



## Narrative Reflection of Language Style in the Short Film "Niko Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta" by West Papuan Young Filmmakers

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze language style (figurative language) as a narrative reflection in the fictional prose of the short film *Niko: Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta*, produced by young West Papuan filmmakers and set in Sorong, Papua. The film portrays the dynamics of bullying and social diversity within a multicultural community. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through systematic viewing and note-taking of the film's dialogues and narration. Analysis focused on dialogue and narrative sequences containing localized language styles, emotional expressions, and social symbols. The findings reveal four principal functions of language style in the film: (1) as a reflection of local Papuan cultural identity, (2) as a means of constructing and differentiating character, (3) as a medium for representing social conflict and diversity, and (4) as a vehicle for conveying moral messages. The parallel deployment of connotative and narrative language data, eight instances each, demonstrates that conflict and resolution are proportionally structured within the film's narrative architecture. It is concluded that language style in this film functions not merely as a

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communicative instrument but as an ideological one medium affirming the values of unity in diversity within Papua's multicultural society.

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## INTRODUCTION

Literary works and film, as forms of cultural expression, serve not merely as entertainment media but as vehicles for reflecting social and human reality. In this context, fictional prose adapted into short films constitutes an important medium for representing the dynamics of community life, encompassing social conflict, inter-character relations, and the humanistic values embedded therein. Language style, or figurative language, represents one of the primary elements through which the representational power of such works is constructed and communicated (Keraf, 2009; Nurgiyantoro, 2018).

Language style refers to the distinctive manner in which authors and speakers express thought through language to produce specific effects upon the reader or audience (Keraf, 2009). Far from functioning merely as an aesthetic device, language style also operates as a tool for constructing meaning, shaping character, and structuring narrative arc (Ratna, 2013). This position is reinforced by Nurgiyantoro (2018), who maintains that language within fictional works simultaneously functions as a means of bringing the narrative world into being and as a reflection of the sociocultural context of both author and characters.

In the domain of contemporary stylistics, language style analysis has expanded beyond classical rhetorical categories to encompass its functions within broader discourse and sociolinguistic contexts. According to Simpson (2019), stylistics investigates how linguistic choices produce meaning effects in specific textual and social situations. This functional perspective is particularly salient in film studies, where dialogue, narration, and visual language interact

dynamically to construct narrative meaning (Bordwell & Thompson, 2017). The intersection of stylistics and film analysis therefore constitutes a productive analytical space for examining how language functions as both aesthetic and social practice.

The short film *Niko: Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta*, produced by young West Papuan filmmakers and set in Sorong, Papua, presents a narrative centered on the experiences of secondary school adolescents in a multicultural community. The diversity of characters' backgrounds, encompassing religion, ethnicity, and culture, constitutes a central element in the construction of both conflict and thematic message. The central character, Niko, is portrayed confronting bullying and discrimination, while his friends embody values of tolerance and cross-difference solidarity. In this context, the language style deployed in the film's dialogue and narration cannot be separated from the distinctive social realities of Papuan society, realities characterized by directness, vernacular authenticity, and emotional depth.

This study situates its analytical approach within the framework of stylistics. Ratna (2013) asserts that stylistics investigates the deployment of language in literary works by foregrounding aesthetic function and contextual meaning. Through a stylistic lens, language is understood as a sign system whose meaning exceeds its surface linguistic structure. Accordingly, the analysis of language style in the fictional prose of *Niko* is pertinent for illuminating how language functions as both a narrative and social reflection. This approach aligns with contemporary functional stylistics, which positions textual features as socially motivated choices embedded in specific communicative situations (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2019).

In addition to stylistics, this study draws on semiotic theory as a complementary analytical framework. Barthes (1977) posits that literary texts and films constitute sign systems containing both denotative and connotative meanings. The dialogue, lexical choices, and emotional expressions in *Niko* may thus be understood as signs representing social values, characters' internal

conflicts, and the moral messages intended for the audience. Within this framework, language style is understood not only as verbal expression but also as a form of social and cultural symbol that participates in the construction and negotiation of meaning (Danesi, 2011; van Dijk, 2018).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the language choices made in film dialogue are inherently tied to questions of identity and social positioning. Fought (2017) argues that vernacular and localized language varieties in media function as markers of ethnic and cultural identity, signalling group membership and in-group solidarity. In the context of the short film *Niko*, the deployment of everyday Papuan speech patterns, including code-mixing and region-specific expressions, functions not merely as a stylistic choice but as an act of cultural affirmation. Such linguistic choices resist the homogenizing tendencies of standard media language and assert the distinctiveness of Papuan social and cultural experience.

Research on language style in Indonesian short films has grown in significance within the field of literary and film studies. Several scholars have examined how regional varieties of Indonesian and local vernaculars shape narrative and characterization in Indonesian independent cinema (Junaedi, 2020; Sumarlan & Nababan, 2021). However, studies specifically examining language style in short films produced in Eastern Indonesian contexts, particularly Papua, remain relatively scarce. This gap highlights the need for investigations that foreground Eastern Indonesian linguistic and cultural perspectives in media analysis.

Furthermore, the themes of bullying and multiculturalism portrayed in the film *Niko* are subjects of considerable academic and social concern. Research on bullying in Indonesian school contexts has consistently underscored the role of language as both a weapon of social exclusion and a resource for building solidarity (Setiawan et al., 2022; Wibowo, 2020). The film's exploration of these dynamics through the specific medium of short film—and through the lens of localised language use, thus, offers a particularly rich site for analysis. Understanding how language style constructs and mediates these

social realities can contribute to broader discourses on inclusion, tolerance, and multicultural education.

The title of the film itself, '*Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta*' (Our colors are different but united in love), is formulated in Papuan Malay, a regional vernacular that blends standard Indonesian with local vocabulary and grammatical structures. This choice is politically and aesthetically significant: it signals that the film's narrative universe is embedded in a specifically Papuan sociolinguistic context and that its message of solidarity is articulated from within, rather than about, that community. Fairclough (2016) contends that language choices in public texts are never innocent; they encode and reproduce particular worldviews, social relations, and ideological positions. The film's deliberate use of Papuan vernacular thus constitutes an act of discursive resistance and cultural affirmation.

In light of the foregoing discussion, this study aims to conduct a systematic analysis of the functions and significance of language style in the short film *Niko: Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta*. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) identify and classify the language styles employed in the film's dialogue and narration; (2) examine the functions of these language styles as narrative reflection and social representation; (3) analyze the role of language style in constructing character, conflict, and moral message; and (4) explore how language style negotiates questions of cultural identity and social norms within Papua's multicultural context.

## METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative methodology was selected because the primary objective of the research is to describe, interpret, and explain the linguistic and social phenomena embedded within the film's narrative, rather than to measure or quantify them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A descriptive approach is appropriate given that the study aims to document and characterise the forms and functions of language style as they appear organically within the data source (Miles et al., 2020).

The primary research object is the short film *Niko: Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta*, an independent production by young West Papuan filmmakers set in Sorong City. The film constitutes the sole primary data source for this study. The selection of this film is justified by its thematic relevance to multiculturalism and social conflict in Papua, its deliberate use of localised Papuan language styles, and its status as an authentic cultural artefact produced by and for the local community.

Data collection was conducted through the 'listening and noting' (*simak dan catat*) technique, adapted for film analysis as 'viewing and noting'. This technique involved: (1) systematic, repeated viewing of the entire film to ensure comprehensive familiarity with its narrative and linguistic content; (2) transcription of all relevant dialogues and narrative sequences that exhibited discernible language style features with social and narrative significance; and (3) systematic noting and preliminary classification of the transcribed data. This approach is consistent with established practice in qualitative text analysis (Ratna, 2013; Zaimar, 2019).

In accordance with qualitative research conventions, the researcher served as the primary research instrument (key instrument). The researcher's role encompassed data collection, analysis, and interpretation, guided by theoretical knowledge and analytical experience in stylistics and film discourse (Moleong, 2017). To ensure the credibility and reliability of the analysis, a process of peer checking was applied, in which preliminary interpretations were reviewed and discussed among the research team members.

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative procedure comprising three interlocking stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020). In the condensation stage, the transcribed dialogue data were reviewed, coded, and categorised according to type of language style and communicative function. In the data display stage, the classified data were organised into a comparative table distinguishing between connotative and narrative language data. In the conclusion drawing stage, interpretive synthesis

was conducted to identify patterns, functions, and implications of the language styles identified in the film.

Data validity was ensured through methodological triangulation, cross-referencing textual analysis with theoretical frameworks from stylistics (Ratna, 2013; Simpson, 2019), semiotics (Barthes, 1977; Danesi, 2011), and sociolinguistics (Fairclough, 2016; Fought, 2017). Member checking within the research team was conducted to minimize interpretive bias and to strengthen analytical rigor.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Local Language Style as a Reflection of Cultural Identity

The analysis of the short film *Niko* reveals that the deployment of local Papuan language constitutes a structurally significant element in the construction of narrative identity. The deliberate selection of everyday vernacular diction, characterized by the use of oral speech forms and informal regional expressions, reflects the social background of the characters and the sociocultural environment in which the narrative unfolds. This language style functions not only as an inter-character communication tool but also strengthens the authenticity of the story and fosters emotional proximity between the film and its audience.

The use of local language thus serves as a reflection of the cultural identity of the Papuan community, represented in a natural and unaffected manner. The film's narrative avoids an impression of artificiality because dialogue is delivered in accordance with the speech conventions of the local community. This renders the conflicts and events within the story more tangible and more relevant to the social realities being portrayed. This finding is consistent with Fought's (2017) argument that localized vernacular in media functions as a powerful marker of ethnic and cultural identity, signalling in-group membership and affective solidarity.

From a semiotic perspective (Barthes, 1977; Danesi, 2011), the vernacular Expressions in the film function as cultural signs whose significance extends

beyond their literal referential meaning. Expressions such as '*torang*,' '*ko*,' and '*sa*,' characteristic features of Papuan Malay, are not merely grammatical variants but constitute semiotic resources through which the film asserts its embeddedness in a specific sociocultural context. As van Dijk (2018) observes, the local vernacular in media discourse functions as a discursive site for the articulation of community identity and the negotiation of belonging.

Furthermore, the deployment of Papuan Malay in a film narrative about bullying and solidarity carries a specific ideological significance. Fairclough (2016) contends that language choices in public texts encode and reproduce particular worldviews and social positions. By narrating the story of intercultural solidarity in the vernacular of the community it depicts, the film performs an act of discursive inclusion, asserting that Papuan voices and perspectives are legitimate and central, not peripheral, subjects of cultural representation.

### **Language Style as a Constructor of Character**

Language style plays a substantial role in constructing the character of the film's protagonist, Niko. The simple yet assertive expressions employed by Niko reflect his resilience, courage, and moral integrity in confronting bullying. The language used by antagonist characters tends to be confrontational and demeaning in tone, thereby clarifying the positional structure of the narrative conflict.

The differential language styles among characters function as social markers that illuminate power relations and social imbalances within the peer environment. Language style thus operates not only as an aesthetic feature but also as an analytical tool for mapping character, emotion, and attitude in relation to the specific situations each character faces. This is consistent with Nurgiyantoro's (2018) assertion that character is expressed not only through action but equally through the distinctive linguistic choices that define how each character inhabits and responds to their social world.

Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) systemic functional linguistics provides

a productive analytical framework for understanding this character-differentiation function of language. In functional terms, the language choices made by each character in the film can be interpreted as interpersonal meaning, choices that enact particular social roles and relationships. The confrontational register adopted by the bullying characters indexes a claim to social dominance, while Niko's assertive yet composed register performs resistance and moral authority without resorting to aggression.

This character-constructing function of language style is further illuminated by narrative theory. Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2016) argue that everyday narrative, including fictional dialogue, is a site where identity is dynamically constructed and negotiated. Niko's language choices across the film trace a narrative arc of resilience: the consistency of his register in the face of verbal provocation positions him as a character whose identity is stable and principled, in contrast to the volatility of those who bully him.

### **Language Style as a Reflection of Social Conflict and Diversity**

The film *Niko* reflects social conflicts relating to differences in background and cultural diversity through its specific choices of language style. Language is deployed both as a vehicle for expressing discriminatory attitudes and as a medium for communicating peace and solidarity. The expressions that emerge in dialogue reveal divergent perspectives among characters regarding the nature and significance of difference.

The film's narrative gradually traces a transformation in character attitudes through increasingly inclusive language. This demonstrates that language plays a decisive role in processes of social acceptance and the reconciliation of difference. The film's central message, '*torang pu warna beda tapi satu dalam cinta*' (our colors differ, but we are one in love), is clearly reflected in the progressive shift in the characters' modes of address and interaction.

This dimension of the film's language use resonates with critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspectives on language and social identity. Wodak and Meyer (2016) emphasizes that language in social contexts is never politically neutral: it

is the primary medium through which social hierarchies, exclusions, and solidarities are enacted and contested. The bullying dialogues in *Niko*, employing such expressions as 'dasar anak haram' (illegitimate child) and 'ko balik ke Cina sana' (go back to China), instantiate processes of social exclusion and stigmatization that are well-documented in the literature on school bullying in multicultural contexts (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Crucially, however, the film does not simply represent exclusion; it also enacts inclusion through its narrative language choices. The gradual shift toward more collaborative and respectful registers in the later dialogue sequences represents what Fairclough (2016) terms 'discourse change,' the reconfiguration of social relations through altered language practice. This narrative movement from exclusionary to inclusive discourse is central to the film's ideological project.

The social conflict dimensions portrayed in the film also intersect with broader concerns about multicultural education and tolerance. In the Indonesian context, where national ideology enshrines unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), the representation of bullying as a threat to intercultural solidarity carries particular pedagogical resonance. Setiawan et al. (2022) and Wibowo (2020) have documented how language-based bullying functions as a mechanism of social exclusion in Indonesian school settings. The film *Niko* engages directly with these dynamics, positioning language and its transformation as both the problem and the solution.

### **Language Style as a Vehicle for Moral Messaging**

The analysis further demonstrates that language style in this film functions as an effective vehicle for the communication of moral messages. Simple yet emotionally resonant language renders the film's messages of tolerance, humanity, and cross-difference love accessible to its intended audience. The narrative avoids didacticism, conveying its moral content implicitly through character dialogue and social interaction rather than through direct address.

The implicit moral messaging of the film aligns with what Chatman (2019) identifies as the 'discourse' dimension of narrative, the 'how' of storytelling as distinct from the 'what' of story content. By embedding its moral argument within the texture of everyday dialogue, rather than in explicit authorial commentary, the film achieves a naturalistic quality that enhances its affective and persuasive force. This technique also respects the audience's interpretive agency, inviting active moral engagement rather than passive reception.

From the perspective of media literacy and multicultural education, the film's deployment of a moral message through language style carries significant implications. Buckingham (2019) argues that media narratives are among the most influential sites through which young people develop their understanding of social norms, values, and identities. A film that embeds messages of tolerance and solidarity in the vernacular of its community, rather than in the formal language of institutional moral discourse, is therefore more likely to achieve genuine resonance with its intended audience.

The data table presented below provides a structured overview of the connotative and narrative language data identified in the film's dialogue (see **Table 1**). Connotative data comprise expressions with negative, emotional, and conflict-laden meanings, including insults, threats, and discriminatory utterances that reflect the social pressures and psychological tensions experienced by the characters. Narrative data, by contrast, consist of everyday dialogues that are informational and contextually neutral in function, serving to explain situations, facilitate narrative progression, and display interpersonal interaction between characters.

**Table 1.** Connotative and narrative language data in the short film *Niko: Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta*

CONNOTATIVE DATA	NARRATIVE DATA
"dasar anak haram" and "ko balik ke Cina sana"	"Kaka, permisi."
"saya biasa dibilang anak haram."	"iyo ade bagaima"
"jang bawa-bawa soal agama."	"Oh iyo ini alamatnya sudah."
"Ko cari sapa jadi"	

"ko dapat lempar deng batu bahkan deng cacian juga kapa."	"tapi kaka tau mama deng bapa pu nama dari sapa eh?"
"Iyo ko kalo pergi sekarang, nanti ko dapat lempar batu bahkan deng cacian juga kapa."	"ko pu mama ada berjualan di pasar ka?"
"ini rumahnya Mama Enjel."	"ko pu mama ada berjualan di pasar ka?"
"Ka Niko tau sa rumah dari sapa?"	"eh iyo mari masuk, kaka."

The equal distribution of eight connotative and eight narrative data items reflects the proportional construction of conflict and resolution within the film's narrative architecture. Neither dimension dominates: confrontation and solidarity, exclusion and inclusion, are held in narrative balance. This equilibrium reinforces the film's central ideological argument that in multicultural societies, the tensions of difference need not be resolved through the erasure of one side but through the cultivation of mutual recognition and solidarity.

The connotative data, particularly expressions such as 'dasar anak haram' (you illegitimate child) and 'ko balik ke Cina sana' (go back to China), instantiate what van Dijk (2018) terms 'elite racism' in media discourse, even when reproduced through popular vernacular form. These expressions enact processes of dehumanization, racialization, and social exclusion that are characteristic of bullying behavior as documented in the social psychology literature (Olweus, 2016; Smith, 2019). Their presence in the film is analytically significant not because the film endorses them, but because it subjects them to narrative scrutiny.

The narrative data, conversely, are characterized by a quality of ordinariness, expressions of everyday social courtesy, and cooperative interaction ('kaka permisi,' 'iyo ade bagaimana,' and 'mari masuk kaka'). This ordinariness is itself ideologically meaningful: it suggests that the baseline conditions of intercultural social life are those of respect, reciprocity, and mutual recognition. The extraordinary violence of the connotative data stands in sharp relief against this ordinary social backdrop, highlighting bullying not as a normal feature of community life but as a deviation from it.

This narrative structure resonates with Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia, the coexistence within a single text of multiple, socially differentiated voices and linguistic registers. The short film *Niko* instantiates a heteroglossic narrative space in which the competing registers of exclusion and solidarity, confrontation and cooperation, are not synthesised into a single authoritative voice but remain in productive tension. It is through this polyphony that the film achieves its narrative complexity and its moral depth.

The overall findings of this analysis confirm that language style in the short film *Niko* functions across four interconnected dimensions: as a reflection of local cultural identity, as a mechanism of character construction and differentiation, as a medium for representing social conflict and diversity, and as a vehicle for implicit moral messaging. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive but are deeply intertwined in the film's narrative fabric. Together, they demonstrate that language is not merely a communicative instrument in this film but an ideological medium through which the values of unity in diversity are affirmed within Papua's multicultural social context.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the systematic analysis of the short film *Niko: Torang Pu Warna Beda Tapi Satu Dalam Cinta*, this study concludes that language style occupies a strategic position as both a narrative reflection and a social representation in the construction of the film's meaning. The deployment of the local Papuan language, characterized by directness, contextual authenticity, and vernacular specificity, serves to strengthen the authenticity of the narrative setting, represent cultural identity, and convey the realities of multicultural life in Papua in a vivid and affectively resonant manner.

The connotative language style, manifested through expressions of insult, threat, and discrimination, plays a central role in constructing social conflict, particularly the bullying experienced by the protagonist. These expressions reflect psychological pressure and social inequality in inter-character relations. Conversely, the narrative language style, characterised by its informational and

contextually neutral quality, facilitates narrative progression, clarifies situational context, and presents a social interactional dimension marked by greater harmony. The equilibrium between eight connotative and eight narrative data items demonstrates that conflict and resolution are proportionally structured within the film's narrative architecture.

Furthermore, language style makes a substantial contribution to character formation, particularly that of Niko, who is constructed as a figure of resilience, honesty, and moral principle. Through simple yet semantically rich language choices, the film succeeds in communicating its moral messages of tolerance, solidarity, and humanity in an implicit and affectively powerful manner. The language of everyday interaction is thus shown to carry extraordinary moral weight in the context of the film's multicultural social world.

It is therefore concluded that language style in the short film *Niko* functions not merely as a communicative instrument but as an ideological medium affirming the values of unity in cultural diversity within Papua's multicultural society. This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on language and identity in Eastern Indonesian media contexts and underscores the importance of culturally grounded stylistic analysis in understanding the social and moral dimensions of community film production.

Future research is recommended to extend the scope of analysis to include visual and paralinguistic dimensions of the film, including gesture, facial expression, and cinematographic choices, in conjunction with verbal language style, so as to produce a more comprehensive account of the film's semiotic construction. Comparative studies examining language style across multiple short films produced by young filmmakers from diverse regions of Papua would also contribute meaningfully to scholarship on the relationship between language, identity, and media in Eastern Indonesian contexts.

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### Declarations

- Author Contribution** : Ludifina Korain: Conceptualization, Data Collection, Writing - Original Draft, and Visualization; Mellisa Waicang: Writing - Review & Editing, and Formal Analysis; Febiola Kalapain: Data Collection and Validation; Yulita Solissa: Methodology and Writing - Review; Siti Fatihaturrahmah Al. Jumroh: Supervision and Final Validation.
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