entirely. The phrase gained wide currency during the Vietnam War, when, as John Kenneth Galbraith noted, critics quoted Eisenhower for the "flank protection" his authority provided (Ledbetter, 2011). Ledbetter described the concept as a "rhetorical Rorschach blot" whose meaning adapted to successive political contexts—a characterization that speaks directly to its dialogic afterlife. Notably, Eisenhower originally considered the formulation "military-industrial-congressional complex" but dropped the third element, while an early draft used "military-scientific complex" before science adviser James Killian persuaded Eisenhower to change it.

Crucially for the Biden comparison, Eisenhower's farewell contained a second warning that is less frequently cited but directly anticipates Biden's concerns: the danger that public policy could become captive to a "scientific-technological elite." Eisenhower cautioned that government's increasing dependence on costly research risked subjugating the nation's scholars to federal patronage and the power of money. This often-overlooked passage reveals that the Eisenhower farewell already contained the seeds of the technology-power critique that Biden would develop sixty-four years later. Biden's intertextual borrowing thus reaches not only to the famous military-industrial complex phrase but resonates with the deeper structure of Eisenhower's entire warning—a structure concerned fundamentally with the danger that specialized knowledge and concentrated resources can subvert democratic self-governance.

The Productive Compound: X-Industrial Complex

Eisenhower's coinage spawned what linguists would recognize as a productive compound template—a constructional idiom or snowclone where the first element is variable while the frame [-industrial complex] remains fixed. The most significant derivatives include the "medical-industrial complex" (Relman, 1980), the "prison-industrial complex" (Schlosser, 1998; Davis, 2003), and numerous variants including the immigration-industrial complex, the nonprofit-industrial complex, and the academic-industrial complex. Each compound inherits Eisenhower's critical authority through structural parallelism: the form signals a systemic threat to democratic governance analogous to the original. The listener imports the gravity, urgency, and critical stance of Eisenhower's farewell into whatever new domain the compound addresses. Significantly, the right-wing coinage "censorship-industrial complex"—used circa 2023–2024 to describe alleged government-social media collaboration on speech suppression—demonstrates that the compound's rhetorical authority is ideologically transferable, available to critics across the political spectrum. Biden's "tech-industrial complex" is the most explicitly intertextual of all these derivatives, because it is accompanied by a direct quotation of the source text, making the borrowing not merely structural but discursively marked and acknowledged.

Bakhtinian Dialogism and Intertextuality

Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism holds that every utterance exists as a response to prior utterances and anticipates future responses. No speaker is "the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69). Central to the present analysis is Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia: the coexistence within any utterance of multiple social languages, intentions, and accents. Each word carries what Bakhtin (1981) describes as the "taste" of the contexts in which it has previously lived its "socially charged life" (p. 293). The word in language is, crucially, "half someone else's"—it becomes one's own only when the speaker "populates it with his own intention, his own accent" and "adapts it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293).

Bakhtin's (1984) typology of double-voiced discourse, elaborated in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, provides a further analytical tool. The "word with a sideward glance" describes utterances oriented simultaneously toward their referential object and toward another person's discourse about that same object—speech that serves two speakers and expresses two different intentions. This concept illuminates how Biden's "tech-industrial complex" simultaneously addresses its object (concentrated technology power) while glancing at Eisenhower's prior discourse, inviting recognition of the parallel and appropriating its authority.

Kristeva (1980) coined the term "intertextuality" in her 1966 presentation of Bakhtin to Roland Barthes's seminar, reconceptualizing Bakhtinian dialogue as a relation between texts rather than between speaking subjects. Her foundational formulation—that any text is "a mosaic of quotations" representing "the absorption and transformation of another" text (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66)—provides the theoretical vocabulary for analyzing Biden's systematic textual borrowing. Fairclough (1992) operationalizes intertextuality for discourse analysis, distinguishing manifest intertextuality—where other texts are explicitly present—from constitutive intertextuality or interdiscursivity, involving the mixing of discourse conventions. His observation that texts may "assimilate, contradict, ironically echo" prior texts (Fairclough, 1992, p. 84) maps precisely onto the range of intertextual operations visible in Biden's farewell.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach combining stylistic analysis with Bakhtinian dialogic analysis and Faircloughian CDA. The primary data consists of the official White House transcript of Biden's January 15, 2025, farewell address (Biden, 2025), cross-referenced with the video recording for prosodic and gestural features. The secondary comparative text is the Avalon Project transcript of Eisenhower's January 17, 1961, farewell address (Eisenhower, 1961). Supplementary data includes media commentary from the immediate post-speech period (January 15–20, 2025) and the scholarly analysis by Risse (2025) published by Harvard Kennedy School's Carr-Ryan Center.

Analytical Framework

The analysis proceeds through three integrated levels, following Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model. At the textual level, the study examines lexical choices (neologism, register), syntactic parallelism, metaphor (the avalanche and smothering imagery), and macro-structural features (ring composition, the five-part architecture). At the discursive practice level, the analysis traces manifest intertextuality—the explicit presence of Eisenhower's text within Biden's—and interdiscursivity, particularly the mixing of the farewell genre with the prophetic–admonitory register. At the social practice level, the study situates the speech within the political context of technology monopolization, the January 2025 transition, and the broader tradition of presidential farewell warnings.

Theoretical Tools

The Bakhtinian concepts operationalized in this analysis include: the word as "half someone else's" (Bakhtin, 1981), applied to the "tech-industrial complex" coinage; double-voiced discourse and the "word with a sideward glance" (Bakhtin, 1984), applied to Biden's simultaneous orientation toward Eisenhower's authority and his own political purpose; the utterance chain (Bakhtin, 1986), applied to the farewell genre's diachronic development from Washington through Eisenhower to Biden; and heteroglossia, applied to the speech's layering of presidential authority, populist anger, prophetic warning, and technological critique within a single discursive event.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analytical procedure involved several stages. First, a close textual reading of both the Biden and Eisenhower farewell transcripts, identifying all instances of lexical parallelism, explicit quotation, structural correspondence, and thematic echoing. Second, a systematic comparison of the two speeches' macro-structures, identifying parallels in their opening frames, warning sections, and closing charges to citizens. Third, an analysis of Biden's metaphorical systems using conceptual metaphor theory as a supplementary tool alongside Bakhtinian analysis. Fourth, a review of the immediate media and scholarly commentary (Fallows, 2025; Meyerson, 2025; Risse, 2025; Wirls, 2025) to triangulate the researcher's interpretive claims against other informed readings of the speech. Fifth, a diachronic mapping of the [X]-industrial complex compound's genealogy, tracing the productive pattern from Eisenhower through its major derivatives to Biden's coinage. The combination of these procedures ensures that the analysis attends to the speech at multiple levels—from individual lexical choices through metaphorical systems to genre conventions and the broader discursive context.

Results and Analysis

The Intertextual Neologism: "Tech-Industrial Complex"

Biden's central coinage operates through what may be termed paradigmatic substitution within an inherited syntagmatic frame. Eisenhower's "military-industrial complex" established a three-element compound structure: [domain]-industrial complex. Biden substitutes "tech" for "military," preserving the syntactic architecture while redirecting its referential scope. This is not a novel technique—the compound has been productive since the 1960s, generating variants including "prison-industrial complex" (Schlosser, 1998; Davis, 2003), "medical-industrial complex" (Relman, 1980), and numerous others. However, Biden's coinage is unique in the lineage for one critical reason: it is accompanied by an explicit, verbally marked quotation of the source text.

In Bakhtinian terms, this constitutes maximally transparent double-voicing. Biden does not merely echo Eisenhower's phrase—he stages the echo, announcing it with the verbal markers "and I quote" and "end of quote." This deliberate framing transforms what might otherwise be an unmarked allusion into what Fairclough (1992) would classify as manifest intertextuality of the most explicit kind. The speech presents Eisenhower's words as authoritative discourse—in Bakhtin's (1981) terminology, discourse that demands allegiance—and then immediately derives a new utterance from that authority. The word "complex" arrives in Biden's speech already saturated with Eisenhower's intentions, Cold War anxiety, and six decades of institutional critique. It is, precisely, "half someone else's."

The mechanism of authority transfer operates through structural iconicity: the formal parallelism between the source phrase and the coinage signals that the new threat bears the same structural relationship to democracy as the old one. Just as the military-industrial complex represented the dangerous fusion of governmental and corporate power in the defense sphere, the tech-industrial complex represents an analogous fusion in the digital domain. The neologism's effectiveness depends entirely on the listener's recognition of the source—a recognition that Biden's explicit quotation ensures. Meyerson (2025) identified a crucial structural difference between the two warnings: Eisenhower warned against the power of institutions, while Biden warned against the power of the super-rich who have arisen through decades of deregulation and globalization. This shift from institutional to personal power represents a transformation of the inherited frame, not merely its replication—consistent with Kristeva's (1980) formulation of intertextuality as absorption and transformation.

The "Oligarchy" Register Shift

Biden's use of "oligarchy" to describe domestic American conditions constituted what multiple commentators recognized as an extraordinary lexical choice. NPR correspondent Asma Khalid stated that she had previously heard Biden reference the word only in the context of corruption in Russia and Ukraine, making its domestic application a striking departure (NPR, 2025). The term "oligarchy" carries a semantic field overwhelmingly associated with post-Soviet political dysfunction—Russian plutocrats, Ukrainian power brokers, Central Asian authoritarian regimes. Biden's importation of this term into domestic discourse represents a deliberate register shift: the critical vocabulary of foreign-policy analysis is redeployed as a diagnostic tool for American conditions.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, this register shift exemplifies the "word with a sideward glance." The term "oligarchy" does not merely describe concentrated wealth; it simultaneously invokes the failures of post-Soviet democratization, implying that America risks following a similar trajectory. The word glances at Russia while ostensibly addressing America, creating what Bakhtin (1984) would recognize as an internally dialogized utterance—one that contains within itself the response it anticipates. When Biden says an "oligarchy is taking shape in America," the heteroglossic resonances of the word—its associations with Putin, with failed transitions, with democratic backsliding—perform rhetorical work that no synonym could replicate. The choice of "oligarchy" over alternatives such as "plutocracy" or "aristocracy of wealth" is itself an act of rhetorical positioning.

Wirls (2025) extended the intertextual chain, identifying Andrew Jackson's 1837 farewell address as another antecedent for Biden's oligarchy warning. Jackson had cautioned against concentrated financial power threatening democratic governance—a parallel that Biden's speechwriters may well have been conscious of. This multiple intertextual layering—Eisenhower for the compound neologism, Jackson for the oligarchy theme, Washington for the genre itself—produces what Fairclough (1992) would describe as a high degree of interdiscursivity, mixing the farewell genre, the prophetic register, populist economic critique, and foreign-policy analytical vocabulary within a single speech event.

The speech's treatment of artificial intelligence further reinforces the prophetic architecture. Biden characterized AI as "the most consequential technology of our time—perhaps of all time," offering "profound possibilities and risks for our economy and our security, our society, our very—for humanity" (Biden, 2025). The verbal stumble at "our very—" before landing on "for humanity" registers a moment of scalar escalation: Biden reached beyond the conventional political categories of economy, security, and society to invoke the existential frame of humanity itself. This echoes Eisenhower's own scalar progression, where the military-industrial complex's "total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—" extended the warning beyond material to metaphysical domains. Both speakers, at the climax of their warnings, breach the conventional categories of political discourse to invoke something larger—a rhetorical move characteristic of the prophetic register.

Metaphorical Architecture: Avalanche, Smothering, and the Statue

The speech deploys three interconnected metaphorical systems. The first is the governing frame of the Statue of Liberty as an allegory for American democracy—built to withstand storms, designed to sway without falling, moving forward atop a broken chain of bondage. This metaphor creates a ring composition (inclusio): the speech opens and closes with the Statue, framing the warning section within an arc of national resilience. The rhetorical effect is to contain the prophetic alarm within a structure of hope—democracy may bend, but it is engineered not to break.

The second metaphorical system addresses misinformation. Biden employed a double metaphor of overwhelming force and suffocation: Americans are being "buried under an avalanche of misinformation and disinformation," while "the truth is smothered by lies told for power and for profit" (Biden, 2025). The avalanche metaphor constructs misinformation as a kinetic, gravitational force—massive, sudden, and burying. The smothering metaphor shifts the register from natural disaster to deliberate violence—someone is smothering something. Together, they create a semantic field of asphyxiation: "buried," "crumbling," "disappearing," "smothered." The progression enacts an escalation from environmental catastrophe to intentional killing, culminating in the refrain "for power and for profit," which attributes agency and motive to the previously impersonal avalanche. This refrain appears twice in the speech, creating a rhythmic link between the misinformation crisis and the oligarchy theme.

The third metaphorical thread is historical: the invocation of "robber barons" and the Progressive Era as a precedent for the current moment. By framing contemporary tech oligarchs as analogues to Gilded Age industrialists, Biden situates his warning within a narrative of cyclical threat and democratic renewal—Americans "stood up to the robber barons back then and busted the trusts" (Biden, 2025). This historical metaphor performs the same function as the Eisenhower allusion: it imports the authority of a prior moment of democratic reckoning into the present crisis.

Genre and the Prophetic Register

Biden's farewell explicitly positions itself within the prophetic–admonitory tradition of presidential farewells. The speech's signal sentence—"In my farewell address tonight, I want to warn the country of some things that give me great concern" (Biden, 2025)—echoes Campbell and Jamieson's (2008) identification of the farewell's divestiture function: the departing president, freed from electoral consequences, speaks truth as a final act of democratic stewardship. This prophetic register is reinforced by the physical performance Fallows (2025) documented: mid-speech, Biden's body language shifted from valedictory to urgent, his hands moving from folded to gesturing directly at the camera with a pen—a somatic marker of the transition from retrospection to prophecy.

The genre positioning creates a three-term utterance chain: Washington (1796) warned against factions and foreign entanglements; Eisenhower (1961) warned against the military-industrial complex; Biden (2025) warns against the tech-industrial complex and oligarchy. Each farewell warning gains authority from the chain itself—each new entry retroactively validates the genre's significance. As Fallows (2025) observed, Eisenhower's speech received limited attention at the time but "steadily grown in attention and importance" in subsequent decades, suggesting Biden's address may follow a similar trajectory of delayed recognition. This is the Bakhtinian utterance chain made concrete: each farewell responds to its predecessors while anticipating its successors in the genre.

The Withdrawal Speech as Intertextual Prelude

Biden's farewell cannot be fully understood without reference to his July 24, 2024, Oval Office address announcing his withdrawal from the presidential race—the first such withdrawal by an incumbent since Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968. That speech opened with a quadruple historical allusion, naming Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt in rapid succession as portraits surrounding him in the Oval Office. Each allusion carried implicit commentary: Jefferson for democratic ideals, Washington for the principle that presidents are not kings, Lincoln for rejecting malice, Roosevelt for rejecting fear. Where the withdrawal speech mobilized the Founders through direct naming, the farewell mobilized Eisenhower through structural and lexical borrowing. Together, the two speeches form a paired set—a diptych of democratic legitimation, the first anchored in the revolutionary founding, the second in the Cold War reckoning with institutional power.

Discussion

The analysis reveals Biden's farewell address as a densely intertextual speech whose rhetorical power derives from what Bakhtin (1981) would recognize as its orientation toward prior utterances. The "tech-industrial complex" coinage is not merely a clever parallel—it is a dialogic act that appropriates Eisenhower's authoritative discourse, populates it with new intentions, and redirects it toward a contemporary threat. The explicit quotation of Eisenhower's exact words ensures that the source text's authority is not merely alluded to but staged and transferred.

The speech's effectiveness demonstrates a principle that dialogic theory illuminates but political communication scholarship has not fully explored: the rhetorical power of intertextual neologism. Unlike ordinary coinages, which must establish their authority through repetition and adoption, an intertextual neologism arrives pre-loaded with the accumulated cultural weight of its source. The compound "tech-industrial complex" does not need to prove its gravity—it inherits gravity from the sixty-four years of cultural resonance that Eisenhower's coinage has accumulated. As Ledbetter (2011) described the original as a "rhetorical Rorschach blot," Biden's derivative partakes of the same adaptive quality—its meaning expands to encompass whatever the listener perceives as threatening about concentrated technology power.

The "oligarchy" register shift operates through a different but complementary mechanism. Where the compound neologism borrows from a specific text, the register shift borrows from an entire discourse—the analytical vocabulary of post-Soviet political analysis. The word's heteroglossic resonances—its "taste" of Russia, Ukraine, and democratic failure—perform argumentative work that no denotative synonym could achieve. Risse (2025) rightly cautioned that "America is not Russia, and it would be misguided to make comparisons to Putin," but the rhetorical force of the term lies precisely in the frisson of the comparison: if the word "oligarchy" can be applied to America, then America's democratic exceptionalism is no longer assured.

The speech's prophetic architecture—its ring composition, its escalating metaphors of asphyxiation, its explicit genre self-positioning as a warning—reflects a sophisticated understanding of the farewell genre's conventions. Campbell and Jamieson's (2008) observation that the farewell occurs during an institutional "entr'acte" is enacted through Biden's liminal status: no longer electorally accountable, not yet historically irrelevant, he occupies the threshold position that the prophetic register requires. The Bakhtinian framework reveals something further: this is not merely a speech about power but a speech about language and power—about who has the authority to name and to warn, and about how that authority is constructed through strategic reappropriation of prior discourse.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. This analysis draws primarily on the written transcript and published commentary rather than a systematic audience-reception study. The speech's long-term cultural impact—whether it follows the trajectory of delayed recognition that Fallows (2025) predicted—remains to be determined. Additionally, the political context of the January 2025 transition inflects interpretation in ways that may shift as historical distance increases. Future research might employ corpus-linguistic methods to track the adoption of "tech-industrial complex" in public discourse, or conduct comparative analyses of Biden's farewell with other presidential farewells using computational stylistic tools.

A further dimension worth exploring in future scholarship is the speech's reception across ideological lines. The Biden farewell provoked sharply polarized responses: CNN's David Axelrod called it perhaps one of the best speeches he had ever heard Biden deliver, while conservative commentators questioned the credibility of the oligarchy warning from a politician who had spent decades working closely with corporate interests. This polarization itself illuminates Bakhtin's (1981) insight that words are always already populated with competing intentions. The phrase "tech-industrial complex" enters a discursive field where different audiences bring radically different evaluative accents to the same lexical material—for some, it names a genuine structural threat; for others, it is a hypocritical appropriation of Eisenhower's credibility by a politician who lacks comparable authority. The dialogic nature of the coinage ensures that it cannot control its own reception; it is, as Bakhtin would predict, subject to the responsive understanding of its audience.

The question of Biden's credibility as a speaker of these words raises a broader theoretical point about the relationship between ethos and intertextuality. Eisenhower's military-industrial complex warning derived much of its force from the speaker's identity: a five-star general and Supreme Allied Commander warning against military power carried unique rhetorical authority precisely because the warning came from within the institution being criticized. Biden's warning against oligarchy and tech power does not enjoy the same insider credibility. However, the intertextual strategy compensates for this asymmetry: by explicitly invoking Eisenhower's authority, Biden borrows not only his words but his ethos. The quotation functions as a surrogate credential—if Eisenhower warned against misplaced power, and Biden extends the same structural analysis to a new domain, then the authority of the analysis transfers even if the speaker's biography differs. This is a sophisticated rhetorical maneuver that dialogic theory helps to explain: the borrowed voice supplements the speaker's own authority with the accumulated cultural capital of the source.

Conclusion

Biden's 2025 farewell address represents a paradigmatic case of dialogic political rhetoric—a speech constructed through systematic intertextual borrowing from what is arguably the most consequential presidential farewell in American history. Through the lens of Bakhtinian dialogism, the speech reveals itself as a complex act of discursive appropriation: Biden takes Eisenhower's authoritative discourse, repopulates it with new intentions, and deploys it against a new configuration of power. The "tech-industrial complex" coinage functions as an intertextual neologism that inherits rhetorical authority through structural parallelism. The "oligarchy" register shift imports the critical vocabulary of foreign-policy analysis into domestic discourse, creating a heteroglossic utterance whose meaning depends on the prior contexts the word has inhabited.

The analysis demonstrates that political neologism is not merely a matter of lexical invention but of dialogic positioning within an utterance chain. Biden's farewell positions itself as the third major entry in a genre lineage—after Washington and Eisenhower—that defines the presidential farewell as prophetic warning. Whether this positioning succeeds—whether Biden's speech enters the cultural memory as Washington's and Eisenhower's have—depends on the same historical contingencies that shaped its predecessors' receptions. Eisenhower's warning was largely ignored at the time and gained resonance only through the Vietnam War. Biden's warning, addressed to the age of artificial intelligence and technology monopolies, awaits its own moment of validation or obsolescence. As Bakhtin (1986) insisted, every utterance is a link in a chain that extends both backward and forward: Biden's farewell speaks not only to Eisenhower's past but to a future it cannot yet know.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval: The study involved human participants (questionnaire respondents). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, translation of the corpus, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (V. W. McGee, Trans.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Eds.). University of Texas Press.

Biden, J. R. (2025, January 15). Remarks by President Biden in a farewell address to the nation [Transcript]. The White House. https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2025/01/15/remarks-by-president-biden-in-a-farewell-address-to-the-nation/

Campbell, K. K., & Jamieson, K. H. (1990). *Deeds done in words: Presidential rhetoric and the genres of governance*. University of Chicago Press.

Campbell, K. K., & Jamieson, K. H. (2008). *Presidents creating the presidency: Deeds done in words*. University of Chicago Press.

Davis, A. Y. (2003). *Are prisons obsolete?* Seven Stories Press.

Eisenhower, D. D. (1961, January 17). Farewell address to the nation [Transcript]. The Avalon Project, Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eisenhower001.asp

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.

Fallows, J. (2025, January 16). The speech Joe Biden is likely to be remembered for. *Breaking the News*. https://fallows.substack.com/p/the-speech-joe-biden-is-likely-to

Gilbert, F. (1961). *To the farewell address: Ideas of early American foreign policy*. Princeton University Press.

Holquist, M. (1990). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world*. Routledge.

Kristeva, J. (1980). Word, dialogue and novel. In L. S. Roudiez (Ed.), *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art* (T. Gora, A. Jardine, & L. S. Roudiez, Trans., pp. 64–91). Columbia University Press.

Ledbetter, J. (2011). *Unwarranted influence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the military-industrial complex*. Yale University Press.

Medhurst, M. J. (1994). Reconceptualizing rhetorical history: Eisenhower's farewell address. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 80*(2), 195–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639409384067

Meyerson, H. (2025, January 20). Joe Biden's cautionary farewell. *The American Prospect*. https://prospect.org/politics/2025-01-20-joe-bidens-cautionary-farewell/

Milford, M. (2023). The biggest losers: Legacy, exigence, and apologia in presidential farewell addresses. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12839

Miller, C. R. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 70*(2), 151–167.

NPR. (2025, January 16). After more than 50 years in politics, Biden bids farewell in an Oval Office address. https://www.npr.org/2025/01/16/nx-s1-5260961/

Relman, A. S. (1980). The new medical-industrial complex. *New England Journal of Medicine, 303*, 963–970.

Risse, M. (2025, February 10). The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power: A tale of two presidential farewells and a recent inauguration. Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights, Harvard Kennedy School. https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr-ryan/

Schlosser, E. (1998, December). The prison-industrial complex. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 51–77.

Stuckey, M. E. (1991). *The president as interpreter-in-chief*. Chatham House.

Wirls, D. (2025, January). Warning of "oligarchy," Biden channels Andrew Jackson. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/warning-of-oligarchy-biden-channels-andrew-jackson-247681

Received: 03.15.2026
Revised: 03.15.2026
Accepted: 04.02.2026
Published: 04.04.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Semantic Features of Azerbaijani Proverbs Containing the Word "Mountain"

[1] **Sadagat Hasanova**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002004

Abstract

This study investigates the semantic features of Azerbaijani proverbs containing the word "mountain." The primary objective is to identify the meanings, functions, and cultural values conveyed by the "mountain" metaphor within these proverbs. The research is oriented toward understanding the multi-layered semantic structures of proverbs from both linguistic and cultural perspectives. Within the scope of the study, phraseological units and instances of metaphorical extension were analyzed, revealing both literal and figurative meanings of the term "mountain." The semantic analysis demonstrates that in Azerbaijani proverbs, the concept of "mountain" is associated with notions of stability, strength, patience, and challenge. The contextual usage of various examples is explicated through qualitative semantic and phraseological analysis. This study provides an academic approach to examining the semantic and metaphorical richness of proverbs and highlights the role of natural elements in folk language, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complex linguistic and cultural structures embedded in proverbs.

Keywords: *mountain, proverb, semantics, metaphor, phraseology, Azerbaijani language*

1. Introduction

Proverbs constitute a central component of folk cognition, cultural values, and the semantic system of language. They are concise yet semantically rich expressions that reflect intergenerational experience and the logic of life (Mieder, 2004). In Azerbaijani, numerous proverbs are associated with natural elements such as mountains, rivers, wind, and fire, which play a crucial role in constructing intra-linguistic metaphorical structures (Gasparov, 2016). The primary aim of this study is to analyze the semantic features of Azerbaijani proverbs containing the word "mountain."

Natural elements occupy a prominent position in the proverb traditions of many cultures, serving as vehicles for conveying ethical, social, and philosophical values. Among these elements, the mountain holds a particularly significant place in the Azerbaijani folk imagination, functioning

[1] Hasanova, S. Doctor of Philology, Professor, Nakhchivan State University, Azerbaijan. Email: sedaqethesenova@ndu.edu.az. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9996-6229

as both a geographical reality and a richly layered symbol. The present study examines how this symbolic potential is exploited within the semantic structures of proverbs, drawing on methods from cognitive semantics, phraseology, and cultural linguistics.

2. Methodology

The present study is grounded in a qualitative semantic analysis approach. Proverbs containing the word "mountain" were systematically selected and categorized from primary collections of Azerbaijani proverbs. Semantic analysis methods were employed to distinguish between literal and metaphorical meanings and to identify semantic components such as stability, strength, patience, challenge, and grandeur. In the phraseological analysis, the metaphorical functions of the word "mountain" within the proverbs were examined, and an analytical approach was adopted to investigate semantic domains in social, psychological, and ethical contexts. This methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of the multi-layered semantic and metaphorical structures of Azerbaijani proverbs.

3. Results

The principal findings of the study can be summarized as follows. First, the mountain, as a physical object, is perceived as stable, strong, and elevated; metaphorically, these attributes are applied to human character and life experiences. Second, proverbs containing the word "mountain" encompass semantic domains such as stability and strength, patience and endurance, challenges and obstacles, as well as ethical values and dignity. Third, these proverbs serve both cultural and communicative functions by reflecting social relationships, mutual respect, and life experience. Within Azerbaijani culture, the "mountain" metaphor symbolizes power, protection, and grandeur.

3.1. Semantic Structures and Metaphors

According to semantic analysis, a metaphor creates new layers of meaning by transferring one conceptual domain to another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The term "mountain" is perceived as a high, strong, and stable physical entity. In proverbs, these physical characteristics are metaphorically associated with human behavior, ethical values, and psychological traits. For example:

> ***Dağ dağa qovuşmaz, insan insana qovuşar*** — *A mountain does not meet another mountain; a person meets another person*
>
> ***Dağlar başına qış, igid başına iş*** — *For a mountain, winter comes; for a brave man, work comes* (Məlikova, 2016, p. 17)

Here, the stability and resilience of the mountain are metaphorically linked to reciprocity in social relations (Vázquez, 2010). A further selection of illustrative proverbs demonstrates the range of metaphorical functions at play:

Dağ çiçəyindən ilan zəhər çəkər, arı bal — *Even from the flower of a mountain, snakes draw venom; bees draw honey* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 113)

Dağ da olsan dağa daldalan — *Even if you are a mountain, you lean against another mountain* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 113)

Dağ dağa arxadı — *A mountain relies on another mountain*

Dağ nə qədər uca olsa, üstündən yol aşar — *No matter how high a mountain is, a path can be made over it* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 114)

Dağ dağa qovuşmaz, insan insana rast gələr — *A mountain does not meet another mountain; people encounter one another* (Məlikova, 2016, p. 17)

In these proverbs, the endurance of the mountain is likened to human patience. This type of metaphorical extension is classified in traditional semantic models as "semantic extension" (Traugott & Dasher, 2002). Proverbs containing the word "mountain" penetrate abstract domains such as human behavior, ethical values, and social relations through the metaphorical expansion of the physical object. This semantic extension is further reinforced by phraseological units and reflects the cultural semantic memory of the Azerbaijani language.

3.2. Functions of Semantic Domains

Concrete and Abstract Semantics. In proverbs, "mountain" is initially understood as a geographical object, but subsequently reveals abstract layers of meaning:

Dağdan gələn dağa gedər — *What comes from a mountain goes to a mountain*

Dağı daş bəzəyər, insanı baş — *A mountain is adorned with stones; a human with a head (wisdom)* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 114)

Dağın vüqarı, əlin qabarı — *The mountain's dignity, the hand's prominence* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 115)

In proverbs, mountains are recognized as symbols of stability and strength. Perceived as immutable, they are sometimes associated with human character (Heine, 1997). In Azerbaijani literary language, mountains have historically symbolized grandeur and dignity:

Dağ dediyin ucalıqdı, ucalıq — *A mountain, as you call it, is height itself* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 114)

In literary discourse, mountains are often employed to signify challenges and obstacles, referring to the difficulties inherent in overcoming them (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). In Azerbaijani, mountains occupy elevated positions in nature and symbolically reflect human intellect and values.

Social Relations. In proverbs, the mountain serves as a symbol to promote positive social behaviors such as mutual respect and cooperation:

***Dağ dağa qovuşmaz, insan insana rast gələr** — A mountain does not meet another mountain; people encounter one another* (Məlikova, 2016, p. 17)

***Qaya dağa arxalanar** — A rock relies on a mountain* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 276)

These features align with the theoretical semantic function of proverbs (Radden & Kövecses, 1999). Spiritually, the mountain symbolizes power, protection, and grandeur in Azerbaijani culture, reflecting the folk worldview and ethical values.

3.3. Phraseological Context and Semantic Units

In proverbs, the word "mountain" is not only a nominal element but is also enriched with metaphorical meaning within phraseological fragments. Phraseology constitutes the semantic memory of a language and encompasses cultural experience (Makkai, 1972):

***Dağ nə qədər uca olsa, üstündən yol aşar** — No matter how high a mountain is, a path can be made over it* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 114)

***Dağ quşu dağa yaraşar, bağ quşu bağa!** — A mountain bird suits a mountain; a garden bird suits a garden!* (Atalar sözü, 2004, p. 79)

These expressions convey metaphorical cautionary functions. Such units are classified in the semantic system as conceptual metaphors (Kövecses, 2002).

3.4. Semantic Depth and Culture

The relationship between language and culture is reciprocal. The semantic structures of a culture reflect its worldview (Whorf, 1956). The Azerbaijani people's perception of mountains embodies values such as grandeur, protection, and stability, which are reflected in the semantic layers of proverbs and transmitted from generation to generation through language. Research on mountain metaphors in Turkic languages indicates that this metaphor is widely semantically disseminated (Özsoy & Er, 2014). The following examples from Azerbaijani proverbs further illustrate these cultural-semantic dimensions:

***Dağı külək yeyər, insanı böhtan** — The wind erodes a mountain; slander harms a person*

***Dağlar yalan götürməz** — Mountains do not tolerate lies*

***Dağ səfasız olmaz, gözəl vəfasız** — A mountain is never barren; beauty is never unfaithful*

***Dağ suları dağdan gələr** — Mountain waters flow from the mountain*

***Dağ üstə maral gəzər** — A stag roams atop a mountain* (Atalar sözü, 2013, p. 114)

These examples help understand the semantic structure of Azerbaijani proverbs in a broader cultural context, showing that proverbs containing the word "mountain" possess multi-layered semantic structures and convey both concrete and abstract, as well as social and cultural meanings.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that proverbs containing the word "dağ" (mountain) cannot be evaluated solely as folklore or linguistic elements; they are also structural units of the people's cognitive culture and worldview. The word "dağ" functions both as a concrete geographical object and as a metaphorical symbol, serving various communicative purposes. Semantic analyses indicate that these proverbs are reliable instruments reflecting the people's life experience, cultural values, and social relations. This observation demonstrates the linguistic richness, morphological flexibility, semantic depth, and phraseological expressiveness of the Azerbaijani language.

The "mountain" metaphor in proverbs performs several semantic functions. Lemghari's (2017, p. 58) study emphasizes that the metaphorical structures of these expressions motivate the polysemy of proverbs: "The lexical polysemy of proverbs is motivated by given conceptual metaphors... which give rise to a range of lexical meanings." From this standpoint, the "dağ" metaphor conveys both the meaning of a physical object and socio-psychological significance in proverbs. This approach is corroborated by other research, which highlights that metaphors occupy a central role in the rich semantic structure of proverbs (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010), facilitating the explanation of the "dağ" metaphor across multiple semantic layers, including concrete, abstract, cultural, and social dimensions.

The word "dağ" in proverbs also expresses cultural values. Research by Issa and Ali (2025, p. 70) notes that proverbs reflect the values and worldview of respective speech communities through conceptual metaphors: "Conceptual metaphors found in proverbs reflect the values and worldview of the respective speech communities." This observation illustrates how the "dağ" metaphor plays a critical role in expressing values such as stability, strength, and endurance in Azerbaijani culture, thereby engaging with cultural memory.

Structural analysis of proverb semantics allows the systematic demonstration of meaning and function, including cultural and psychological aspects. Jgharkava (2024, p. 5) asserts that understanding the meaning of proverbs cannot rely on surface-level interpretation alone; semantic interpretation must consider structure along with context: "To fully understand the content of the proverb, it is necessary to refer to the situation of using the proverb... which allows us to identify structurally changed and semantically reinterpreted proverbs." This source demonstrates that the semantic character of proverbs is context-dependent, and the meaning of the "dağ" (mountain) metaphor may vary according to specific discourse.

5. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that proverbs containing the word "dağ" (mountain) possess both moral and communicative significance in the Azerbaijani language. This research provides deeper insights into the semantic function and cultural context of natural elements in folk language, highlighting the role of language in cultural memory through the analysis of phraseological and metaphorical structures. The mountain, as both a physical and symbolic entity, encodes a constellation of cultural values—stability, strength, patience, dignity, and social solidarity—that are transmitted across generations through the proverbial tradition.

Several directions emerge from the present findings. Future research could integrate quantitative approaches, enabling frequency analysis and statistical description of the use of the "dağ" metaphor, thereby increasing the empirical contribution of the study. A comparative examination of the "dağ" metaphor in Azerbaijani proverbs alongside analogous metaphors in other Turkic languages and world proverb traditions would illuminate both universal and culture-specific aspects of this metaphorical concept. Furthermore, detailed investigation of the pragmatic and communicative functions of these proverbs within specific contexts could provide deeper insights into their semantic and functional dimensions. The results of the present study could also be applied in Azerbaijani language instruction, folklore research, and cultural studies, thereby extending their practical and educational significance.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval: The study involved human participants (questionnaire respondents). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, translation of the corpus, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Atalar sözü. (2004). Bakı: Onder.

Atalar sözləri. (2013). Bakı: Nurlan.

Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities. Basic Books.

Gasparov, B. (2016). Traditional proverbs in Eurasian languages. Cambridge University Press.

Heine, B. (1997). Cognitive foundations of grammar. Oxford University Press.

Issa, M., & Ali, S. S. (2025). Conceptual metaphors in proverbs: Conduits of cultural values and beliefs. Journal of Language and Pragmatics Studies, 4(2), 69–79. https://doi.org/10.58881/jlps.v4i2.114

Jgharkava, G. (2024). The implicit meaning of a proverb and the main issues of semantic interpretations. TSU TI — The International Scientific Journal of Humanities. https://doi.org/10.55804/TSU-ti-2/Jgharkav

Kövecses, Z. (2002). Metaphor: A practical introduction. Oxford University Press.

Kövecses, Z. (2010). Metaphor: A practical introduction (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors we live by. University of Chicago Press.

Lemghari, E. M. (2017). Conceptual metaphors as motivation for proverbs lexical polysemy. International Journal of Language and Linguistics, 5(3), 57–70. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20170503.11

Makkai, A. (1972). Idioms: A view from cognitive semantics. The Hague: Mouton.

Məlikova, İ. (2016). Azərbaycanda yaşayan xalqların atalar sözləri və deyimləri. Bakı: Ecoprint.

Mieder, W. (2004). Proverbs: A handbook. Greenwood Press.

Özsoy, S., & Er, E. (2014). Turkish proverbs and their metaphoric use. Journal of Comparative Linguistics, 38(2), 112–130.

Radden, G., & Kövecses, Z. (1999). Towards a theory of metonymy. John Benjamins.

Traugott, E. C., & Dasher, R. B. (2002). Regularity in semantic change. Cambridge University Press.

Vázquez, R. (2010). Semantic patterns in proverbs. International Journal of Language Studies, 4(1), 57–74.

Whorf, B. L. (1956). Language, thought, and reality. MIT Press.

Received: 01.15.2026
Revised: 02.15.2026
Accepted: 04.02.2026
Published: 04.07.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

A Rhyme-Driven Approach to Poetry Translation: Arabic Renderings of Shakespeare's Sonnet 146

[1] **Sallaheddine Tahiri**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002006

Abstract

Poetry translation demonstrates a significant obstacle, which lies in seeking a balance between aesthetic elements such as rhyme and rhythm and thematic and linguistic fidelity. This study examines the impact of a rhyme-driven translation approach on achieving textual fluency, taking Arabic translations of Shakespearean poetry as a case study. The research combines qualitative textual analysis with quantitative empirical data in order to examine how rhyme preservation influences translation choices, employing a mixed-method approach. Findings reveal that prioritising rhyme while integrating domestication, literalism, adaptation, covert and overt translation, and foreignisation results in a natural and fluent target text, depending on the translator's literary and linguistic capabilities. Empirical results further confirm this fluency, as 68.41% of participants expressed that they perceived the translation as an original Arabic poem. These insights contribute to the literature on poetry translation strategies, demonstrating that a hybrid translation approach can effectively preserve both the aesthetic and structural integrity of the original.

Keywords: *translation studies, poetry translation, rhyme-driven approach in poetry translation, Shakespearean poetry in Arabic, aesthetic translation of poetry to Arabic, translation of Shakespearean sonnets*

1. Introduction

Translating poetry is a popular practice that features numerous impediments. Translators tend to use elucidations and prose translations to convey the meaning behind each poetic stanza. This hinders the connection between readers who are eager to know the meaning behind foreign poems in their own native languages. Poetry translation is not only intriguing to those who do not speak the poem's original language but also to those who speak it as well, as one would be interested to read the same content in different languages and see how the same thing may be expressed in varied manners. Considering the linguistic parameters that change from one language

[1] Tahiri, S. King Fahd School of Translation, Tangier, Morocco. Email: sallaheddine.tahiri@etu.uae.ac.ma. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6485-0011

to another, people would reckon that poetry cannot be translated, at least while keeping the poetic aesthetic features.

Verily, poetry can be translated while keeping certain aesthetic features. Yet, it is controversial whether this maintains the same content as the original poem or modifies its content and makes it an independent work only similar to the original one. Other perspectives are sparked, tackling the relatedness between the source language and the target language and how it impacts the process of translation. It is also paramount to identify salient elements of a poem and which of them are central to conveying the same effect to the target readers.

This study tackles a case study of Shakespeare's Sonnet for various considerations. Arabic is a broad language that is supposed to be able to express different shades of meaning in literary forms. The sonnet is a poem rich with feelings, figures of speech, and aesthetic devices, which is expected to enrich the current literature and treat various literary and poetic possibilities through a limited corpus.

The study investigates whether it is possible to translate poetry in such a way that literalism, foreignisation, and domestication can all be combined in a harmonious concoction. Initially, the research follows the same rhyme scheme of the original poem while translating it, undergoing the necessary modifications to produce an aesthetic poem-like target text. Alongside this, literal fidelity is questioned in terms of its occurrence, given the translator's aim to maintain the poetic aesthetics. The research problem can be formulated in the following question: Can a rhyme-driven, literal yet aesthetically nuanced translation approach produce both a text that is faithful to the source and naturally fluent for the target audience?

This paper hypothesises that poetry can be translated in a way that preserves both the rhyme and the literal meaning of the original poem without distorting the author's intended ideas or excessively foreignising the poem. Accordingly, the research is pillared on the following objectives:

- To assess whether maintaining the original poem's rhyme pattern can be integrated effectively with literal translation without compromising the author's intent.
- To explore how the use of domestication and foreignisation can be harmoniously fused in the translation process.
- To gather and analyse empirical data (e.g., reader perceptions) to determine if a rhyme-driven approach results in a fluent target text that is perceived as original.
- To understand how aesthetic elements such as rhyme influence thematic modification and overall translation quality, while still maintaining literal accuracy.

Correspondingly, the research aims to answer the following questions:

- To what extent can the original rhyme scheme of a poem be preserved through a literal translation approach without altering the author's core ideas?
- How does the translation balance domestication with foreignisation, particularly under a rhyme-driven strategy?
- How do readers perceive the fluency and originality of the translated poem, especially in light of its aesthetic modifications?
- What role do aesthetic elements (e.g., rhyme, rhythm) play in modifying the theme and structure of the poem during translation?

2. Literature Review

The wide array of poetry's parameters made it subject to an everlasting discussion, particularly in terms of how it should be translated and whether or not it can be. To approach the studies and theories tackling the translation of poems, it is indispensable to consider literary translation as the founding cornerstone. The theorisation for the principal types of translation may be traced to the elucidations of Dryden (1680), who coined three types of translation: metaphrase (word-for-word), paraphrase (meaning-based), and imitation (producing a new work in the target language).

In his book The Task of the Translator, Benjamin (1923) sought a more unified approach, identifying what he called "the spirit of the text" — the core reason for which the writer wrote his own text. Nida (1964) engaged in a more scientific framework, highlighting the equivalent and the equivalent effect, and proceeding with different types of equivalents. Such was the map of Holmes (1972), which was generalised for literary works as well through a scientific scheme. These studies were mostly the ones on which later views and analyses on poetic translation were based.

2.1. The (Im)Possibility of Translating Poetry

Poetry is often superficially envisioned as an untranslatable element for a wide range of linguists. Jacobson (1959) states that "Poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible." He envisioned the correlation between metres in poems and the meaning of poems as impossible. Benjamin (1923) similarly noted that poetry translation is a flawed process, as the interplay between its elements seems to produce a mismatch in the final product.

Nonetheless, the aforesaid may be a mere restricted view. Nida (1964) impugns the advocates of the impossibility of translating poetry, pointing out that the translator in every type of translation should seek the equivalent effect. Lefevere (1975) stipulates seven strategies for translating poetry: phonemic translation, word-for-word translation, metrical translation, prose translation, blank/free verse translation, imitation, and rhymed translation. The present study follows the last of these — rhymed translation — which is dedicated to producing rhymes imitating the poem in the source language.

Among the studies that confirmed the feasibility of Lefevere's (1975) strategies is the one led by Chongyue et al. (2010), integrating his strategies with Chinese translation methods of metrical English poetry. Masoudzade and Rad (2023) used Lefevere's (1975) seven strategies as a theoretical framework to assess English translations of poems written by the Persian poet Sohrab Sepeheri.

2.2. The Visibility of the Translator

The footprint of the translator throughout the target text is a paramount point of discussion. Berman (1985), in The Ethics of Translation, envisions the visibility of the translator as a salient feature in any translation, relating this to the act of foreignising the text — leaving intentional marks that usher the reader to the source culture in what he calls "l'épreuve de l'étranger" (the trial of the foreign). Venuti (1995) points out that Anglophone cultures practise a kind of hegemony, directing translators to domesticate the texts translated into English, and argues that a translator's liberty is to be marked through a proper process of foreignisation.

Nonetheless, the defenders of Skopos Theory tend to back domestication. The translator's role will always show up, provided the efforts put into establishing a connection between the source culture and the target culture (Nord, 1997). Pym (2012) criticises Venuti's stand for foreignisation, highlighting the fact that the translator in domestication is more conspicuous through her/his choices and decisiveness.

2.3. Translating the Sonnets

Shakespeare's sonnets were not only of great importance to literary scholars but also to translators and translation studies scholars. Eanani (2016) emphasised the barriers that border the translation of the sonnets to Arabic and assessed their previous Arabic translations. Abdulwahhab Ismail (2023) conducted a corpus study comparing the translation of the sonnets into French and Arabic, realising that foreignisation was followed throughout the French translation while domestication was the dominant approach with the Arabic translations. Cottegnies (2023) elaborated on the social ground of the Sonnets' translation in France and its literary tradition.

However, there is still a gap in providing and assessing Arabic translations for the sonnets that could be a cornerstone for translating other poems. Rhymed translation is a prominent strategy that has not received its due in the Arab context. Such translation can encourage Arabic speakers to read foreign poetry by giving a sense as if they are reading an Arabic literary extract.

3. Methodology

The researcher opted for a mixed-method approach to match the requirements of the study. The research merges qualitative and quantitative approaches to test the textual level and its relation to reality through concrete numbers representing a population's perception of the corpus under study. Baker (1993) emphasises the importance of using a mixed method in dealing with corpus-based studies, as this opens the gate for unveiling cultural and social patterns. This leads to crystallising the functional perspectives of translation, given that the function of a particular corpus is only known through the social framework to which it is directed (House, 2015).

3.1. Sampling

This study incorporates samples from both a corpus and a population. The corpus study includes Shakespeare's Sonnet 146, "My Sinful Earth," which was translated by the researcher into Arabic. The sonnet was chosen because of the rich vocabulary and the connotative and denotative prospects it holds, as well as its diversity in terms of semantic structure, which makes its analysis easier to generalise to other corpora.

As for the sampled population, master's and PhD students and professors at King Fahd School of Translation were selected, totalling 41 participants all specialised in a linguistic combination involving English and Arabic. They were selected to test the visibility of the translator and the extent to which the poem, with all the applied approaches of translation, seems natural.

3.2. Data Collection and Instruments

The study constructs a harmonious mixture between corpus and population data collection. The researcher collected data from the corpus (Shakespeare's Sonnet 146) in a scheme aligned with the theoretical framework. For the population, questionnaires were read orally to participants after the poem had been read to them. The questionnaire contained one primary question — whether the Arabic poem is a translation or an original text. Should the participant answer that it is an original text, no further questions were asked. If identified as a translation, they were asked how they deduced that, and to guess the source poem. Some questionnaires were also distributed online via Google Forms.

3.3. Data Analysis and Theoretical Framework

The qualitative data analysis is based on the theoretical framework of Lefevere's (1975) seven strategies for translating poetry. This theoretical approach leads to the analysis of the poem's translation, with all extractions based on deducing the cases where his strategies were most prominent. The researcher's translation was mainly based on Lefevere's (1975) strategy of Rhymed Translation.

Another analysis model addresses cultural considerations through foreignisation and domestication by Venuti (1995). Adapting the poem to the cultural and aesthetic Arabic norms, the researcher shifted from the English cultural stance to the Arabic one, for the sake of clarity and the invisibility of the translation process. The data resulting from the main survey question measures the extent to which the application of Lefevere's (1975) strategies could enhance the poem's sense of originality, fluency, and clarity.

4. Findings and Results

In this section, data is accumulated and analysed for the sake of verifying whether Lefevere's (1975) strategies, namely "rhymed translation," may transfer the poetic essence. Textual analysis serves as the introductory step to dig deep into the textual and aesthetic features in the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). To enhance objectivity, there follows a quantitative analysis with a practical test.

4.1. Textual Analysis

The analysis is divided in accordance with the common rhyme — that is, verses with a mutual rhyme in the ST are sectioned and fronted by their equivalents in the TT. Rhymes in both the TT and the ST are highlighted. Features that are compared across different verses are presented following their essential perspective.

Lines 1–4

ST (English)	TT (Arabic)
1 Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth	مسكينة أنت يا روح، يا من تَكْتَنِهين أرضي الآثمة
2 these rebel powers that thee array	تلك القوة العصية التي تَكْتَنِفِين
3 Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth	فمالك كنت فيها تُسْتَصْغَرين، متألمة
4 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?	ومالك تبذلين وتبذلين لقاء جدران زائلة تحبكين؟

These lines encapsulate different features conforming to the strategies of Lefevere (1975). The rhymes are rendered in the TT, following the same order as in the ST. In the latter, lines 1 and 3 had /ɜːθ/ as a rhyme, rendered as /مه/ in the TT. For lines 2 and 4, the rhyme was /eɪ/, rendered as /ين/ in Arabic. The rhyme choice of the original author was thus preserved.

The rhyme had effects on rendering the meaning in the TT, yet literalism was still relied on. A comparison of line 1 in English to its counterpart in Arabic reveals a high degree of literalism, except for the translation of "centre" to "تكتنهين," which entailed a transposition from a noun to a verb. Semantic compensation is also pivotal: "تحبكين" encompasses the denotation of both "painting" and "gay," as the Arabic term means to do, make, build, or sew something in a beautiful, showy way.

Lines 5–8

ST (English)	TT (Arabic)
5 Why so large cost, having so short a lease,	مقام لك فيها قصير بحمل ألف من البعير،
6 Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?	ألقاء ذاك النزل المهترئ تنفقين؟
7 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,	فللديدان إذن حاصل هذا المسير؛
8 Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?	أهِيَ إذن لوديعتك من الآكلين؟ أهذه عاقبة الجسد الذي تملكين؟

No different from the previous lines, the ones above followed the same pattern as the ST in terms of rhymes. One may be captivated by the slant rhyme (/i:s/ and /es/) rendered in Arabic as a complete rhyme /ير/ and /ير/. The sixth and eighth lines present a perfect rhyme /end/, rendered through the pronoun /ين/. There was also an internal rhyme, /t/ in "cost" and "short," compensated for through /ير/ in /قصير/. In the fifth line, "costly" was rendered into "بحمل ألف من البعير," which denotes in an Arabic literary register something extremely costly — an instance of domestication adopted both to produce a rhyme and to compensate for collocative aesthetics.

Lines 9–12

ST (English)	TT (Arabic)
9 Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss	فلك إذن أن على أشلاء خادمك تقتاتين، يا روحُ،
10 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;	مَنونُه لك مغنم، فكوني من الغانمين
11 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;	واشري سويعات لَهْوٍ لِقاء خُلدٍ لا يروحُ
12 Within be fed, without be rich no more:	قُوتٌ لك في جوفه، وفاقة إن أنت له تهجرين:

Unchangeably, the rhyme in the TT imitates the one in the ST. The first rhyme was /ɒs/ in the ninth and eleventh lines, produced as /روحو/ in the TT. The rhyme /ɔ:(r)/ in lines 10 and 12 appeared in Arabic as /ين/. The rhyme entailed numerous alterations to the TT. In line 9, "loss" was rendered as "أشلاء," a directed interpretation that changed the semantic charge while preserving what the researcher deemed most paramount. Stanza 10 presents a special case of translation based on complete interpretation: "aggravate" in Middle English meant to make greater, encapsulated in

"مغنم," while "let" was rendered as "فكوني," introducing lexical parallelism between "مغنم" and "غانمين." Accordingly, domestication was purely employed throughout this stanza.

Lines 13–14

ST (English)	**TT (Arabic)**
13 So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men	*ءِفالمنية لك قُوت وقُوتها بنو بشرِ*
14 And Death once dead, there's no more dying then	*وإذا المنية زُهِقَت، فلا مَزْهُوقَ بعدُ لِنُوارِي*

In these two lines, Shakespeare used the same rhyme consecutively, and so was the pattern in the TT. The rhyme was /en/ in the ST, rendered as /ري/ in the TT. To make the text short enough for the rhyme to be related to the one under it, "shall" was not reproduced explicitly, causing a transposition from a verbal form in the ST to a nominal form in the TT. The second line starts with a literal translation in the first clause, in contrast to the second clause, which was based on a cultural equivalent.

4.2. Coherence throughout the TT

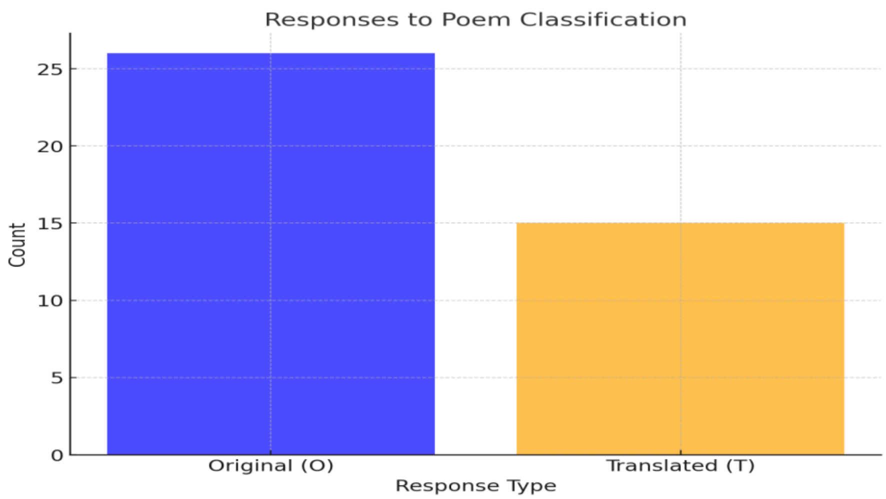
The text consisted of a different cohesive structure, yet in the end, this did not produce a different structure in terms of coherence. Cohesive devices throughout the lines were mainly organised following the pattern of rhymes throughout the poem. Fronting was used even when unemployed in the TT, and was at times not rendered in the TT, though it was in the ST. This can be labelled a poetry translation rhyme-driven approach. As for literalism, it was frequently used so that there could be no deviation from the coherence-based pattern throughout the TT.

4.3. Empirical Analysis

This analysis is a complementary study to the previous corpus-based one, cementing its practical implications. It analyses the responses of a research population completely specialised in different degrees of translation between Arabic and English, based principally on the coherence shown to be found in the TT by the corpus study.

The Visibility of the Translator

Figure 1

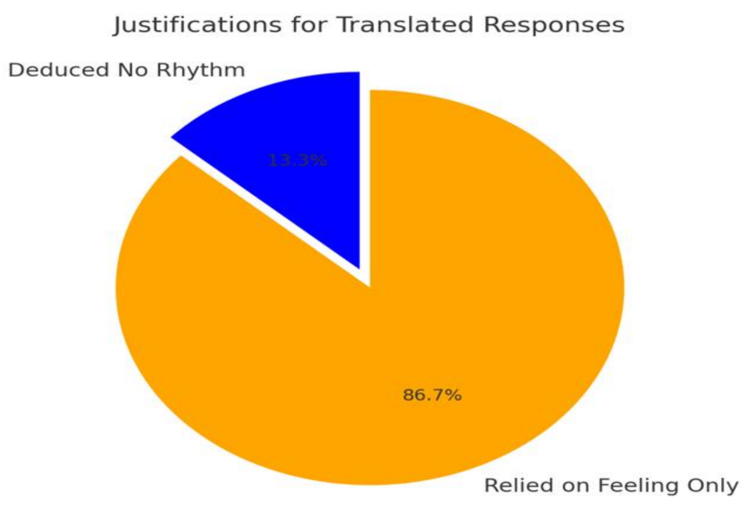


Responses to whether the Text Seems Original or a Translation

The data in Figure 1 indicate, on the one hand, that the majority answered that the text was an original poem written in Arabic. On the other hand, almost half the population expressed that the text was a translation. Mainly, 26 people out of 41 said they felt the text was linguistically natural and responded that the text is original, while 15 said that the text was translated for different reasons. In terms of the visibility of the translator, the data depict that most participants saw no mark of the translator.

Indications of Translation in the TT

Figure 2

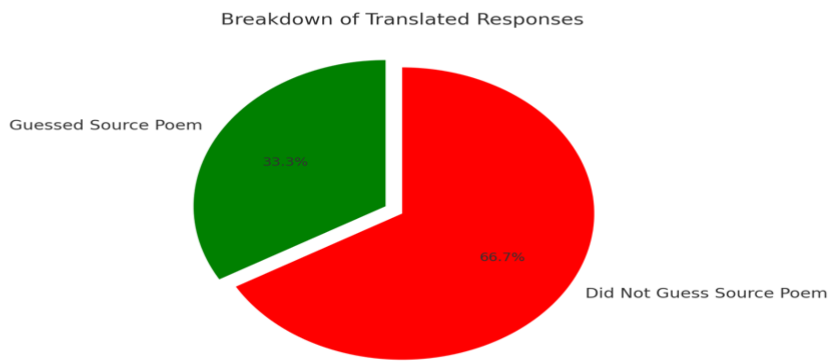


Justifications for Responding that the Text Was a Translation

The interviewees who answered that the text was a translation were asked for the reason. The majority answered that they only had a feeling and could not elucidate further. A very small population (13.3%) answered that they deduced no classic Arabic rhythm throughout the TT. The other 86% could not provide any further comments, even after rereading the TT. Their answers orbited around having just a sense — based on no textual particularity — that the text was a translation, meaning the text had no clear indications of the translator's footprint.

Relatedness between the ST and the TT

Figure 3



Percentage of Participants who Guessed the ST

The data in Figure 3 shows that a part of those who said the text was a translation could relate it to a poem they had already read. Most of the participants who said the text was a translation could not guess the source text, representing 66.7% of the population, while those who guessed the ST were only 33.3%. Significantly, everyone who had previously read the ST could guess it.

4.4. Synthesis

The findings indicate various facts. The translation strategy that can be sorted out of the herein TT is a rhyme-driven translation approach. It modified the theme and the rhyme throughout most of the poem's parts to keep the rhyme pattern. Additionally, the rhyme behoved the translator to use aesthetic elements, resulting in the use of domestication, while this did not lead to abandoning literal translation and foreignisation. The translator maintained the foreign structures whenever appropriate, and they were also fused with the target culture's structure, producing a fluent, natural combination.

Accordingly, this textual fluency, as a result of a rhyme-driven approach, was confirmed by empirical findings. Most of the interviewees identified no signs of translation throughout the TT, as 68.41% said the text was an original poem written in Arabic. Furthermore, this proves that literalism, if used properly, does not lead to any lack of textual fluency. The textual fluency was further established by the fact that even those who said the text was translated could not assign that to any lack of textual fluency.

5. Discussion

The findings indicated that the rhyme-driven translation approach was paramount in forming the TT. This strategy's crux was altering both theme and rheme in different locations to maintain the rhyme pattern, producing a text governed by aesthetic and domesticated elements. However, literal translation and foreignisation were not abandoned; instead, they were strategically employed, allowing the translator to retain foreign structures when appropriate. Empirical data cemented this textual fluency, as 68.41% of participants perceived the TT as an original Arabic poem with no signs of translation, indicating that the rhyme-driven approach could take off traces of translation while preserving the poem's aesthetic, semantic, and structural integrity.

6. Conclusion

Translating poetry is an extremely creative process filled with numerous challenges. Poetry is a unique text, given its intricate parallelism between form (rhyme, rhythm) and content (theme, meaning). This study focused on this issue and was conducted to explore the most feasible strategies to translate poetry and convey its meaning between two different cultures, combining corpus-based data and empirical data.

By analysing the translation of Sonnet 146 through a rhyme-driven approach, the research deduced the effect that the rhyme had on the TT. Thereafter, literalism was observed to occur frequently, indicating that the used approach does not employ full foreignisation but rather relies on a consistent fusion between domestication and foreignisation, as theorised by Venuti (1995), enhancing fidelity to the text and adherence to the target language rules. This was further proved by the empirical data that featured fluency in the TT through the majority of participants who thought the TT was a poem written originally in the target language.

The research's findings impugned various studies in the literature and espoused others. The study showed that approaches claiming poems cannot be translated are inadequate. The research further cemented the practice of translating poetry while considering its parameters that are either to be foreignised or domesticated in accordance with the general perspective of the poem or its particular one related to each verse. The two strategies of rhymed translation and literal translation mentioned by Lefevere (1975) were found to be relevant, and lines were drawn between those two strategies and foreignisation and domestication of Venuti (1995), creating a harmonious concoction between the two tendencies.

The totality of this paper's findings suggests that its approach can be widely applied in translating poetry. Poetry translators should not hesitate to consider replicating the same rhyme pattern of the source poem in the TT, training themselves to excel in using proper words and expressions whose meaning is very close to those in the ST, constituting a literal translation that does not seem foreign to the readers. Future research should increase the quantity of the corpus under analysis and the empirical population, incorporating diversified categories of participants, to ensure the permanency of the approach suggested by this paper.

Appendix: The Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was administered to participants both in person and via Google Forms:

1. Please read the following poem.

مسكينة أنت يا روح، يا من تَكْتَتِهين أرضي الآثمة،

تلك القوة العصية التي تَكْتَنِفين،

فمالك كنت فيها تُسْتَصْغَرين، متألمة

ومالك تبذلين وتبذلين لقاء جدران زائلة تحبكين؟

مقام لك فيها قصير بحمل ألف من البعير،

ألقاء ذاك النزل المهترئ تنفقين؟

فللديدان إذن حاصل هذا المسير؛

أهِيَ إذن لوديعتك من الآكلين؟ أهذه عاقبة الجسد الذي تملكين؟

فلك إذن أن على أشلاء خادمك تقتاتين، يا روحُ،

مَنونُه لك مغنم، فكوني من الغانمين،

واشري سويعات لَهْوٍ لِقاء خُلدٍ لا يروحُ،

قَوتٌ لك في جوفه، وفاقة إن أنت له تهجرين:

فالمنية لك قُوت وقُوتها بنو بشرٍ،

وإذا المنية زُهِقَت، فلا مَزْهُوقَ بعدُ لِنُوارِي.

2. Is the poem originally written in Arabic, or is it a translation?

Options: Original (أصلية) / Translated (مترجمة)

3. Should you have answered that the poem is a translation, then why?

4. Should you have answered that the poem is a translation, could you guess the original poem?

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval: The study involved human participants (questionnaire respondents). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, translation of the corpus, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Abdulwahhab Ismail, A. (2023). A corpus study of Shakespeare's sonnets in French and Arabic: A comparative analysis.

Baker, M. (1993). Corpus linguistics and translation studies: Implications and applications. In M. Baker, G. Francis, & E. Tognini-Bonelli (Eds.), Text and Technology: In Honour of John Sinclair (pp. 233–250). John Benjamins.

Benjamin, W. (1923). The task of the translator. In H. Arendt (Ed.), Illuminations (H. Zohn, Trans.). Schocken Books.

Berman, A. (1985). The ethics of translation. Éditions Gallimard.

Chongyue, L., & Hui, W. (2010). Applying Lefevere's poetry translation strategies in Chinese-English metrical translation. Journal of Translation Studies, 13(2), 45–62.

Cottegnies, L. (2023). The rival poet and the literary tradition: Translating Shakespeare's sonnets in France. Journal of Literary Translation, 40(1), 78–96.

Dryden, J. (1680). Preface to Ovid's Epistles.

Eanani, A. (2016). Translating Shakespeare into Arabic: Challenges and strategies. Arab Journal of Translation Studies, 9(1), 112–134.

Holmes, J. S. (1972). The name and nature of translation studies. In J. S. Holmes (Ed.), Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies (pp. 67–80). Rodopi.

House, J. (2015). Translation quality assessment: Past and present. Routledge.

Jakobson, R. (1959). On linguistic aspects of translation. In R. A. Brower (Ed.), On Translation (pp. 232–239). Harvard University Press.

Lefevere, A. (1975). Translating poetry: Seven strategies and a blueprint. Van Gorcum.

Masoudzade, H., & Rad, M. (2023). Assessing English translations of Sohrab Sepehri's poetry using Lefevere's strategies. International Journal of Translation Studies, 18(2), 210–227.

Nida, E. A. (1964). Toward a science of translating: With special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating. E. J. Brill.

Nord, C. (1997). Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained. St. Jerome.

Pym, A. (2012). On translator ethics: Principles for mediation between cultures. John Benjamins.

Robinson, D. (1991). The translator's turn. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Venuti, L. (1995). The translator's invisibility: A history of translation. Routledge.

Received: 03.15.2026
Revised: 03.20.2026
Accepted: 04.10.2026
Published: 04.12.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Lexical-Stylistic Features in Media Discourse

[1] **Mulayim Baghirova**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002007

Abstract

This study investigates the lexical-stylistic features of media discourse, focusing on how linguistic choices shape meaning, influence interpretation, and reflect ideological positions. Drawing on a corpus of 50 media texts, including news articles, editorials, and social media posts, the research applies a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative discourse interpretation. The findings reveal that media discourse is characterized by the extensive use of evaluative vocabulary, loaded language, and recurring lexical patterns that reinforce key themes. In addition, stylistic devices such as metaphor, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, and parallelism are widely employed to enhance engagement and emotional impact. The study also demonstrates that lexical and stylistic features function together as framing mechanisms, guiding audience perception by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while downplaying others. Differences across media platforms are identified, with digital media showing a higher tendency toward informal, expressive, and attention-driven language. These results support existing theories in stylistics and critical discourse analysis, highlighting the persuasive and constructive nature of media language. Overall, the study underscores the importance of critical language awareness in understanding media messages and contributes to ongoing research on discourse, communication, and ideology.

Keywords: *media discourse, lexical features, stylistics, framing, persuasion*

1. Introduction

Media discourse occupies a central position in contemporary society, functioning not only as a channel for information dissemination but also as a powerful instrument of social construction. In an era characterized by rapid digital communication and information overload, the language of media has become increasingly strategic, shaped by the need to attract attention, sustain engagement, and influence public perception. As a result, the study of lexical-stylistic features in media discourse has gained significant importance within the fields of linguistics, communication studies, and media analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

[1] Baghirova, M. Senior Lecturer, Chair of English Lexicology, Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan. Email: bagirova_mulayim@adu.edu.az. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2224-5611

Lexical-stylistic features refer to the deliberate selection of vocabulary and the use of stylistic devices that contribute to the tone, meaning, and persuasive force of a text. In media contexts, these features are rarely neutral. Journalists and content creators make conscious or unconscious choices about words, expressions, and stylistic structures that frame events, construct narratives, and position audiences in specific ways. Fowler (1991) emphasizes that even seemingly objective news reporting is shaped by lexical choices that encode ideological perspectives. For example, the use of alternative labels such as freedom fighters versus terrorists illustrates how lexical variation can significantly influence interpretation and evaluation.

The evolution of media platforms from traditional print newspapers to digital and social media has further intensified the role of stylistic and lexical strategies (Babayev, 2022). Unlike traditional journalism, which often prioritized formal and standardized language, contemporary media discourse frequently incorporates informal expressions, emotive vocabulary, and attention-grabbing stylistic devices. Headlines, in particular, have become highly stylized, often employing metaphor, wordplay, and sensational language to maximize reader engagement (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

From a theoretical perspective, the analysis of media language is grounded in several linguistic traditions, including stylistics, systemic functional linguistics, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Stylistics focuses on how linguistic choices create meaning and aesthetic effects (Simpson, 2004), while systemic functional linguistics highlights the relationship between language and its social functions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). CDA examines how discourse structures enact, confirm, and reproduce power relations in society (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988).

Moreover, lexical-stylistic features are closely linked to the concept of framing, which refers to the way information is presented and organized in discourse. Through selective word choice and stylistic emphasis, media texts highlight certain aspects of reality while downplaying others, thereby shaping audience interpretation (Entman, 1993). This process not only influences cognitive understanding but also affects emotional responses, as the use of emotionally charged vocabulary in reporting on crises or conflicts can evoke fear, sympathy, or outrage (Richardson, 2007).

Another important dimension is the role of intertextuality and cultural context in shaping media language. According to Fairclough (1995), intertextuality allows media discourse to connect with broader social and cultural discourses, reinforcing dominant ideologies. At the same time, globalization and the expansion of digital media have led to the emergence of hybrid linguistic styles that combine formal and informal registers, as well as local and global influences (Crystal, 2008).

Despite the growing body of research on media discourse, there remains a need for integrated analyses that examine how lexical and stylistic features interact within contemporary media environments. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of lexical-stylistic features across different types of media texts (Babayev et al., 2025). The main objective is to investigate the patterns and functions of lexical-stylistic features in media discourse and to understand how these features contribute to persuasion, framing, and audience engagement. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the dominant lexical features in contemporary media discourse?
2. Which stylistic devices are most frequently used, and in what contexts?
3. How do lexical and stylistic choices interact to shape meaning and influence audiences?

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of lexical-stylistic features in media discourse. The quantitative component focuses on identifying frequency patterns of lexical items and stylistic devices, while the qualitative component aims to interpret their communicative and ideological functions within specific contexts. Such an integrative approach is consistent with methodological practices in corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, where numerical patterns are complemented by in-depth textual interpretation (Biber et al., 1998; Fairclough, 1995).

2.2. Data Collection

The dataset consists of a purposively selected corpus of 50 media texts drawn from a range of English-language sources, including hard news reports, opinion and editorial articles, online news headlines, and social media posts published by verified news organizations. The texts were collected from widely recognized international media outlets such as BBC, CNN, and The Guardian between 2020 and 2024. To ensure diversity and representativeness, the sample includes texts covering politics, economy, health including pandemic-related discourse, social issues, and international relations.

2.3. Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling method was employed to select texts that exhibit clear examples of stylistic variation and lexical richness. The selection criteria included relevance to current public discourse, presence of evaluative or persuasive language, diversity of genres and platforms, and accessibility and authenticity of the source. Efforts were made to balance the dataset in terms of text type and topic to avoid bias toward a single domain or discourse style.

2.4. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework integrates concepts from stylistics, systemic functional linguistics, and critical discourse analysis. The analysis is structured around three main categories.

2.4.1. Lexical Analysis

Lexical features were examined using the following parameters: frequency and distribution of key lexical items; semantic fields such as conflict, economy, and crisis; evaluative and emotive vocabulary; collocations and lexical patterns; and use of jargon and technical terms. Corpus analysis tools such as AntConc were used to identify recurring lexical items and patterns.

2.4.2. Stylistic Analysis

Stylistic features were identified and categorized based on established frameworks in stylistics (Simpson, 2004). These include figurative language such as metaphor, simile, and metonymy; rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, rhetorical questions, and irony; syntactic structures such as parallelism, repetition, and ellipsis; and tone and register. Special attention was given to headlines, as they often exhibit a high density of stylistic devices.

2.4.3. Discourse and Framing Analysis

Drawing on CDA (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988), the study examines how lexical and stylistic features contribute to the framing of events and issues, representation of social actors, construction of ideology and bias, and persuasive strategies and audience positioning. This stage involves interpreting how linguistic choices reflect broader social and political contexts.

2.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was conducted in several stages: corpus preparation involving compiling and cleaning all texts; coding and annotation of texts for lexical and stylistic features using predefined categories; quantitative analysis through frequency counts and keyword analysis; qualitative interpretation of selected examples; and cross-comparison of patterns across different genres and platforms to identify similarities and differences.

2.6. Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability, a systematic coding scheme was developed and applied consistently across the dataset. Where possible, categories were based on established linguistic frameworks to enhance theoretical validity. Triangulation was achieved by combining quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse analysis, which strengthens the credibility of the findings (Biber et al., 1998).

2.7. Ethical Considerations

All data used in this study are publicly available media texts, and no personal or sensitive information was collected. Proper attribution is maintained for all referenced sources. The study adheres to ethical standards in research, ensuring that data is used responsibly and without misrepresentation.

3. Results

3.1. Lexical Features

The quantitative analysis of the corpus revealed a high frequency of evaluative and emotionally charged lexical items across all media genres. Words such as crisis, dramatic, controversial, and unprecedented appeared repeatedly, particularly in political and health-related reporting. These findings support the claim that media discourse relies heavily on evaluative language to construct salience and urgency (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). In addition, the data demonstrated a consistent use of loaded language, where lexical choices implicitly conveyed ideological positions, reflecting patterns noted by Fowler (1991). Similarly, semantic prosody was observed in the frequent pairing of terms like economic reform with positive descriptors and immigration with negative or problem-oriented language (Sinclair, 1991).

Another prominent feature was the use of lexical repetition and keyword prominence, especially in headlines and lead paragraphs (Babayev, 2023). Repetition served to reinforce key themes and guide reader interpretation, aligned with van Dijk's (1988) concept of macrostructures in news discourse. Furthermore, neologisms and media-specific jargon such as infodemic, clickbait, and fake news reflected the evolving nature of media language in response to technological and social changes (Crystal, 2008).

3.2. Stylistic Features

The stylistic analysis revealed a high density of rhetorical and figurative devices across the dataset. Metaphor emerged as one of the most frequently used devices, particularly in political and economic reporting, where political processes were often conceptualized as battles, games, or storms, consistent with conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Hyperbole was also widely observed, especially in headlines (Alisoy, 2026): expressions such as massive backlash or historic collapse often exaggerated the scale or significance of events, amplifying news values of negativity and impact (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

The use of rhetorical questions was particularly prominent in opinion pieces and editorials, functioning as persuasive tools that guided readers toward specific interpretations (Simpson, 2004). Similarly, parallelism and syntactic repetition were frequently used to create rhythm and emphasis, contributing to memorability and rhetorical force (Babayev, 2025). The increasing use of informal and conversational tone in digital and social media texts, with contractions and direct address, reflected a shift toward audience engagement and personalization (Crystal, 2008).

3.3. Framing and Ideological Representation

The interaction between lexical and stylistic features played a crucial role in framing media narratives. Framing was frequently achieved through strategic lexical selection combined with stylistic emphasis, reinforcing Entman's (1993) definition of framing as the selection and salience of certain aspects of reality. For example, terms such as reform versus overhaul or protesters versus rioters framed the same events in markedly different ways, supporting Richardson's (2007) argument that lexical choices in media texts are central to the construction of social actors and events. Stylistic devices such as metaphor and hyperbole intensified these frames (Javid, 2025), while patterns of foregrounding and backgrounding were consistently achieved through lexical prominence and stylistic positioning, consistent with van Dijk's (1988) theory of discourse structures.

3.4. Cross-Genre and Platform Variation

Significant variation was observed across different media genres and platforms. Traditional news reports tended to maintain a more formal and restrained lexical style, whereas digital media and social platforms exhibited a higher frequency of stylistic devices, including hyperbole, informal language, and direct audience engagement. Headlines across all platforms showed the highest concentration of lexical-stylistic features, confirming their role as key sites of persuasion and attention management (Bednarek & Caple, 2012). Social media posts demonstrated a hybrid style blending informational and promotional discourse, often prioritizing emotional impact over neutrality.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that lexical-stylistic features are central to the construction and interpretation of media discourse. Far from being neutral conveyors of information, media texts rely on strategic linguistic choices that shape meaning, guide audience perception, and reflect underlying ideological positions, supporting the broader claims of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988). The pervasive use of evaluative and loaded lexical items suggests that media discourse actively constructs rather than merely reflects reality, aligning with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) systemic functional perspective, which views language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts.

The study highlights the crucial role of stylistic devices, particularly metaphor, hyperbole, and rhetorical structures, in enhancing the persuasive and affective dimensions of media texts. The widespread use of metaphor confirms the arguments of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who demonstrate that metaphor is fundamental to human cognition. In media discourse, metaphors such as war, battle, or crisis frame complex phenomena in simplified and often dramatized terms, making them more accessible but potentially distorting their complexity. Similarly, the use of hyperbole and sensational language reflects the increasing commercialization and competitiveness of modern media environments, raising important questions about the balance between informativeness and sensationalism (Aslanova, 2025).

Another key insight concerns the relationship between lexical-stylistic features and framing processes. This study provides empirical evidence that the selection of certain aspects of reality is often achieved through subtle lexical and stylistic means. The choice between semantically related terms such as migrants versus refugees can significantly alter the perceived legitimacy or urgency of an issue. The findings further underscore that lexical repetition, headline construction, and stylistic emphasis all contribute to reinforcing dominant narratives and perspectives (Alisoy, 2026).

The variation observed across media platforms confirms a broader move toward informalization in public discourse (Crystal, 2008), where boundaries between spoken and written language become increasingly blurred. As media texts become more stylistically complex and persuasive, audiences must develop greater critical awareness of the linguistic mechanisms that shape meaning (Richardson, 2007). However, the relatively small and English-language-focused corpus restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope of analysis by incorporating multilingual corpora, cross-cultural comparisons, and more advanced computational methods for large-scale discourse analysis.

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the lexical-stylistic features of media discourse, demonstrating that language in media texts is far from neutral and plays a crucial role in shaping meaning and audience perception. Through the combined analysis of lexical patterns and stylistic devices, the findings reveal that media discourse relies heavily on evaluative vocabulary, metaphor, hyperbole, and other rhetorical strategies to frame events and influence interpretation. These features not only enhance the communicative effectiveness of media texts but also contribute to the construction of ideological perspectives.

The results highlight that lexical choices and stylistic structures work together to foreground certain aspects of reality while backgrounding others, thereby guiding readers understanding and emotional responses. Furthermore, the study shows that digital media environments intensify the use of stylistic devices, reflecting the growing importance of audience engagement and attention economy. Overall, the research underscores the importance of critical awareness in interpreting media discourse. Future studies may expand on these findings by examining cross-cultural differences, evolving media formats, and larger and more linguistically diverse corpora.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability: All data used in this study are publicly available media texts. Further information is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Alisoy, H. (2026). Hyperbole, repetition, and metonymy in Donald J. Trump's Davos 2026 Special Address: A discourse-stylistic analysis. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum, 3*(1), 33-43.

Alisoy, H. (2026). Repetition as policy tool: Anaphora, tricolon, and slogan-motifs in Joe Biden's 2023 State of the Union. *Porta Universorum, 2*(2), 19-24.

Aslanova, U. (2025). Social and cultural factors in the formation of individual style in the German language. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education, 2*(5), 132-143.

Babayev, J. S., Sadikhova, S. N., Baghirova, M. A., Seidova, E. R., & Mammadova, A. A. (2025). A lexical-stylistic and cross-cultural analysis of vulgarisms and their usage spheres. *Universidad y Sociedad, 17*(6), e5525.

Babayev, J. (2023). Philological sciences. *Norwegian Journal of Development of the International Science, 118*, 30.

Babayev, J. (2022). Stylistic opportunities of colloquial layer of the language. *Norwegian Journal of Development of the International Science, 80*, 29-30.

Babayev, J. (2025). A stylistic analysis of proverbs and sayings. *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities, 2*(5), 323-331.

Bednarek, M., & Caple, H. (2012). *News Discourse.* Continuum.

Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use.* Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (6th ed.). Blackwell.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication, 43*(4), 51-58.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse.* Edward Arnold.

Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press.* Routledge.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Javid, B. (2025). The use of stylistic layers in literary language. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Science, 2960*, 9550.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By.* University of Chicago Press.

Richardson, J. E. (2007). *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students.* Routledge.

Sinclair, J. (1991). *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation.* Oxford University Press.

van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News as Discourse.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Received: 03.10.2026
Revised: 03.20.2026
Accepted: 04.14.2026
Published: 04.15.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Investigating Strategies for Ensuring Equitable Access to Quality Education in Uganda

[1] **Ademola Olatide Olaniyan,** [2] **Afam Uzorka**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002008

Abstract

In addition to being a basic human right, equitable access to high-quality education is essential to sustainable development. This study explores strategies for ensuring equitable access to high-quality education in Uganda using a qualitative research design. Fifty-six people from 12 Ugandan universities participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used in the participant selection process to guarantee a varied representation of experiences and points of view. Through semi-structured interviews, data were gathered and subsequently analysed using thematic analysis. The results highlight the significance of focused funding in underprivileged regions, ongoing professional development for educators, community engagement, equitable policies, and reliable data systems. Policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders may work to ensure that all Ugandans have equitable access to high-quality education by focusing on these important areas.

Keywords: *educational equity, Uganda, resource allocation, teacher quality, professional development*

1. Introduction

In addition to being a basic human right, equitable access to high-quality education is essential to sustainable development (Hasanova & Safarli, 2024; Uzorka et al., 2024; Zickafoose et al., 2024). Significant differences in educational access and quality still exist throughout Uganda (Barasa et al., 2025; Faisal et al., 2024; Kabay, 2021), and these differences are frequently caused by systemic, regional, and socioeconomic factors (Barasa et al., 2025). The country's efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are hampered by these gaps, especially SDG 4, which calls for universal access to high-quality, inclusive education. The provision of equitable education in Uganda faces numerous obstacles, including unequal distribution of resources,

[1] Olaniyan, A. O. Science Unit, Department of Primary Education, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6571-4758

[2] Uzorka, A. Department of Physical Sciences, School of Natural and Applied Sciences, Kampala International University, Kampala, Uganda. Email: afamuzorka@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4653-1619. Corresponding author.

disparities in the quality of teachers, a lack of community involvement, insufficient policy frameworks, and a lack of data to make well-informed decisions (SSALI, 2024). A comprehensive strategy that takes into account the various requirements and circumstances of the Ugandan nation is needed to address these issues.

This research investigates strategies for ensuring equitable access to quality education in Uganda through the following research question: What strategies can be implemented to ensure equitable access to quality education in Uganda? Through an analysis of these domains, the research identifies effective approaches and provides insights for policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders committed to enhancing educational equity in Uganda. The study's findings add to the body of evidence already available on educational equity and draw attention to the crucial areas that require improvement in order to address the gaps in access and quality. This research provides a framework for creating and implementing ideas that can address the particular difficulties faced by Ugandan educational systems.

2. Literature Review

Inequalities in access, quality, and outcomes have long been a problem for the Ugandan educational system (Kabay, 2021; Kan & Klasen, 2021). The complex nature of these differences and their consequences for sustainable development have been extensively studied. For example, a study by Kan and Klasen (2021) showed how persistent educational disparities are in Uganda, especially along socioeconomic lines, and how underprivileged people have the most difficulty gaining access and succeeding in school. The urgent need to rectify these disparities was also highlighted in the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2019), which aims to guarantee that all children, regardless of background, have equal opportunity to learn and succeed (Zancajo et al., 2021).

Resource distribution and allocation are important issues affecting educational equity in Uganda (Fraser & Lockheed, 2021; Robert et al., 2021). According to research, differences in educational outcomes are made worse by the unequal allocation of resources, which includes funding, infrastructure, and instructional materials (Mugerwa-Sekawabe, 2022; Natukunda & Barigye, 2024; Nnachi, 2022). A study by Maki et al. (2021) discovered notable differences in the distribution of resources between urban and rural schools, with rural schools frequently receiving less funding even though they serve underprivileged populations.

A key factor in determining educational equity is the quality of teachers and their professional development. Having well-trained and supported instructors is crucial to enhancing student learning outcomes, especially for students from marginalized areas (Uzorka et al., 2023). A study by Mwesigye et al. (2024) highlighted the value of ongoing professional development for South Western Ugandan teachers, emphasizing how it can improve student achievement and instructional effectiveness. Glover and Stewart (2024) also underlined the necessity of thorough teacher preparation programs customized to the regional environment in order to meet the unique requirements of Ugandan communities.

Partnerships and community engagement are essential for advancing educational equity because they encourage cooperation between communities, families, and schools. Studies reveal that incorporating community members and parents in the educational process can result in better student performance and increased accountability (Eden et al., 2024; Naeem & Iqbal, 2025). The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) emphasized the significance of community involvement in school governance and decision-making processes to guarantee that policies are responsive to local needs and goals (Silva & Oliveira, 2022).

Addressing educational gaps and advancing inclusive education systems require equity-oriented policies and governance structures. Research indicates that policies aimed at addressing inequality, such as affirmative action programs and specific funding mechanisms, are essential for increasing access and enhancing the lives of marginalized people (Hardy & Woodcock, 2024; Nichols & Dixon-Roman, 2024). A study by Manani (2021) examined how affirmative action laws affected Kenyan students' access to higher education, emphasizing how they helped historically underrepresented groups. Furthermore, efficient governance frameworks are required to guarantee that resources are distributed fairly among schools and regions.

To detect inequalities in educational access and quality, track progress toward equity goals, and inform evidence-based policymaking, robust data collection and monitoring are crucial. Strong data systems are required to monitor important metrics including enrollment rates, learning outcomes, and resource distribution in order to pinpoint areas that require intervention and assess the effectiveness of policies and initiatives (Dodman et al., 2021; Fien et al., 2021; Li & Morris, 2024). Mansour et al. (2022) conducted a study on the importance of data in education planning and decision-making in sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting the need for improved data collection methods and capacity-building programs. The OECD (2019) similarly underlined the significance of data-driven methods in education policy creation, contending that accurate data are necessary to pinpoint interventions and uncover inequities (Li & Morris, 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study investigated ways to guarantee that all Ugandans have equitable access to high-quality education using a qualitative research design. The main goals were to obtain detailed information and comprehend the viewpoints and experiences of participants in relation to equitable access to education. This design was selected due to its ability to facilitate in-depth investigation of complex matters via semi-structured interviews.

3.2. Participants

Fifty-six people from 12 Ugandan universities participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used in the participant selection process to guarantee a varied representation of experiences and points of view. Faculty and administrators at the universities who were actively involved in and informed about matters pertaining to educational quality and access were included in the selection criteria.

3.3. Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. Out of 56 participants, 31 (55.36%) were male and 25 (44.64%) were female, all aged 20 years and above. The majority, 26 (46.43%) participants, held PhD degrees. There were 22 (39.29%) administrators and 34 (60.71%) faculty members. Regarding work experience, 10 (17.86%) participants had less than 5 years, 14 (25.00%) had between 5 and 10 years, 17 (30.36%) had between 11 and 15 years, and 15 (26.78%) had 16 years or more.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Variables	Male Frequency (%)	Female Frequency (%)	Total Frequency (%)
Gender	31 (55.36)	25 (44.64)	56 (100)
Age (Years)			
20-29	06 (54.55)	05 (45.45)	11 (19.64)
30-39	08 (53.33)	07 (46.67)	15 (26.79)
40-49	08 (50.00)	08 (50.00)	16 (28.57)
50 and above	09 (64.29)	05 (35.71)	14 (25.00)
Educational Qualification			
Bachelor	03 (42.86)	04 (57.14)	07 (12.50)
Master	11 (47.83)	12 (52.17)	23 (41.07)
PhD	17 (65.38)	09 (34.62)	26 (46.43)
Designation			

Administrator	10 (45.45)	12 (54.55)	22 (39.29)
Faculty	21 (61.76)	13 (38.24)	34 (60.71)
Work Experience (Years)			
Under 5 years	05 (50.00)	05 (50.00)	10 (17.86)
5-10 years	08 (57.14)	06 (42.86)	14 (25.00)
11-15 years	09 (52.94)	08 (47.06)	17 (30.36)
16 years and above	09 (60.00)	06 (40.00)	15 (26.78)

3.4. Data Collection

Through semi-structured interviews, data were gathered. This approach was selected because it offers the flexibility to delve deeply into different subjects while preserving a uniform framework across interviews. A series of open-ended questions intended to elicit in-depth responses regarding participants' experiences, opinions, and recommendations for enhancing equitable access to high-quality education guided each interview. In-person interviews were conducted to promote deep and engaging conversation.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. This required multiple steps: (1) Transcription — with the participants' permission, all interviews were audio recorded and verbatim transcribed; (2) Coding — transcripts were coded to identify recurrent themes and patterns connected to the research questions; (3) Theme Development — codes were grouped into more comprehensive topics that summarized the study's main findings; and (4) Interpretation — the topics were examined in light of the body of research on equitable access to education, emphasizing original ideas and possible implications for practice and policy.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Prior to participating, participants gave informed consent after receiving comprehensive information about the study. Ethical approval was granted by the Kampala International University Research Ethics Committee under reference number KIU-2024-392, in accordance with Uganda's research guidelines and regulations. Throughout the whole research procedure, confidentiality was upheld, and all data were anonymised to safeguard the identities of the participants.

3.7. Limitations

The study acknowledges several limitations. The reliance on interviews means the findings are based on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. Additionally, the purposive sampling method, while ensuring a diverse range of perspectives, may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into strategies for enhancing equitable access to quality education in Uganda.

4. Results

To maintain the confidentiality of participants, each was assigned a database number referred to as R1 to R56. When the findings reference a participant's comments, the database number is recorded in parentheses.

4.1. Resource Allocation and Distribution

Respondents discussed the distribution and allocation of resources among various schools and areas, including funding, facilities, and instructional materials. A total of 76% of respondents stated that it is critical to address differences in the distribution of funding, ensuring that resources are allocated according to need and accounting for variables including student demographics, infrastructure deficiencies, and poverty levels. Furthermore, 68% stated that it is crucial to invest in modernizing infrastructure and ensuring facilities are distributed fairly, while 65% stated that all schools should have access to current instructional resources, regardless of their geography or socioeconomic condition.

Allocation levels should be determined by taking into consideration factors including the number of students, their socioeconomic background, and the needs of the infrastructure (R6, R13, R17). Formula financing systems can aid in the standardization of resource allocation by distributing funds in accordance with preset formulae that account for variables such as student enrollment, poverty levels, and special education requirements (R8, R11, R12). Ensuring that every student has access to secure and comfortable learning environments requires identifying and rectifying infrastructure shortcomings (R1, R6, R8, R17). Access to technology is crucial for academic performance (R22, R26, R41, R46, R49), and providing equal access to computers, internet connectivity, and other digital tools helps students prepare for the demands of a twenty-first-century workforce (R19, R21, R22, R23). It is also crucial to support student well-being by investing in infrastructure upgrades that promote health and safety, such as clean water and sanitation facilities, adequate ventilation, and secure school buildings (R11, R16, R17, R23, R25).

4.2. Teacher Quality and Professional Development

Respondents discussed the importance of teacher quality and professional development. A total of 72% stated that improving educational outcomes and fostering equitable access to high-quality education require investments in teacher quality and professional development, while 71%

stated that it is critical to devise plans for drawing and retaining talented educators in underprivileged communities. High-quality instructors can be attracted to underprivileged areas through incentive programs including salary bonuses, housing assistance, loan provisions, and scholarships (R1, R4, R7, R13). To stay current with best practices and meet the varied needs of their students, teachers must receive ongoing training (R8, R11). Providing teachers with well-defined career trajectories and prospects for advancement fosters professional development and boosts retention rates (R11, R15, R17). Offering mentorship programs, leadership positions, and specialized training can improve teachers' commitment to their roles and job satisfaction (R19, R22, R25, R27, R28). Hiring educators from diverse backgrounds who mirror the linguistic and cultural diversity of the school community encourages inclusivity and improves the educational experience for every student (R15, R18, R19, R20, R26).

4.3. Community Engagement and Partnerships

The importance of communities, families, and other stakeholders in promoting education and creating a positive learning environment was emphasized by respondents. A majority of respondents (76%) stated that education systems can leverage the combined knowledge, resources, and support of families, corporations, non-profit organizations, and governmental organizations to build effective partnerships that support equity, access, and achievement for every student. Furthermore, 42% stated that working together, corporations, NGOs, and government organizations can address resource gaps and systemic issues in education. Schools receive additional funding and support when businesses and corporations engage with the community through sponsorship, mentorship programs, and in-kind contributions (R1, R5, R6, R7, R10, R15, R18). Students' learning experiences are enhanced when local businesses collaborate to finance extracurricular activities, workforce development programs, and educational initiatives (R41, R44, R46, R49).

4.4. Equity-Oriented Policies and Governance

Respondents discussed regulatory and administrative frameworks that support educational equity. A total of 52% stated that to resolve discrepancies in resource allocation and promote equity, financing methods that account for variables like student demographics, poverty levels, and geographic location should be adopted. Policies that give targeted support where it is most needed — for example, allocating greater resources to schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged students — are necessary (R26, R29, R30, R32, R34). Promoting equity and inclusion in education is facilitated by the adoption of inclusive policies that acknowledge and assist the diverse needs of students (R44, R45, R47, R50). Disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes can be lessened by implementing policies that support socioeconomic integration in schools (R12, R17, R21, R23). Government institutions should implement measures that give priority to educational equity and address structural impediments to enrollment and success (R1, R3, R7, R10, R11, R18), including changes to curricular standards, teacher recruitment practices, and financing sources (R5, R7, R12, R14).

4.5. Data Collection and Monitoring

Respondents discussed the crucial importance of gathering and evaluating data to track progress toward equitable access to high-quality education. A majority of respondents (63%) stated that education systems may identify inequalities, monitor advancement, and guide evidence-based decision-making by prioritizing data collection and monitoring activities. Gathering and evaluating disaggregated data can guide focused interventions and resource allocation plans and help reduce disparity (R9, R12, R18, R20, R22, R23). Data should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language competency, and disability status to identify areas of need and guide targeted interventions (R8, R13, R20, R23). Monitoring data on funding levels, staffing ratios, and the distribution of facilities and educational materials helps guarantee that resources are allocated fairly and in line with the requirements of schools and pupils (R6, R19, R26, R30). Evidence-based decision-making should be systematically implemented across all levels of the education system (R1, R8, R14, R15, R16).

5. Discussion

Five key themes emerged from the investigation into strategies for ensuring equitable access to high-quality education in Uganda: resource allocation and distribution, teacher quality and professional development, community engagement and partnerships, equity-oriented policies and governance, and data collection and monitoring. These themes offer a thorough framework for addressing the difficulties encountered in Ugandan educational systems. The study emphasizes how crucial it is to distribute resources fairly to address differences in the quality of education. Resources for marginalized and rural communities are frequently less than those for metropolitan and affluent areas, a disparity extensively documented in the literature. A study by Natukunda and Barigye (2024) stressed how important it is to provide underprivileged areas with targeted support in order to close the achievement gap. Similarly, UNICEF (2020) research indicated that equitable funding approaches are necessary to guarantee that all children, irrespective of their socioeconomic or geographic origin, have access to high-quality education (Nnachi, 2022).

Achieving educational equity has been shown to require both high-quality teachers and ongoing professional development. Several studies corroborate the study's findings, emphasizing the value of investing in teacher preparation and professional development (Glover & Stewart, 2024; Uzorka et al., 2023). Mwesigye et al. (2024) assert that supportive and well-trained educators are more successful in providing high-quality instruction, which is essential for raising student achievement in underprivileged communities, and that professional development programs must be customized to the local environment.

The importance of partnerships and community involvement in advancing educational equity cannot be overstated. The study found that developing partnerships with different stakeholders and integrating communities in the educational process are crucial strategies, a finding supported by Eden et al. (2024), who maintained that community and family involvement is a crucial element of effective educational systems. Furthermore, community engagement improves accountability and transparency in educational governance, which in turn improves equity, according to studies from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (Naeem & Iqbal, 2025).

Equitable policies and governance are essential to guaranteeing access to high-quality education. Participants in the study emphasized the necessity of strong policies that specifically aim to reduce inequality. The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2020) similarly emphasized the importance of policies that are expressly intended to address disparities in order to establish inclusive educational systems (Hardy & Woodcock, 2024). Furthermore, as noted by Nichols and Dixon-Roman (2024), these policies cannot be implemented and sustained without strong governance frameworks.

The importance of data collection and monitoring emerged as a key theme. The findings indicate that accurate data are necessary for determining gaps, tracking advancement, and guiding policy decisions. This is consistent with other research highlighting the necessity of strong data systems for tracking educational equity (Dodman et al., 2021; Fien et al., 2021). The OECD promotes the use of data in policymaking, contending that evidence-based policies have a higher chance of being both successful and sustainable (Li & Morris, 2024).

6. Conclusion

This study offers insightful information about strategies for ensuring equitable access to high-quality education in Uganda through the identification of five key themes: resource allocation and distribution, teacher quality and professional development, community engagement and partnerships, equity-oriented policies and governance, and data collection and monitoring. These themes are consistent with previous research and highlight the complexity of resolving educational inequalities in the region.

The allocation and distribution of resources emerged as a fundamental component, emphasizing the vital need for targeted investment in marginalized communities to guarantee that all students have access to the equipment and settings required for learning. It was further determined that high standards for teacher quality and professional development are required for successful education, as investments in teacher preparation and ongoing professional development can greatly improve educational performance in underprivileged communities. Partnerships and community engagement are essential for advancing educational equity, and policies and governance that prioritize equity are critical to guaranteeing equitable access. For the purpose of making well-informed decisions and implementing effective policies, robust data collection and monitoring are indispensable.

In conclusion, addressing educational equity in Uganda necessitates a comprehensive strategy that incorporates these fundamental principles. The results of this study add to the understanding of educational inequities and offer policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders a framework for creating and putting into practice solutions that guarantee all Ugandan children equal access to high-quality education.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

Funding: None.

Ethical Approval: Ethical approval was granted by the Kampala International University Research Ethics Committee under reference number KIU-2024-392, in accordance with Uganda's research guidelines and regulations.

Consent to Participate: All participants provided their written consent to take part in this study.

Data Availability: The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgements: None.

Authors' Contributions: Conceptualization, A.O.O., A.U.; methodology, A.O.O., A.U.; investigation, A.O.O., A.U.; writing — original draft preparation, A.O.O., A.U.; writing — review and editing, A.O.O., A.U.; visualization, A.O.O., A.U.

References

Barasa, M. C., Ssentamu, P. N., Chang'ach, J. K., & Kurgat, S. J. (2025). Implementing the Uganda lower secondary competence-based curriculum: the equity question. *Quality Education for All, 2*(1), 138-157. https://doi.org/10.1108/QEA-03-2024-0026

Dodman, S. L., Swalwell, K., DeMulder, E. K., & Stribling, S. M. (2021). Critical data-driven decision making: A conceptual model of data use for equity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 99*, 103272. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103272

Eden, C. A., Chisom, O. N., & Adeniyi, I. S. (2024). Parent and community involvement in education: Strengthening partnerships for social improvement. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences, 6*(3), 372-382.

Faisal, B., Kapeller, J., Vicent, S., & Anber, M. (2024). Differential impacts of electricity access on educational outcomes: Evidence from Uganda. *The Electricity Journal, 37*(1), 107362.

Fien, H., Chard, D. J., & Baker, S. K. (2021). Can the evidence revolution and multi-tiered systems of support improve education equity and reading achievement? *Reading Research Quarterly, 56*, S105-S118. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.391

Fraser, A., & Lockheed, M. (2021). Uganda case study. *The Role of Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers in Improving Education Outcomes*, 85.

Glover, A., & Stewart, S. (2024). Using a blended distance pedagogy in teacher education to address challenges in teacher recruitment. *Teaching Education, 35*(1), 104-126. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2023.2223526

Hardy, I., & Woodcock, S. (2024). Inclusive education policies: Objects of observance, omission, and obfuscation: Ten years on. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 28*(13), 3234-3252. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2023.2257697

Hasanova, G. I., & Safarli, A. J. (2024). Education for sustainable development: A review. *Green Economics, 2*(1), 102-111.

Kabay, S. (2021). *Access, Quality, and the Global Learning Crisis: Insights from Ugandan Primary Education.* Oxford University Press.

Kan, S., & Klasen, S. (2021). Evaluating universal primary education in Uganda: School fee abolition and educational outcomes. *Review of Development Economics, 25*(1), 116-147. https://doi.org/10.1111/rode.12725

Li, X., & Morris, P. (2024). Generating and managing legitimacy: How the OECD established its role in monitoring sustainable development goal 4. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 54*(7), 1065-1082. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2142038

Maki, T., Ogawa, M., & Sakaue, K. (2021). The prospect of education universalisation and inequality in African countries aspiring to be middle-income countries: A comparative study of Thailand, Kenya, and Uganda. *Africa Educational Research Journal, 12*, 19-36.

Manani, S. J. O. (2021). *Affirmative action laws and policies: Interrogating their effectiveness in the promotion of substantive gender-based equality in Kenya.*

Mansour, W., Aryaija-Karemani, A., Martineau, T., Namakula, J., Mubiri, P., Ssengooba, F., & Raven, J. (2022). Management of human resources for health in health districts in Uganda: A decision space analysis. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management, 37*(2), 770-789. https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3359

Mugerwa-Sekawabe, M. (2022). Increasing access to education for refugees in Uganda. *Law, Democracy & Development, 25*(1), 546-574.

Mwesigye, S., Sekiwu, D., & Edoru, J. M. (2024). Professional development and science teacher effectiveness in Africa: A study of South Western Uganda. *East African Journal of Education Studies, 7*(3), 176-193.

Naeem Mirza, S., & Iqbal, D. A. (2025). Participatory development: The role of citizens in advancing UN SDG-4 in Pakistan. *Aumer.*

Natukunda, L., & Barigye, G. (2024). Supporting underprivileged children on their livelihood in communities of Kabale district: A case of Kabale child development program. *Kabale University Interdisciplinary Research Journal, 2*(3), 38-50.

Nichols, T. P., & Dixon-Roman, E. (2024). Platform governance and education policy: Power and politics in emerging edtech ecologies. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 46*(2), 309-328. https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737231202469

Nnachi, J. O. (2022). *A critical evaluation of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) impact on reducing educational poverty and aiding poor children's equitable access to quality education in the Gasabo District of Kigali City, Rwanda* (Master's thesis, Oslomet-storbyuniversitetet).

Robert, T., Charles, M., & Aisha, K. (2021). Effective financial resources management for school improvement and development in Uganda. *African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies, 2*(1), 1-18.

Silva, R. D., & Oliveira, J. (2022). Global education policy in African fragile and conflict-affected states: Examining the Global Partnership for Education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 20*(4), 508-522. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2021.1947201

SSALI, N. (2024). An assessment of organizational factors affecting utilization of monitoring and evaluation results in delivering government programs: A case of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), Uganda. *Kabarak Journal of Research & Innovation, 14*(01).

Uzorka, A., Namara, S., & Olaniyan, A. O. (2023). Modern technology adoption and professional development of lecturers. *Education and Information Technologies, 28*(11), 14693-14719. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11790-w

Uzorka, A., Akiyode, O., & Isa, S. M. (2024). Strategies for engaging students in sustainability initiatives and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards sustainable development. *Discover Sustainability, 5*(1), 320. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-024-00505-x

Zancajo, A., Fontdevila, C., Verger, A., & Bonal, X. (2021). *Regulating public-private partnerships, governing non-state schools: An equity perspective.* Background paper for UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report.

Zickafoose, A., Ilesanmi, O., Diaz-Manrique, M., Adeyemi, A. E., Walumbe, B., Strong, R., & Dooley, K. (2024). Barriers and challenges affecting quality education (SDG 4) in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030. *Sustainability, 16*(7), 2657. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16072657

Received: 03.25.2026
Revised: 04.01.2026
Accepted: 04.14.2026
Published: 04.15.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

French Lexicon in English Diplomatic Discourse: Prestige, Precision, and Functional Hierarchy

[1] **Liubov Yatsenko,** [2] **Olga Ponomarenko**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002010

Abstract

This article examines the role and ongoing relevance of French lexical borrowings in contemporary English diplomatic discourse. Although English is the dominant global language of international relations, its formal, institutional, and professional registers remain strongly influenced by vocabulary of French origin. These lexical units function as markers of prestige and authority while also enhancing semantic precision, especially in legal, procedural, and political contexts where ambiguity must be minimized. The study argues that French borrowings should not be viewed merely as historical remnants of linguistic contact, but as essential tools that ensure clarity, neutrality, and stylistic refinement in communication of diplomats. Through a systematic analysis of key lexical units of French derivation, the paper shows how they contribute to hierarchical register formation and enable nuanced expression in complex communicative environments. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the coexistence of Germanic and Romance elements in English creates a highly flexible linguistic system. This dual structure allows speakers to shift between emotional expressiveness and institutional formality, thereby addressing the diverse communicative requirements of modern diplomatic discourse.

Keywords: *diplomatic discourse, French borrowings in English, lexical prestige, semantic precision, linguistic hierarchy*

1. Introduction

English holds a leading role in the sphere of international diplomacy, serving as the principal language for negotiations, treaty drafting, and global communication. Nevertheless, its functionality in this field extends beyond its Germanic linguistic foundation. A significant contribution comes from a layer of vocabulary of French origin, which introduces formality, accuracy, and a sense of institutional legitimacy. This combination results in a stratified lexical

[1] Yatsenko, L. 1st year student, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine, Email: liuboviat@icloud.ua, ORCID https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0285-6496

[2] Ponomarenko, O. Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine, Email: olga0508009510@gmail.com,ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0634-208X

system where French-derived elements are typically associated with more formal and prestigious registers, where lexical choices signal social and professional hierarchy (Fairclough, 2015).

This study aims to analyze the contribution of French lexical components to the prestige and semantic precision of diplomatic English. It suggests that the persistence of such vocabulary is due to historical factors and practical communicative demands. As noted by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, linguistic choices in formal interaction are crucial in institutional communication for the sake of politeness and face management (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Diplomatic terminology of French origin frequently conveys complex legal and political concepts that lack direct equivalents in the Germanic lexicon. This aligns with the observation in lexical studies that borrowed vocabulary often becomes "specialized in meaning and function within institutional domains" (Crystal, 2003). Consequently, their use is essential for maintaining clarity and reducing ambiguity in sensitive and high-level international interactions. In diplomatic communication in particular, language is used not only to transmit information but to convey power relations and reduce interpretative conflict (Chilton, 2004). Diplomatic discourse therefore functions as what Teun A. van Dijk defines as a form of socially situated discourse where ideology and institutional power shape linguistic structure (van Dijk, 2008), while, in our opinion, the opposite is also true.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical approach to investigate the role of French lexical borrowings in English diplomatic discourse (Fairclough, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The research focuses on identifying, classifying, and interpreting lexical items (Bhatia, 2004) of French origin and examining their functional contribution to semantic precision, formality, and professional register.

The data for the analysis were collected from a range of authentic sources representing contemporary diplomatic communication (Chilton, 2004; Sharp, 2009). These include official statements, international agreements, policy documents, and transcripts of diplomatic speeches published by governmental and international institutions. Additional examples were drawn from authoritative lexicographic resources, including the Oxford English Dictionary and the Online Etymology Dictionary, to verify the origin and semantic development of selected lexical items.

The methodological framework consists of several stages. First, a corpus of frequently used French-derived lexical units in diplomatic English was compiled. These items were selected based on their frequency, relevance to diplomatic contexts, and clear etymological origin (Coulthard, 2014). The corpus includes nouns (e.g., communiqué, envoy, protocol), verbs (assist, enquire, select), and adjectives (amicable, profound).

Second, the selected lexical items were analyzed using semantic and functional analysis (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). This stage focused on identifying the specific meanings carried by French borrowings and comparing them with their Germanic equivalents. Attention was paid also to differences in connotation (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), level of formality, and degree of abstraction.

Third, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine how lexical choice influences register and communicative effect (van Dijk, 2008). Pairs of Germanic and French-derived synonyms were evaluated in context to determine how they function within diplomatic discourse and how they contribute to clarity, neutrality, and institutional tone.

Finally, elements of discourse analysis (Wodak, 2009; Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 2008) were applied to assess how these lexical choices operate within broader communicative structures. This allowed for the identification of patterns in the use of French borrowings as markers of prestige and professionalism in diplomatic and academic settings.

Overall, this methodology enables a systematic examination of the linguistic, semantic, and functional significance of French borrowings, highlighting their role as essential components of modern English diplomatic communication.

3. Results

The analysis of French lexical borrowings in English diplomatic discourse reveals a consistent pattern of functional specialization, where French-derived vocabulary systematically operates as a marker of formality (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 2008), precision, and institutional authority (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The examined data demonstrate that such lexical units are not randomly distributed but are strongly concentrated in contexts requiring legal exactness, procedural clarity, and diplomatic neutrality.

3.1. Borrowings as International Diplomatic Terminology

The results confirm that French borrowings occupy a higher stylistic register compared to their Germanic counterparts. In diplomatic documents and official statements, terms such as communiqué, protocol, envoy, attaché, détente, and rapprochement (Sargsyan, 2020; Oxford English Dictionary) are consistently used to encode institutional meanings that require precision and standardization. These units function as established international terms, reducing ambiguity and ensuring mutual understanding between multilingual actors in diplomatic communication.

3.2. Semantic Precision

The semantic analysis shows that French-derived vocabulary frequently carries meanings that are more specialized (Kecskes, 2014) and context-dependent than their Germanic equivalents. For example, communiqué is not interchangeable with "report," as it implies an officially sanctioned and carefully formulated public statement. Similarly, impasse denotes not merely a "dead end," but a structured diplomatic deadlock that implies negotiation potential. These distinctions support the claim that French borrowings contribute significantly to semantic precision in high-level international contexts.

3.3. Stylistic Register

The comparative analysis of synonymic pairs (Germanic vs. French-derived) confirms a systematic shift in register and tone. Germanic verbs such as help, ask, buy, and choose are regularly replaced in formal discourse by assist, enquire, purchase, and select. This substitution produces a more objective and impersonal tone, which is essential in diplomatic communication where emotional neutrality and professionalism are required. Similarly, adjectives such as amicable and profound replace simpler forms like "friendly" and "deep," reinforcing an elevated and institutional style.

3.4. Borrowings as Determinators of Diplomatic Roles

The results indicate that French lexical items serve as markers of institutional hierarchy (Sharp, 2009) and diplomatic roles. Terms such as attaché and envoy encode specific functional positions within diplomatic missions, while protocol regulates official behavior and procedure. Their use reinforces structural clarity and institutional legitimacy within international relations, as they are widely recognized across diplomatic systems.

3.5. Universal Diplomatic Discourse Formants

Discourse-level analysis demonstrates that French borrowings contribute to the construction of a standardized diplomatic register that transcends national linguistic variation. This is particularly evident in terms related to political processes and international relations, such as détente, rapprochement, and impasse, which provide concise conceptual labels for complex geopolitical situations. Their usage enables diplomats to communicate abstract political realities efficiently and with reduced interpretative variability.

Overall, the results confirm that French lexical borrowings play a dual role (Fairclough, 2015) in English diplomatic discourse: they function both as tools of semantic precision and as indicators of prestige and institutional formality. Their persistent use reflects not only historical linguistic influence but also their continued practical necessity in ensuring clarity, neutrality, and efficiency in international communication, as supported by etymological and lexicographic evidence from standard references.

4. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the central role of French lexical borrowings in shaping the stylistic and functional structure of English diplomatic discourse. Their persistent use confirms that English, while structurally Germanic, operates in diplomacy through a layered lexical system in which French-derived elements occupy a privileged position of formality and precision.

The findings support earlier observations in linguistic scholarship that French has historically functioned as the language of diplomacy, law, and elite communication in Europe, a process reinforced after the Norman Conquest and subsequent centuries of cultural exchange (Roth, 2011). This historical background explains why many French-origin terms remain embedded in institutional English today, not as archaic remnants, but as active components of specialized registers.

A key implication of the results is that French borrowings fulfill a functional gap in English vocabulary. As demonstrated in the analysis, Germanic lexical items often express direct, everyday meanings, while French-derived terms encode more abstract, institutional, or legally precise concepts. This supports the view that lexical duality in English is not redundant but complementary. The coexistence of pairs such as help/assist, ask/enquire, and buy/purchase allows speakers to select between informal immediacy and formal detachment depending on communicative context.

Furthermore, the study confirms that French borrowings operate as markers of prestige and institutional authority. Terms such as communiqué, protocol, and envoy are not merely stylistic alternatives but standardized international terms that carry recognized diplomatic weight. Their usage enhances the perceived legitimacy of communication and aligns with established norms of international discourse. This observation is consistent with lexicographic evidence from authoritative sources such as the Oxford English Dictionary and etymological studies documenting the sustained prestige of French-origin vocabulary in English.

The analysis also demonstrates that semantic precision is a key factor explaining the persistence of French lexical units. In diplomatic contexts, where misinterpretation can have significant political consequences, lexical clarity is essential. French-derived terms such as impasse and détente encapsulate complex geopolitical situations in concise and internationally recognized forms. As noted in Sargsyan (2020), such borrowings contribute to the stabilization of meaning across multilingual environments, reducing the risk of semantic ambiguity.

At the same time, the study reveals that the use of French vocabulary is not purely functional but also symbolic. It reflects the continued association of French with education, refinement, and institutional authority. This symbolic dimension contributes to the perception of diplomatic English as a neutral and professional medium, reinforcing hierarchical distinctions within discourse.

Overall, the discussion confirms that French lexical borrowings are integral to the structure of diplomatic English. They simultaneously perform communicative, semantic, and symbolic roles, enabling English to function effectively as a global diplomatic language. Their continued relevance demonstrates that linguistic prestige and communicative efficiency are closely interconnected in international discourse, where clarity, neutrality, and institutional legitimacy remain essential.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the role of French lexical borrowings in English diplomatic discourse, focusing on their contribution to lexical prestige, semantic precision, and institutional formality. The findings demonstrate that French-derived vocabulary is a structurally significant component of diplomatic English rather than a peripheral historical influence.

The analysis confirms that French borrowings consistently function as markers of elevated register, distinguishing formal and institutional communication from everyday usage. Through examples such as communiqué, protocol, envoy, détente, and rapprochement, it has been shown that these terms encode complex diplomatic meanings in a concise and internationally recognizable form. This supports their continued use in contexts where clarity, neutrality, and precision are essential.

The study also highlights the importance of lexical duality in English, where Germanic and Romance elements coexist and fulfill complementary communicative roles. While Germanic vocabulary tends to express directness and emotional immediacy, French-derived terms provide abstraction, formality, and conceptual specificity. This balance enables English to adapt effectively to different communicative settings, particularly in international relations.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the persistence of French lexical items is driven not only by historical tradition but also by functional necessity. In diplomatic communication, where misunderstandings may have significant political consequences, French borrowings help minimize ambiguity and standardize meaning across multilingual contexts.

Overall, the research confirms that French lexical influence remains essential to the structure and effectiveness of modern diplomatic English. It ensures both semantic accuracy and institutional legitimacy, while also reinforcing the prestige associated with formal international communication. The coexistence of Germanic and French layers ultimately provides English with the flexibility required for its role as the dominant global language of diplomacy.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval: The study does not involve human participants. No personally identifiable information was collected.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available in the References section.

Author Contributions: The authors confirm their joint responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words.* Oxford University Press.

Bhatia, V. K. (2004). *Worlds of written discourse: A genre-based view.* Continuum.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage.* Cambridge University Press.

Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice.* Routledge.

Cohen, R. (2012). *Negotiating across cultures: International communication in an interdependent world* (Revised ed.). United States Institute of Peace Press.

Cornelissen, J. (2020). *Corporate communication: A guide to theory and practice* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Coulthard, M. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, N. (2015). *Language and power* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Fetzer, A. (2014). *Context and context types in discourse analysis.* Routledge.

Ilie, C. (2010). Strategic uses of parliamentary forms of address. *Journal of Pragmatics, 42*(4), 885–911. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2009.08.003

Jucker, A. H. (2012). Pragmatics of historical discourse. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics, 13*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1075/jhp.13.1.01juc

Kecskes, I. (2014). *Intercultural pragmatics.* Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199892651.001

Mautner, G. (2010). *Language and the market society.* Routledge.

Neumann, I. B. (2012). *At home with the diplomats: Inside a European foreign ministry.* Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/cornell/9780801450460.001.0001

Online Etymology Dictionary. (n.d.). Etymology of English words. https://www.etymonline.com/

Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/

Roth, C. (2011). The Norman Conquest and the French influence on English vocabulary. *Journal of Medieval Linguistics, 15*(2), 45–67.

Sargsyan, T. (2020). French borrowings in English diplomatic language. *Journal of Language and Linguistics Studies, 16*(3), 1203–1218.

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language.* Cambridge University Press.

Sharp, P. (2009). *Diplomatic theory of international relations.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511814460

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory* (2nd ed.). Continuum.

van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and power.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-07289-8

van Dijk, T. A. (2011). *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Wodak, R. (2009). *The discourse of politics in action: Politics as usual.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230233689

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2016). *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Received: 03.20.2026
Revised: 04.10.2026
Accepted: 04.20.2026
Published: 04.26.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

A Qualitative Analysis of Discourse Markers in the Consultation Paper on Climate Change by the Liberal Democrats

[1] **Oleksandr Kapranov**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002011

Abstract

The issue of climate change is one of the key foci of British politics and social activism. Whilst there are multiple studies on the climate change discourses by the major political actors in the United Kingdom (the UK), research on the climate change discourse by the Liberal Democrats seems to be under-represented. Acknowledging the gap in scholarship, this article presents a qualitative study that seeks to learn about the discourse on climate change by the Liberal Democrats. Specifically, the study focuses on identifying and discussing the pragmatic roles of DMs in the Consultation Paper on Climate Change by the Liberal Democrats. The results of the qualitative analysis show that the Consultation Paper on Climate Change is marked by such DMs as (i) *furthermore*, (ii) *although*, (iii) *but*, (iv) *however*, (v) *if*, (vi) *in particular*, (vii) *specifically*, and (viii) *more specifically*, which play a range of pragmatic roles that are further discussed in the article.

Keywords: *climate change, climate change discourse, discourse markers, the Liberal Democrats, the United Kingdom*

1. Introduction

In the United Kingdom (the UK), the issue of climate change has become one of the critical foci of the current political agenda (Kapranov, 2023, 2024a; Sloam, Pickard, & Henn, 2022). The issue of climate change, however, polarises British political and societal actors (Cole et al., 2025; Kapranov, 2025a). Particularly, the British political spectrum is characterised by a number of mutually exclusive approaches to tackling the climate crisis that range from climate denialism to climate activism (Berglund & Bailey, 2023; Hansson, 2018; Hornsey & Lewandowsky, 2022; Kapranov, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d). For example, the UK's Green Party prioritises the issue of climate change as its specific political niche and demands the adoption of an intensive climate

[1] Kapranov, O. Associate Professor, NLA University College, Oslo, Norway. Email: oleksandr.kapranov@nla.no. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9056-3311

change-related agenda (Dennison, 2020), whilst the British mainstream parties, for instance the Conservative and Labour Parties, regard climate change as a long-term challenge that needs to be mitigated via political and economic mechanisms in order to meet the 2050 net-zero target (Carter, 2013, 2014; Kapranov, 2025b).

Whereas there is a plethora of scholarly studies on climate change policies and climate change discourses by the British mainstream actors (Boykoff, 2008; Lorenzoni & Benson, 2014; Kapranov, 2025a), relatively little is known about climate discourse by the UK's Liberal Democrats (Carter & Clements, 2015; Clements, 2014; Ford et al., 2025). Particularly, there is insufficient research on climate change-related discourse by the Liberal Democrats (Gillard, 2016). Taking into consideration the current gap in scholarly knowledge, the article presents a qualitative study that aims at learning about how metadiscursive means are used in the Consultation Paper on Climate Change (further — the Paper) published by the Liberal Democrats in 2024. Specifically, the study examines discourse markers (DMs) and their pragmatic roles in the Paper. Accordingly, the study answers the following

research question (**RQ**):

RQ: What are the pragmatic roles of DMs in the Paper?

Providing answers to the RQ seems relevant to the fields of (i) discourse studies, in particular, the Anglophone political discourse and the discourse on climate change, (ii) climate change education, and (iii) education for sustainable development (Kapranov, 2018a, 2025c, 2025d; Kapranov & Voloshyna, 2023).

Further, the article is structured as follows. First, the literature on DMs in the Anglophone climate change discourses is provided in section 2 of the article. Second, the present study is introduced and discussed in section 3. Finally, the study is concluded with the summary of the findings and an indication of prospective research.

2. The Literature on DMs in the Anglophone Climate Change Discourses

We should emphasise that DMs are researched in discourse studies, linguistics, applied linguistics, and studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Fraser, 1990, 1999, 2006, 2009; Kapranov, 2017, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2024e; Schiffrin, 2006; Schourup, 1999). Taking into consideration the fact that DMs are extensively studied in a range of scientific disciplines by different scholars (see comprehensive literature reviews in Kapranov (2021), Povolná (2012), and Schiffrin (2006)), it is only logical to expect that there are multiple definitions of DMs. For example, Aijmer (2002) posits that DMs are regarded as words or phrases that have connotative but not propositional meanings. Agreeing with Aijmer (2002), Furkó (2017), however, emphasises that DMs possess a pragmatic dimension, which he includes in his definition of DMs as

> a set of syntactically diverse linguistic items (for example, of course, surely, I think, well and so on) that are used for a variety of attitudinal and meta-communicative functions, lack conceptual meaning, and whose distinctive properties include indexicality, context-dependence and multifunctionality. The term PrM will be used as an umbrella term whose extension includes items with a primarily textual, discourse-connecting function as well primarily non-connective, interpersonal attitude markers (Furkó, 2017, p. 2)

Irrespective of the approaches to the classification of DMs, there is a nascent line of research that examines the occurrence and pragmatic functioning of DMs in climate change discourse, in particular in the Anglophone climate change discourse. For instance, Fløttum (2010) demonstrates that DMs are typically used in order to reflect polyphonic relationships in a climate change-related text. Furthermore, she notes that contrastive DMs are extensively employed in scientific texts on climate change. Analogously to Fløttum (2010), Kapranov (2024b, 2024e) shows that a number of contrastive DMs are frequently found in the discourse on climate change by King Charles III. Kapranov (2024e) illustrates the finding as follows:

> In the present corpus, the DM **but** seems to be readily utilised by the King in (i) creating contrast, as shown in excerpt (5) as well as (ii) adding an alternative discursive voice or a point of view to his narrative, as illustrated by excerpt (6). Both (5) and (6) derive from a speech delivered by the King at the Energy and Climate Change Meeting in Campeche in Mexico on 4 November 2014. (5) I'm not an economist, **but** I do think I have a little bit of common sense! And, if I may, Ladies and Gentlemen, I fear that we will also miss a trick unless we embrace the concept of a circular economy - not a linear one - not least in the utilization of waste and sewage in energy production, something which I know the President is thinking about seriously and which I've been taking seriously for the past 25 years. (Kapranov, 2024e, p. 140)

In a fairly recent study, Kapranov (2025a) has established that the current British prime minister Keir Starmer uses a range of DMs in his speeches and oral statements on the issue of climate change. Particularly, a quantitative examination of Starmer's discourse on climate change reveals that

> there is a group of DMs that occur very frequently in the corpus, namely (i) and, (ii) as, (iii) but, (iv) also, (v) so, and (vi) because. It should be briefly mentioned that the aforementioned six DMs could be classified, in accordance with Fraser (2015), into elaborative (e.g., and), implicative (also, as, because, so), and contrastive (e.g., but). Judging from the data presented in Table 2, the elaborative DM and is the most frequent DM in Keir Starmer's speeches on climate change, which is followed by the implicative DM as. (Kapranov, 2025a, p. 17).

In line with the prior studies that point to the use of contrastive and additive DMs in the Anglophone climate change discourses (Fløttum, 2010; Kapranov, 2024e, 2025a), a quantitative analysis of the climate change reports by the Greater London Authority (Kapranov, 2026) has yielded the following findings, which illustrate that the

> reports communicate the issue of climate change by means of using a rather wide range of DMs (N of types of DMs = 48). The range of DMs in the corpus is in line with the literature [27-28], which indicates that the major corporate actors in the UK employ a vast array of metadiscursive means, inter alia DMs, in their corporate reporting that concerns the issue of climate change. However, our findings are in contrast to the prior studies, which show that the Anglophone legal discourse on climate change employs a modest range of DMs [29]. It follows from Table 1 that the most frequently occurring DMs in the corpus are (i) and, (ii) as, (iii) however, (iv) but, and (v) if. (Kapranov, 2026, p. 10)

It is evident from the literature overview that the British climate change discourse makes use, predominantly, of the elaborative and contrastive DMs. It also follows from the literature review that there is a scarcity of studies that focus on DM in the British climate change discourse. In this light, we introduce and discuss a qualitative study on DMs in the climate change discourse by the Liberal Democrats in the subsequent section of the article.

3. The Present Study

As previously mentioned, there is insufficient research on DMs in the Anglophone and, specifically, British climate change discourses. That is why, the present study aims at proving an additional insight into this under-researched area of scientific inquiry. Specifically, the study examines the Consultation Paper on Climate Change, which was published by the Liberal Democrats in 2024. In the study, we refer to the Consultation Paper on Climate Change as the Paper and analyse it qualitatively in order to identify DMs and discuss their pragmatic roles.

The Paper is available at https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference/papers/autumn-2024/157-climate-change. The Paper consists of seven parts, which are titled (i) Background, (ii) Introduction, (iii) Our Starting Points and Recent Developments, (iv) Overall Framework, (v) Mitigation, (vi) Just Transition, and (vii) Adaptation. It should be noted that the Liberal Democrats regard the Paper as a platform for exchanging ideas and debating about their climate change-related policy, cf.

> This consultation paper is presented as the first stage in the development of new Party policy in relation to Climate Change. It does not represent agreed Party policy. It is designed to stimulate debate and discussion within the Party and outside; based on the response generated and on the deliberations of the working group, a full policy paper will be drawn up and presented to Conference for debate. The paper has been drawn up by a working group appointed by the Federal Policy Committee and chaired by Duncan Brack. Members of the group are prepared to speak on the paper to outside bodies and to discussion meetings organised within the Party (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 1)

In other words, the Paper represents a policy-shaping platform for an in-house debate that is taking place within the Liberal Democratic Party on the issue of climate change. The Paper, however, is written in the form of a programme, with occasional passages that invite the party members to suggest ways of influencing the party's policies on the issue of climate change. Hence, the readers can encounter passages in the Paper that are presented as a series of questions to the party members.

The Paper is analysed qualitatively in order to identify DMs in line with the definition of DMs provided by Fraser (1997, 1999, 2009, 2011, 2013), who defines them as lexical expressions, which "signal a relationship between the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1" (Fraser, 1999, p. 950). Modifying Fraser's definition of DMs, the identification of DMs in the study also includes those instances, in which they occur on the clausal boundaries between two clauses within one sentence, as well as on the sentential boundaries, as indicated by Fraser (2009, 2011, 2013).

The study's aim to determine the pragmatic roles of DMs in the Paper does not follow a predetermined set of roles found in the prior studies (see, for instance, Furkó (2017)). Instead, the assignment of pragmatic roles to DMs in the Paper is data-driven and specific to the context of the Paper. The results of the qualitative analysis are summarised and discussed in subsection 3.1. of the article.

3.1. Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis reveal that the Paper involves several qualitatively different types of DMs. In the order of their appearance in the Paper, these DMs are as follows: (i) *furthermore*, (ii) *although*, (iii) *but*, (iv) *however*, (v) *if*, (vi) *in particular*, (vii) *specifically*, and (viii) *more specifically*. The aforementioned types of DMs in the Paper can be grouped into (i) elaborative DMs, (ii) contrastive DMs, and (iii) conditional DMs. These three groups of DMs are further discussed in the present subsection of the article.

The elaborative DMs in the Paper are represented by *furthermore*, *in particular*, *specifically*, and *more specifically*. Whereas the DM *furthermore* is found in the initial parts of the Paper, the DMs *in particular*, *specifically*, and *more specifically* are located in the mid-section and the concluding parts of the Paper, as illustrated by excerpts (1) — (4) below.

> (1) Human activities, mainly the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, are causing global temperatures to rise, which in turn is driving the most rapid change in the climate in Earth's history. July 2024 was Earth's warmest July on record, extending the series of record high monthly global temperatures to 14 successive months. The year to date (January – July 2024) has seen average global surface temperature reach 1.28°C above the 20th-century average. **Furthermore**, the rate of change is accelerating: the warming rate of 0.18°C per decade seen between 1970 and 2008 almost doubled to roughly 0.3°C per decade over the past 15 years. On present trends,

the 1.5°C target set in the Paris Agreement will be breached by 2040. (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 3)

(2) Are the policies set out above still fit for purpose, particularly given the accelerating rate of global warming? What needs to be changed or added? **In particular**, what should our policy be in relation to when ending sales of new petrol and diesel cars, and of gas boilers? (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 17)

(3) **Specifically**, we proposed to create an independent Just Transition Commission to report to Parliament on the costs and benefits of net zero policies and provide advice on how to ensure that the transition delivers high-value employment opportunities and that disadvantaged groups are protected, with the benefits shared fairly between income groups, industries and regions. (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 19)

(4) **More specifically**, what needs to be done in the priority areas? The UN's Global Goal on Adaptation framework includes seven global thematic targets, covering water, food and agriculture, health, nature and biodiversity, infrastructure and buildings, livelihoods and cultural heritage. (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 22)

As evident from excerpts (1) — (4), the elaborative role of the DMs *further*, *in particular*, *specifically*, and *more specifically* consists in providing more specific information concerning the main points associated with the issue of climate change in the Paper. Additionally, we argue that the elaborative role of these DMs pertains to providing exemplification to the main argument, which is especially seen in (3) and (4), respectively. In case of the DM *furthermore*, we may assume that in addition to conveying a fine-tuned dimension to the exemplification of the point in (1), the pragmatic role of *furthermore* seems to render importance, or, perhaps, salience to the argument as a supplementary layer of its pragmatic function. So far, we contend that the elaborative DMs constitute a prominent feature of the Paper, since we have identified four types of elaborative DMs in it. This finding is rather novel, given that the prior studies on DMs in climate change discourse do not report a qualitatively rich presence of elaborative DMs (see Fløttum (2010), Kapranov (2024e, 2025a, 2026)).

Whilst the DM *although* can be regarded as contrastive in (5) and (6), we should, however, point to its pragmatic role that appears to be associated with concession in the Paper, as exemplified below:

(5) Wildfires will become more common and more extensive, water supplies will come under pressure and habitats and wildlife will suffer. **Although** the UK is better placed to adapt to climate change than many other countries, it will not escape global impacts such as rising food prices, the spread of diseases and the rise in numbers of refugees. (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 4)

(6) The record of the Conservative government on these issues has not been impressive, to put it mildly. **Although** the UK became the first major economy to adopt a target of net zero (in 2019), the Conservatives failed to put in place the measures necessary to achieve it. They continued to support road building and airport expansion, approved new oil and gas exploration licences in the North Sea, delayed the targets for phasing out sales of petrol and diesel vehicles and gas boilers, and provided insufficient support for renewable electricity generation and low-carbon heat and insulation upgrades in buildings — together costing energy bill-payers an estimated £2.5 billion by 2024. (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 7)

From a pragmatic perspective, we may also argue that the DM *although* in both (5) and (6) conveys a mild form contrast. Presumably, the DM *although* in (5) and (6) combines the pragmatic property of concession that can be, hypothetically, interchanged with the DM *whereas*, its pragmatic role gravitates towards a suggestion to reconsider the argument that is manifested in the preceding sentence. Accordingly, we posit that the DM *although* is associated in (5) as well as in (6) with the undertones of contrast, concession, and even contradiction.

Whilst the DM *although* can be seen as a pragmatic marker of mild contrast, a stronger form of contrast in the Paper is rendered by the contrastive DMs *but* and *however*, respectively. The contrastive DMs *but* and *however* are illustrated by excerpts (7) and (8) below.

(7) Comparing actual UK emissions with the trajectory we set out in 2019, in fact emissions dropped sharply in 2020, to a slightly lower figure than we had projected, because of the pandemic and lockdown. They rebounded strongly in 2021, **however,** and by 2023 were at 425 MtCO2e (including emissions from peatlands and the UK's share of international aviation and shipping), a 50 per cent fall from the base year of 1990. (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 8)

(8) The Labour government elected in July 2024 came to power with a more ambitious climate agenda than its predecessor, **but** it remains to be seen whether this will survive contact with the government's other approaches, such as its strict fiscal rules and its excessive caution in approaching closer links with the EU. In developing the party's climate policy for the next electoral cycle, we will need to take into account a range of new factors. (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 8)

As illustrated by (7) and (8), the contrastive DMs *but* and *however* signal the contradictory and antonymic relationships between the clauses. They join the two clauses by means of foregrounding the fact that the idea in Clause 1 is in opposition to the idea in Clause 2. This finding is in alignment with the literature (Fløttum, 2010; Kapranov, 2024e, 2025a, 2026), which shows that contrastive DMs form an inalienable part of climate change discourses.

Finally, the Paper employs the conditional DM *if*, which plays a prototypical role of establishing dependency on the current condition. The use of the conditional DM *if* is exemplified by excerpt (9).

> (9) **If** local authorities are given the responsibility, powers and resources to implement their own zero-carbon strategy, how can this be made consistent with the need to meet national targets? (The Consultation Paper, 2024, p. 13)

In (9), the conditional DM *if* plays a pragmatic role of a discussion-starter, i.e. by foregrounding contingencies between the ideas in (9), it is used as an invitation to the party members to discuss them and offer their vision of the net-zero strategy. It should be observed that the pragmatic use of the conditional DM *if* as an invitation to the discussion in (9) has not been reported in the studies on DMs in climate change discourses (Fløttum, 2010; Kapranov, 2024e, 2025a, 2026).

4. Conclusions

The present qualitative study examined the Consultation Paper on Climate Change published by the Liberal Democrats in 2024. The aim of the examination was to identify DMs in the Paper and establish their pragmatic roles. The novelty of the study consisted in the fact that the climate change discourse by the Liberal Democrats was rarely analysed in the literature on the Anglophone climate change discourses.

Whereas the study was only one of the first attempts to shine light onto the climate change discourse by the Liberal Democrats, the results of the investigation revealed that the Paper involved the following DMs: (i) *furthermore*, (ii) *although*, (iii) *but*, (iv) *however*, (v) *if*, (vi) *in particular*, (vii) *specifically*, and (viii) *more specifically*. The analysis of their pragmatic roles demonstrated that they were associated with (i) elaboration and rendering salience to the supplementary layer of information; (ii) concession and mild contrast, which verged on combining contrast with concession and contradiction; and (iii) conditionality, which was exacerbated by the pragmatic undertone of a discussion-starter.

Based upon the aforementioned findings, the article could provide suggestions for future research investigations. In particular, it would be relevant to collect a corpus of climate change documents by the Liberal Democrats and analyse them quantitatively. In addition, it would be pertinent to contrast the climate change discourse by the Liberal Democrats with the respective discourses by other political actors in the UK and in the Anglophone world.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available in the References section.

Primary Sources

The Consultation Paper. (2024). Consultation Paper on Climate Change by the Liberal Democrats. https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference/papers/autumn-2024/157-climate-change

References

Aijmer, K. (2002). *English Discourse Particles.* John Benjamins.

Berglund, O., & Bailey, D. J. (2023). Whose system, what change? A critical political economy approach to the UK climate movement. *Environmental Politics, 32*(6), 1012–1032.

Boykoff, M. T. (2008). The cultural politics of climate change discourse in UK tabloids. *Political Geography, 27*(5), 549–569.

Carter, N. (2013). Greening the mainstream: party politics and the environment. *Environmental Politics, 22*(1), 73–94.

Carter, N. (2014). The politics of climate change in the UK. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 5*(3), 423–433. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.274

Carter, N., & Clements, B. (2015). From 'greenest government ever' to 'get rid of all the green crap': David Cameron, the Conservatives and the environment. *British Politics, 10*(2), 204–225.

Clements, B. (2014). Political party supporters' attitudes towards and involvement with green issues in Britain. *Politics, 34*(4), 362–377.

Cole, J. C., Gillis, A. J., Van der Linden, S., Cohen, M. A., & Vandenbergh, M. P. (2025). Social psychological perspectives on political polarization: Insights and implications for climate change. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 20*(1), 115–141. https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916231186409

Dennison, J. (2020). How niche parties react to losing their niche: the cases of the Brexit Party, the Green Party and Change UK. *Parliamentary Affairs, 73*(Supplement_1), 125–141.

Fløttum, K. (2010). A linguistic and discursive view on climate change discourse. *ASp. la revue du GERAS, 58*, 19–37.

Ford, R., Bale, T., Jennings, W., & Surridge, P. (2025). Winning here: The Liberal Democrats. In R. Ford, T. Bale, W. Jennings, & P. Surridge (Eds.), *The British General Election of 2024* (pp. 133–160). Springer.

Fraser, B. (1990). An approach to discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics, 14*(3), 383–398. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90096-V

Fraser, B. (1997). Commentary pragmatic markers in English. *Estudios ingleses de la Universidad Complutense, 5*, 115–127.

Fraser, B. (1999). What are discourse markers?. *Journal of Pragmatics, 31*(7), 931–952. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00101-5

Fraser, B. (2006). Towards a theory of discourse markers. In K. Fischer (Ed.), *Approaches to Discourse Particles* (pp. 189–204). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9780080461588_012

Fraser, B. (2009). An account of discourse markers. *International Review of Pragmatics, 1*(2), 293–320. https://doi.org/10.1163/187730909X12538045489818

Fraser, B. (2011). The sequencing of contrastive discourse markers in English. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture, 1*, 29–35.

Fraser, B. (2013). Combinations of contrastive discourse markers in English. *International Review of Pragmatics, 5*(2), 318–340.

Furkó, P. (2017). Manipulative uses of pragmatic markers in political discourse. *Palgrave Communications, 3*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.54

Gillard, R. (2016). Unravelling the United Kingdom's climate policy consensus: The power of ideas, discourse and institutions. *Global Environmental Change, 40*, 26–36.

Hansson, S. O. (2018). Dealing with climate science denialism: experiences from confrontations with other forms of pseudoscience. *Climate Policy, 18*(9), 1094–1102.

Hornsey, M. J., & Lewandowsky, S. (2022). A toolkit for understanding and addressing climate scepticism. *Nature Human Behaviour, 6*(11), 1454–1464.

Kapranov, O. (2017). Discourse markers in academic writing in EFL by Swedish pre-service secondary school teachers of English. *Logos & Littera: Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches to Text, 1*(4), 21–39.

Kapranov, O. (2018a). The impact of implicit instruction upon the use of English discourse markers in written tasks at the advanced beginners' level of EFL proficiency. *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture, 8*, 56–73. https://doi.org/10.22364/BJELLC.08.2018.04

Kapranov, O. (2018b). Discourse markers in the genre of formal letter writing performed by intermediate students of English as a foreign language. *Studies about Language, 33*, 74–89. https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.0.33.20672

Kapranov, O. (2019a). Discourse markers in online writing by early balanced English/Italian bilinguals. *Brno Studies in English, 45*(2), 77–100. https://doi.org/10.5817/BSE2019-2-4

Kapranov, O. (2019b). Discourse markers in the novice translator students' translations from Swedish into English. In M. Organ (Ed.), *Translation Today: Applied Translation Studies in Focus* (pp. 63–80). Peter Lang. https://doi.org/10.3726/b15536

Kapranov, O. (2021). Discourse markers in peer reviews of academic essays by future teachers of English as a foreign language. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia, 56*(1), 55–84. https://doi.org/10.2478/stap-2021-0020

Kapranov, O. (2023). Throwing soup at Van Gogh: The framing of art in climate change activism by British mass media. *Discourses on Culture, 19*(1), 175–200.

Kapranov, O. (2024a). The framing of King Charles III's climate change-related activities by the leading American and British mass media. *Philologia, 22*(1), 53–73. https://doi.org/10.18485/philologia.2024.22.22.3

Kapranov, O. (2024b). Responsibility, sustainability, and threat: The framing of climate change by King Charles III. *Cultural Perspectives-Journal for Literary and British Cultural Studies in Romania, 29*, 117–146.

Kapranov, O. (2024c). The framing of climate change discourse by Greenpeace Africa. *Acta Marisiensis. Philologia, 6*(6), 29–39. https://doi.org/10.62838/amph-2024-0102

Kapranov, O. (2024d). Metonymy in Greta Thunberg's climate change discourse on Facebook. *Филолог — часопис за језик, књижевност и културу / Philologist — Journal of Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies, 15*(30), 109–129. https://doi.org/10.21618/fil2430109k

Kapranov, O. (2024e). Discourse markers in King Charles III's speeches on climate change. *Analele Universităţii Ovidius din Constanţa. Seria Filologie, 35*(1), 131–145.

Kapranov, O. (2025a). Discourse markers in Keir Starmer's speeches on climate change. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 13*(1), 8–26.

Kapranov, O. (2025b). Syntactic means in Keir Starmer's speeches on climate change: An investigation of dependent clauses. *Annals of the Faculty of Philology / Анали Филолошког факултета, 37*(1), 13–28. https://doi.org/10.18485/analiff.2025.37.1.1

Kapranov, O. (2025c). Culture, education and theatre: The Globe Theatre's discourse on climate change. *Journal of Education, Society & Multiculturalism, 6*(2), 78–96. https://doi.org/10.2478/jesm-2025-0016

Kapranov, O. (2025d). Chair's letter: Analysing discourse markers in BP's annual reports. *Lyuboslovie, 25*, 193–209. https://doi.org/10.46687/SUOB1186

Kapranov, O. (2026). Discourse markers in climate change reports by the Greater London Authority. *Bulletin of Karaganda University. Philology Series, 31*(1), 6–15. https://doi.org/10.31489/2026phi1(121)/6-15

Kapranov, O., & Voloshyna, O. (2023). Learning English under the air-raid sirens: Analysing undergraduate EFL learners' sustainable practices. *Sustainable Multilingualism, 23*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.2478/sm-2023-0011

Lorenzoni, I., & Benson, D. (2014). Radical institutional change in environmental governance: Explaining the origins of the UK Climate Change Act 2008 through discursive and streams perspectives. *Global Environmental Change, 29*, 10–21.

Povolná, R. (2012). Causal and contrastive discourse markers in novice academic writing. *Brno Studies in English, 38*(2), 131–148.

Schiffrin, D. (2006). Discourse marker research and theory. In K. Fischer (Ed.), *Approaches to Discourse Particles* (pp. 315–338). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9780080461588_018

Schourup, L. (1999). Discourse markers. *Lingua, 107*(3–4), 227–265. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-3841(96)90026-1

Sloam, J., Pickard, S., & Henn, M. (2022). Young people and environmental activism: The transformation of democratic politics. *Journal of Youth Studies, 25*(6), 683–691.

Received: 03.25.2026
Revised: 04.20.2026
Accepted: 05.02.2026
Published: 05.04.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

The Most Effective Strategies in Foreign Language Acquisition

[1] **Seadet Seyidova**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002012

Abstract

This study explores the most effective techniques in foreign language acquisition, focusing on cognitive, communicative, and technology-enhanced strategies that support successful learning outcomes. Drawing on existing research and pedagogical practices, the paper examines how methods such as spaced repetition, immersion, task-based learning, and interaction contribute to language proficiency. A qualitative-descriptive approach was employed through a systematic review of academic literature, language learning frameworks, and empirical studies. The findings indicate that no single technique guarantees success; rather, a combination of methods tailored to learners' needs yields the best results. Techniques that promote active engagement, meaningful communication, and long-term memory retention are particularly effective. Additionally, the integration of digital tools enhances accessibility and motivation. The study concludes that effective language acquisition depends on strategic method selection, learner autonomy, and consistent practice. These insights provide practical implications for educators and learners seeking to optimize language learning processes.

Keywords: *language acquisition, immersion, spaced repetition, task-based learning, communicative approach*

1. Introduction

Foreign language acquisition has become increasingly important in a globalized world, where communication across cultures, economies, and educational systems is essential. As international mobility and digital connectivity expand, the ability to use more than one language is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Despite this growing demand, many learners struggle to achieve communicative competence, often due to ineffective learning strategies, limited exposure, or lack of motivation.

[1] Seyidova, S. Teacher, Department of Languages, Industrial and Technology College under Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University, Azerbaijan. Email: seadetseyidova76@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5862-8566

The study of how individuals acquire a second or foreign language has been widely explored within the field of applied linguistics. Early approaches, such as the grammar-translation method, focused primarily on memorization of vocabulary and explicit grammatical rules. However, these traditional methods were later criticized for failing to develop practical communication skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In contrast, contemporary theories emphasize the importance of meaningful interaction and exposure to authentic language use.

One of the most influential perspectives in language acquisition is Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which argues that learners acquire language most effectively when they are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level (Krashen, 1985). This theory highlights the importance of listening and reading activities that are both understandable and challenging. However, input alone is not sufficient. Swain's Output Hypothesis suggests that producing language through speaking and writing plays a crucial role in developing linguistic accuracy and fluency (Swain, 1995).

Interaction also plays a central role in language learning. Long's Interaction Hypothesis posits that conversational interaction facilitates acquisition by allowing learners to negotiate meaning and receive feedback (Long, 1996). This has led to the development of communicative language teaching (CLT), which prioritizes real-life communication and learner participation over rote learning.

In addition to interaction-based theories, cognitive approaches emphasize the role of memory and information processing. Techniques such as spaced repetition and retrieval practice are grounded in cognitive psychology and have been shown to significantly improve long-term retention of vocabulary and structures (Nation, 2013). These strategies demonstrate that effective language learning is closely linked to how information is encoded, stored, and retrieved in the brain (Alisoy, 2025).

Furthermore, sociocultural theory highlights the importance of social context and collaboration in language development. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable others within the learner's zone of proximal development. This perspective supports the use of collaborative tasks, peer learning, and guided instruction in language classrooms.

In recent years, technological advancements have further transformed language learning practices. Digital tools such as mobile applications, online platforms, and artificial intelligence-based systems provide learners with personalized and interactive experiences (Alisoy, 2025). Studies suggest that technology-enhanced learning can increase motivation, provide immediate feedback, and facilitate autonomous learning (Godwin-Jones, 2018).

Given the diversity of theories and techniques, it is clear that no single method can address all aspects of language acquisition. Instead, successful learning depends on the integration of multiple approaches that target cognitive, communicative, and social dimensions of language use. Therefore, this study aims to examine the most effective techniques in foreign language acquisition by synthesizing insights from established theories and contemporary practices (Javid & Sayyara, 2024).

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive research design based on a systematic review of scholarly literature related to foreign language acquisition. The purpose of this approach is to synthesize theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in order to identify the most effective language learning techniques across different contexts.

2.1. Research Design

A qualitative synthesis method was chosen to allow for an in-depth examination of existing studies rather than generating new experimental data. This design is particularly appropriate for identifying patterns, comparing approaches, and evaluating the pedagogical effectiveness of various techniques (Creswell, 2014). The study integrates insights from applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, and educational technology.

2.2. Data Sources and Search Strategy

Data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and reputable educational reports. Major academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect were used to locate relevant publications. The search included combinations of keywords such as *"foreign language acquisition," "language learning strategies," "communicative approach," "task-based learning," "spaced repetition,"* and *"technology in language learning."*

The search process focused primarily on studies published between 2000 and 2023, while also including seminal works that have significantly influenced the field, such as Krashen (1985), Vygotsky (1978), and Long (1996).

2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the reliability and relevance of the data, the following inclusion criteria were applied:

- Studies addressing foreign or second language acquisition
- Research evaluating specific learning techniques or methods
- Empirical studies with measurable outcomes or well-established theoretical frameworks
- Publications in English

Exclusion criteria included:

- Studies lacking methodological clarity
- Opinion-based articles without empirical or theoretical grounding
- Research focused solely on first language acquisition

2.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The collected sources were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, relevant data were extracted and organized according to recurring themes. These themes were then grouped into broader categories representing major language learning techniques, including cognitive strategies, communicative approaches, immersion practices, and technology-assisted learning.

Comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of each technique based on reported outcomes such as vocabulary retention, fluency development, learner motivation, and communicative competence (Nuri & Ismailli, 2025). Attention was also given to contextual factors, including age, proficiency level, and learning environment.

To enhance the credibility of the study, multiple sources were cross-checked to confirm consistency in findings. Preference was given to peer-reviewed publications and widely cited works in the field. Additionally, the use of established theoretical frameworks (e.g., Input Hypothesis, Interaction Hypothesis, sociocultural theory) strengthens the validity of interpretations.

Despite its systematic approach, this study has certain limitations. As a qualitative review, it does not include primary experimental data, which may limit the ability to generalize findings. Furthermore, variations in study design, participant demographics, and educational contexts across the reviewed literature may affect comparability. Nevertheless, the synthesis provides a comprehensive overview of effective techniques in foreign language acquisition.

3. Results

The analysis of the selected literature reveals that effective foreign language acquisition is supported by a combination of cognitive, communicative, and technology-enhanced techniques. The findings are organized into key thematic areas, each supported by empirical and theoretical research.

3.1. Spaced Repetition and Memory-Based Techniques

A substantial body of research highlights the effectiveness of spaced repetition in vocabulary acquisition. Spaced repetition systems (SRS) rely on reviewing information at gradually increasing intervals, which strengthens long-term retention and reduces forgetting. According to Nation (2013), deliberate vocabulary learning combined with repeated exposure significantly enhances lexical acquisition. Similarly, Kang (2016) demonstrates that spaced practice leads to better retention compared to massed learning due to improved memory consolidation. Digital tools such as flashcard applications further facilitate this process by adapting review schedules to individual learner performance.

3.2. Immersion and Naturalistic Exposure

Immersion has consistently been identified as one of the most powerful techniques in language learning. Learners exposed to authentic linguistic environments develop stronger listening and speaking skills due to continuous input. Krashen (1985) emphasizes that comprehensible input is essential for acquisition, and immersion environments naturally provide such input. Studies on study-abroad programs also indicate that immersion significantly improves fluency, pronunciation, and pragmatic competence (Freed, 1995). However, the effectiveness of immersion depends on the level of learner engagement and interaction within the target language environment.

3.3. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching focuses on meaningful interaction and real-life communication. Research shows that learners engaged in communicative activities demonstrate higher levels of fluency and confidence. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT promotes functional language use rather than isolated grammar instruction. Furthermore, classroom-based studies confirm that pair work, group discussions, and role-playing activities improve learners' ability to use language spontaneously (Littlewood, 2004). These findings support the view that communication-oriented instruction is essential for developing practical language skills.

3.4. Task-Based Learning (TBL)

Task-Based Learning has gained prominence as an extension of communicative approaches. This method encourages learners to complete meaningful tasks using the target language, such as solving problems or participating in projects (Hasan, 2023). Ellis (2003) argues that tasks create opportunities for authentic language use and promote both fluency and accuracy. Empirical studies suggest that TBL enhances learner engagement and leads to improved communicative competence, particularly when tasks are relevant to real-life situations (Nunan, 2004).

3.5. Input–Output Balance

The balance between input and output is a critical factor in language acquisition. While input provides the foundation for understanding, output allows learners to practice and refine their language skills. Swain (1995) highlights the importance of output in helping learners notice gaps in their knowledge and develop grammatical accuracy. Long (1996) further emphasizes that interaction during output activities facilitates negotiation of meaning, which enhances comprehension and learning. Studies confirm that learners who actively produce language achieve higher proficiency levels than those who rely solely on passive input.

3.6. Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

The integration of technology has transformed language learning practices. Digital platforms, mobile applications, and online resources provide learners with access to authentic materials, interactive exercises, and immediate feedback (Babayev, 2025). Godwin-Jones (2018) notes that technology supports personalized learning and increases learner autonomy. Additionally, research shows that multimedia tools improve listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition by combining visual and auditory input (Mayer, 2009). However, the effectiveness of technology depends on how well it is integrated into pedagogical practices.

3.7. Learner Autonomy and Motivation

Another important finding is the role of learner autonomy and motivation in successful language acquisition (Babayev, 2025). Autonomous learners who take responsibility for their learning tend to use a wider range of strategies and achieve better outcomes. According to Dörnyei (2005), motivation is one of the strongest predictors of language learning success. Techniques that encourage self-directed learning, such as goal setting and self-assessment, significantly enhance learner engagement and persistence.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the view that foreign language acquisition is a complex and multifaceted process that cannot be effectively addressed through a single instructional method. Instead, the results highlight the importance of integrating cognitive, communicative, and technological approaches to achieve optimal learning outcomes. This aligns with contemporary perspectives in applied linguistics, which emphasize the interaction of multiple factors in successful language development.

One of the key insights from the analysis is the complementary relationship between memory-based techniques and communicative practices. While spaced repetition has been shown to significantly improve vocabulary retention (Nation, 2013; Kang, 2016), it does not inherently develop communicative competence. In contrast, communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning (TBL) provide opportunities for meaningful interaction, which is essential for fluency development (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Ellis, 2003). This suggests that effective language instruction should combine structured vocabulary learning with interactive activities that promote real-life language use.

The role of input and output in language acquisition also emerges as a critical consideration. Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis underscores the importance of exposure to comprehensible input, yet the findings indicate that input alone is insufficient for achieving full proficiency. Swain’s (1995) Output Hypothesis and Long’s (1996) Interaction Hypothesis demonstrate that language production and interaction are equally important, as they encourage learners to process language more deeply and identify gaps in their knowledge. Therefore, a balanced approach that incorporates both receptive and productive skills is essential.

Immersion, often regarded as one of the most effective techniques, provides rich opportunities for exposure to authentic language use. However, the results suggest that immersion is not universally effective without active engagement. Freed (1995) notes that learners who passively experience immersion environments may show limited improvement compared to those who actively participate in communication. This finding highlights the importance of learner involvement and supports sociocultural theory, which emphasizes interaction and collaboration as key drivers of learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

Another significant aspect discussed in the findings is the growing role of technology in language learning. Digital tools and online platforms have expanded access to language resources and created new opportunities for personalized learning (Babayev, 2025). According to Godwin-Jones (2018), technology enhances learner autonomy and provides immediate feedback, which can accelerate the learning process. However, the discussion also reveals potential limitations, as excessive reliance on technology may reduce opportunities for face-to-face interaction, which remains crucial for developing pragmatic competence and conversational skills.

Learner-related factors, particularly motivation and autonomy, further influence the effectiveness of language acquisition techniques. Dörnyei (2005) emphasizes that motivation is a key determinant of success, affecting both the intensity and persistence of learning efforts. The findings support this view by demonstrating that motivated learners are more likely to engage in diverse learning strategies, including self-directed practice and consistent exposure to the target language. This underscores the need for teaching approaches that not only provide effective techniques but also foster intrinsic motivation.

Despite the strengths of the identified techniques, the study also acknowledges certain limitations in their application. Differences in learner age, proficiency level, and learning context may influence the effectiveness of specific methods (Aslanova, 2026). For instance, younger learners may benefit more from immersive and interactive approaches, while adult learners may prefer structured and cognitively oriented techniques. Additionally, institutional constraints, such as limited classroom time or resources, may restrict the implementation of certain strategies.

Overall, the discussion highlights that successful foreign language acquisition requires a dynamic and flexible approach that adapts to individual learner needs and contextual factors. The integration of multiple techniques — combining memory, interaction, input-output balance, and technological support — appears to be the most effective pathway to achieving communicative competence. Future research may further explore how emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and adaptive learning systems, can be integrated with established pedagogical methods to enhance language learning outcomes (Mammadova, 2026).

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the most effective techniques in foreign language acquisition by synthesizing insights from established theories and contemporary research (Huseyn & Babayev, 2025). The findings demonstrate that successful language learning does not rely on a single method but rather on the strategic integration of multiple approaches that address different dimensions of the learning process. Cognitive techniques such as spaced repetition play a crucial role in strengthening memory and supporting long-term retention of vocabulary, while communicative approaches, including communicative language teaching and task-based learning, are essential for developing fluency and practical language use.

The analysis also highlights the importance of balancing input and output. Exposure to comprehensible input provides the foundation for understanding the language, whereas active production through speaking and writing enables learners to refine their skills and achieve greater accuracy. Immersion further enhances this process by offering authentic contexts for language use, although its effectiveness depends largely on the learner's level of engagement.

In addition, the growing role of technology has introduced new opportunities for personalized and flexible learning. Digital tools can increase motivation, provide immediate feedback, and support autonomous learning, making language acquisition more accessible than ever before. However, these tools should complement rather than replace meaningful human interaction.

Ultimately, effective foreign language acquisition requires consistency, motivation, and adaptability. Learners benefit most when they actively engage with the language, use a variety of techniques, and tailor their strategies to their individual needs. Future developments in educational technology and pedagogy are likely to further enhance these processes, offering even more effective pathways to language proficiency.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available in the References section.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Alisoy, H. (2025). ESL teaching methods and approaches: Essential strategies for encouraging effective language acquisition. *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities, 1*(1), 3–11.

Alisoy, H. (2025). The impact of AI-powered personalized learning on ESL student outcomes. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education, 2*(2), 89–98.

Aslanova, U. (2026). Methods of teaching German at the A1 level to students with heterogeneous proficiency levels in higher education institutions. *Porta Universorum, 2*(3), 43–56.

Babayev, J. (2025). Application of social platforms in language learning. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum, 2*(3), 141–148.

Babayev, J. (2025). Algorithmic autonomy or dependence? A mixed-methods study on AI personalization and self-regulated learning in higher education. *Journal of Azerbaijan Language and Education Studies, 2*(4), 32–39.

Babayev, J. S. (2025). How music makes you fluent: Learning English through songs. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum.*

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching.* Oxford University Press.

Freed, B. F. (Ed.). (1995). *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context.* John Benjamins.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2018). Using mobile technology to develop language skills and cultural understanding. *Language Learning & Technology, 22*(3), 1–17.

Hasan, O. G. L. U. (2023). Task-based teaching, learning, and assessment in ELT: A case study of innovative practices. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies and Social Sciences, 3*(5), 25–33.

Huseyn, Z. I., & Babayev, J. (2025). Effective methods of teaching Azerbaijani to foreign students. *Porta Universorum, 1*(9), 118–126.

Javid, B., & Sayyara, S. (2024). The most ideal L2 teaching method. *International Journal of Religion, 5*(7), 367–378.

Kang, S. H. K. (2016). Spaced repetition promotes efficient and effective learning: Policy implications for instruction. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 3*(1), 12–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732215624708

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications.* Longman.

Littlewood, W. (2004). The task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *ELT Journal, 58*(4), 319–326. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/58.4.319

Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). Academic Press.

Mammadova, R. (2026). Emerging technologies and pedagogical innovations in foreign language teaching. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education, 3*(1), 44–55.

Mayer, R. E. (2009). *Multimedia learning* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching.* Cambridge University Press.

Nuri, A., & Ismailli, T. (2025). The importance of student motivation. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems, 8*(6), 260–262.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Swain, M. (1995). Three functions of output in second language learning. In G. Cook & B. Seidlhofer (Eds.), *Principle and practice in applied linguistics: Studies in honour of H. G. Widdowson* (pp. 125–144). Oxford University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Harvard University Press.

Received: 04.01.2026
Revised: 04.20.2026
Accepted: 05.02.2026
Published: 05.04.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Conceptual Metaphor and Metonymy in Cognitive Linguistics: Theoretical Foundations, Interactions, and Cross-Domain Mappings

[1] **Shehla Salmanova**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002013

Abstract

Since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphors We Live By in 1980, conceptual metaphor theory has fundamentally transformed the linguistic and cognitive understanding of figurative language. Rather than treating metaphor and metonymy as rhetorical ornaments confined to literary or poetic discourse, cognitive linguistics reconceptualizes them as basic mechanisms of human thought and conceptual organization that permeate everyday language, reasoning, and communication. This article examines the theoretical foundations of conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual metonymy, analyzes their structural properties and cognitive functions, and investigates the nature of their interaction in actual linguistic data. Drawing on corpus-based and discourse-analytical approaches, the study identifies the primary types of conceptual metaphor and metonymy, discusses the principles governing cross-domain mapping, and examines the relationship between metaphor and metonymy as partially overlapping cognitive mechanisms. The analysis demonstrates that conceptual metaphor and metonymy are not merely linguistic phenomena but reflect deep-seated patterns of human embodied cognition, cultural knowledge, and experiential grounding. The article argues that their systematic study contributes not only to theoretical linguistics but also to applied fields including discourse analysis, cognitive semantics, and language pedagogy.

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor, metonymy, cognitive linguistics, cross-domain mapping, embodied cognition, Lakoff and Johnson, figurative language*

1. Introduction

Prior to the cognitive revolution in linguistics, metaphor was treated primarily as a rhetorical device — an ornamental feature of poetic or literary language that served to embellish expression but played no fundamental role in ordinary thought or communication. The classical Aristotelian view, elaborated through centuries of rhetorical tradition, held that metaphor involved the

[1] Salmanova, S. Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, Azerbaijan. Email: shehlasalmanova@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1692-9996

substitution of a figurative expression for a literal one, implying that all metaphorical meanings could in principle be replaced by their literal equivalents without loss of propositional content (Aristotle, trans. 1984; Richards, 1936). Metonymy, similarly, was treated as a figure of speech — a rhetorical device involving the substitution of a related or contiguous term — rather than as a cognitive mechanism with systematic properties.

The publication of Lakoff and Johnson's Metaphors We Live By in 1980 marked a fundamental reorientation of this understanding. Lakoff and Johnson argued that metaphor is not primarily a feature of language but of thought: that the human conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature, and that most abstract concepts are understood and reasoned about in terms of more concrete or experientially grounded domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This proposal — the theory of conceptual metaphor — initiated a research programme that has continued to develop and diversify over four decades, generating substantial empirical evidence from linguistics, cognitive science, psychology, and neuroscience (Steen et al., 2010; Kövecses, 2002).

Metonymy received parallel theoretical reconceptualization. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) recognized metonymy as a distinct cognitive mechanism involving reference within a single domain rather than mapping across domains. Subsequent work by Radden and Kövecses (1999), Barcelona (2003), and others developed a systematic theoretical account of conceptual metonymy, identifying the cognitive principles governing metonymic mappings and distinguishing metonymy from metaphor as partially overlapping but theoretically distinct phenomena. The relationship between metaphor and metonymy — and the possibility of their interaction and integration in single linguistic expressions — has been a productive area of research that continues to generate theoretical debate (Goossens, 1990; Barcelona, 2011). Studies of figurative language in adjacent domains, including idiomatic expressions and their impact on lexical competence, further underscore the practical relevance of these cognitive mechanisms for language learning and use (Sadiqzade, 2025).

This article provides a comprehensive examination of conceptual metaphor theory and conceptual metonymy within the framework of cognitive linguistics. It examines the theoretical foundations and structural properties of each phenomenon, analyzes their cognitive functions and experiential grounding, investigates their interaction and combination, and considers the implications of the cognitive linguistic approach for the broader study of figurative language in discourse. The article aims to contribute to the ongoing theoretical consolidation of the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor and metonymy while also highlighting areas of continuing debate and future research potential.

2. Theoretical Framework: Cognitive Linguistics and Embodied Cognition

Conceptual metaphor theory is situated within the broader framework of cognitive linguistics, which shares a set of core theoretical commitments that distinguish it from formal and generative approaches to language. These commitments include the rejection of the modularity thesis — the claim that language constitutes an autonomous cognitive module separate from general cognition — in favor of the view that language reflects and is structured by general cognitive mechanisms including categorization, image schemas, mental spaces, and conceptual integration (Langacker, 1987; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

Central to the cognitive linguistic framework is the thesis of embodied cognition: the claim that the structure of the human conceptual system is grounded in and shaped by the nature of the human body and its sensorimotor interactions with the physical and social environment (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). On this view, abstract concepts are not arbitrary symbols that stand in purely conventional relations to their meanings but are structured by patterns of embodied experience — by the experience of physical force, of spatial orientation, of containment and boundedness, of motion and trajectory — that are projected onto abstract domains through metaphorical and metonymic mappings.

The concept of the image schema, introduced by Johnson (1987) and elaborated in subsequent cognitive linguistic research, is particularly important in this context. Image schemas are pre-conceptual, recurring patterns of sensorimotor experience — such as the CONTAINER schema, the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, the FORCE schema, and the VERTICALITY schema — that provide the experiential basis for abstract conceptualization through metaphorical projection (Hampe, 2005). The ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor, for example, draws on the physical experience of force, resistance, and territorial conflict; the MORE IS UP metaphor is grounded in the correlation between adding physical substance and increase in vertical height (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The experiential basis of conceptual metaphor is further supported by work in neural linguistics and embodied simulation theory, which proposes that understanding metaphorical language involves partial activation of the sensorimotor systems associated with the source domain (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005). Neuroimaging studies have provided empirical support for the view that processing metaphorical expressions activates brain regions associated with the literal meanings of the source domain, though the precise neural mechanisms of metaphor processing remain an active area of investigation (Steen et al., 2010).

3. Conceptual Metaphor: Structure and Types

3.1. The Structure of Conceptual Metaphor

A conceptual metaphor, in Lakoff and Johnson's framework, is a systematic mapping between a source domain and a target domain, whereby the structure, inferential patterns, and experiential correlates of the source domain are projected onto the target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993). The standard notation for conceptual metaphors uses the format

TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN: thus ARGUMENT IS WAR, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, TIME IS MONEY, and THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS are all conceptual metaphors in which an abstract or less clearly structured target domain is understood in terms of a more concrete or experientially familiar source domain.

The mapping between source and target domain is not total but partial: only certain aspects of the source domain are projected onto the target. In the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor, for example, the aspects of warfare that are projected include attack and defense, winning and losing, strategy, and the use of force; the aspects that are not projected include actual physical violence, military hierarchy, and territorial conquest. This partiality of mapping is what Lakoff (1993) calls the Invariance Principle: metaphorical mappings preserve the image-schematic structure of the source domain in a way that is consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain.

Kövecses (2000, 2002) distinguishes several types of conceptual metaphor on the basis of their generality and their relationship to other metaphors. Generic-level metaphors, such as EVENTS ARE ACTIONS and STATES ARE LOCATIONS, operate at a high level of abstraction and govern a wide range of more specific metaphors. Specific-level metaphors, such as ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER, instantiate more general schemas at a lower level of abstraction. The relationship between generic and specific metaphors reveals the hierarchical organization of the metaphorical system, in which more specific mappings inherit the structural properties of more generic ones.

3.2. Primary and Complex Metaphors

Grady (1997) introduced an important distinction between primary metaphors and complex metaphors that has significantly refined the cognitive linguistic account of metaphorical motivation. Primary metaphors are grounded in recurring correlations in embodied experience between subjective judgments or assessments (the target) and sensorimotor experiences (the source). The primary metaphor MORE IS UP, for example, is motivated by the recurring experiential correlation between adding physical substance to a pile and the simultaneous upward movement of the pile's height. Similarly, AFFECTION IS WARMTH is motivated by the correlation between the warmth of physical contact and the emotional states associated with caring relationships in early childhood (Grady, 1997).

Complex metaphors, by contrast, are built from combinations of primary metaphors and are not directly motivated by a single experiential correlation. The complex metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for example, combines several primary metaphors including PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, ACTIONS ARE MOTIONS, and DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION. The systematic compositionality of complex metaphors from primary building blocks provides a principled account of how the vast range of metaphorical expressions in natural language relates to a more limited inventory of experientially grounded primary mappings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

4. Conceptual Metonymy: Principles and Types

4.1. Metonymy as a Cognitive Mechanism

Conceptual metonymy, like conceptual metaphor, is reconceptualized in cognitive linguistics as a cognitive mechanism rather than a merely rhetorical device. Where metaphor involves a mapping across two distinct conceptual domains, metonymy involves a mapping within a single domain or conceptual structure, whereby one entity — the vehicle — provides mental access to another entity — the target — within the same domain or Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM) (Lakoff, 1987; Radden & Kövecses, 1999). The standard notation for metonymy uses the format VEHICLE FOR TARGET: thus THE CROWN FOR THE MONARCH (a part of the royal insignia standing for the institution of monarchy), THE AUTHOR FOR THE WORK (as in 'I am reading Dostoyevsky'), and THE CAUSE FOR THE EFFECT are all instances of conceptual metonymy.

Radden and Kövecses (1999) provide the most systematic typology of conceptual metonymy within the cognitive linguistic framework, distinguishing metonymies on the basis of the ICM within which the mapping operates. Within the WHOLE-PART ICM, metonymies may involve a whole standing for a part (synecdoche downward) or a part standing for a whole (synecdoche upward). Within the SCALE ICM, metonymies may involve the extreme standing for the scale as a whole, as in 'She is the best cook in the world' meaning simply that she is a very good cook. Within the ACTION ICM, metonymies may involve the instrument standing for the action, as in 'The pen is mightier than the sword', or the result standing for the action, as in 'Give me your ear' meaning 'Listen to me'.

4.2. The Contiguity Principle and ICM Structure

The cognitive principle governing metonymic mappings is what Radden and Kövecses (1999) call the Contiguity Principle: metonymy involves a mapping between two entities that stand in a relation of contiguity or proximity within a shared conceptual structure or ICM. This contiguity may be physical (spatial or temporal proximity), causal (cause-effect relations), institutional (part-whole relations within a social institution), or representational (the relation between a category and its prototypical member or typical instance).

The notion of the Idealized Cognitive Model, developed by Lakoff (1987), provides the theoretical framework for specifying the conceptual structures within which metonymic mappings operate. ICMs are structured wholes — idealized, schematic representations of domains of experience — that organize conceptual knowledge into coherent frames. Metonymic mappings exploit the internal structure of ICMs by allowing one element to stand for another element within the same ICM, or for the ICM as a whole. Barcelona (2003) has extended the ICM-based account to include a broader range of metonymic types and to clarify the distinction between metonymy and related phenomena such as semantic broadening and narrowing.

5. The Interaction of Metaphor and Metonymy

One of the most productive areas of research in cognitive figurative language studies has been the investigation of the interaction between metaphor and metonymy in actual linguistic expressions and in the construction of complex figurative meanings. Goossens (1990) coined the term 'metaphtonymy' to describe cases in which metaphor and metonymy interact within a single expression, identifying four types of interaction: metaphor from metonymy (a metonymic expression is further extended metaphorically), metonymy within metaphor (a metonymic mapping operates within the scope of a metaphorical mapping), metaphor within metonymy (a metaphorical mapping operates within the scope of a metonymic mapping), and metonymy within metonymy (two metonymic mappings are combined).

A frequently cited example of metaphor from metonymy is the expression 'to lend someone an ear' (meaning to listen attentively), in which the metonymic use of EAR FOR THE ACTIVITY OF LISTENING has been extended metaphorically into a compound expression involving fictive transfer. Barcelona (2011) has argued that metonymy is in fact more fundamental than metaphor in the cognitive linguistic system, proposing the Metonymy-Based Theory of Metaphor, which holds that the source domains of conceptual metaphors are always accessed through metonymic mappings within the source domain ICM. On this view, the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is activated not through direct access to a WAR schema but through metonymic highlighting of particular aspects of the WAR ICM — particularly its confrontational, force-dynamic, and strategic dimensions.

Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Díez Velasco (2002) further distinguish between high-level metonymy and low-level metonymy in the context of metaphor-metonymy interaction, arguing that the two phenomena operate at different levels of conceptual generality and that their interaction is governed by cognitive economy principles. High-level metonymies, such as INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION and PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT, operate at the level of generic ICMs and may interact with generic-level metaphors; low-level metonymies operate within more specific conceptual frames and interact with specific-level metaphors. This distinction provides a more fine-grained account of the range of metaphtonymic combinations attested in natural language.

6. Cross-Domain Mappings and Conceptual Blending

The theory of conceptual blending, developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), offers an important extension and partial revision of conceptual metaphor theory that is particularly relevant to the analysis of complex figurative expressions. Where conceptual metaphor theory posits a unidirectional mapping from source to target domain, conceptual blending theory proposes a more flexible integration network in which two or more input mental spaces are selectively projected into a blended space that develops emergent structure not present in either input (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002).

Conceptual blending is particularly useful for analyzing creative, novel, and culturally specific metaphors that cannot be straightforwardly derived from conventional conceptual metaphors through the Lakoffian mapping framework. Novel metaphors in advertising, political discourse, and literary language frequently exploit blending operations to create emergent meanings that draw on multiple source domains simultaneously and generate inferences that would not be available from either source domain alone (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009). The relationship between conceptual metaphor theory and blending theory has been a source of ongoing theoretical discussion, with some researchers viewing blending as a more general cognitive operation that subsumes metaphor as a special case, and others maintaining that the two frameworks address different aspects of figurative cognition (Grady, Oakley, & Coulson, 1999). The relevance of such figurative structures also extends to literary analysis, where metaphorical and metonymic patterns have been shown to play a constitutive role in shaping thematic meaning in poetic and narrative texts (Mammadova, 2023).

The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and its extended version MIPVU, developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) and Steen et al. (2010) respectively, provide systematic, reproducible methods for identifying metaphorically used words in naturally occurring discourse. These corpus-based approaches have generated substantial empirical data on the frequency, distribution, and contextual patterns of metaphor use in a range of genres and registers, providing an empirical complement to the introspective and constructed-example methodology that characterized much earlier work in conceptual metaphor theory (Steen et al., 2010).

7. Discussion

The cognitive linguistic reconceptualization of metaphor and metonymy has produced a theoretical framework of considerable explanatory power and empirical productivity. The central claim of conceptual metaphor theory — that abstract conceptual domains are systematically understood in terms of more concrete or experientially grounded domains through cross-domain mappings — has been supported by evidence from linguistic analysis, psychological experiments, corpus studies, and neuroimaging research (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005; Steen et al., 2010). The parallel reconceptualization of metonymy as a cognitive mechanism involving mappings within conceptual domains or ICMs has clarified the cognitive principles governing a wide range of linguistic and inferential phenomena that were previously treated as unrelated (Radden & Kövecses, 1999).

At the same time, conceptual metaphor theory has been subjected to significant critical scrutiny. Glucksberg (2001) has questioned the psychological reality of conceptual metaphors as stored cognitive structures, arguing that metaphorical language is understood online through property attribution processes rather than through access to pre-stored cross-domain mappings. Steen (2011) has introduced the distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor, arguing that only deliberately used metaphors involve the kind of dual-domain processing that conceptual metaphor theory describes, while conventionalized metaphors are processed as direct category attributions. These debates highlight the importance of distinguishing between the cognitive mechanisms involved in metaphor production and comprehension and the abstract structural properties of conceptual metaphors as linguistic conventions.

The cultural dimension of conceptual metaphor presents a further area of theoretical complexity. While Lakoff and Johnson (1980) emphasized the universality of primary metaphors as grounded in shared embodied experience, subsequent cross-cultural research has documented significant variation in conceptual metaphor systems across languages and cultures (Kövecses, 2005; Yu, 1995). The metaphorical conceptualization of emotions, time, and social relationships shows both universal tendencies — reflecting the shared embodied basis of primary metaphors — and culture-specific patterns reflecting the particular experiential and cultural knowledge of different communities. This finding supports a nuanced position that acknowledges both universal and culturally specific dimensions of the metaphorical organization of conceptual systems.

8. Conclusion

This article has examined the theoretical foundations, structural properties, and cognitive functions of conceptual metaphor and metonymy within the framework of cognitive linguistics. The analysis has demonstrated that both phenomena represent fundamental mechanisms of human conceptual organization that permeate everyday language and thought, extending far beyond the literary and poetic contexts in which they were traditionally studied. Conceptual metaphor theory, developed by Lakoff and Johnson and extended by subsequent researchers, provides a systematic account of how abstract domains are structured through cross-domain mappings from more experientially grounded source domains. Conceptual metonymy, as theorized by Radden, Kövecses, and Barcelona, accounts for a complementary set of cognitive mappings within shared conceptual domains or ICMs.

The interaction between metaphor and metonymy — through the various types of metaphtonymy identified by Goossens and elaborated by subsequent researchers — reveals a rich and complex system of figurative cognition in which the two mechanisms combine to produce meanings that neither could generate independently. The extension of conceptual metaphor theory through conceptual blending provides additional resources for analyzing creative and complex figurative expressions. And the development of systematic corpus-based methods for metaphor identification — particularly MIPVU — has opened the empirical study of metaphor in naturally occurring discourse to rigorous quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Several directions for future research emerge from this overview. The neural basis of metaphor and metonymy processing requires further investigation through controlled neuroimaging and psycholinguistic experiments. The cross-cultural variation in conceptual metaphor systems deserves more systematic comparative analysis across typologically diverse language families. The role of metonymy in grammatical construction and morphological productivity — areas that have received less attention than lexical metonymy — represents an important area for further development. And the implications of cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor and metonymy for language pedagogy, translation studies, and discourse analysis in specialized domains such as political, scientific, and medical communication offer productive avenues for applied research.

Declarations

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available in the References section.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, S.S.; Methodology, S.S.; Investigation, S.S.; Writing — original draft, S.S.; Writing — review & editing, S.S.

References

Aristotle. (1984). *Poetics* (I. Bywater, Trans.). In J. Barnes (Ed.), *The complete works of Aristotle* (Vol. 2, pp. 2316–2340). Princeton University Press. (Original work published ca. 335 BCE)

Barcelona, A. (Ed.). (2003). *Metaphor and metonymy at the crossroads: A cognitive perspective.* Mouton de Gruyter.

Barcelona, A. (2011). Reviewing the properties and prototype structure of metonymy. In R. Benczes, A. Barcelona, & F. J. Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez (Eds.), *Defining metonymy in cognitive linguistics* (pp. 7–57). John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/hcp.28.02bar

Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities.* Basic Books.

Forceville, C., & Urios-Aparisi, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Multimodal metaphor.* Mouton de Gruyter.

Gallese, V., & Lakoff, G. (2005). The brain's concepts: The role of the sensory-motor system in conceptual knowledge. *Cognitive Neurodynamics, 22*(3–4), 455–479. https://doi.org/10.1080/09515080500266913

Glucksberg, S. (2001). *Understanding figurative language: From metaphors to idioms.* Oxford University Press.

Goossens, L. (1990). Metaphtonymy: The interaction of metaphor and metonymy in expressions for linguistic action. *Cognitive Linguistics, 1*(3), 323–342. https://doi.org/10.1515/cogl.1990.1.3.323

Grady, J. E. (1997). *Foundations of meaning: Primary metaphors and primary scenes* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of California, Berkeley.

Grady, J., Oakley, T., & Coulson, S. (1999). Blending and metaphor. In R. W. Gibbs Jr. & G. J. Steen (Eds.), *Metaphor in cognitive linguistics* (pp. 101–124). John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.175.07gra

Hampe, B. (Ed.). (2005). *From perception to meaning: Image schemas in cognitive linguistics.* Mouton de Gruyter.

Johnson, M. (1987). *The body in the mind: The bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason.* University of Chicago Press.

Kövecses, Z. (2000). *Metaphor and emotion: Language, culture, and body in human feeling.* Cambridge University Press.

Kövecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: A practical introduction.* Oxford University Press.

Kövecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation.* Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind.* University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G. (1993). The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and thought* (2nd ed., pp. 202–251). Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought.* Basic Books.

Langacker, R. W. (1987). *Foundations of cognitive grammar: Vol. 1. Theoretical prerequisites.* Stanford University Press.

Mammadova, İ. (2023). Struggle and lonely sorrow in Byron's romanticism (Based on poems "The Giaour", "The Corsair", "The Bride of Abydos" and "The Prisoner of Chillon"). *Akademik Tarih ve Düşünce Dergisi, 10*(2), 355–363. https://izlik.org/JA59DM63XM

Pragglejaz Group. (2007). MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol, 22*(1), 1–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926480709336752

Radden, G., & Kövecses, Z. (1999). Towards a theory of metonymy. In K.-U. Panther & G. Radden (Eds.), *Metonymy in language and thought* (pp. 17–59). John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/hcp.4.03rad

Richards, I. A. (1936). *The philosophy of rhetoric.* Oxford University Press.

Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, F. J., & Díez Velasco, O. I. (2002). Patterns of conceptual interaction. In R. Dirven & R. Pörings (Eds.), *Metaphor and metonymy in comparison and contrast* (pp. 489–532). Mouton de Gruyter.

Sadiqzade, Z. (2025). Idiomatic expressions and their impact on lexical competence. *Journal of Azerbaijan Language and Education Studies, 2*(1), 26–33. https://doi.org/10.69760/jales.2025001002

Steen, G. J. (2011). The contemporary theory of metaphor — now new and improved! *Review of Cognitive Linguistics, 9*(1), 26–64. https://doi.org/10.1075/rcl.9.1.03ste

Steen, G. J., Dorst, A. G., Herrmann, J. B., Kaal, A., Krennmayr, T., & Pasma, T. (2010). *A method for linguistic metaphor identification: From MIP to MIPVU.* John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/celcr.14

Yu, N. (1995). Metaphorical expressions of anger and happiness in English and Chinese. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity, 10*(2), 59–92. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms1002_1

Received: 03.15.2026
Revised: 04.20.2026
Accepted: 05.02.2026
Published: 05.05.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Linguocultural Features of Phraseological Units in Azerbaijani and French

[1] **Aziza Aliyeva**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002014

Abstract

This study investigates the linguocultural features of phraseological units in Azerbaijani and French, focusing on how idiomatic expressions encode cultural values, worldviews, and social norms specific to each linguistic community. Adopting a corpus-based comparative approach, the research analyzes a purposively selected corpus of 120 phraseological units drawn from authoritative phraseological dictionaries, literary texts, and contemporary written sources in both languages. The analysis examines structural, semantic, and cultural dimensions of the selected units, with particular attention to cases of full equivalence, partial equivalence, and lacunarity. The findings reveal that while both languages share a number of universal conceptual domains — including family relations, natural phenomena, time, and moral values — the cultural coding of these domains through phraseological form is largely language-specific. Azerbaijani phraseology reflects nomadic and agrarian heritage, Islamic values, and oral folk tradition, whereas French phraseology bears the imprint of Greco-Roman antiquity, Christian culture, and a long literary tradition. The study argues that phraseological units constitute a primary repository of linguocultural memory and that cross-linguistic comparison of such units offers a productive methodology for the analysis of cultural cognition. These findings have implications for lexicography, translation studies, and foreign language teaching.

Keywords: *phraseological units, linguoculturology, Azerbaijani, French, comparative phraseology, cultural semantics, idioms*

1. Introduction

Phraseological units occupy an important place in the lexical system of every language because they combine structural stability with figurative and culturally marked meaning. Unlike single words or free word combinations, phraseological units often preserve traces of a speech community's historical experience, social values, beliefs, and worldview (Kunin, 1996; Teliya, 1996). From a linguocultural perspective, such units are not only fixed lexical expressions but also

[1] Aliyeva, A. Lecturer, Nakhchivan State University, Azerbaijan. Email: aliyeva_aziza@ndu.edu.az. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9812-5006

carriers of cultural knowledge, since they reflect how a community conceptualizes everyday life, moral values, social relations, nature, and human behaviour.

The linguocultural study of phraseological units has become an important area of contemporary linguistic research. This approach examines how language encodes, transmits, and reproduces cultural meanings through idiomatic expressions, metaphors, proverbs, and other fixed expressions (Maslova, 2001; Sadiqzade, 2025). Phraseological units are especially significant for this purpose because their meanings are often not fully predictable from the meanings of their individual components. As a result, they require not only linguistic interpretation but also cultural explanation.

The comparative study of phraseological systems in different languages makes it possible to identify both universal and culture-specific features of linguistic expression. By comparing phraseological units in two languages, researchers can observe cases of full or near-full equivalence, partial equivalence, and lacunarity. These categories help reveal how similar human experiences, such as family relations, labour, natural phenomena, time, and moral evaluation, may be expressed through different cultural images and linguistic structures (Dobrovol'sky & Piirainen, 2005; Alisoy, 2026a).

The present study focuses on Azerbaijani and French phraseological units. These two languages differ significantly in terms of genealogical affiliation, typological structure, and cultural-historical development. Azerbaijani belongs to the Oghuz branch of the Turkic languages and has been shaped by nomadic and agrarian traditions, oral folk culture, and contact with Persian and Arabic cultural influences (Baghirov, 2006; Orujova, 2009). French, as a Romance language, developed within a different cultural context, influenced by Greco-Roman heritage, Christian tradition, and a long literary and intellectual history (Rey, 2011; Hausmann, 2007). Therefore, the comparison of Azerbaijani and French phraseological units offers a useful basis for examining how different cultural traditions are reflected in idiomatic language.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

(1) What structural and semantic types of phraseological units are represented in the Azerbaijani and French corpora?

(2) In which conceptual domains do the two languages demonstrate full or near-full equivalence, partial equivalence, or lacunarity?

(3) What linguocultural values and worldview components are reflected in the language-specific phraseological units of Azerbaijani and French?

By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute to comparative phraseology, linguoculturology, bilingual lexicography, translation studies, and foreign language teaching. The findings may be useful for understanding how culturally marked meanings are encoded in fixed expressions and how such meanings can be interpreted, translated, and taught in cross-linguistic contexts.

2. Literature Review — revised version

The theoretical foundations of linguoculturology were developed mainly in the works of scholars who examined the relationship between language, culture, and national worldview. Teliya (1996) and Maslova (2001) emphasized that culturally marked linguistic units, especially phraseological expressions, contain important information about the cultural memory of a speech community. In this approach, phraseological meaning is not limited to semantic structure alone; it also includes imagery, connotation, evaluation, and culturally specific associations.

This perspective changed the study of phraseology from a purely structural or semantic analysis into a broader investigation of cultural meanings encoded in language. Phraseological units came to be viewed as linguistic signs that preserve collective experience and reflect culturally specific ways of interpreting reality. Later studies extended this approach to cross-linguistic and comparative contexts, showing that different languages may express similar meanings through different metaphorical and cultural images (Dobrovol'sky & Piirainen, 2005).

In Azerbaijani linguistics, phraseology has been studied from structural, semantic, and etymological perspectives. Baghirov (2006) provided a classification of Azerbaijani phraseological units according to their degree of semantic fusion, including phraseological fusions, phraseological unities, and phraseological collocations. Orujova (2009) examined the historical and cultural sources of Azerbaijani phraseology, paying attention to Turkic folk traditions as well as Arabic and Persian influences. These studies show that Azerbaijani phraseological units are closely connected with oral tradition, social values, everyday life, and cultural experience.

In French linguistics, phraseology has been examined especially within lexicographic, semantic, and stylistic frameworks. Rey and Chantreau (1993) collected and explained numerous French idiomatic expressions and locutions, providing etymological and contextual information. Hausmann (2007) studied phraseological and collocational structures in French within the broader field of lexical combinatorics. French phraseology has also been discussed in relation to European cultural traditions, including Greco-Roman heritage, Christian imagery, literary expression, and historical experience.

Comparative phraseology focuses on the relationship between phraseological units in different languages and pays special attention to the problem of equivalence. Dobrovol'sky and Piirainen (2005) proposed a useful framework for classifying cross-linguistic phraseological relations into full equivalence, partial equivalence, and zero equivalence, or lacunarity. Full or near-full equivalents have similar meanings and comparable imagery; partial equivalents express similar meanings but differ in structure, image, or connotation; lacunary units do not have an exact phraseological counterpart in the other language. This framework is used in the present study to compare Azerbaijani and French phraseological units.

The pedagogical importance of comparative phraseology has also been emphasized in studies of second language acquisition and translation. Learners often experience difficulty with idiomatic expressions because their meanings are figurative, culturally marked, and sometimes impossible to understand through literal translation. Comparative analysis of phraseological units can help identify possible sources of misunderstanding, negative transfer, and cultural misinterpretation. It can also support the development of phraseological competence in foreign language teaching and improve translation strategies for culturally specific expressions (Sadiqzade, 2025; Alisoy, 2026b; Babayev, 2025).

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus Design and Data Collection

The corpus for this study consists of 60 phraseological units, 30 from Azerbaijani and 30 from French. The units were selected to represent different conceptual domains, structural types, and degrees of cultural specificity. Azerbaijani phraseological units were drawn from phraseological dictionaries, collections of Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings, and selected contemporary written sources. French phraseological units were selected from established dictionaries of French expressions and locutions, as well as from selected contemporary literary and journalistic sources.

Purposive sampling was used in order to include phraseological units from conceptual domains that are culturally significant in both languages. These domains include: (1) the human body and physical states; (2) natural phenomena such as water, fire, wind, and earth; (3) animals; (4) food and domestic life; (5) kinship and social relations; (6) time and spatial orientation; and (7) moral and ethical evaluation. The main criterion for inclusion was that the unit should have a figurative or culturally marked meaning that cannot be fully understood through a literal interpretation of its individual components.

The selected units were organized into **30 comparative sets**. Each set included either an Azerbaijani and French unit with comparable meanings, or one culturally specific unit for which no exact phraseological counterpart was identified in the other language. This design made it possible to compare both shared and language-specific features of Azerbaijani and French phraseology.

3.2. Analytical Framework

The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, each phraseological unit was examined structurally according to its syntactic pattern, such as verbal, nominal, adjectival, or prepositional construction. Attention was also given to the degree of semantic fusion, including idioms proper, phraseological unities, and phraseological collocations.

Second, the units were analyzed semantically in order to identify their conceptual domain, evaluative orientation, and internal image. The internal image refers to the concrete scene, object, or cultural association that motivates the figurative meaning of the phraseological unit.

Third, a cross-linguistic comparison was carried out on the basis of the framework proposed by Dobrovol'sky and Piirainen (2005), which distinguishes between full or near-full equivalence, partial equivalence, and lacunarity. Full or near-full equivalents were understood as units with similar meanings and comparable imagery. Partial equivalents were defined as units that express similar meanings but differ in image, structure, or cultural connotation. Lacunary units were understood as phraseological expressions for which no exact image-based counterpart was identified in the other language.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Structural and Semantic Overview

The analysis shows that verbal phraseological units are the most frequent type in both the Azerbaijani and French parts of the corpus. In the Azerbaijani sample, 18 out of 30 units are verbal constructions, while in the French sample, 19 out of 30 units belong to this category. Nominal, adjectival, and prepositional phraseological units occur less frequently. This indicates that both languages tend to encode idiomatic meaning mainly through actions, states, and human behaviour.

At the same time, the internal structure of verbal phraseological units differs in accordance with the grammatical characteristics of each language. Azerbaijani verbal phraseological units often reflect the verb-final structure of the language and may include postpositional elements. French verbal phraseological units, by contrast, generally follow the subject–verb–object pattern and frequently contain prepositional phrases. These structural differences demonstrate that even when two languages express similar figurative meanings, they do so through different grammatical patterns.

In terms of semantic fusion, idioms proper and phraseological unities form the largest part of the corpus. Idioms proper are expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal meanings of their components. Phraseological unities, by contrast, have figurative meanings that are partly motivated by a recognizable image or metaphor. Phraseological collocations are less frequent in the corpus because their meanings are more predictable and less culturally marked.

4.2. Full or Near-Full Equivalence: Shared Conceptual Domains

The comparative analysis identified **10 cases of full or near-full equivalence** across the 30 comparative sets. These cases are mainly found in domains connected with natural phenomena, everyday experience, and basic moral evaluation. Such expressions suggest that some human experiences are conceptualized in similar ways across different linguistic and cultural traditions.

The following examples illustrate this category:

(1)
Az.: *Su axar, çuxurunu tapar.*
Fr.: *L'eau fait son chemin.*
Gloss: Water finds its way / Persistence eventually overcomes obstacles.

(2)
Az.: *Od olmayan yerdən tüstü çıxmaz.*
Fr.: *Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu.*
Gloss: There is no smoke without fire / Every rumour usually has some basis.

(3)
Az.: *Bir daşla iki quş vurmaq.*
Fr.: *Faire d'une pierre deux coups.*
Gloss: To kill two birds with one stone / To achieve two aims with one action.

These examples show that Azerbaijani and French sometimes use similar natural or practical images to express the same abstract meanings. In example (2), both languages use the image of smoke and fire to express the idea that visible signs usually have an underlying cause. In example (3), both languages use almost the same metaphor of achieving two results through one action. Such cases may be explained by shared human experience, cultural contact, or broader cross-linguistic metaphorical patterns.

However, even in cases of near-full equivalence, complete identity should not always be assumed. Differences may remain in frequency, stylistic register, pragmatic use, or cultural association. For this reason, the term **full or near-full equivalence** is more appropriate than absolute full equivalence.

4.3. Partial Equivalence: Shared Meaning, Different Cultural Image

The largest group in the corpus consists of **14 cases of partial equivalence**. These are units that express similar general meanings but use different images, cultural references, or grammatical structures. This category is especially important because it shows how similar human experiences may be interpreted through different cultural models.

The following examples illustrate partial equivalence:

(4)
Az.: *Dəvənin çöküb-durması çoxdur.*
Fr.: *Chacun doit porter sa croix.*
Gloss: The camel kneels and rises many times / Everyone has their burden to bear.

(5)
Az.: *Qazanc əlindən çıxıb getdi.*
Fr.: *Aller à vau-l'eau.*
Gloss: To lose what one had gained / To go to ruin or fall apart.

(6)
Az.: *Qana qan qatma.*
Fr.: *Ne pas jeter de l'huile sur le feu.*
Gloss: Do not add blood to blood / Do not add oil to the fire.

Example (4) demonstrates a contrast between different cultural images of hardship and endurance. The Azerbaijani expression uses the image of the camel, an animal associated with endurance, labour, and traditional life. The French expression uses the Christian image of carrying one's cross. Both expressions communicate the idea that every person has difficulties to endure, but the cultural images used to express this meaning are different.

Example (5) shows partial equivalence in the expression of loss or decline. The Azerbaijani unit is connected with the idea of losing something valuable or earned, while the French expression *aller à vau-l'eau* uses the image of something being carried away by water. The meaning is similar, but the figurative basis is not identical.

Example (6) concerns the intensification of conflict. The Azerbaijani expression uses the image of blood, which may be connected with kinship, revenge, and serious conflict in traditional cultural contexts. The French expression uses the image of adding oil to fire, a metaphor widely used in European languages. Both expressions warn against making a conflict worse, but they rely on different cultural and metaphorical images.

These examples confirm that partial equivalence is often more linguoculturally informative than full equivalence. While the abstract meaning may be similar, the imagery reveals the cultural background through which each language conceptualizes the experience.

4.4. Lacunary Units: Culture-Specific Phraseological Encodings

The analysis identified **6 lacunary cases** in the corpus. In this study, lacunarity does not mean that the meaning cannot be expressed in the other language at all. Rather, it means that no exact phraseological equivalent with the same image, structure, and cultural connotation was identified.

The following examples illustrate this category:

(7)
Az.: *El bir olsa, dağı yerindən oynadar.*
Fr.: —
Gloss: If the community is united, it can move a mountain / Collective unity can overcome great difficulty.

(8)
Az.: —
Fr.: *Avoir le cafard.*
Gloss: Literally, to have the cockroach / To feel depressed or gloomy.

(9)
Az.: *Yeddi ölç, bir biç.*
Fr.: —
Gloss: Measure seven times, cut once / Think carefully before acting.

(10)
Az.: —
Fr.: *Chercher midi à quatorze heures.*
Gloss: Literally, to look for noon at two o'clock / To overcomplicate a simple matter.

Example (7) reflects the importance of collective unity in Azerbaijani cultural thinking. Although French has expressions such as *l'union fait la force*, the Azerbaijani unit contains a specific image of communal power strong enough to move a mountain. Therefore, it is more accurate to describe it as lacking an exact image-based French equivalent rather than having no equivalent at all.

Example (8), the French expression *avoir le cafard*, is a culturally specific idiom meaning to feel depressed or gloomy. Azerbaijani can express the same emotional state through other words or expressions, but it does not use the same image of the cockroach. For this reason, the unit is treated as lacunary at the level of phraseological imagery.

Example (9), *Yeddi ölç, bir biç*, expresses the value of careful deliberation before action. Similar advice can be expressed in French, but the exact numerical and craft-based image is not fully reproduced in a fixed French phraseological unit. Therefore, it is better to describe this case as the absence of an exact phraseological equivalent rather than a complete absence of meaning.

Example (10), *chercher midi à quatorze heures*, reflects a French idiomatic way of criticizing unnecessary complication. Azerbaijani can express this meaning descriptively, but the specific temporal image of “looking for noon at two o’clock” does not have a direct Azerbaijani phraseological counterpart.

4.5. Conceptual Domains and Cultural Value Encoding

The comparison shows that Azerbaijani and French phraseological units encode both shared human experiences and culturally specific values. In the Azerbaijani part of the corpus, several productive domains are connected with animals, community relations, moral evaluation, patience, and practical wisdom. These domains reflect the influence of traditional social life, oral folk culture, agrarian experience, and ethical values.

In the French part of the corpus, productive domains include food and domestic life, body-related expressions, religious imagery, historical experience, and ironic evaluation. These domains reflect the importance of literary tradition, Christian cultural heritage, gastronomy, and social irony in French phraseology.

The contrast between Azerbaijani and French phraseology is especially visible in the images used to express similar meanings. Azerbaijani phraseological units often draw on collective life, animals, practical wisdom, and moral endurance. French phraseological units more frequently use images connected with food, the body, religious symbolism, and intellectual or ironic evaluation. These differences suggest that phraseological units serve as important carriers of cultural memory and worldview.

At the same time, the findings should not be interpreted as absolute cultural oppositions. Both languages contain a wide variety of phraseological images, and the present corpus is limited in size. Therefore, the results should be understood as qualitative tendencies rather than exhaustive descriptions of the entire Azerbaijani and French phraseological systems.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to the comparative linguocultural study of phraseology by showing how Azerbaijani and French phraseological units encode both shared human experiences and culture-specific meanings. The analysis confirms the usefulness of the Dobrovol’sky-Piirainen (2005) framework for examining cross-linguistic phraseological relations. The distinction between full or near-full equivalence, partial equivalence, and lacunarity makes it possible to classify phraseological similarities and differences in a systematic way.

The 10 cases of full or near-full equivalence identified in the corpus demonstrate that certain experiential domains, such as natural phenomena, everyday actions, and basic moral evaluation, may generate similar phraseological images in different languages. Expressions based on fire, water, smoke, or practical human activity show that some metaphorical patterns are widely shared across cultures. These similarities may be explained by common human experience, general cognitive associations, and, in some cases, broader intercultural phraseological parallels.

However, the study also shows that complete equivalence should be treated with caution. Even when Azerbaijani and French phraseological units have similar meanings and images, they may still differ in frequency, stylistic register, grammatical structure, or pragmatic use. For this reason, the term full or near-full equivalence is more appropriate than absolute full equivalence in the present analysis.

The 14 cases of partial equivalence form the most informative part of the corpus from a linguocultural perspective. These units show that similar abstract meanings may be expressed through different cultural images. For example, the contrast between the Azerbaijani camel image and the French Christian image of carrying one’s cross demonstrates how the concept of hardship and endurance can be represented through different cultural traditions. Similarly, the Azerbaijani image of blood and the French image of oil and fire both express the idea of intensifying conflict, but they rely on different metaphorical and cultural associations.

These cases are particularly important for translation and language teaching. Literal translation of partially equivalent phraseological units may lead to misunderstanding or stylistic awkwardness. Translators and learners need to recognize not only the general meaning of an idiom but also its cultural image, emotional tone, and communicative function. Therefore, partial equivalence requires functional translation strategies rather than word-for-word transfer.

The 6 lacunary cases identified in the corpus also have important linguocultural value. In this study, lacunarity does not mean that a meaning cannot be expressed in the other language. Rather, it means that no exact phraseological equivalent with the same image, structure, and cultural connotation was identified. Azerbaijani expressions such as *El bir olsa, dağı yerindən oynadar* and *Yeddi ölç, bir biç* reflect culturally marked values connected with collective unity, practical wisdom, and careful action. French expressions such as *avoir le cafard* and *chercher midi à quatorze heures* reflect different idiomatic traditions, including emotional imagery and ironic evaluation.

The domain-specific analysis suggests that Azerbaijani phraseology in the selected corpus is strongly connected with animals, communal relations, practical wisdom, endurance, and moral evaluation. These tendencies reflect the influence of oral folk culture, traditional social life, agrarian experience, and ethical values. French phraseology, by contrast, shows productive links with food, body-related imagery, religious symbolism, social irony, and literary-cultural tradition. These differences do not represent absolute cultural oppositions, but they do indicate different phraseological preferences in the two languages.

From a methodological perspective, the use of a smaller and more focused corpus allows for a qualitative comparison of selected phraseological units. The corpus of **60 units** is not intended to represent the entire phraseological system of either language. Instead, it provides a controlled basis for identifying tendencies in cultural imagery, equivalence, and phraseological meaning. Future studies based on larger corpora could test these tendencies more extensively and provide broader quantitative evidence.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the linguocultural features of Azerbaijani and French phraseological units through a comparative analysis of 60 selected units organized into 30 comparative sets. The analysis focused on structural features, semantic characteristics, cultural imagery, and degrees of cross-linguistic equivalence.

The findings show that Azerbaijani and French phraseological units demonstrate three main types of relationship: full or near-full equivalence, partial equivalence, and lacunarity. The study identified 10 cases of full or near-full equivalence, mostly connected with shared human experience and common metaphorical domains. It also identified 14 cases of partial equivalence, where similar meanings are expressed through different cultural images. Finally, 6 lacunary cases were found, in which no exact image-based counterpart was identified in the other language.

The analysis suggests that Azerbaijani phraseology in the selected corpus reflects cultural associations connected with communal life, animals, oral tradition, practical wisdom, and moral endurance. French phraseology, on the other hand, reflects associations connected with food, the body, religious imagery, irony, and literary-cultural tradition. These differences show that phraseological units are not only linguistic expressions but also carriers of cultural memory and worldview.

The study contributes to comparative phraseology and linguoculturology by applying an equivalence-based framework to Azerbaijani and French, two languages with different typological and cultural backgrounds. It also has practical implications for translation studies, bilingual lexicography, and foreign language teaching. In particular, the findings show that culturally marked phraseological units require careful interpretation and should often be translated according to function and meaning rather than literal form.

The limitations of the study should also be noted. Since the corpus is relatively small and purposively selected, the findings should be understood as qualitative tendencies rather than complete descriptions of Azerbaijani and French phraseology. Future research could expand the corpus, include spoken and digital language data, and examine how learners process and translate culturally specific phraseological units in real communicative contexts.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability: The corpus data supporting the findings of this study are drawn from publicly available lexicographic sources listed in the References section.

Author Contributions: The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, corpus compilation and analysis, and preparation of the manuscript.

References

Alisoy, H. (2026a). Lexical borrowing and cultural mediation in Azerbaijani-English translation practice. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum, 3*(2), 12–24.

Alisoy, H. (2026b). Idiom recognition and L2 lexical competence: Implications for EFL instruction. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education, 3*(1), 56–68.

Babayev, J. (2025). Application of social platforms in language learning. *Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum, 2*(3), 141–148.

Baghirov, M. (2006). *Azərbaycan dilinin frazeoloji lüğəti* [Phraseological dictionary of the Azerbaijani language]. Elm.

Dobrovol'sky, D., & Piirainen, E. (2005). *Figurative language: Cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspectives.* Elsevier.

Hasanova, G. I., & Safarli, A. J. (2024). Education for sustainable development: A review. *Green Economics, 2*(1), 102–111.

Hausmann, F. J. (2007). Phraséologie et dictionnairique. In H. Burger, D. Dobrovol'sky, P. Kühn, & N. R. Norrick (Eds.), *Phraseologie / Phraseology* (Vol. 1, pp. 1010–1022). de Gruyter.

Kunin, A. V. (1996). *Kurs frazeologii sovremennogo angliiskogo yazyka* [A course in contemporary English phraseology] (2nd ed.). Vysshaya Shkola.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* University of Chicago Press.

Maslova, V. A. (2001). *Lingvokul'turologiya* [Linguoculturology]. Akademiya.

Mel'čuk, I. (2006). Parties du discours et locutions. In J. Dubéda & D. Gledhill (Eds.), *Les Cahiers du CIEL* (pp. 3–56). Université Paris Diderot.

Nuri, A., & Ismailli, T. (2025). The importance of student motivation. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems, 8*(6), 260–262.

Orujova, L. (2009). *Azərbaycan frazeologiyası* [Azerbaijani phraseology]. Azərbaycan Məktəbi.

Rey, A. (2011). *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (3rd ed.). Le Robert.

Rey, A., & Chantreau, S. (1993). *Dictionnaire des expressions et locutions* (2nd ed.). Le Robert.

Sadiqzade, Z. (2025). Idiomatic expressions and their impact on lexical competence. *Journal of Azerbaijan Language and Education Studies, 2*(1), 26–33. https://doi.org/10.69760/jales.2025001002

Teliya, V. N. (1996). *Russkaya frazeologiya: Semantichesky, pragmatichesky i lingvokul'turologichesky aspekty* [Russian phraseology: Semantic, pragmatic and linguocultural aspects]. Yazyki russkoy kul'tury.

Received: 03.22.2026
Revised: 04.25.2026
Accepted: 05.02.2026
Published: 05.05.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Narrating Trauma and Resistance: A Comparative Transitivity Analysis of *My Story* and *When I Hit You*

[1] Aardra A. Chandran, [2] Shahila Zafar
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002015

Abstract

This article explores how trauma and existential crises are articulated in *My Story* (1976) by Kamala Das and *When I Hit You* (2017) by Meena Kandasamy through distinct narrative and stylistic choices. Drawing on Halliday's transitivity framework (1985), we examine how each author's use of language reveals their psychological landscapes. The transitivity analysis of selected autobiographies showed that in *My Story*, mental processes were used more to narrate the experiences of trauma and existential crises, whereas in *When I Hit You*, the material process is used more, which points to the intensity of domestic violence inflicted upon the protagonist. Thus, the authors' differing narrative approaches and introspective recollection versus confrontational exposure highlight how autobiographical writing becomes a space for both survival and resistance. The emotional depth of both texts aligns with clinical descriptions of PTSD outlined in the *DSM-5*, demonstrating a convergence between literary and psychological expressions of trauma. Together, these works exemplify how women's autobiographies can transform personal suffering into powerful critiques of patriarchal violence.

Keywords: *autobiography, Halliday, patriarchy, stylistics, transitivity, trauma*

1. Introduction

The present study conducts a Hallidayan stylistic analysis of *My Story* (1976) by Kamala Das and *When I Hit You* (2017) by Meena Kandasamy, autobiographies written by acclaimed Indian women writers from the 1970's and the 2010s, respectively. Both these life stories focus on the conflict between the protagonists' ambitions and the patriarchal setup that they are part of. Traditionally**,** critical approaches to autobiographies written by women have focused on themes such as gender, identity, race, and the formation of the self. Simone de Beauvoir's

[1] Chandran, A. A. Don Bosco Institute of Higher Education, Angadikadavu, Kerala, India. Email: aardrakunju9494@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5921-2633.

[2]Zafar, S. Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab, India. Email: shahila.zafar@cup.edu.in. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4034-9613.

autobiographical writings, for example, are often explored from feminist perspectives (Curthoys, 2000). At the same time, the life narrative of Harriet Jacobs has been analysed in terms of race, the American self, and resistance to oppression (Drake, 1997). As Adelman (2004, p. 116) notes, women's life writing is often marked by a tension between the difficulty of defining the self and the challenge of representing others. While thematic interpretations remain vital, expanding the analytical lens to include linguistic and stylistic frameworks provides additional insight into how autobiographical meaning is constructed. This move toward language-focused inquiry enables an exploration not only of what is told but also of how experience is shaped and rendered through stylistic choice.

In this context, the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the transitivity system developed by M.A.K. Halliday (1985), opens a new dimension for analysing autobiographical writing. SFL posits that language is a resource for making meaning and views grammar as a system of choices linked to the expression of experience, interpersonal relations, and textual organisation. Writers and speakers choose particular structures to reflect their social reality. The transitivity system, part of Halliday's notion of ideational metafunction of language, provides a framework for examining how processes, participants, and circumstances are structured in clauses to reflect the author's perception of reality. When applied to autobiography, this framework may enable a closer reading of how authors grammatically encode experiences of trauma, struggle, and resistance, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the relationship between language and lived experience, especially when those experiences defy easy articulation. Schulkind et al. (2012, p. 963) observe that women's autobiographical narratives often prioritise evaluative over factual information, emphasising inner emotional landscapes rather than external chronology.

The transitivity system, a framework for examining how language represents processes, participants, and circumstances within a clause, identifies six primary types of processes through which experiences are linguistically expressed: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential. Each process type offers a different window into how writers construct meaning, and each involves specific participant roles and associated circumstances. For example, material processes represent actions or events, i.e., processes of "doing" or "happening." A material clause, such as "I eat mango," involves an *Actor* ("I") and a *Goal* ("mango"). In contrast, a clause like "I stand here" features no Goal and simply captures an action without an affected entity, marking it as a "happening" clause (Rehman, 2020, p. 25). These subtle distinctions influence how agency and impact are distributed across narrative voices. Mental processes, by contrast, open a window into the inner world. These processes, divided into perception, cognition, and reaction, capture thoughts, feelings, and desires. In "She disliked the idea," "she" functions as the *Sensor*, and "the idea" is the *Phenomenon* (Simpson, 2004, 23). Perception-based clauses might involve sensory verbs like "see," "hear," or "feel," while cognitive ones deal with internal acts such as "think" or "know." Reaction processes are evaluative, capturing emotional responses like "love" or "hate." These clauses have a special significance in trauma narratives, as they reflect psychological states that may not be outwardly expressed. Relational processes convey states of being, identification, or possession. Paul Simpson (2004, p.24) identifies three types: intensive ("Joyce is the best Irish writer"), possessive ("Peter has a piano"), and circumstantial ("The guest was in the lobby"). These are further categorised into *attributive* and *identifying* relational clauses. In attributive clauses, an attribute is assigned to a subject (*Carrier*), whereas identifying clauses assign a specific identity and are reversible (Rehman, 2020, p. 28). These forms often serve to locate the subject socially, morally, or emotionally, an essential function in autobiographical writing that seeks to make sense of the self.

The verbal process, or process of saying, is central to storytelling, dialogue, and quotation. It involves a *Sayer* (the speaker), a *Receiver* (the listener), and *Verbiage* (what is said). A sentence like "She told him a story" exemplifies this: "she" is the Sayer, "him" is the Receiver, and "a story" is the Verbiage (Rehman, 2020, p. 30). In autobiographical texts, these clauses often mark moments of testimony, confrontation, or disclosure and help shape the writer's position in relation to others. Behavioural processes reflect outward expressions of internal states. This includes actions such as "frowning," "laughing," or "crying" that straddle the material and mental domains. The participant here is known as the *Behaver*, as in "She frowned at me," where "she" performs an action that is both physical and emotionally suggestive (Simpson, 2004, p. 24). These processes are subtle yet powerful tools for revealing affect in autobiographical prose. The final type, the existential process, asserts the presence of something or someone. It is typically marked by the use of "there," as in "There is a house." The *Existent* ("house") is the only necessary participant. This form often appears in descriptive passages or expressions of detachment or inevitability, allowing the narrator to shift focus from agency to mere occurrence. Together, these six process types create a grammar of experience. The choices an author makes, whether to highlight a mental state or material act, whether to obscure agency through existential forms or assert it through active clauses, reflect deep stylistic and ideological positions. As Simpson (2004, p. 25) notes, transitivity plays a central role in revealing "style as a choice". In autobiographical writing, especially when addressing themes of trauma, resistance, or self-discovery, the grammar of transitivity becomes a powerful tool for interpreting not just what is said but how it is made meaningful.

The current study also incorporates the concept of the medicalisation of trauma as outlined by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). The most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-5*) (2013) defines trauma, which is a concept associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence. Under *DSM-5*, PTSD is diagnosed through five criteria that reflect distinct dimensions of traumatic response. Criterion A (Stressor) involves four forms of exposure: direct personal experience, witnessing trauma to others, learning of traumatic events experienced by close family or friends, or repeated/extreme exposure to traumatic details. Criterion B (Intrusion) refers to the re-experiencing of the traumatic event through unwanted memories, nightmares, flashbacks, or emotional and physical distress triggered by reminders. Criterion C (Avoidance) addresses the tendency to avoid trauma-related thoughts or external stimuli. Criterion D (Negative alterations in cognition and mood) includes symptoms such as memory gaps, persistent negative beliefs, and excessive self-blame or blame of others. Finally, Criterion E (Alterations in arousal and reactivity) encompasses physiological and behavioural responses, such as irritability, risk-taking, hypervigilance, and the startle response ("DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for PTSD"). In categorising trauma, APA recognises three distinct types: acute, chronic, and complex trauma. Acute trauma results from exposure to a single traumatic event. Chronic trauma stems from prolonged or repeated exposure, as seen in domestic violence or childhood abuse. Complex trauma arises from multiple, often layered experiences of trauma that are typically interpersonal in nature (Leonard, "What is trauma? What to know", 2020).

Positioning this psychiatric framework alongside linguistic and literary analysis offers a robust lens for exploring how trauma is not only experienced but also narrated and framed in women's autobiographical writing. As trauma disturbs linear narrative and self-coherence, the clause-level representation of actions, thoughts, and states of being can reflect deeper psychological and existential patterns. Through this framework, autobiographical narratives can be read not only for thematic content but also for the linguistic encoding of trauma and existential crises. The patterned use of processes, participants, and circumstances offers insight into how authors attempt to articulate the unspeakable through structured yet subjective expression.

As part of the current exploration, an extensive thematic content analysis of both selected autobiographies was conducted using Taguette software. This open-source qualitative research tool enables tagging and exporting of text data. From the broader thematic coding, a specific focus was placed on themes of trauma and existential crisis, as both autobiographies centre on the traumatic experiences of women writers.

Transitivity Analysis of *My Story* (1976)

My Story by Kamala Das is an autobiography, originally published in Malayalam, titled *Ente Katha* (1973). When first published, it caused a sensation among Malayali readers for its frank exposition of the traditional Malayali patriarchal system in an otherwise matrilineal society. *My Story* is a testimony of how such a system tries all means, especially through the institution of marriage, to quash the creative ambitions and sexual desires of a woman too bold to be tied down to its mores.

The transitivity analysis of *My Story* by Kamala Das, as shown in Table 1 below, reports eighteen instances of trauma linked to existential crises. These were examined not only through a literary lens but also through the scientific framework of PTSD, integrating the medicalisation of trauma defined by the American Psychological Association. Table 1 presents the frequency of each transitivity process related to the themes of trauma and existential crisis in the autobiography *My Story*. A general observation of the table indicates that 43 processes were identified, out of which the most frequently used process is mental processes (41.86%). This may refer to the writer's mental recollections about the traumas and existential crises she experienced throughout her life.

Table 1: Transitivity processes with reference to themes found in *My Story*

Transitivity Processes	Occurrences	Total No. of Processes	Percentage
Material	12	43	27
Mental	18	43	41
Verbal	1	43	2.
Behavioural	12	43	27
Relational	0	43	0
Existential	0	43	0

As shown in Table 1, the material and behavioural processes are used equally (27%) to explore traumatic experiences. This hints at specific physical actions as well as behaviours that gave the author-protagonist bad experiences. The verbal process is not often used to describe the themes, and out of the six processes described in the transitivity system, relational and existential processes are not used at all for exploring the key themes in this autobiography.

In *My Story*, the author employs mental processes to explain the traumas and existential crises she experiences. The expressions "I felt humiliated" (p. 40) and "I felt hurt and humiliated" (p. 78) indicate the instances of trauma Kamla Das faced in life. The first expression refers to an instance of insult that Das experienced at a young age when her uncle took her to a shop to purchase material for stitching frocks. The intensity of pain she felt is metaphorically expressed in the narrative. The second instance happened when her cousin, who would soon be her husband, physically abused her before marriage. This led to dissatisfaction in the marriage, as evident from expressions such as "hoped for a more tranquil relationship" (p. 80) and "made up mind to be unfaithful to him" (p. 90). Thus, the physical abuse, as well as dissatisfaction with married life, affected her mental health, which later paved the way for experiencing an existential crisis or a feeling of escape from married life. This is notable from the sentences "I want to escape" (p. 81), "I wished to escape from my home and walk on" (p. 103), and "get out of this trap" (p. 93). Then, the phrase "wanted to find rest in the sea" (p. 210) suggests her yearning for eternal peace, which allows her to escape the bitter realities and traumas she faces in life.

The next most commonly used process is the material process, which involves examining the nature of trauma through action. The very first expression, "she was asked to read the poem I composed" (p. 10), points to the painful realisation of shadeism and its effects on Das’s life. Das's talent was attributed to another girl only because of her dark skin tone. Another phrase, "posted an appeal to my father to rescue me" (48), refers to the strict institutions like convent schools, which enforced religion upon children. Kamala, as a young girl, witnessed the brutal side of the Calcutta riots, which is evident in the sentence, "his body was cut by Muslims" (p. 65). All the experiences gave her bitter lessons, and when she entered her teenage years, her cousin physically and sexually abused her. This resulted in a dissatisfactory marriage. This is evident from expressions like "pushed me into a dark corner behind the doors and kissed" (p. 78), "crushed my breast" (p. 78), "his hands bruised my body" (p. 79), "he hurt me" (p. 85), "let him take my body every night." The last two expressions point to an image of a wife who is reduced to a sex object for her husband and projects a marital relationship devoid of love and emotional affection.

The third most used process to represent her traumas and existential crisis is a behavioural process. The first expression, "pleads to bare my breast," indicates Das’s cousin's bad treatment and physical abuse. The two clauses, "surprising me by the extreme brutality of attack" (p. 84) and "sobbing and trying hard to believe in destiny" (p. 97), show the sexual abuse or marital rape by the husband, which led to mental trauma. Being dissatisfied with married life, Das becomes depressed. The two expressions "threw himself down on my body with two strange groans" (p. 101) and "rolled off my body and lay inert at the foot of the bed" (p. 101) refer to the traumatic mental illusion experienced by the writer. The other depressing acts of aggression she faced were from her father's friends, who "gave me lecherous hugs" (p. 151), and from old acquaintances who "tried to touch me and made indiscreet suggestions" (p. 186). Thus, certain acts left her with bad experiences and memories. The verbal process is not that much used to explore the themes of trauma and existential crisis. Being born as a child of dark skin, Das faced discrimination at her European school. These events led to a decrease in confidence about one's beauty, as evident from the expression, "asking him secretly if I were ugly" (p. 36), and pointing to the colour-based discrimination prevalent at large. Similarly, the sentence "my husband told me that I am going mad" (p. 98) hints at her change in mental attitude. Her dissatisfaction with her married life may have prompted this change.

Thus, Das employed mental, material, behavioural, and verbal processes to explore the themes of trauma and existential crises experienced. The repeated usage of words like "hurt" and "humiliated" shows the linguistic choice made by the author to express negative emotions attached to memories of the trauma she comes across in life. Additionally, the repeated expression "I was going mad" highlights the change in mental stability that the author experienced. The recurrent usage of the expression "wish/want to escape" hints towards the existential crises she felt in life.

Transitivity Analysis of *When I Hit You* (2017)

Like *My Story*, *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017), an autobiography by Meena Kandasamy, a Tamil-origin author, is about a young woman aspiring to be a writer. Here, as well, like Kamala Das, Kandasamy faces cultural and societal pressure to give up and settle into the matrimonial routine of a traditional Indian wife. However, here, as described by the author, the oppression is much more vicious, not just mental but primarily involving physical violence.

As a part of the exploration of the representations of these oppressions in Kandasamy's *When I Hit You*, Table 2 presents the frequency of each transitivity process related to the themes of trauma and existential crisis that they lead to. The first observation in the table suggests that the total number of processes identified was 79, out of which the most frequently used are material processes (37%), which explore the themes of trauma and existential crises. This may be associated with the domestic violence experienced by the writer.

Table 2: Transitivity Processes with reference to themes found in *When I Hit You*

Transitivity Processes	Occurrences	Total No. of Processes	Percentage
Material	34	79	43
Mental	20	79	25
Verbal	12	79	15
Behavioural	12	79	15
Relational	0	79	0
Existential	1	79	1

Further, the second most used process is mental (25 %), which may point to the mental recollections of traumatic experiences Kandasamy faced in her life. Thirdly, there is an equal use of both behavioural processes and verbal processes (15%). Additionally, unlike *My Story,* a small number of existential processes are also observed, whereas the relational process is not used by the writer at all.

The material process, also known as the action process, is evident in expressions such as "I must learn that walking to the grocery store without a tunic makes people frown" (p. 34), which exposes patriarchal control over dress. This expression strengthens Kandasamy's marking of marriage as a "re-education camp" (p. 32). Expressions associated with the actions of her husband, like "deactivate my Facebook account" (p. 52), "write down passwords" (p. 54), "deletes 25,600 odd emails" (p. 139), "changes password" (p. 139), "erases everything on my hard disk" (p. 139) show the extreme level of controlling behaviour exhibited by her husband, leading to her experience a mental shock. The expression, "putting his fingers in my vagina" (p. 60), points to the childhood sexual abuse she experienced. The brutal physical abuse Kandasamy suffered in her marital life is evident from the phrases "can catalogue weapons of abuse" (p. 69), "slaps me" (p. 199), "forces his way through the door and kicks me" (p. 202), "drags me" (p. 163), "hoists me against the wall" (p. 211), and "holding face under his toes" (p. 212). These acts of domestic violence bring fear of being killed by her husband. This leads to her being hypervigilant in her everyday life with him, evident from expressions such as "I light the matchstick in the empty air before I open the valve of the gas cylinder" (p. 188). Thus, this material process helps us understand the brutal treatment she had in married life.

Expressions such as "must consider in my role as a perfect wife" (p. 15)," I must remember that the responsibility of the female body belongs to me" (p. 34), and "I hear for 'your own good'", using the mental process (p. 60), show how Kandasamy was forced to come to terms with societal expectations of women. The unavailability of mental peace in married life is revealed through the sentence, "I resolutely buy myself an uneasy peace" (p. 54). The existential crisis felt by the author is evident in the statement, "I feel robbed of my identity" (p. 55). She felt nauseous when she realised her husband was replying to all her personal messages and emails. This gave her a mental shock. The total disappointment in married life can be identified through the statement, "I did not know that this was the exemplary life awaiting a newly married woman" (p. 69). The dissatisfaction in marriage takes her back to the memory of her true love and the pain of realising that he was a womaniser. This is expressed in phrases like "I watch love transform" (p. 121) and "he crushes me" (p. 121). Thus, the exploration of mental processes exposes the mental traumas experienced by the protagonist. The third process used to describe traumas and existential crises is the Behavioural process. Expressions, such as "she continues to enumerate her list with a note of requisite humility until a look of satisfaction flashes across his face" (p. 19), show how women are expected to please their husbands by speaking politely. The statements made by the author, such as "he allows me three hours a week" (p. 59) and "he is not going to let me go to a workplace unsupervised" (p. 79), reveal her husband's ruthless behaviour and mistrust of her. The expressions like "he continues smashing things '(p. 31), "he flies into rage tearing my bag from shoulders' (p. 132), and "he shouts and screams at me" (p. 212) point to her husband's violent behaviour towards her. His controlling behaviour does not allow her even to moan during sex. The expression "he stops the act itself" (p. 152) shows his punishment for putting her pleasure in front of him. Thus, this process helps in understanding the cruel behaviours of her husband directed toward her.

The verbal process, the process of reporting, is evident in expressions like "She asks him how his day at college was" (p. 19), a cliché talk expected from a perfect wife. Initially, Kandasamy responds strongly to the mistreatment, evident in the sentence, "I am not going to do anything if you blackmail me" (p. 50). However, towards the end, after enduring continual physical abuse, she finds herself too weak to argue and respond to her husband's entreaties, "This is the last time. Forgive me. Give me this last chance. This will never happen again" (p. 156). His well-defined patriarchal control over her is evident from the utterance, "I am forced to tell you what's good for you and what is not" (p. 51). The verbal abuse she suffered in married life is also expressed in her husband's utterances, "I have been asked to write on sexuality because I have the wide range experience of fucking up so many men" (p. 75), "he tells me to shut the fuck up" (p. 75) and "you are a whore" (p. 164). The sentence "It is the rain that tells me to run away" conveys the existential crisis the author feels while she searches for an escape. Thus, this verbal process demonstrates how a strong woman transforms into a weak, apologising one because of the bad treatment she receives in her married life, which directed humiliation not only to her identity as a wife but also to her identity as a writer, highlighting the functioning of well-defined patriarchal control within the institution of marriage. The existential process in the expression "this plainness that will prevent arguments" (p. 16) highlights how Kandasamy employs "plainness" as a strategy to promote peace in married life and how this same strategy is a sign of surrender from her side. This strategy of plainness can be successful only when it silences everything that constitutes an identity, leading to a loss of identity, which in turn can lead to existential crises. The recurrent use of phrases like "kicks me" and "hits me" shows the intensity of domestic violence inflicted upon her in the domestic space. Additionally, the recurrent use of the expression "your own good" exposes the patriarchal strategy to normalise the abuse of women within the institution of marriage. Phrases like "walk out" and "runaway" also hint at Kandasamy's longing to leave her marriage and the associated existential crisis she undergoes.

Features of Linguistic Choices and their Alignment with Symptoms of PTSD as per DSM-5

A general observation of the different transitivity processes identified in selected autobiographies hints at widespread symptoms of trauma that the protagonists experience. In *My Story,* expressions like "I felt humiliated" (p. 40) and "I felt hurt and humiliated" (p. 78) illustrate the negative emotions associated with these experiences. Additionally, expressions like "my husband told me I was going mad" and "they thought I am mad" show the change in mood and cognition. These symptoms, including nightmares that recollect the marital rape, associating events with negative emotions, and changes in mood and cognition, point and point to symptoms of PTSD. Additionally, as per DSM, Das may be undergoing chronic trauma because the symptoms she shows seem to emerge from her dissatisfaction with her loveless married life. In *When I Hit You*, expressions like "I feel robbed of my identity" (p. 55), "I resolutely buy myself an uneasy peace" (p. 54), and "I did not know that this was the exemplary life awaiting a newly married woman" (p.70), show the association of negative emotions with Kandasamy's experiences. The expressions like "I nod in agreement" (58) and "this is the last time. Forgive me. Give me this last chance. This will never happen again" (p. 156) indicate Kandasamy's fear of her husband's figure and her fear of death at her husband's hands. This fear later gives rise to hypervigilance, as evident in lines such as "I leave the window open before I switch on the gas" (p. 188) and "I light the matchstick in empty air before I open the valve of the gas cylinder" (p. 188). Additionally, there are instances of recapping, one about the lost love when she realises the true nature of her husband, and another about childhood sexual abuse. Thus, these symptoms, i.e., associating the experiences with negative emotions, fear, hypervigilance, and flashbacks, point to a lingering PTSD. Furthermore, Kandasamy may be undergoing complex trauma because she is traumatised not only by her abusive husband but also by the loss of her true love and her experience of childhood sexual abuse.

Thus, in *My Story*, Kamala Das uses verbs of perception, emotion, and cognition to narrate trauma and existential crisis as deeply internalised experiences. The emphasis on inward states and psychological fragmentation suggests a form of trauma that is not always visible but is profoundly felt, layered within the recesses of an unsatisfying, loveless marriage. Her narrative is less concerned with external agents of harm than with the aftershocks of emotional rupture, presenting trauma as a quiet implosion rather than an overt confrontation. In contrast, Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You* adopts a language of material processes, privileging verbs that enact rather than reflect. Her narrative aligns memory with bodily harm and foregrounds physical suffering within the domestic sphere. Through the direct naming of the abuser and the visibility of the violence, her prose performs resistance. The language does not seek refuge in introspection; instead, it fights back, insists on presence, and refuses to be erased. In doing so, Kandasamy positions her autobiography as both testimony and protest.

Conclusion

By applying Halliday's transitivity system, the selected autobiographies were not only stylistically analysed in the current article but were also systematically understood as narrative responses to trauma. The divergent linguistic strategies of the two writers reflect not only their individual sensibilities but also the specific contours of the traumas they carry. Kamala Das's introspective recollections align with features of chronic trauma shaped by prolonged emotional deprivation. Meena Kandasamy's assertive, action-oriented narration corresponds to complex trauma, which spans physical abuse, the loss of a romantic relationship, and childhood sexual violation. Both sets of experiences, though different in form and intensity, exhibit patterns that correspond with the DSM-5's diagnostic criteria for PTSD, including intrusive recollection, emotional dysregulation, avoidance, and hyperarousal. Thus, the grammatical choices each writer makes, whether to internalise or confront, do more than organise language; they reveal the psychological architecture of pain, resistance, and survival. In this way, transitivity functions as a bridge between literary form and clinical reality, illuminating how trauma is shaped, spoken, and ultimately made legible through narrative. Thus, the transitivity system helps identify and study expressions of trauma and existential crises experienced by women within the institution of marriage and society at large. In addition to engaging with literary trauma studies, pioneered by Cathy Caruth (1996), who integrated Freudian concepts to argue that trauma disrupts both the psyche and language, thereby manifesting in fragmented narratives, abrupt beginnings, and ruptured dialogue, trauma studies can also seek to incorporate insights from psychology and linguistics by examining the linguistic features employed by writers to narrate traumatic experiences.

References

Adelman, T. H. (2004). Self, other, and community: Jewish women's autobiography. *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues, 7*, 116–127. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/nsh.2004.0037

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books

Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Curthoys, A. (2000). Adventures of feminism: Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographies, women's liberation, and self-fashioning. *Feminist Review, 64*, 3–18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1395698

Das, K. (1977). *My story*. Harper Collins.

Drake, K. (1997). Rewriting the American self: Race, gender, and identity in the autobiographies of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs. *MELUS, 22*(4), 91–108. https://doi.org/10.2307/46799

DSM-5 criteria for PTSD | BrainLine. (2023, March 22). BrainLine. https://www.brainline.org/article/dsm-5-criteria-ptsd

Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *Introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge.

Kandasamy, M. (2017). *When I hit you: Or, a portrait of the writer as a young wife*. Atlantic Books.

Leonard, J. (2025, August 20). *What is trauma? What to know*. https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/trauma

Rehman, M. H. U. (2020). *A transitivity analysis of Imran Khan and Mahatir Muhammad's selected political speeches: A comparative study* [Master's thesis, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus].

Schulkind, M., Schoppel, K., & Scheiderer, E. (2012). Gender differences in autobiographical narratives: He shoots and scores; she evaluates and interprets. *Memory & Cognition, 40*(6), 958–965. https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-012-0197-1

Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics*. Taylor and Francis e-Library.

Taguette | Georgetown University Library. (n.d.). https://library.georgetown.edu/software/taguette

Received: 04.17.2026
Revised: 04.19.2026
Accepted: 06.06.2026
Published: 06.07.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

Assessing the Origins, Symbolic Significance, and Social Meaning of Dalma-Type Impressed Pottery on the Basis of Evidence from Nakhchivan and Karabakh

[1] **Elmar Bakhshaliyev**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002016

Abstract

The impressed pottery of the Dalma tradition was distributed across a wide area extending from the Urmia Basin to the South Caucasus during the fifth millennium BCE. However, the mechanisms underlying this distribution remain insufficiently understood. The Late Neolithic layer uncovered during the 2019 excavations at Nakhchivan Tepe provides an opportunity to reassess this issue. At Nakhchivan Tepe, impressed pottery was recorded stratigraphically prior to painted pottery, a sequence that differs significantly from the classical Dalma stratigraphy. Petrographic and archaeometric analyses indicate the coexistence of stylistic homogeneity and raw material variability. This suggests that the spread of this pottery tradition was associated less with the exchange of finished products than with the transmission of technological knowledge. Radiocarbon dates from Neolithic sites in the Karabakh-Mil Plain indicate an earlier presence of this tradition in the South Caucasus than in the Urmia Basin. These results support a multi-centred model involving Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin.

Keywords: *Dalma, impressed pottery, Nakhchivan Tepe, Karabakh-Mil Plain, Neolithic, cultural transmission, South Caucasus.*

Introduction

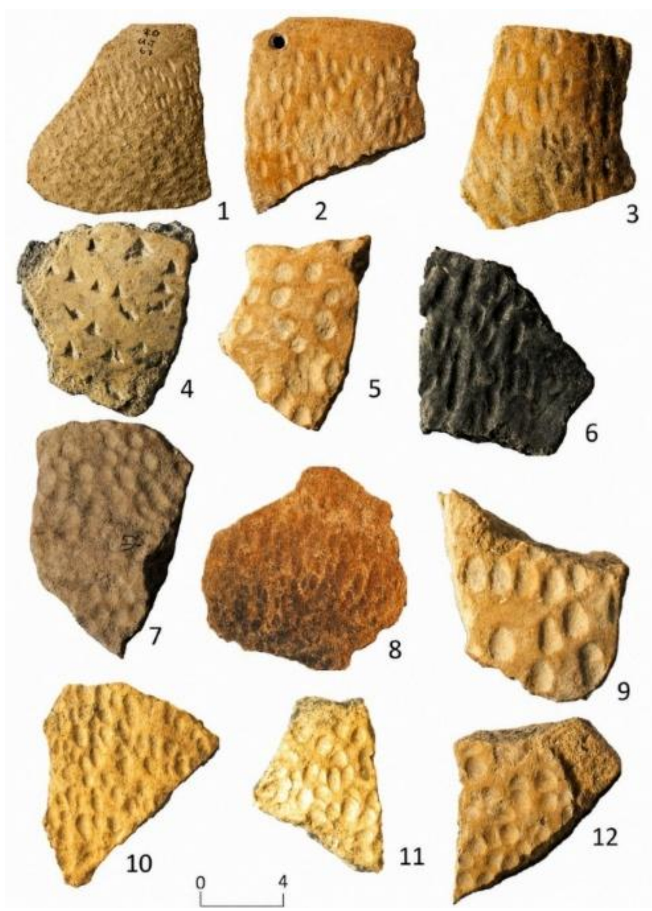
Dalma Tepe pottery was first identified at the site of Dalma Tepe in the Urmia Basin of northwestern Iran (Young, 1962, pp. 707-709; Young, 1963, pp. 38-39; Hamlin, 1975, p. 111). During the initial investigations, Young suggested that this culture might not be indigenous to the region (Young, 1962, p. 709). According to Henrickson's typological classification, the pottery is divided into three principal categories: plain ware, impressed ware, and painted ware. Plain ware is further subdivided into slipped-burnished, slipped-unburnished, and unslipped-unburnished groups, while red-slipped pottery is treated not as an independent category but as a subtype within

[1] Bakhshaliyev, E. Nakhchivan Branch of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS), Azerbaijan. Email: elmarbakhshaliev@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3360-0961

this ware. Painted ware includes monochrome, bichrome, and banded variants. Impressed ware is characterized by finger impressions, fingertip impressions, and designs executed with reed or bone tools. However, the coverage of the entire exterior surface of vessels by such motifs is not a defining characteristic of all subgroups within this category (Henrickson, 1983, pp. 110-111, 185-186, 196-198).

Previous studies have argued that the principal core of the Dalma Tepe Culture emerged in the Urmia Basin and the northern Zagros region, from where pottery associated with the Dalma tradition spread into various parts of western Iran, the Trans-Tigridian region, Iraqi Kurdistan, and the South Caucasus (Abedi et al., 2015, pp. 321-322; Henrickson & Vitali, 1987, p. 37; Renette, 2022, pp. 114-115). Subsequent research has demonstrated the wide distribution of the Dalma Tepe Culture throughout northwestern Iran and its presence at numerous settlements in Iranian Azerbaijan (Bakhshaliyev et al., 2018, p. 23).

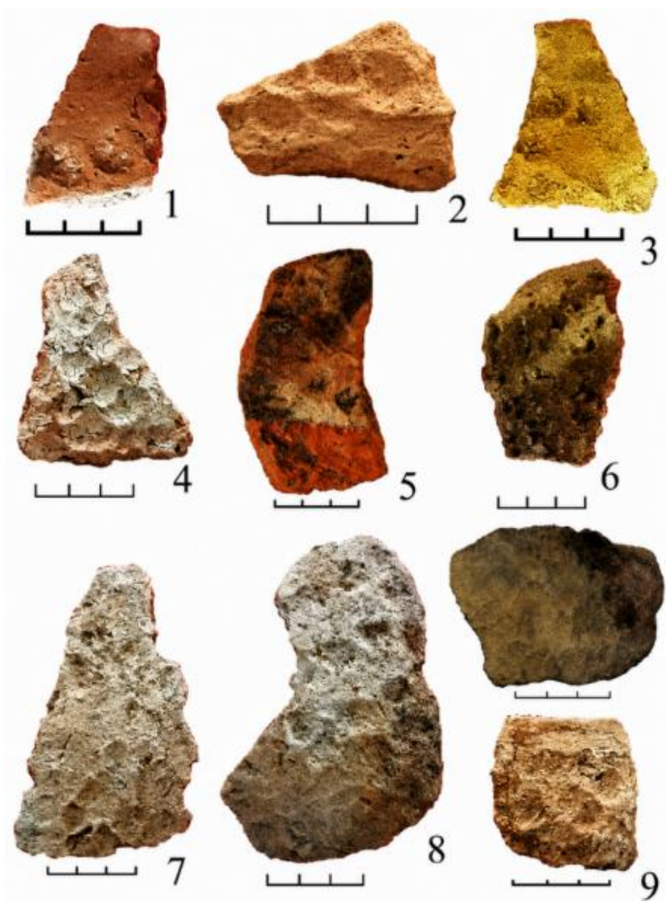
Fig. 1 Impressed pottery from Ilanlitepe (Akhundov 2017).



More recent studies, however, have suggested that the formative area of the culture included Karabakh (Fig. 1), Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin (Bakhshaliyev, 2020, p. 46; Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 194-195). Excavations conducted at the settlement of Nakhchivan Tepe in 2019 identified impressed pottery within a Neolithic layer, providing an opportunity to reassess the connections between the Mil Plain, Karabakh, and the Urmia Basin (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2020, p. 57). Based on the results of these investigations, it has been argued that the impressed-pottery sites of the Mil Plain and Karabakh played an important role in the formation of the Dalma Tepe Culture.

At Nakhchivan Tepe, impressed pottery was documented in the lowest layers (Fig. 2). This was followed by red-slipped plain pottery and subsequently by geometrically painted pottery of the Dalma type. Such a stratigraphic sequence differs from the classical Dalma stratigraphy known from the Urmia Basin and Kangavar and raises new questions concerning the position of the impressed pottery tradition within the Dalma ceramic complex. Research conducted during the last decade has shown that the formative phase of the Dalma Tepe Culture predates the classical Dalma sites of the Urmia Basin and that its roots can be traced to the Late Neolithic cultures of Nakhchivan and Karabakh (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 17-18, 23). These results have generated new discussions concerning the formation of the Dalma Tepe Culture and the origins of its ceramic traditions.

Fig. 2 Impressed pottery from the Late Neolithic level at Nakhchivan Tepe (Bakhshaliyev 2020).



Archaeological and Archaeometric Evidence

The Dalma ceramic complex is best documented at Dalma Tepe in the Urmia Basin and at Seh Gabi Mound B and Godin Tepe Op. XYZ in the Kangavar Valley. It is characterized by the co-occurrence of impressed and painted pottery groups (Henrickson, 1983, pp. 178-202, 473-474). At Tepe Qishlaq, impressed, incised, and painted pottery assemblages likewise occur together. At the same time, painted pottery constitutes only a limited proportion of the overall assemblage, whereas the principal ceramic complex consists of impressed and incised wares characteristic of the Dalma tradition (Motarjem & Sharifi, 2014, pp. 57-60). In contrast, at settlements in the Trans-Tigridian region and the western-central Zagros that have been associated with the Dalma Tepe Culture, Dalma-type pottery forms only a limited component of the overall ceramic assemblage and stands out as a non-local element. At these sites, Dalma materials are represented primarily by impressed wares, which occur in higher proportions than painted pottery (Alden et al., 2021, p. 6; Renette, 2022, p. 116).

Fig. 3 Dalma impressed pottery (Alden et al. 2021).

Analysis of the material from Dalma Tepe indicates that painted pottery was more common in the earlier levels, whereas impressed pottery (Fig. 3) became increasingly prevalent in the later strata (Alden et al., 2021, p. 5). Renette has likewise noted that Dalma painted pottery was largely restricted to the Northern Zagros, while impressed pottery had a considerably wider geographical distribution (Renette, 2022, p. 114). From this perspective, the predominance of impressed wares in the Trans-Tigridian region and the western-central Zagros may indicate an association with the relatively later phases of the Dalma tradition.

The comparative table presented below synthesizes published excavation data and previous research concerning the stratigraphic distribution of the principal ceramic groups at settlements associated with the Dalma Tepe Culture. The data presented are based on the assessments provided in the published studies (Table 1).

Table 1. Stratigraphic distribution of ceramic groups at settlements associated with the Dalma Tepe Culture.

Site	Geographic Region	Painted Pottery	Impressed Pottery	Red-Slipped Ware	Plain Ware	Reference
Dalma Tepe	Urmia Basin	Dominant during the early phase	Increases during later phases	Present	Present	Hamlin 1975
Seh Gabi / Godin X	Kangavar Valley	Present during the early phase (monochrome)	Increases during later phases	Present	Present	Henrickson 1983
Nad Ali Beig	Central Zagros	Linear motifs during the early phase; complex geometric motifs during later phases (monochrome)	Increases during later phases	Present	Present	Bahranipoor 2021
Soha Chay Tepe	Zanjan, Iran	Dominant during the early phase	Increases during later phases	Present	Present	Rahimi Sorkhani et al. 2016
Surezha	Erbil Plain (Iraq)	Continues in high percentages throughout LC1 as a continuation of the Ubaid tradition	Dalma-type impressed examples occur only in the upper (late) LC1 levels	Not reported	Present	Stein & Fisher 2020
Kani Shaie	Bazyan Basin,	Present during the early	Present during the	Appears from	Present	Renette et al. 2021

	Southern Iraqi Kurdistan	phase (Late Ubaid), decreasing during later phases	early phase (Late Ubaid), absent in LC1	LC2 onward		
Nakhchivan Tepe	Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, Azerbaijan	Rare during the early phase, increasing during later phases	Dominant during the early phase	Present	Present	Bakhshaliyev 2020; Bakhshaliyev and Bakhshaliyev 2023
Neolithic Sites of Karabakh (Ilanlitepe, Ismayilbeytepe, Chalagantepe, Kamiltepe, etc.)	Mil-Karabakh Plain	Rare, mainly appearing during later phases	Present from the early phase and becoming widespread and standardized during later phases	Present	Present	Narimanov 1987; Akhundov 2017; Almammadov 2018

The data presented in the table indicate that the proportions of ceramic categories are not uniform across settlements associated with the Dalma tradition. At Surezha, painted pottery continues in high frequencies throughout LC1 and is characterized as a continuation of the Ubaid tradition. Impressed pottery, by contrast, is represented only in the later LC1 levels and occurs in limited quantities of Dalma-type examples. At Kani Shaie, both painted and impressed pottery are present during the earlier phase (Late Ubaid). In subsequent phases, painted pottery decreases, whereas impressed pottery disappears entirely during LC1.

The evidence from the South Caucasus presents a different pattern. At Nakhchivan Tepe, impressed pottery predominates during the earlier phase, while painted pottery is present only in small quantities and increases only in later phases. A similar trend can be observed at the Neolithic settlements of Karabakh. There, impressed pottery is present from the earlier phase and becomes more widespread and standardized in subsequent phases, whereas painted pottery occurs in limited quantities and is largely confined to the later phase. This parallel may suggest that the early predominance of impressed pottery constituted a regional trend in the South Caucasus, although additional stratigraphic evidence is required to evaluate this interpretation further.

A comparative table of radiocarbon dates obtained from the Karabakh-Mil Plain settlements (Table 2) provides the chronological framework for this sequence.

Table 2. Radiocarbon Dates from the Karabakh-Mil Plain Settlements, Nakhchivan Tepe, and Kul Tepe (Iran).

No.	Site	Sample ID	Radiocarbon (BP)	Date BC (95.4%)
1	Goytepe (Karabakh)	LAAA-141125	6385±30	5486-5391 BC
2	Goytepe (Karabakh)	LAAA-120067	6610±30	5617-5490 BC
3	Ismayilbeytepe (Karabakh)	R3	6700±80	5730-5450 BC
4	Ismayilbeytepe (Karabakh)	R5	6650±80	5710-5480 BC
5	Nakhchivan Tepe	LTL19695A	6102±45	5209-4930 BC
6	Nakhchivan Tepe	LTL19694A	6028 ± 45	5038-4799 BC
7	Nakhchivan Tepe	LTL19693A	5967 ± 45	4959-4725 BC
8	Julfa Kultepe (Iran)	LTL13047A	5647 ± 50	4600-4350

This observation gains greater significance when considered together with the results of archaeometric investigations. One of the principal issues in the study of the Dalma ceramic tradition concerns the distinction between stylistic similarity and production origin. Petrographic and INAA analyses conducted on the Surezha material have demonstrated that Dalma-type pottery shows close similarities in form and decorative characteristics to the Dalma assemblages of the Urmia Basin, while at the same time being produced from local clay sources. This result indicates that the spread of the Dalma style was related less to the exchange of ceramic vessels than to cultural influence or the transmission of technological traditions (Stein & Fisher, 2020, pp. 144-145). Similar results have been obtained through petrographic studies of material from Seh Gabi, Godin Tepe, and Tepe Siahbid. Although similar in appearance, the Dalma-type pottery from these three settlements has been identified as local production. The igneous and metamorphic clay sources used in the Eastern Central Zagros (Seh Gabi and Godin Tepe) differ from the calcareous clay sources of the Western Central Zagros (Tepe Siahbid). This indicates that it was not the pottery itself, but rather the method of its production, that was transmitted by communities associated with the Dalma tradition. At the same time, variability in local clay sources suggests that production took place at the household level (Hossein Mardi, 2025, p. 14).

Portable XRF analyses carried out by Rahimi Sorkhani and Eslami on the pottery from Soha Chay Tepe demonstrated that each ceramic style possessed a distinct chemical composition, reflecting different raw materials or recipes, while remaining compositionally homogeneous within each stylistic group (Rahimi Sorkhani & Eslami, 2018, p. 220). The authors interpret this pattern as indicating that changes in style were accompanied by changes in clay procurement and that potters made different production choices for different ceramic styles, regarding this as evidence for an early stage of craft specialization within the Dalma tradition (Rahimi Sorkhani & Eslami, 2018, p. 232). At the same time, by emphasizing that diagnostic Dalma pottery was not the product of long-distance exchange (Rahimi Sorkhani & Eslami, 2018, p. 222), they argue that this phenomenon was associated not with the large-scale trade of finished products but rather with local production and a shared material-cultural tradition.

Theoretical Framework

The social significance of ceramic decoration has long been a subject of discussion within archaeology. Wobst argued that style may participate in the transmission of social information and noted that the formal characteristics of artefacts play a role in the expression of group identity and social relationships (Wobst, 1977, pp. 8, 18-21). Sackett, in turn, emphasized that style is manifested not only in decorative elements but also in technological choices, explaining this phenomenon through the concept of "isochrestic variation" (Sackett, 1986, pp. 268-270).

These approaches are of particular relevance for the interpretation of Dalma-type impressed pottery. Petrographic and archaeometric studies indicate that Dalma-type ceramics were produced from local raw materials in different regions while displaying a high degree of technological and decorative similarity. This situation suggests that it was not the pottery itself, but rather the method of production and the stylistic tradition that spread across the region.

This phenomenon may also be approached through the concept of communities of practice. Lave and Wenger characterized technological learning as a process of participation within social practices and argued that technological knowledge and production skills are transmitted through shared traditions of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 29-42, 89-98). In a subsequent study, Wenger noted that practical relationships established between communities may, over time, give rise to broader constellations of practices (Wenger, 1998, pp. 72-84, 126-131). Within archaeological research, this approach has been widely applied to explain the spread of ceramic production and technological knowledge (Roddick & Stahl, 2016, pp. 3-5).

The shared tradition of impressed decoration observed across Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin similarly allows for the possibility that a network of interconnected communities existed, based on local production while sharing common technological knowledge and traditions of learning. From this perspective, the wide geographical distribution of Dalma impressed pottery may be related less to the exchange of finished vessels than to the transmission of technological knowledge, social learning, and the expression of group identity. Although the currently available evidence does not permit the identification of a specific religious or cosmological meaning for these motifs, it does indicate that they constituted socially meaningful stylistic choices.

The multifunctionality model proposed by David, Sterner, and Gavua demonstrates that ceramic decoration may fulfil a variety of social and symbolic functions. While some of these interpretations are theoretically possible within the Dalma assemblage, the available archaeological evidence does not directly support most of them. Consequently, the strongest support remains with a model of social identity and shared tradition that corresponds closely to the combination of local production and regional stylistic homogeneity observed in the archaeological record (Table 3).

Table 3. Functions of decoration according to the multifunctionality framework proposed by David, Sterner, and Gavua, and the level of supporting evidence for their application within the Dalma context.

Function	Level of Evidence for Dalma
Identification of the vessel with the human person and the representation of cosmological/religious concepts (anthropomorphic vessels, ancestor/goddess vessels; “pots are persons”)	Direct evidence depends on the presence of anthropomorphic vessels or associated figurative representations. The available Dalma evidence does not support this interpretation.
Protective function of decoration as an apotropaic device. The decoration protects the vessel or the individual from dangerous forces, creating a symbolic protective boundary. Red slip (red as a symbol of both power and protection).	No direct evidence exists. Authors emphasize that such meanings can only be approached through a rich ethnographic and cosmological context and cannot be demonstrated through archaeology alone. The impressed decoration found on vessels from Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and other Dalma-related contexts may have served a protective function; however, no direct evidence currently supports this interpretation.
Commemoration of culturally acquired abundance (thorn/horn motif, maray feast)	Dalma impressed decoration could theoretically represent abundance, but no direct evidence exists. As above, confirmation would require a broader cosmological or ritual context.

ISSN 3030-1718

Mnemonic function: the everyday transmission of collective values and the reinforcement of social order; “restricted decoration” (“decoration is like prayer”, “every day at mealtimes”)	Consistent with the small-scale community structure of tribal groups and with the integration of decorated vessels into food preparation and consumption practices (indirectly supported).
Marking ritual status or exchange value (Kopytoff: commoditization-singularization scale; sacred versus market vessels)	No direct evidence is currently available for Dalma.
Indirect indicator of social identity	The paradox of stylistic homogeneity and local production (petrographic studies indicate local manufacture, while stylistic conventions remain regionally homogeneous) is strongly consistent with this interpretation.

This approach is more consistent with Wobst’s model of information exchange (Wobst, 1977, pp. 1-8), Sackett’s concept of isochrestic style (Sackett, 1986, pp. 268-269), and the symbolic-communicative interpretation of decoration proposed by David, Sterner, and Gavua (David et al., 1988, pp. 365-367). The available evidence therefore suggests that a model centred on social identity and shared tradition provides the most appropriate framework for the interpretation of Dalma pottery.

Possible Meanings of Impressed Decoration

Petrographic and archaeometric studies indicate that Dalma-type pottery exhibits a high degree of similarity in terms of technological sequence and decorative principles despite being produced from different local raw materials in different regions. This situation suggests that the impressed decoration tradition was associated less with the distribution of finished products than with the sharing of production knowledge and learning practices. In this sense, technological similarities can be interpreted as indicators of sustained social interaction and cultural transmission between Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin (Wenger, 1998, pp. 4-7; Roddick & Stahl, 2016, pp. 3-6; Peeples, 2019, pp. 3-7; Brughmans & Peeples, 2023, pp. 34-35).

A second approach considers impressed pottery as an expression of social identity and group affiliation. The occurrence of impressed pottery across a wide geographical area with similar decorative characteristics raises the possibility that it functioned as a material expression of social identity and group membership (Wobst, 1977, pp. 12, 20-21; Pereira et al., 2023, p. 1). However, this interpretation does not represent a directly demonstrated conclusion but rather one of several possible explanations of the available evidence.

A third approach relates impressed pottery to the expression of a distinct identity by Dalma communities in relation to the social hierarchies emerging in Mesopotamia (Renette, 2022, pp.

111-112). Yet this hypothesis relies primarily on indirect arguments and is not directly supported by the currently available material. Furthermore, the possibility that certain components of the Dalma tradition emerged prior to these social transformations weakens the explanatory power of this interpretation (Renette, 2022, pp. 123-124). For this reason, it should presently be regarded as a possibility that requires additional supporting evidence.

The available evidence indicates that impressed decoration was not solely decorative in character and may have carried a certain symbolic significance. Considering the storage function of many vessels, it is possible that such motifs were associated with the protection of stored contents or with concepts related to fertility and abundance. On the basis of Neolithic Near Eastern evidence, ceramic decoration has been interpreted as a medium carrying social and mythological meanings (Campbell, 2010, pp. 152-154). Early pottery has frequently been associated with ritual and symbolic practices, while ornamentation has in some cases been explained in terms of an apotropaic function (David et al., 1988, pp. 365, 372; Vitelli, 1993, p. 215). Nevertheless, no anthropomorphic vessels, iconographic representations, or other forms of direct evidence are currently known from the Dalma ceramic tradition that would support such an interpretation. Consequently, protective or fertility-related symbolism can presently be considered only at the level of hypothesis.

The analyses discussed above indicate that the social and symbolic significance of Dalma-type impressed pottery may be explained at different levels. The currently available archaeological and archaeometric evidence does not support all interpretations to the same degree. While some explanations correspond more closely with the available empirical evidence, others remain theoretical possibilities that require further investigation. A comparative evaluation of these interpretations and their respective levels of epistemic reliability is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Proposed interpretations of impressed decoration and their epistemic status

Interpretation	Main Content	Key References	Level of Evidence
Technical transmission (learning networks / communities of practice)	The same decorative tradition is reproduced using different local raw materials. Knowledge is transmitted through direct learning processes.	Wenger 1998; Roddick & Stahl 2016; Peeples 2019; Brughmans & Peeples 2023	Supported by petrographic evidence
Conscious resistance to Mesopotamian hierarchy (“mountain identity”)	The interpretation is based primarily on indirect arguments. No direct archaeological	Renette 2022	Testable but weakly supported argument

	evidence is currently available.		
Protective / abundance symbolism	The vessel serves as a container, while decoration symbolically protects or reinforces the meaning of its contents. No direct iconographic evidence is currently available for the Dalma tradition.	Campbell 2010; Vitelli 1993; David, Sterner & Gavua 1988	No direct evidence is currently available. This interpretation may be evaluated through future research.

Stratigraphy of Nakhchivan Tepe and Its Relationship with the Karabakh Sites

The lowest architectural level representing the Late Neolithic phase at Nakhchivan Tepe was documented at a depth of 2.50-3.50 m. At this stage, semi-subterranean dwelling structures cut into the natural soil were identified in excavation areas A, B, and E (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 10-11). Radiocarbon analyses of charcoal samples recovered from hearths associated with these structures produced dates of 5209-4930 BCE, 5038-4799 BCE, 4959-4725 BCE, and 4941-4722 BCE (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 10-12). These results indicate that the settlement complex was constructed during the final quarter of the sixth millennium BCE and remained in use into the beginning of the fifth millennium BCE (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, p. 12).

The ceramic assemblage recovered from this level was produced primarily from chaff-tempered clay and fired in various shades of red. Some examples were covered with red or cream-coloured slips (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, p. 17). The pottery can be divided into four principal categories: impressed, painted, red-slipped, and plain wares. Since painted examples occur only in limited quantities, impressed pottery constitutes the dominant component of the assemblage (Bakhshaliyev, 2020, pp. 20-21). The impressed decoration was produced by applying fingers, fingernails, and various tools to vessel surfaces. The discovery of numerous impressed pottery fragments within and around the rectangular pottery kilns identified in Area E at Nakhchivan Tepe indicates local production of these vessels (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 13, 15).

Within the Late Neolithic level of Nakhchivan Tepe, part of the impressed decoration was applied to burnished vessel surfaces with a blunt tool, as observed in the Karabakh assemblages, whereas other examples were executed on matte surfaces in accordance with the Dalma tradition (Bakhshaliyev, 2020, p. 20). This sharing of technological choices may be regarded as an archaeological manifestation of technological transmission.

From both typological and technological perspectives, this level shows similarities with the Neolithic settlements of the Karabakh-Mil Plain, including Ilanlitepe, Ismayilbeytepe, and Chalagantepe (Narimanov, 1987, pp. 48-50; Akhundov, 2017, pp. 17-904; Almammadov, 2018, pp. 152-154). Whereas impressed decoration in the earlier Karabakh assemblages tends to be smaller in scale, denser, and occasionally more irregular in execution, the same technique in the Late Neolithic level of Nakhchivan Tepe appears more standardized and closer in character to the Dalma tradition. This gradual differentiation is consistent with a process of local development rather than direct copying. Radiocarbon dates obtained from the Karabakh sites (Ismayilbeytepe: 5730-5450 BCE; Goytepe: 5617-5391 BCE) indicate that the impressed pottery tradition existed in the South Caucasus prior to the emergence of the early Dalma Tepe Culture in the Urmia Basin. Such a pattern is consistent with the transmission of technological knowledge and cultural traditions between the Urmia Basin and the Karabakh-Nakhchivan axis. The chain of settlements extending from Nakhchivan to the Salmas Plain and further south, together with the shared use of Gegham and Zangezur obsidian in all three regions, supports this direction of interaction and the existence of an interregional network (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 7-8, 12-13, 21-22).

The transition to painted pottery in Nakhchivan has been associated with Halaf and Ubaid influence. Direct evidence exists in support of this proposal. Halaf-type painted finds from the Neolithic levels of Kultepe I, together with plain and painted pottery of Halaf-Ubaid character from Nakhchivan Tepe and Bulovqaya (Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 18-20), indicate that the increase in the use of painted pottery corresponds to the Early Chalcolithic period and the first half of the fifth millennium BCE. This development is connected with intensified interaction between Nakhchivan and the Urmia Basin.

The painted pottery phase may be evaluated, in accordance with the model proposed by Pereira and colleagues, as a material expression of broader social networks and cultural information exchange (Pereira et al., 2023, pp. 1, 3). By contrast, the impressed pottery observed in the earlier levels of Nakhchivan Tepe may be interpreted as a decorative system reflecting the continuity of local and regional traditions. The stratigraphy of Nakhchivan Tepe therefore provides a rare archaeological context in which different ceramic traditions and the social identities associated with them can be traced in sequence.

Discussion

The present study is not based on the production of new archaeometric analyses, but rather on the synthesis and reassessment of existing stratigraphic, chronological, petrographic, and theoretical data. The combined evaluation of the stratigraphic, chronological, archaeometric, and theoretical evidence presented here indicates that the origin and distribution of Dalma-type impressed pottery cannot be fully explained within the framework of the long-accepted single-centre model. Although the Urmia Basin has traditionally been regarded as the principal centre in the formation of the Dalma Tepe Culture (Abedi et al., 2015, pp. 321-322; Henrickson & Vitali, 1987, p. 37), evidence obtained in recent years from the sites of Nakhchivan and Karabakh requires a reassessment of this interpretation (Bakhshaliyev, 2020, p. 46; Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 194-195).

The stratigraphy of Nakhchivan Tepe and the radiocarbon dates obtained from the Karabakh-Mil Plain indicate that the impressed pottery tradition has early roots in the South Caucasus. These data call for a reconsideration of the classical Urmia-centred model and support a developmental scenario based on interactions between Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin (Bakhshaliyev, 2020, pp. 20-21; Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023, pp. 17-18; Almammadov, 2018; Bakhshaliyev & Bakhshaliyev, 2023).

Petrographic and archaeometric investigations likewise support this interpretation. Analyses conducted at Surezha, Seh Gabi, Godin Tepe, and other settlements demonstrate that Dalma-type pottery was produced from local raw materials in different regions, while exhibiting a high degree of similarity in decorative and technological characteristics (Stein & Fisher, 2020, pp. 144-145; Hossein Mardi, 2025, p. 14; Rahimi Sorkhani & Eslami, 2018, pp. 220-232). This apparent paradox, namely the coexistence of local production and regional stylistic homogeneity, suggests that what circulated was not the pottery itself, but rather the technological knowledge and decorative conventions associated with its production. Such an interpretation is consistent with the principal propositions of communities-of-practice and cultural transmission theories (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 29-42; Wenger, 1998, pp. 72-84; Roddick & Stahl, 2016, pp. 3-5).

From a theoretical perspective, it is difficult to regard impressed pottery as having been produced solely for aesthetic purposes. The persistence of standardized motifs across a wide geographical area raises the possibility that these carried particular social functions. The available evidence is most consistent with a model of interconnected communities extending across Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin (Wobst, 1977, pp. 18-21; Sackett, 1986, pp. 268-270). At the same time, the existing data do not directly demonstrate that impressed motifs possessed specific religious, cosmological, or protective meanings. Interpretations relating to protection or fertility should therefore be approached with caution and considered subjects for future investigation.

Taken together, the stratigraphic, chronological, and archaeometric evidence presented here supports the existence of interactions among communities occupying Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin. Within this framework, impressed pottery may be understood not as a finished product dispersed from a single centre, but as a material phenomenon shaped through shared technological knowledge, mechanisms of social learning, and regional interaction. Theoretical approaches in archaeology likewise provide support for such an interpretation (Collar et al., 2015, pp. 2-4; Peeples, 2019, pp. 453-456; Brughmans & Peeples, 2023, pp. 28-35; Pereira et al., 2023, pp. 1-3).

The results further indicate that Dalma-type impressed pottery represents not merely a decorative tradition, but also a material expression of regional social interaction, the transmission of technological knowledge, and processes of collective identity formation. The evidence from Nakhchivan Tepe and Karabakh provides important archaeological data for tracing the early stages of these processes and suggests that the emergence of the Dalma Tepe Culture is more convincingly explained within a framework of multi-centred development.

Conclusion

The present study indicates that existing interpretations concerning the emergence and distribution of Dalma-type impressed pottery require reassessment. The stratigraphic sequence at Nakhchivan Tepe and the radiocarbon dates obtained from sites in the Karabakh-Mil Plain indicate that the impressed pottery tradition was present in the South Caucasus since the Neolithic period. These data support the view that Karabakh and Nakhchivan played an important role in the process through which the Dalma cultural tradition developed.

The results of petrographic and archaeometric investigations conducted in different regions demonstrate that Dalma-type pottery was predominantly produced from local raw materials, while at the same time exhibiting a high degree of technological and decorative similarity. This pattern suggests that the distribution of the pottery tradition was associated not with the circulation of finished products, but rather with the transmission of technological knowledge, production practices, and social connections.

Although the available evidence does not permit the identification of a specific religious or cosmological meaning behind the impressed motifs, it does provide grounds for interpreting them as socially meaningful stylistic choices and expressions of a shared cultural tradition. In this sense, impressed pottery can be viewed not only as an element of material culture but also as an indicator of interregional interaction and collective identity.

The results further indicate that the development of the Dalma cultural tradition can be more productively examined within the context of interactions between Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the

Urmia Basin. Accordingly, the available evidence suggests that Dalma-type impressed pottery is more appropriately understood not as a phenomenon that spread from a single centre, but as the product of a system of interactions that developed between Karabakh, Nakhchivan, and the Urmia Basin.

Literature

Abedi, A., Omrani, B., & Karimifar, A. (2015). Fifth and fourth millennium BC in north-western Iran: Dalma and Pisdeli revisited. *Documenta Praehistorica, 42*, 321-338. https://doi.org/10.4312/dp.42.23

Akhundov, T. I. (2017). *U istokov Karabakskoy tsivilizatsii: Karabakhskiy neolit*. Afpoligraf.

Alden, J., Minc, L., Buehlman-Barbeau, S., & Stein, G. (2021). Dalma ceramics at Surezha in the Erbil Plain: Stylistic, compositional, and petrographic evidence for trans-Zagros interaction during the Terminal Ubaid/Late Chalcolithic 1. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports, 40*, 103241. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2021.103241

Alməmmədov, X. (2018). Cənubi Qafqaz Neolitində yeni social-mədəni məkanın-Qarabağın erkən oturaq əkinçi mədəniyyətinin təşəkkülü. *Azərbaycan arxeologiyası*, 21, 1, 152-176.

Bakhshaliyev, E., & Bakhshaliyev, V. (2020). The Neolithic layer of Nakhchivan Tepe settlement. *Social Sciences, 2*, 51-59.

Bakhshaliyev, V. B. (2020). Links of the Neolithic culture of Nakhichevan with the Middle East. In *Ancient and medieval cultures of Central Asia (The formation, development and interaction of urbanized and cattle-breeding societies): Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference, 10-12 November 2020* (pp. 44-46). IIMK RAN. https://doi.org/10.31600/978-5-907298-09-5-44-46

Bakhshaliyev, V., & Bakhshaliyev, E. (2023). *Origin of Dalma Tepe culture*. Ajami.

Baxşəliyev, V. (2023). Naxçıvantəpə yaşayış yerində arxeoloji qazıntıların nəticələri və Dalmatəpə mədəniyyətinin mənşəyi. *Sosial Elmlər, 1*, 180-200. https://doi.org/10.59849/2710-0820.2023.1.180

Baxşəliyev, V., Quliyeva, Z., Həşimova, T., Mehbalıyev, K., & Baxşəliyev, E. (2018). *Naxçıvan təpə yaşayış yerində arxeoloji tədqiqatlar*. Əcəmi.

Brughmans, T., & Peeples, M. A. (2023). *Network science in archaeology*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009170659

Campbell, S. (2010). Understanding symbols: Putting meaning into the painted pottery of prehistoric Northern Mesopotamia. In D. Bolger & L. C. Maguire (Eds.), *Development of pre-state communities in the ancient Near East* (pp. 147-155). Oxbow Books.

Collar, A., Coward, F., Brughmans, T., & Mills, B. J. (2015). Networks in archaeology: Phenomena, abstraction, representation. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory, 22*(1), 1-32. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10816-014-9235-6

David, N., Sterner, J., & Gavua, K. (1988). Why pots are decorated. *Current Anthropology, 29*(3), 365-389. https://doi.org/10.1086/203648

Hamlin, C. (1975). Dalma Tepe. *Iran, 13*, 111-127.

Henrickson, E. F. (1983). *Ceramic styles and cultural interaction in the Early and Middle Chalcolithic of the Central Zagros, Iran* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. University of Toronto.

Henrickson, E. F., & Vitali, V. (1987). The Dalma tradition: Prehistoric inter-regional cultural integration in highland western Iran. *Paléorient, 13*(2), 37-45. https://doi.org/10.3406/paleo.1987.4427

Hossein Mardi, G. (2025). A petrographic approach to study Dalma pottery at the sites of Seh Gabi, Godin Tepe, and Tepe Siahbid in the Central Zagros of Iran. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports, 63*, 105069. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2025.105069

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Motarjem, A., & Sharifi, M. (2014). Cultural development of Chalcolithic era in the East of Central Zagros based on archaeological excavations at Tepe Gheshlagh. *Iranian Journal of Archaeological Studies, 4*(1), 49-65.

Narimanov, İ. G. (1987). *Kultura drevneyşego zemledelçesko-skotovodçeskogo naseleniya Azerbaydjana*. Elm.

Peeples, M. A. (2019). Finding a place for networks in archaeology. *Journal of Archaeological Research, 27*(4), 451-499. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10814-019-09127-8

Pereira, D., Manen, C., & Rigaud, S. (2023). The shaping of social and symbolic capital during the transition to farming in the Western Mediterranean: Archaeological network analyses of pottery decorations and personal ornaments. *PLOS ONE, 18*(11), e0294111. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0294111

Rahimi Sorkhani, R., Niknami, K., & Eslami, M. (2016). Sefālhā-ye gheyr-e Dalmāyi dar bستر-e Dalmāyi: Tashkhis-e bāstānshenākhti va tozih-e āzmāyeshgāhi (Nemune-ye moradi: Sahā

Chāy Tepe-ye Zanjān) [Dalma bağlamında Dalma dışı seramikler: Arkeolojik tanımlama ve laboratuvar açıklaması (Zencan Saha Çay Tepe örneği)]. مطالعات باستان‌شناسی *(Archaeological Studies)*, *8*(2), 53-70.

Renette, S. (2022). Defining Dalma: An incipient mountain identity? *Paléorient, 48*(1), 111-130. https://doi.org/10.4000/paleorient.1699

Roddick, A. P., & Stahl, A. B. (Eds.). (2016). *Knowledge in motion: Constellations of learning across time and place*. The University of Arizona Press.

Sackett, J. R. (1986). Isochrestism and style: A clarification. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology, 5*(3), 266-277.

Stein, G. J., & Fisher, M. T. (2020). *Surezha excavations 2019: Erbil Plain, Kurdistan Region, Iraq*. In *The Oriental Institute 2019-20 Annual Report* (pp. 127-145). The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Wobst, H. M. (1977). *Stylistic behavior and information exchange*. In C. E. Cleland (Ed.), *For the Director: Research essays in honor of James B. Griffin* (pp. 317-342).

Young, T. C., Jr. (1962, November 3). *Taking the history of the Hasanlu area back another five thousand years: Sixth- and fifth-millennium settlements in Solduz Valley, Persia*. *The Illustrated London News, 241*, 707-709.

Young, T. C., Jr. (1963). *Dalma painted ware*. *Expedition, 5*(2), 38-39.

Received: 05.10.2026
Revised: 05.12.2026
Accepted: 06.01.2026
Published: 06.07.2026

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
ISSN: 3030-1718
Vol. 3, No. 2 (2026): Aestas

The Quiet Grammar of Domination: Symbolic Violence and the Gagauz Struggle for National Identity through a Bourdieusian Lens

[1] **Akif Hashimov**
https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.026002017

Abstract

This article develops a sociological reading of the Gagauz struggle for national identity through Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, together with the cognate concepts of the linguistic market, linguistic capital and habitus. The Gagauz a Turkic-speaking, Orthodox Christian minority concentrated in southern Moldova occupy an instructive sociological position: they enjoy formal language rights and even territorial autonomy, yet their language continues to recede in favour of Russian. I argue that this paradox cannot be explained by overt coercion, which is largely absent, but only by the subtler mechanism Bourdieu calls symbolic violence: the process whereby a dominated group comes to perceive its own subordination as natural, reasonable and even freely chosen. Drawing on peer-reviewed scholarship in particular Dağdeviren-Kırmızı and İnan's work on linguistic insecurity, Kapaló's ethnography of Gagauz folk religion, and the extensive Polish-school literature on Gagauz statehood and autonomy by Kosienkowski and Hatłas the article shows how the low symbolic value of the Gagauz tongue has been historically produced and durably internalised. A central original contribution is a conceptual model (Figure 1) that maps Bourdieu's abstract circuit of symbolic violence onto the empirical Gagauz case. The conclusion argues that the success of Gagauz identity politics depends less on further legal recognition than on a reconstruction of the symbolic value of linguistic capital itself.

Keywords: *Pierre Bourdieu; symbolic violence; linguistic capital; habitus; Gagauz; national identity; linguistic insecurity; ethno-confessional identity; Gagauzia; Moldova*

1. Introduction

Few questions in the sociology of ethnicity are as deceptively simple as why some minority languages fade while their speakers profess to cherish them. The case of the Gagauz throws this puzzle into especially sharp relief. Here is a people that secured, in 1994, a form of territorial autonomy widely praised as a model of peaceful conflict accommodation; whose language holds

[1] Hashimov, A. PhD Student, Institute of Sociological Sciences, Faculty of Social and Technical Sciences, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin, Poland. Email: Akif@kul.pl. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2485-2629.

co-official status within that autonomy; and who express, when surveyed, genuine emotional attachment to their mother tongue. And yet the Gagauz language steadily loses ground to Russian, generation after generation, in the very territory the Gagauz themselves administer. No law forbids Gagauz; no authority compels its abandonment. The retreat happens, as it were, of the speakers' own accord.

It is precisely this appearance of free, reasonable, self-authored choice that makes the Gagauz case a paradigmatic instance of what Pierre Bourdieu called symbolic violence. For Bourdieu, the most durable forms of domination are not those imposed by force, which provoke resistance and must constantly justify themselves, but those that operate through the very categories of perception and appreciation through which the dominated apprehend the social world. When subordination is misrecognised as the natural order of things, domination reproduces itself without coercion, lodged in the dispositions of the dominated themselves. A sociology attentive only to overt power — to laws, prohibitions, open conflict — will simply miss this mechanism. The Gagauz language does not retreat because it is banned; it retreats because, in the linguistic market that speakers have internalised, it is worth less.

The scholarly literature on the Gagauz, though comparatively small, is mature and falls into three broad streams. A sociolinguistic stream examines the vitality, attitudes and insecurity surrounding the Gagauz language; an ethnographic and historical stream investigates Gagauz ethnogenesis, the ethnonym, and above all the distinctive entanglement of Turkic speech with Orthodox Christianity; and a political-science stream, exemplified by the Polish school of Kosienkowski and Hatłas, analyses Gagauz autonomy, de facto statehood and external orientation. Each stream has accumulated valuable empirical material, yet they rarely converse, and almost none of them reads the Gagauz situation explicitly through the conceptual apparatus of Bourdieusian sociology. This article seeks to supply that missing synthesis.

The argument proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the Bourdieusian framework and presents an original conceptual model linking symbolic violence to the Gagauz case. Section 3 explains the analytical-synthesis method and the source base. Section 4 reconstructs the historical formation of the Gagauz linguistic market across three imperial regimes. Section 5 turns to the empirical evidence of internalised subordination in language-attitude and insecurity research. Section 6 examines Orthodox Christianity as a second, partly competing form of symbolic capital. Section 7 asks whether the 1994 autonomy has altered the symbolic balance. Sections 8 and 9 discuss implications and conclude. Four questions organise the analysis: Through what institutional mechanisms was the low symbolic value of Gagauz historically produced? How is that value internalised in speakers' habitus, and how do insecurity studies evidence it? What role does Orthodox Christianity play in the Gagauz economy of symbolic capital? and to what extent has territorial autonomy mitigated symbolic violence?

ISSN 3030-1718

2. Theoretical Framework: Symbolic Violence and the Linguistic Field

2.1. Symbolic violence and misrecognition

Symbolic violence, in Bourdieu's usage, denotes the imposition of systems of meaning that legitimate relations of domination by causing them to be perceived as natural. Its defining feature is that it is exercised with the tacit complicity of those who suffer it. Unlike physical coercion, symbolic violence does not announce itself; it works through categories of taste, of competence, of correctness that the dominated share with the dominant. The result is what Bourdieu terms misrecognition (*méconnaissance*): the social arbitrariness of a given hierarchy is forgotten, and the hierarchy appears instead as simply the way things are.

For the sociologist this concept has a crucial methodological consequence: it relocates the site of domination from the institutions of overt power to the embodied perceptions of ordinary actors. The interesting datum is no longer the decree but the disposition — not what speakers are forbidden to do, but what they spontaneously feel to be appropriate, comfortable, or shameful. Symbolic violence, paradoxically, is most effective precisely where overt constraint is absent, because there the domination is most fully naturalised and least available as an object of protest. This is why the Gagauz case, with its near-total absence of formal linguistic prohibition, is not a weak instance of domination but, on the contrary, a particularly pure one.

It is worth underscoring what distinguishes symbolic violence from the cruder notions of ideology or false consciousness with which it is sometimes confused. Bourdieu does not claim that the dominated are simply deceived, nor that some manipulating agent deliberately implants false beliefs in them. The mechanism is at once more impersonal and more intimate. It operates through the ordinary functioning of institutions — schools, churches, labour markets, media — each of which quietly rewards the legitimate competence and penalises its absence, until the resulting hierarchy is sedimented in the body as a second nature. The dominated participate in their own domination not because they are duped but because the categories through which they perceive and evaluate are the very categories the dominant order has instilled. This is what gives symbolic violence its peculiar stability: there is no obvious adversary to resist, only a world that feels self-evidently as it should be.

2.2. The linguistic market and linguistic capital

Bourdieu reconceives every linguistic exchange as an exchange on a market. Utterances are not merely communicative acts but products that receive a value, and that value depends not on intrinsic linguistic properties but on the position of the speaker and the tongue within a structured field. The legitimate language — the one consecrated by the state, the school and the high cultural domains — functions as the standard against which all other tongues and dialects are measured and, inevitably, found wanting. Competence in the legitimate language thus constitutes a form of capital, convertible into educational success, employment and social mobility.

Applied to the Gagauz, the model is almost diagrammatically clear. The Gagauz language is a fully functional Western Oghuz Turkic tongue, rich in folklore and expressive resource; linguistically it lacks nothing. But on the market that its speakers actually inhabit, Russian commands the higher value — not because it is a 'better' language, but because it opens onto a vastly larger field of schooling, employment, administration and, increasingly, digital life. Gagauz, by contrast, is confined largely to the household, the village and informal religious practice. The key sociological point is that the resulting language shift presents itself to speakers as a rational choice, when in fact the rationality is wholly internal to a market whose terms were set elsewhere. Parents who raise children in Russian are not betraying their heritage; they are acting sensibly within a structure that has already devalued the alternative.

2.3. Habitus and the embodiment of subordination

If the market supplies the objective structure, the habitus supplies its subjective counterpart. Habitus, for Bourdieu, is the durable yet transposable system of dispositions through which social structures inscribe themselves in bodies and minds, generating perceptions and practices that tend, without conscious calculation, to reproduce those same structures. The linguistic habitus is the practical sense of which tongue is fitting in which setting — a sense registered not as a reasoned judgement but as ease or unease, comfort or embarrassment.

It is at this level that symbolic violence becomes visible to empirical sociology. Linguistic insecurity — the speaker's sense that her own tongue is deficient, improper, not 'good enough' — is the embodied signature of a dominant norm turned against the self. When a Gagauz adolescent feels safer in Russian and uneasy in Gagauz, she is not reporting a preference so much as enacting a disposition laid down over decades. Crucially, Bourdieu insists that the habitus, though durable, is not immutable: when objective conditions change — when new economic opportunities or new sources of prestige appear — dispositions can, slowly, be reformed. This qualification matters, for it keeps the analysis from collapsing into fatalism and locates the possibility of revitalisation in a transformation of the market itself.

2.4. The state and the centralisation of symbolic capital

Bourdieu accords the state a special place as the central bank of symbolic capital: it is the institution that consecrates the legitimate language, confers titles and credentials, and thereby regulates the entire system of symbolic exchange. The making of a national language is, historically, inseparable from the making of a state, which standardises one tongue and diffuses it through compulsory schooling while relegating all others to subordinate status.

The Gagauz have repeatedly stood on the wrong side of this process. Three successive state projects — the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and independent Moldova — each propagated its own legitimate tongue, and in none was Gagauz that tongue. As Kosienkowski's detailed reconstruction of the short-lived Gagauz Republic (1990–1995) shows, the Gagauz leadership did not even pursue full independence; their goal was autonomism — a measure of self-governance within a parent state rather than a sovereign apparatus capable of consecrating Gagauz as a fully legitimate language. The 1994 autonomy granted Gagauz a kind of semi-state status, but within a small, resource-poor unit. The principal 'bank' of symbolic capital — the Moldovan central state, and behind it the wider Russophone cultural sphere — has remained external to Gagauz control.

Kosienkowski's evidence is sociologically revealing on precisely this point. The Gagauz entity, he shows, sought from Moldova the very apparatus of statehood it lacked — universities, media, banks, bureaucratic structures — and its population continued, strikingly, to pay taxes to Chişinău rather than to any independent Gagauz authority. This is not the behaviour of a community bidding for sovereign control over its own symbolic capital; it is the behaviour of a community seeking a protected niche within someone else's field of power. From a Bourdieusian standpoint the implication is far-reaching: the Gagauz movement contested the distribution of recognition within the Moldovan state without ever contesting that state's monopoly on consecration. The autonomy thus secured a place at the table while leaving the rules of the table — including the hierarchy of languages — substantially intact.

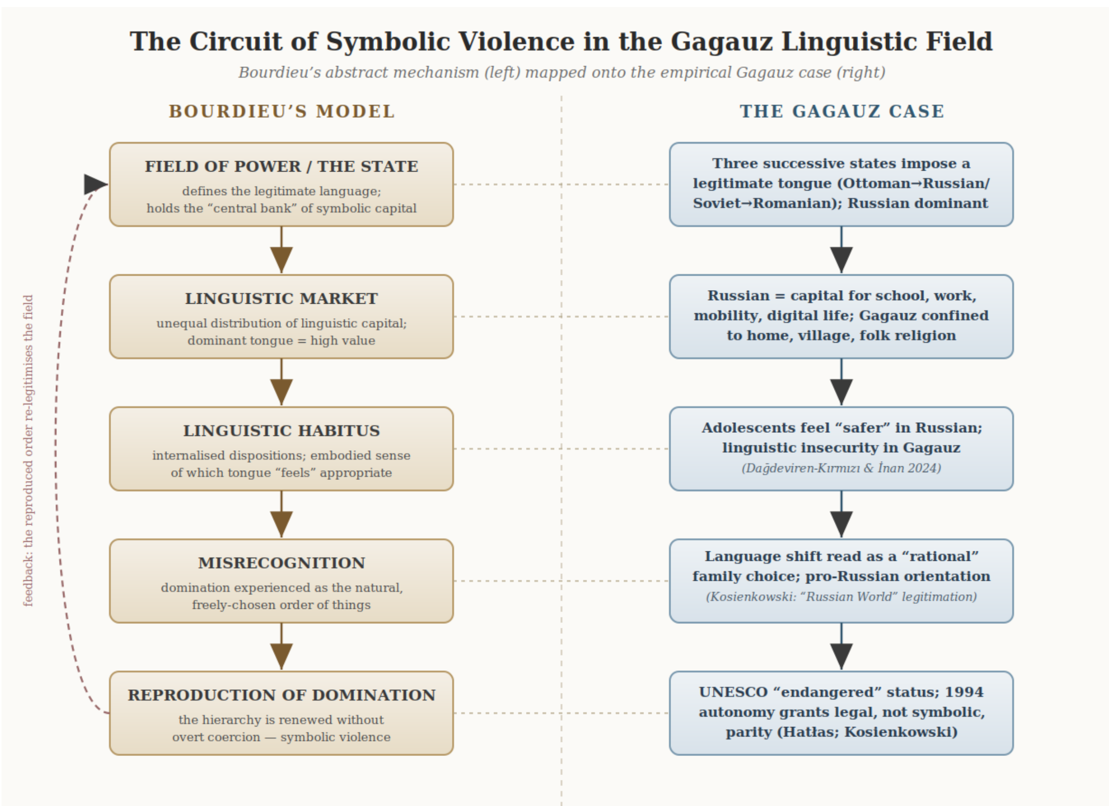


Figure 1. Author's own elaboration based on Bourdieu (1991) and the Gagauz literature discussed in the text.

Figure 1. *The circuit of symbolic violence in the Gagauz linguistic field: Bourdieu's abstract mechanism mapped onto the empirical case (author's own elaboration).*

Figure 1 represents the argument in compressed form. The left-hand column reproduces Bourdieu's general circuit: the field of power defines the legitimate language; the linguistic market distributes capital unequally; the habitus internalises this distribution as embodied disposition; misrecognition recasts domination as natural choice; and the whole cycle reproduces the hierarchy without overt coercion, feeding back to re-legitimate the field. The right-hand column populates each moment with the Gagauz material discussed below. The dashed feedback arrow is essential to the model: symbolic violence is not a linear sequence but a self-renewing loop, in which each reproduced outcome silently restores the conditions of its own continuation.

3. Method and Sources

This is a theoretically driven, qualitative study. It generates no primary fieldwork data; instead it performs an analytical synthesis — a theoretical re-reading in which empirical findings gathered under other frameworks (sociolinguistics, ethnography, political science) are reinterpreted through a single sociological lens. Such re-reading is a recognised mode of conceptual contribution: its value lies not in new data but in the new intelligibility it confers on existing data.

The source base has three layers. The first is Bourdieu's own corpus, principally *Language and Symbolic Power*, from which the concepts of symbolic violence, the linguistic market and habitus are drawn. The second is the peer-reviewed scholarship on Gagauz language and identity: Dağdeviren-Kırmızı and İnan's large-sample study of linguistic insecurity in the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, their related work on language attitudes and digital vitality, and Kapaló's Brill monograph on Gagauz folk religion. The third layer is the political-sociological literature on Gagauz autonomy and statehood, where the Polish school is indispensable: Kosienkowski's analyses of the Gagauz Republic as an autonomism-driven de facto state and of the 'Russian World' as an external legitimation strategy, and Hatłas's historical and ethnographic studies of the Gagauz across Bessarabia, Bulgaria and Ukraine, including his joint work with Żyromski on power, administration and ethnic minorities in the Gagauz autonomy.

One methodological limitation must be stated plainly. Bourdieu never wrote about the Gagauz, and Gagauz specialists have seldom invoked Bourdieu. The bridge between the two is therefore the article's own construction. This lends the study originality but imposes a discipline: the interpretation must remain anchored in what the empirical literature actually reports, rather than bending the evidence to fit the theory. Throughout, I have tried to let the Bourdieusian reading illuminate findings that the original authors documented on independent grounds.

4. The Historical Formation of the Gagauz Linguistic Market

4.1. A people of uncertain origin and subordinate speech

To understand the present, one must follow the trajectory. The ancestors of the Gagauz migrated, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, from the Black Sea coast of present-day Bulgaria into the southern reaches of Bessarabia, then within the Russian Empire. As Hatłas emphasises, their very origin is sociologically consequential: the ethnogenesis of the Gagauz remains genuinely contested, the historical sources are thin, and the question is heavily overdetermined by politics. A people whose foundational narrative is uncertain possesses, in Bourdieusian terms, a weaker stock of the symbolic capital that myths of origin and shared memory ordinarily supply to a nation.

Across this trajectory the Gagauz tongue never once occupied the position of a legitimate, high-status language. Under Ottoman rule, Greek and Church Slavonic dominated the religious sphere and Ottoman Turkish the administrative one; under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, Russian held sway; during the interwar Romanian administration, Romanian was the prestige tongue. Gagauz was, throughout, positioned as a low vernacular, a language of the home and the village — in Bourdieu's terms, a tongue chronically carrying low capital on every market it entered. Hatłas notes, tellingly, that the Gagauz of southern Moldova nonetheless attained a better position than their kin in Ukraine or Bulgaria, where dispersal and an international border cutting through villages, families and even gardens further fragmented the community.

This last observation deserves sociological emphasis, for it reveals that symbolic capital is not distributed evenly even within a single ethnic group. The concentration of the Gagauz in southern Moldova produced a critical mass sufficient to sustain a claim to autonomy, whereas the dispersed Budjak communities studied by Hatłas — strung across the Moldovan–Ukrainian frontier, intermingled with Bulgarian settlers — lacked the demographic density on which collective symbolic mobilisation depends. Territory, in other words, is itself a condition of symbolic capital: a compact settlement can support institutions, a press, a political class, while a scattered one cannot. The Gagauz movement's achievements were thus underwritten by a geographical fact, and the comparative weakness of the diaspora communities throws the Moldovan core's relative success into relief. A Bourdieusian sociology of the Gagauz must therefore be a sociology of place as much as of language.

4.2. Mihail Çakir and the paradox of consecration

The written history of Gagauz turns on the figure of Mihail Çakir (Ciachir), an Orthodox priest who, in the early twentieth century, became the first native speaker to commit the language seriously to writing — translating religious texts and composing a history of his people, first in Romanian and then in Gagauz. Scholars describe this as the 'canonisation' of the Gagauz language: the attempt to lend it status and a written existence through the prestige of the sacred sphere.

Bourdieu's notion of the rite of institution clarifies what was at stake. To furnish a language with an alphabet, a grammar and a corpus of sacred texts is never a merely technical act; it is a symbolic one that consecrates the tongue, lifting it from the flux of oral practice into the dignity of a legitimate cultural object. Yet Çakir's effort also exposed a tension that runs to the heart of Gagauz identity. To raise the language by stressing its Turkic character risked unsettling the Orthodox loyalty on which Gagauz distinctiveness equally rested — the more so as a Turkish-language religious literature offered, at one historical moment, an opening to Protestant missionaries among an Orthodox population whose services were conducted in Romanian or Russian. The very act meant to augment linguistic capital thus threatened the community's other principal asset, its religious capital. The two pillars of Gagauz identity, language and faith, were from the outset in a relation of both alliance and rivalry.

4.3. Soviet nationality policy: recognition as devaluation

The year 1957 is the hinge of the modern story: by decree of the Moldavian SSR a Cyrillic-based alphabet was adopted for Gagauz, and the language gained recognition within the Soviet scheme of nationalities. At first glance this is consecration. But Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power exposes the double character of such official acts.

Soviet nationality policy formally recognised minority languages — furnishing alphabets, grammars, even national territorial units — under the formula 'national in form, socialist in content' while in practice maintaining Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication, indispensable for higher education, professional advancement and union-wide mobility. Recognition, in other words, did not disturb the subordinate position of minority tongues on the real market; it legitimated that position by dressing inequality in the garb of fairness. Gagauz fared especially poorly, for it was not even the titular language of a union republic but the speech of a small minority. The census record traces the cumulative effect: across the Soviet decades, command of Russian among the Gagauz rose steadily while the social space of Gagauz contracted toward the domestic sphere. No prohibition produced this outcome; the structure of the market and the dispositions of the habitus produced it — the long, quiet work of symbolic violence.

5. Internalised Domination: The Evidence of Linguistic Insecurity

The strongest empirical confirmation of the Bourdieusian reading comes from research on how Gagauz speakers regard their own language. Dağdeviren-Kırmızı and İnan's study, published in the SSCI-indexed *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, administered a language-use questionnaire and a linguistic-insecurity scale to 674 adolescent Gagauz speakers, supplemented by interviews. Its central finding aligns exactly with what the theory predicts: respondents felt more secure using Russian, and there was a strong correlation between family language practice and the linguistic insecurity the adolescents experienced.

The article's title — capturing young speakers being asked why they are speaking Gagauz at all — condenses the sociology of the situation. To speak one's mother tongue has become a marked, accountable act, something requiring explanation; the unmarked, default, 'normal' choice is Russian. In Bourdieu's terms, the dominant norm has so thoroughly colonised the field that the minority tongue figures as a deviation to be justified. The insecurity is not idiosyncratic embarrassment but the embodied trace of an objective hierarchy.

Equally telling is the emotional–functional split documented across this body of work, including studies of speaker attitudes and of the language's precarious digital vitality. Gagauz speakers report strong sentimental and identitarian attachment to their language — it is the emblem of who they are — while assigning it low functional value for the practical business of life, for which they prefer Russian. Sociologically this dissociation is the very signature of internalised symbolic violence: the tongue survives as a badge of belonging precisely because it has been emptied of market power. One may love a language and still, without contradiction, decline to live one's public life in it — and it is this gap between affective loyalty and practical abandonment that, accumulated across families and generations, drives the shift.

The same dynamic appears in the spatial and digital registers. Linguistic-landscape research notes that public signage in Gagauzia is predominantly Romanian or Russian, so that the written, visible, public face of the territory rarely speaks Gagauz; and the language is markedly under-represented online. For a young speaker, a tongue absent from screens and street signs quietly transmits the message that it is neither modern nor a language with a future — the reproduction of an old hierarchy in new technological form. Each of these everyday absences is a small act of symbolic violence, and their sum is a habitus calibrated against the mother tongue.

It is important, sociologically, to read these findings as evidence of a relation rather than of a deficiency in Gagauz speakers themselves. The insecurity reported in the surveys is not a psychological frailty of individuals but the subjective face of an objective structure; it is what the linguistic market feels like from the position of its dominated participants. This is the analytical payoff of Bourdieu's refusal to separate structure from disposition: the same hierarchy that can be read off census figures and signage audits can also be read off the hesitation in an adolescent's voice. The micro and the macro are two registers of a single fact. A purely attitudinal account would treat the insecurity as a variable to be correlated; a Bourdieusian account treats it as the very medium through which the social structure perpetuates itself, which is why intervention pitched at attitudes alone — telling speakers to value their language — so reliably fails. One cannot exhort away a disposition that the structure continuously regenerates.

6. Orthodox Christianity as Competing Symbolic Capital

To analyse Gagauz identity through language alone would be to miss half the picture, for the second pillar of Gagauz distinctiveness is Orthodox Christianity. The Gagauz are that sociological rarity, a Turkic-speaking yet Orthodox people — set apart at once from the largely Muslim Turkic world and from their Slavic and Romance-speaking Orthodox neighbours. Kapaló's ethnography of Gagauz folk religion shows how thoroughly lay religious practice has shaped, and been shaped by, ethnic identity, and argues that even the scholarly category of 'folk religion' has been instrumental in constructing Gagauz religious identity.

In Bourdieusian terms, Orthodoxy functions as a form of symbolic capital that is, unlike the language, relatively high in value. It places the Gagauz within the same religious field as the region's dominant Orthodox populations and thereby spares them the minority predicament of the Muslim Turkic peoples. The result is the structural paradox of Gagauz identity: by language they belong to the Turkic world, by faith to the Slavic-Orthodox one. Hatłas and Żyromski's studies of Orthodox churches in the Gagauz villages of southern Bessarabia document how central this religious life is to communal cohesion.

This duality has direct strategic consequences, and it helps explain a fact that the political-science literature has documented at length. As Kosienkowski argues, the Gagauz orientation has been markedly pro-Russian, and the 'Russian World' (*Russkiy Mir*) has operated as an external legitimation strategy in Gagauzia — a supply of symbolic capital from beyond the region's borders. Comparative work on the Gagauz and the Crimean Tatars sharpens the point: two Turkic minorities with broadly similar imperial histories diverged politically, the Muslim Crimean Tatars toward an anti-Russian stance and the Orthodox Gagauz toward a pro-Russian one. Religion, a form of symbolic capital, thus decisively shaped each group's relation to the surrounding centres of power.

There is a further, sharper irony. The religious sphere that anchors Gagauz pride has itself been a conduit of Russian influence: Gagauz parishes fall under the Moscow Patriarchate, and services were long conducted in Russian or Romanian rather than Gagauz. The community's strongest symbolic asset has therefore doubled as a channel for the dominant language's prestige. Yet Kapaló's attention to lay practice reveals a countervailing tendency: in the informal register of folk prayer, household ritual and the invocation of saints, Gagauz endures. The language driven from the high, official domains finds a refuge in the sacred and intimate — but this very refuge confirms its marginality, for it survives as the language of the heart rather than the language of public power. Whether faith can become an engine of revitalisation, through the translation of liturgy into Gagauz, or whether it merely freezes the tongue in a residual niche, remains one of the open strategic questions of Gagauz identity.

7. Territorial Autonomy: Does Legal Recognition Undo Symbolic Violence?

The signal institutional achievement of the Gagauz movement is the 1994 Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia, in force from 1995, which granted territorial autonomy, an elected legislature and executive, and co-official status to three languages: Gagauz, Russian and

Moldovan (Romanian). The political-science literature, including Kosienkowski's reconstruction of the autonomism that drove the earlier Gagauz Republic, generally treats the case as a success of peaceful accommodation, conspicuously unlike the violent Transnistrian secession.

Viewed through Bourdieu, however, the distinction between legal-institutional recognition and symbolic recognition becomes decisive. Autonomy conferred formal status on the Gagauz language without altering its real value on the linguistic market. The evidence of the gap is abundant: even within the autonomy, Russian remains dominant in administration, public life and education; Gagauz is taught not as the medium of instruction but as a 'native language' subject for a few hours a week; and surveys report that a large majority prefer Russian as the language of schooling. That the People's Assembly felt obliged in 2018 to legislate Gagauz-language competence for officials, and that UNESCO in 2010 classified the language as endangered, are themselves admissions of the chasm between official status and actual use.

Here the durability of symbolic violence is laid bare: even in an autonomous unit governed by the Gagauz themselves, the supremacy of Russian persists. Domination no longer depends on any external power; it is reproduced from within — in the habitus, in school choices, in family language policy. Indeed, autonomy can render symbolic violence more invisible still, for once a group enjoys formal language rights and self-government, the continuing retreat of its tongue looks entirely like 'their own choice', and any charge of structural injustice loses its purchase. Formal equality can thus mask substantive symbolic inequality — a general limitation of the liberal rights framework, which can equalise legal statuses while leaving untouched the unequal symbolic values that lie behind them.

It would nonetheless be a mistake to dismiss autonomy as symbolically inert. In Bourdieusian terms, institutional recognition is a necessary, if insufficient, precondition for long-term symbolic change. Official status, the possibility of education in Gagauz, and competence requirements for officials lay the groundwork on which the symbolic value of the language might eventually be rebuilt; they are first steps in returning the tongue to the public, legitimate sphere. The question is whether they are strong, sustained and far-reaching enough. The present evidence suggests that, so far, they have not sufficed to shift the symbolic balance.

8. Discussion

The analysis suggests that the Gagauz struggle for national identity unfolds simultaneously on two fields that should not be conflated. On the legal-political field the Gagauz have won real victories — territorial autonomy, co-official language status, institutional recognition. On the symbolic field — the field of the perceived value of the language, of speakers' self-assurance, of the linguistic habitus — the contest remains profoundly unequal. Bourdieu's framework explains why the two need not move together: the most durable domination resides in the categories of perception, and these are not rewritten by statute.

A second comparison sharpens the sociological stakes still further. Hashimov (2025), analysing the national identity of the Azeri Turks of Iran, frames their situation as a linguistic problem requiring a sociological solution: a numerically substantial Turkic population whose mother tongue is subordinated to a dominant state language (Persian) in education and public life. The structural parallel with the Gagauz is striking — in both cases a Turkic-speaking community confronts a prestige language consecrated by the state, and in both the retreat of the mother tongue is misperceived as a matter of individual convenience rather than of market structure. Yet the divergence is equally instructive: where the Azeri case turns on demographic weight and the absence of any territorial-linguistic institutions, the Gagauz possess precisely such institutions yet still experience symbolic devaluation. The comparison thus confirms a central claim of this article — that institutional recognition, while necessary, does not by itself reconstruct the symbolic value of a subordinated tongue.

This is, in the end, the sociological lesson of the case. The Gagauz speaker who reaches for Russian experiences the act as free, and it is exactly this sense of freedom that marks the success of symbolic violence. To save the language would require not merely laws but a transformation of these internalised structures — a re-perception of Gagauz as valuable, prestigious, a tongue with a future. Bourdieu's theory is not, for all that, a counsel of despair. The habitus is durable but transposable, and the linguistic market is not fixed but a field of struggle. Several developments could raise the symbolic value of Gagauz: deeper cultural and economic ties with Turkey, which might enlarge the market for the Turkic tongue; a stronger presence of the language in media and digital space; an expanded role in education; and the work of cultural entrepreneurs and language activists who labour to raise its prestige. Each is, in Bourdieusian terms, an attempt to restructure the market rather than merely to exhort individuals.

The comparative dimension enriches the point. Recent scholarship on ethnopolitical entrepreneurship in Gagauzia — building, as it notes, on the precedent of Çakir — examines how global frameworks of heritage and authenticity are mobilised in local identity initiatives. Such efforts are precisely struggles over symbolic capital: attempts to re-consecrate the language and the culture by linking them to valued external frames. Their uneven success illustrates Bourdieu's insight that symbolic value cannot simply be willed into being by a committed minority; it must be underwritten by the broader structure of the field, including the powerful external actors — Russia, Turkey, the European Union — whose competing influence Kosienkowski and others have charted.

8.1. Limitations and directions for further research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is theoretical and synthetic rather than empirical; it reinterprets existing findings and does not test the Bourdieusian model against fresh data. Its evidentiary base leans toward language attitudes and insecurity, leaving the interaction of economic and political capital with symbolic dynamics less fully explored. And it treats the Gagauz somewhat as a unit, whereas Bourdieu's framework is acutely sensitive to internal differentiation by generation, class and the urban–rural divide — differentiation that future work should foreground.

The most direct next step would be fieldwork designed explicitly around Bourdieusian categories: a mixed-methods study mapping the linguistic habitus of Gagauz speakers, their domain-specific language choices, and the symbolic value they attach to competing tongues. A second promising avenue is systematic comparison with other 'protected yet retreating' minority languages across the post-Soviet space, which would help distinguish what is universal in the mechanism of symbolic violence from what is specific to the Gagauz configuration of Turkic speech and Orthodox faith.

9. Conclusion

Reading the Gagauz case through Bourdieu yields a coherent account of an otherwise puzzling situation. The retreat of the Gagauz language is not the product of prohibition or simple demography but of a symbolic hierarchy, forged across three imperial regimes and durably lodged in the dispositions of speakers. Language-attitude and insecurity research confirms the theory's prediction with unusual directness: speakers feel safer in Russian and, while emotionally devoted to Gagauz, assign it low functional worth — the emotional–functional split that is the hallmark of internalised symbolic violence.

Orthodox Christianity supplies the Gagauz with a second, higher-valued form of symbolic capital, but one that both fractures the group's identity along a language–faith seam and has historically served as a channel for Russian prestige. And the 1994 autonomy, though a genuine legal achievement, has not dismantled the internalised machinery of symbolic violence; the gap between official status and lived practice endures. The conceptual model in Figure 1 captures this as a self-renewing loop rather than a one-way street.

The wider implication for the sociology of national identity is that minority emancipation cannot be measured by legal recognition alone. The decisive contest is symbolic: the reconstruction of the perceived value of the language and the linguistic self-confidence of its speakers. Bourdieu reminds us that the deepest struggles for freedom often begin by rendering visible what is invisible — the very categories of domination we carry within. For the Gagauz, to save the language is, before anything else, to transform it from a tongue one must account for into a tongue one may take pride in; and that, the analysis suggests, is a labour of symbolic, not merely legal, construction.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability: This study is based on publicly available published sources listed in the References section.

References

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology.* University of Chicago Press.

Chinn, J., & Roper, S. D. (1998). Territorial autonomy in Gagauzia. *Nationalities Papers, 26*(1), 87–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905999808408552

Dağdeviren-Kırmızı, G. (2019). To be digitally alive or not: The case of an endangered official language. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları, (31)*, 147–162.

Dağdeviren-Kırmızı, G. (2020). Emotional and functional speaker attitudes towards Gagauz as an endangered language. *Bilig, (93)*, 203–222. https://doi.org/10.12995/bilig.9309

Dağdeviren-Kırmızı, G. (2021). Gagauzya between the past and tomorrow: An analysis of linguistic landscape. *Türkbilig, 2021*(42), 241–252.

Dağdeviren-Kırmızı, G., & İnan, K. (2024). "They are asking me why I am speaking Gagauz": Family language practices and the level of linguistic (in)security of adolescents speaking an endangered language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 45*(6), 1834–1850. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2026365

Hashimov, A. (2025). The problem of national identity of Azeri Turks in Iran from a linguistic perspective and its solutions in a sociological perspective. *Ancient Land, 7*(2), 372–377. https://doi.org/10.36719/2706-6185/44/372-377

Hatłas, J. (2009). *Gagauzja i Gagauzi: Historia oraz współczesność.* Biblioteka Uniwersytecka.

Hatłas, J. (2011). The Gagauz people in Bessarabia. *Słupskie Studia Historyczne, 17*, 191–199.

Hatłas, J. (2015). Gagauzi w Bułgarii, w Mołdawii oraz na Ukrainie — wybrane aspekty. *Balcanica Posnaniensia: Acta et Studia, 22*(2), 101–116. https://doi.org/10.14746/bp.2015.22.19

Hatłas, J., & Żyromski, M. (2008). *Power, administration and ethnic minorities: The case study of Gagauzian autonomy.* Adam Mickiewicz University.

Hatłas, J., & Żyromski, M. (2012). Christian Orthodox churches in Gagauzian villages in South Bessarabia after the Second World War. *Sacrum et Profanum, 5*, 199–203.

Kapaló, J. A. (2011). *Text, context and performance: Gagauz folk religion in discourse and practice.* Brill.

Katchanovski, I. (2005). Small nations but great differences: Political orientations and cultures of the Crimean Tatars and the Gagauz. *Europe-Asia Studies, 57*(6), 877–894. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130500199483

King, C. (2000). *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture.* Hoover Institution Press.

Kosienkowski, M. (2017a). The Gagauz Republic: An autonomism-driven de facto state. *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review, 44*(3), 292–313. https://doi.org/10.1163/18763324-20171233

Kosienkowski, M. (2017b). The Gagauz Republic: Internal dynamics of de facto statehood. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, Sectio K: Politologia, 24*(1), 115–133. https://doi.org/10.17951/k.2017.24.1.115

Kosienkowski, M. (2021). The Russian World as a legitimation strategy outside Russia: The case of Gagauzia. *Eurasian Geography and Economics, 62*(3), 319–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2020.1793682

Kosienkowski, M. (2025). Great power competition in territorial autonomies: The case of Gagauzia. *Asian Perspective, 49*(2), 299–322. https://doi.org/10.1353/anp.2025.a960996

Menz, A. (2003). Endangered Turkic languages: The case of Gagauz. In M. Janse & S. Tol (Eds.), *Language death and language maintenance: Theoretical, practical and descriptive approaches* (pp. 143–155). John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.240.09men

Neukirch, C. (2002). Autonomy and conflict transformation: The case of the Gagauz territorial autonomy in the Republic of Moldova. In K. Gál (Ed.), *Minority governance in Europe* (pp. 105–123). LGI/ECMI.

Smith, A. D. (1999). *Myths and memories of the nation.* Oxford University Press.

Received: 05.02.2026
Revised: 05.25.2026
Accepted: 06.15.2026
Published: 06.20.2026

Editorial Team

- Shirmammad Qulubayli Qudrat oglu, PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Nakhchivan State University
- Elnaz Aliyeva Ali qizi, PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Nakhchivan State University
- Rashad Seyidov, Assistant Professor, Erzurum Atatürk University Faculty of Theology, Arabic Language
- Cavid Babayev Sabir oglu, PhD in Philology, Senior Lecturer, Nakhchivan State University
- Yasin Babazade Israfil oglu, PhD in Philology, Nakhchivan State University
- Gunel Aliyeva-Mammadova, PhD in History, Associate Professor at Baku State University, expert in Asian and African history
- Leyla Zeynalova Kazim qizi, PhD in Philology, Senior Lecturer, Nakhchivan State University
- Mahsati Asgarova Qasim qizi, PhD in Philology, Associate Professor, Nakhchivan State University
- Turkan Ismayilli Mehrac qizi, PhD in Philology, Head of Department, Nakhchivan State University
- Tehrana Khudaverdiyeva, PhD in Philology, Nakhchivan State University
- Aydin Aliyev Arif oghlu, PhD in Pedagogy
- Elchin Mirzayev Elshad oghlu, Nakhchivan State University Faculty of Foreign Languages
- Zarifa Sadig, Nakhchivan State University Faculty of Foreign Languages
- Kovser Abbasova, Nakhchivan State University Faculty of Foreign Languages
- Ilaha Ashrafova, Nakhchivan State University Faculty of Foreign Languages
- Alaviyya Nuri, Nakhchivan State University Faculty of Foreign Languages
- Daniel Effiong Umoh, Department of Foreign Languages, University of Uyo, Nigeria
- Olatunji Saheed: Federal College of Education (Special), PMB 1089, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria.
- Sadikhova Sayyara: Nakhchivan State University, Doctor of Philosophy in Art-Criticism
- Yulduz Eshmatova, PhD in Philology, Associate Professor (Docent), Department of Uzbek Language and Literature, Tashkent State University of Economics, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
Editor-in-Chief: Hasan Alisoy
E-mail: editor@egarp.lt

Vol. 3 No. 2 (2026): Aestas

ISSN 3030-1718

The *Journal of Humanities and Linguistics: Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum* is a peer-reviewed, international academic journal registered in Lithuania. It is dedicated to fostering innovative research and interdisciplinary dialogue across the humanities. The journal publishes high-quality articles in the fields of linguistics, literature, philosophy, history, cultural studies, social sciences, and ethics.

Frequency: 4 issues per year
Format: A4
Languages: Submissions are accepted in English and other major academic languages.

Registration: The journal is officially registered and published in Lithuania.

All submissions undergo a rigorous peer-review process to ensure the highest academic standards.

Open Access: All articles are freely available online to promote the global exchange of knowledge.

The editorial board does not take responsibility for the content of the materials published in the journal. By submitting an article, authors confirm the originality of their work and assume full responsibility for any copyright issues.

For further details and submissions, visit https://egarp.lt/index.php/aghel/index.

Acta Globalis Humanitatis et Linguarum
Editor-in-Chief: Hasan Alisoy
Executive Secretary: Gerda Urbaite
Salomėjos Nėries g. 57, Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mail: editor@egarp.lt