


## Framing and Word Choice in Listening Audio: Analyzing Language Learners' Perceptions

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### ABSTRACT

This study emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend how language generates meaning in listening comprehension. However, the way that word choice and framing in listening materials affect students' views and interpretations of social concerns has received barely any attention in prior research. The impact of word choice and framing on learners' perceptions and interpretations has frequently been ignored in prior study. This study uses Goffman's (1974) theory. A qualitative method was used with 20 college students aged 18-22. Data were collected through listening response tasks, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews based on an audio about bullying from Listen A Minute, and analysed using thematic analysis across three levels: explanation, interpretation, and description. The results show that word choices provide powerful emotional frames that depict bullies as authoritative characters and victims as psychologically harmed. Pupils tended to believe the story as true and concentrated more on empathy than critical analysis. The study comes to the conclusion that including critical listening techniques is crucial to assisting students in comprehending how language influences ideology, emotion, and social meaning.

**Keywords:** *Critical Listening, English Language Learning, Framing Analysis, Social Issues, Word Choice*

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### INTRODUCTION

Currently, listening materials expose learners to authentic language use and real-world social issues. Social issues play an important role in shaping public perception. This is also related to the educational context, especially in language learning, where students learn about social issues that happen around them, such as poverty, bullying, climate change, and gender inequality. In English learning, students also learn about listening by using a variety of media, such as podcasts, interviews, and news. When students learn about listening, the media also has a way to frame and use word choice in delivering the messages.

Framing theory by Goffman (1974) explains how an issue is presented by emphasizing certain aspects and shaping how audiences interpret that issue. Then, Erving Goffman in his book also implicitly explained word choice, which also influences the emotions and perceptions of the audience (Goffman, 1974). These concepts are important in English learning because students learn not only language skills but also issues that occur in their society. In the listening context, subtle variations in wording, such as describing a group as "refugees" versus "illegal migrants," or labelling an action as "protest" versus "riot" can influence the perception of a group. For English students, word choice can affect their perception of social issues. Understanding listening input as a second or foreign language is a cognitively complex process because students must be aware of the sound or pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures, and gather ideas or information directly. When listening to text focused on a language that has an ideological element or framing strategy, the students tend to rely on lexical interpretation. Lack of vocabulary, unfamiliar sociocultural references, and insufficient pragmatic awareness can affect students' interpretation of social issues. Therefore,

framing and word choice not only affect the comprehension of listening texts but also shape learners' perceptions, attitudes, judgments, and emotional responses.

Several previous studies have shown that language is not neutral and often carries implicit meanings and power relations. The first previous research was by Mayer et al. (2022), entitled "Framing and Word Choice in Childhood Obesity Reduction-Focused Advertising" which focused on the effects of message framing (positive or negative) reaction of the advertisement to reduce childhood obesity rates and spread information about healthier behavior. The second study is by Fattore & Wagner (2023), entitled "Exploring Word Choice and Narrative Framing in Trump's Trade Tweets" which examined Trump's word choice in his tweets to compare his tone in trade with his other tweets during his presidency. The third article is by Widyadhana entitled "Framing Analysis of Republika and BBC News Indonesia on the Conflict of Palestine - Israel" This research analysed the news related to the conflict between Palestine and Israel, using sources from online sites, Republika, and BBC News Indonesia (Widyadhana et al., 2025). Considering a focus on framing impacts in news reporting, social media, and ads, this research primarily examined written texts, media discourse, and political communication. Nevertheless, they mostly neglected how word choice and framing function in spoken or listening materials, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) circumstance. Therefore, previous research has only focused on framing and word choice in written texts, advertisements, and news. However, to fill this gap, this research is about framing and word choice in listening materials by using audio about social issues from *Listenaminute*, which may significantly influence learners' interpretation and comprehension of the message being conveyed.

Although much research discusses listening strategy, vocabulary mastery, and critical listening skills, limited research focuses on how framing and word choices in listening to audio about social issues affect the understanding and perceptions of English students. Most previous studies have focused on the results of listening skills, such as using scoring or strategy used, rather than the interpretative and perceptual effects of discourse features embedded in the materials. Recent research on critical listening emphasizes the significance of assessing spoken texts' ideological and persuasive components in addition to comprehension (Siegel, 2022; Widodo, 2021). Furthermore, studies on framing in educational contexts have demonstrated that educational resources can influence students' attitudes and viewpoints about social issues (Yin, 2022; Yousaf et al., 2022). Additionally, discourse analysis in EFL contexts has focused more on how language use in real-world materials affects learners' sociocultural comprehension and meaning-making processes (Hussein & Al-Emami, 2020; Pham & Le, 2025). Thus, research on framing and word choices in listening is needed to understand students' understanding and perceptions.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between framing and word choice in audio (*Listenaminute*) on social issues as the media for listening context. The following are the specific objectives of this study: (a) What specific word choices are used in social issue listening audios from *Listenaminute*, and how can they be identified and analyzed in terms of framing strategies? (b) How do framing and word choice in these listening audios shape English learners' interpretation and perception of the presented social issues? (c) What are the implications of the analysis of framing and word choice for the development of learners' critical listening skills and socio-cultural awareness in English language education? By exploring these research questions, this study seeks to analyze the framing and word choice in listening materials from *Listenaminute* audio about social issues, understand students' perceptions, and empower students with critical media skills.

### The Concept of Framing

The concept of framing was introduced systematically by Goffman, (1974) in his creation "*Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience.*" Goffman explains that individuals understand reality through interpretative frameworks that help them to organize experiences and the meaning of occasions. Framing influence public behavior and show the

importance of media credibility to gain the trust of the public (Yin, 2022) and (Yousaf et al., 2022). Framing is important because it can influence public perceptions.

In media and discourse studies, framing refers to how an issue is shown so that it can shape how audiences interpret and accept the information. The choice of point of view emphasizes certain aspects, and the narrative organization is part of the framing. When students listen to audio related to social issues, framing can influence how a group, occasion, or policy is positioned as a problem, solution, or neutral phenomenon. Thus, framing influences factual understanding and shapes the audience's perception and understanding of social issues. In language learning, this framework is very important because students do not only learn the language but also understand the social culture of that language.

### **Word Choice and Meaning Construction**

Word choice plays an important role in constructing the meanings of written and spoken texts. Lexical selection may carry ideological, connotative, and emotional meanings that affect audience interpretation. Diction or word choice is the accuracy of a person in choosing and using words depending on conditions and situations (Herman et al., 2020). Choosing the correct word can be implemented if a person has a large vocabulary (Aswad & Sardi, 2023). Word choice can be conditioned based on the certain condition and occasion because it can influence how a person can interpret the meaning or message of text or spoken languages (Juanda et al., 2025). Therefore, in discourse analysis, word choice is not neutral but represents value, perspective, and particular positions.

Words that seem synonymous also generate different meanings. For instance, describing an occasion as a "demonstration" instead of "riot" can show another contrast perception of the same occasion. When listening to audio about social issues, word choices can affect how the audience shapes the meaning of the audio.

Therefore, for students learning English as a foreign or second language, word choice can be a challenge in terms of being aware of how words are used in audio or text. Limited vocabulary and lack of understanding of the culture or meaning in the text or audio can shape them to be non-critical. Thus, word choice is a crucial foundation for understanding how social meanings are constructed in listening materials.

### **Listening Comprehension in Language Learning**

Listening comprehension is the basic element in second or foreign language acquisition (Pham & Le, 2025). Students can successfully interpret meaning by using knowledge about pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structures, cultural context, and the speaker's accent (Aswad & Sardi, 2023). Listening is a receptive skill that builds the foundation for developing other language skills (Purba, 2020). Listening comprehension is a complex cognitive process in which students must integrate sound, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and background knowledge to construct meaning simultaneously. This approach involves *bottom-up* (decoding linguistic input from sounds to meaning) and *top-down* processing (using prior knowledge and contextual understanding).

When listening materials use particular framing and ideologically loaded lexical choices, students process the information linguistically, evaluatively, and conceptually. This means understanding not just "What they say" but also about "how" and "why" something is expressed in a certain way. Therefore, listening comprehension in social issue contexts is related to critical thinking skills. Students who can identify framing strategies and lexical nuances tend to have reflective interpretations and do not passively accept information.

### **Perception and Meaning Construction among Language Learners**

Perceptions of social issues are also influenced by the interaction between linguistic and sociocultural factors. Language shapes social reality through particular representations. In language learning, students' cultural background, values, and experiences affect how they interpret meaning. Framing and word choices in listening audio can strengthen or challenge their perspectives. If students do not have critical thinking, they tend to accept the meaning

without asking “how” and “why.” Otherwise, awareness of framing can help students develop their critical listening skills and improve their sociocultural awareness in language learning.

## METHOD

This research used a qualitative method to determine how framing and word choice in listening to audio about social issues can influence the understanding and perception of college students who enrol in listening for social issues. The participants were 20 students (10 male and 10 female) aged approximately 18-22 years old, selected using a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria, including their enrolment in a listening course and their intermediate level of English proficiency. The listening media was a short audio in 2-4 minutes that discussed a social issue that was bullying. The audio was chosen from Listen A Minute because it offers genuine, succinct, and appropriate for the level listening resources that are frequently utilized in English language study and include distinct instances of social topics that are suited for word choice and framing analysis. The data were collected through listening response tasks, reflective journals to understand how framing and word choice influence students' understanding and response, and semi-structured interviews to understand the students' interpretation and perception. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, and recurring patterns and themes related to framing effects, perception, and comprehension were identified through inductive coding. For data trustworthiness, the researcher used triangulation across the data sources.

This study adopts Goffman's Frame and Word Choice Analysis as its analytical approach. This framework consists of the following: (1) Frame analysis (description): Analysing the frames used in social interaction and how word choice (noun, verb, and adjective) is used to organize experience and impressions within various contexts. (2) Framing in Social Practice (Interpretation): Analysing how frames are formed through language and behaviour in social situations and how they influence people's self-presentation and perceptions of reality in social interactions. (3) Framing and Social Implications (Explanation): This involves exploring the social and cultural consequences of the frames used in daily interactions, specifically their role in shaping identities, reinforcing social norms, and influencing how individuals are perceived in different social settings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses qualitative analysis, which is organized based on Goffman's three-tiered analytical framework: description, interpretation, and explanation. The data from listening response tasks, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews were integrated to provide a holistic view of how framing and word choice in the *Listen a Minute* audio influence students' understanding and perception of social issues. To present the findings systematically, the analysis is organized into three main themes derived from Goffman's analytical framework: (1) linguistic framing at the descriptive level, which highlights emotional framing of victims and authority construction of bullies through word choice; (2) interpretative meaning construction, which reflects students' understanding of the bullying issue; and (3) explanatory implications, which reveal the dominance of empathy over critical reflection in shaping students' perceptions. These themes are developed from the integration of linguistic analysis and students' responses across listening tasks, reflective journals, and interviews.

### Frame Analysis: Description of Linguistic Frames in “Listen A Minute” Audios

Audio analysis was chosen to provide a linguistic framing that is consistent and deliberate through lexical choices. At the descriptive level, the research concentrates on how lexical choices, specifically nouns, verbs, and adjectives which reflect linguistic framing, creates emotional representations of victims and establishes the authority of bullies in the discourse.

**Noun: Categorizing Actors and Issues.**

Nouns serve to identify social actors and establish the bounds of the problem as part of the emotional framing of victims, influencing the conceptual understanding of the bullying experience. The audio discussed the nouns that describe social actors and structure the interpretive boundaries of the issues. The central nouns, such as *"bullying," "bullies,"* and *"group of bullies"* construct the perpetrator as a group who do something like this in real life. The repetition of using *"bullies"* shows that perpetrators are the category who always act like this. The other nouns, such as *"life," "child," "school," "break time," "corridors,"* and *"playing fields,"* show the place and situation that occurred. These word choices describe a school as a place that is not safe for students.

Additionally, nouns such as *"hell," "physical scars," "emotional scars," "confidence,"* and *"belief in myself"* indicate that bullying is not just a short-term effect but has a long-term effect on the victims. The word *"hell"* proves that bullying is a painful experience. The differences in physical and emotional scars also showed the effect of bullying, not just physically, but also emotionally and in terms of the victims' confidence. Overall, these word choices showed that bullying is a tough experience that can change someone's life.

*Verbs: Assigning Agency and Action.*

Verbs are essential in determining agency and emphasizing the power dynamics between bullies and their victims. The audio indicates the perpetrator as someone who bullies and the victim as someone who gets bullied. The expressions, such as *"make (me) miserable," "punch," "kick," "got me,"* and *"took away"* describe bullying as an intentional, physical, and harmful action. The verbs *"make," "got,"* and *"took away"* show an imbalance of power, where the perpetrator is stronger than the victim in social life. Modal expressions such as *"have to"* and statements suggesting that bullies *"think they have the right"* indicate that the perpetrator has the right to do something like that. These word choice unfortunately highlight the imbalance in social life between perpetrators and victims

Meanwhile, the verbs that show victims' experiences, such as *"was afraid," "hate," "changed me," "have no confidence," "am afraid"* point out that the effect of bullying is long-term, even until the victims' become adults. The expression *"changed me for life"* emphasizes that the experience is permanent, and bullying leaves emotional scars for a long time.

**Adjectives: Framing the Emotional Evaluation and Moral**

Additionally, by enhancing the depiction of victims' pain and bolstering the unfavourable representation of bullies, adjectives support moral and emotional analysis. Adjectives such as *"weaker," "not safe,"* and *"living hell"* strengthen the emotional side of the audio. These words not only describe feelings but also show the moral value of something that happened. For example, *"living hell"* indicates that the experience is harmful and morally unfair. Through these word choice patterns, the audio constructs a strong emotional feeling. The victim is described as someone who is weak and needs sympathy from others. Otherwise, the perpetrators act as someone who harms and is unfair to others. Overall, the descriptive analysis identifies two recurring themes: bullies' authority building and victims' emotional framing. Lexical choices are consistently used to develop these themes, with verbs emphasizing the agency and power of the perpetrators and nouns and adjectives emphasizing the pain of the victims.

Table 1. Frame Analysis of Linguistic Features in Listen A Minute Audio (Bullying)

| Linguistic Feature      | Examples from Audio  | Framing Function                                   | Interpretation   |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Nouns (Actors & Issues) | bullying, bullies, group of bullies                        | Identify perpetrators as a collective social actor | Constructs bullies as a consistent group responsible for harmful actions |
|                         | life, child, school, break time, corridors, playing fields | Establish context and setting of bullying          | Frames school environment as an unsafe space for children                |

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
|   | hell, physical scars, emotional scars, confidence, belief in myself | Describe consequences of bullying                | Emphasizes long-term emotional and psychological effects on victims |
| Verbs (Agency & Action)                   | make miserable, punch, kick, got me, took away                      | Represent actions of perpetrators                | Frames bullying as intentional, violent, and harmful behavior       |
|   | have to, think they have the right                                  | Indicate perpetrators' motivation                | Shows perceived entitlement and imbalance of power                  |
|   | was afraid, hate, changed me, have no confidence, am afraid         | Describe victims' emotional experiences          | Highlights lasting psychological impact on the victim               |
| Adjectives (Emotional & Moral Evaluation) | weaker, not safe, living hell                                       | Express emotional condition and moral evaluation | Frames bullying as unfair, harmful, and morally wrong               |

### Interpretation: Students' Understanding of the Bullying Issue

The approach focuses on how students make sense of the framed speech at the interpretative level; specifically, how emotional lexical choices affect how they perceive bullying. For the interpretation, the results of the listening responses and reflective journals showed that the students were able to understand the main idea of the audio, which was the effect of bullying for long-lasting emotional damage. Personal framing helped students identify the feelings and experiences of the speaker more easily. Many students were able to retell the content of the audio by mentioning some main points, such as fear at school, lack of safety, and loss of self-confidence. The majority of the students, more than half, emphasized victims' emotional suffering in their responses. In their reflective journals, the students often used the words "sad," "trauma," and "afraid" afraid, which showed that their understanding was affected by the emotional tone in the audio.

However, students' understanding tends to be influenced by the emotional framing of the audio. Rather than analysing bullying as a social phenomenon involving power relations, school culture, or prevention, the students focused on sympathy toward the victims. Only a few students mentioned broader aspects, such as peer pressure and the school environment, and these points were not described further. The interview data showed that the emotional words helped students connect with the message but also led them to accept the speaker's perspective without questioning the broader context. When the students were asked if the audio represented their personal experiences or general reality, most students said that the audio portrayed "bullying" in real life. This implies that students' interpretation is heavily influenced by emotional framing, which causes them to value empathy over critical thought. Despite their ability to understand the material, students' comprehension tended to stay at an emotional level rather than progressing to a more in-depth analytical evaluation. These answers showed that the students tended to assume the narrative as truth instead of the perspective shaped by particular linguistic choices.

Some students stated that phrases such as "*changed me for life*" and "*scar me for life*" made them believe that the effects of bullying were permanent and unavoidable. These expressions strengthened the perception that bullying can cause psychological damage that cannot be recovered, thereby reducing alternative interpretations of the issue. This suggests that word choice has a significant impact on how students interpret meaning and assess the importance of social issues.

These results show that students' interpretations are heavily influenced by emotional framing, which causes empathy to predominate over critical thought. This thematic pattern demonstrates that although students can understand the material, their comprehension usually stays at an emotive level rather than progressing to a deeper understanding of analytical evaluation.

Table 2. Students' Interpretation of the Bullying Audio

| Data Source              | Students' Responses   | Interpretation  |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Listening Response Tasks | Students retold the story and identified key ideas such as fear at school, lack of safety, and loss of confidence | Students understood the main message of the audio                           |
| Reflective Journals      | Words frequently used: sad, trauma, afraid  | Emotional framing influenced students' understanding                        |
| Interviews               | Students stated the story represented real-life bullying  | Students tended to accept the narrative as factual rather than interpretive |

*Explanation: The Effect Toward Students' Perceptions and Attitudes*

The analysis examines how the predominance of emotional framing causes empathy-driven reactions at the explanatory level, frequently restricting students' capacity for critical thought and influencing how they see social reality. The results of this study showed that framing and word choice in audio influenced the perception and attitude of students toward those issues. The explanation that focused on the victims encouraged students to view bullying as dangerous with long-term consequences. In their reflective journals, the students expressed their sympathy, sadness, and madness toward the bullies. Most students highlighted victims' suffering rather than discussing the social context of bullying. The students' written reflections often pointed to feelings such as "pity," "fear," and "anger," indicating that emotional engagement became the dominant response pattern.

However, the dominant emotional framing also placed students as passive listeners who received implicit moral messages from the audio. Since the narrative consistently emphasized injustice and victimization, the students tended to align themselves with the intended moral position embedded in the discourse. Almost all students viewed the content of the audio as objective truth rather than subjective personal opinion shaped by specific language choices. When the students were asked if the speaker's experiences just represent one perspective, the students' responses reflected that the bullying occurred in real life. Few students showed critical awareness of how language was used to maintain emotional responses. This implies that emotional framing guides students' views toward a single prevailing perspective while also bolstering their comprehension. Students were able to swiftly grasp the essential ideas and connect them to their experiences thanks to the emotive vocabulary and clear narrative, but these linguistic elements also hindered their capacity to critically evaluate the message. Additionally, data suggests that listening comprehension in EFL situations is impacted by linguistic and ideological framing rather than being a neutral cognitive process.

Instead of challenging how language forms meaning, students frequently rely on lexical cues, which causes them to accept the narrative as true. Overall, the results of this analysis showed that the framing and word choices in audio about bullying were effective in improving students' understanding and emotional engagement. The clear narrative and emotional vocabulary helped students understand the main ideas quickly and relate them to their experiences. However, these linguistic features also shaped students' perceptions and limited their critical evaluation. This shows that emotional framing supported understanding, but it also simultaneously narrowed interpretative possibilities by leading students toward a single dominant perspective. However, this research emphasized the importance of listening critically in EFL learning so that the students were able to understand how language maintains meaning, emotion, and social reality. Developing this awareness could assist students in having more analytical and reflective engagement with social issues rather than just having empathy alone.

As students' views are influenced by emotionally constructed narratives, the predominance of empathy over critical reflection becomes more evident. This suggests that

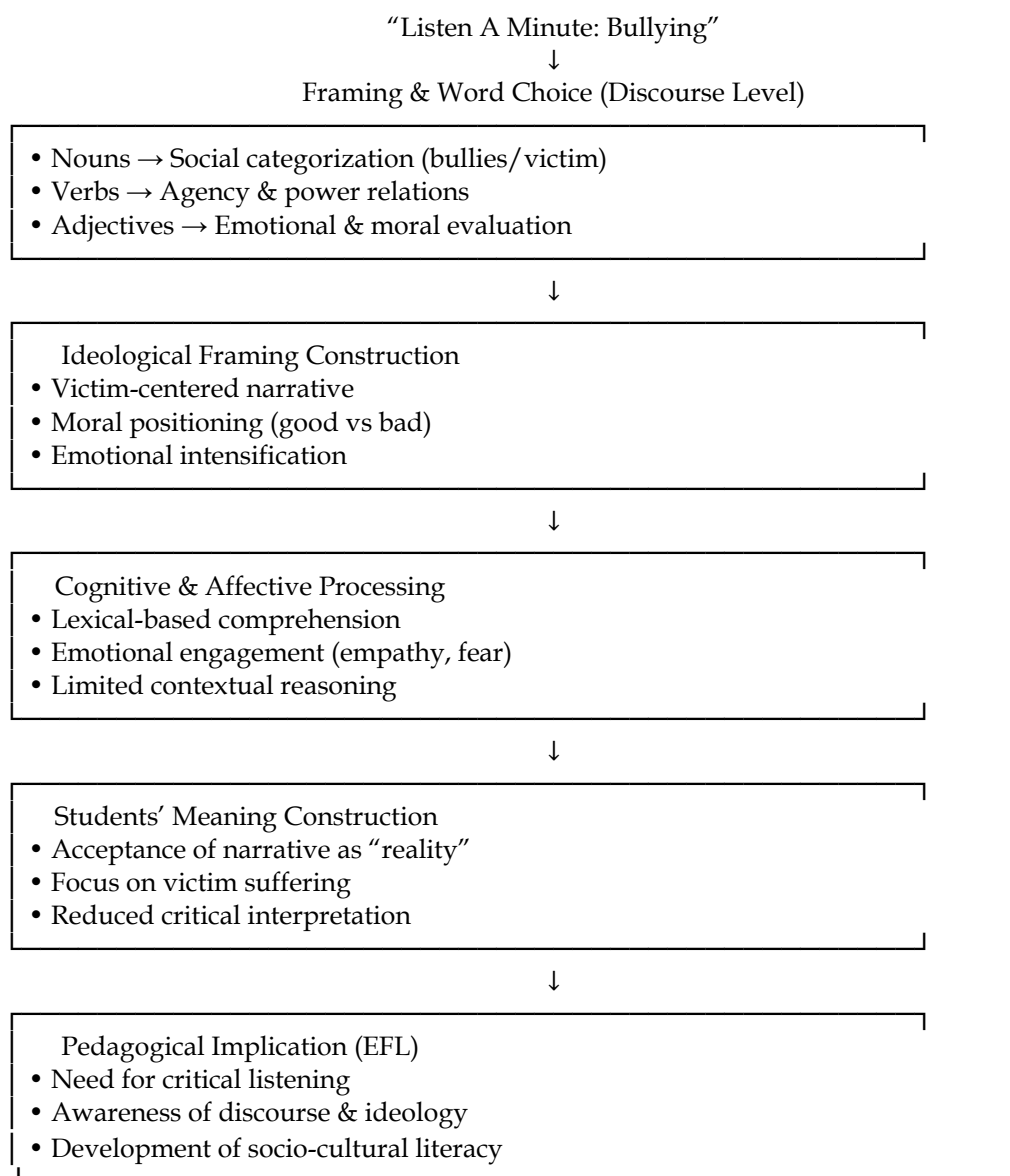
word choice and framing influence students' ideological views of social issues in addition to improving comprehension. These results also emphasize how crucial it is to incorporate critical listening techniques into EFL instruction so that students may examine how language creates meaning, emotion, and social reality.

Table 3. Impact of Framing and Word Choice on Students' Perceptions

| Aspect                 | Findings   | Explanation   |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Emotional Response     | Students expressed pity, sadness, fear, and anger toward bullies     | Emotional vocabulary increased empathy toward victims |
| Perception of Bullying | Students viewed bullying as extremely harmful with permanent effects | Framing emphasized long-term psychological damage     |
| Critical Awareness     | Few students questioned how language shaped the narrative            | Emotional framing limited deeper critical analysis    |

### *Conceptual Model of Framing and Meaning Construction*

#### Listening Input (Social Issue Audio)



The conceptual model demonstrates how word choice and framing influence learners' construction of meaning at both the linguistic and ideological levels. Nouns, verbs, and

adjectives are examples of lexical elements that serve as discursive instruments that classify social actors, assign agency, and incorporate emotional assessment. These linguistic elements create a dominant frame that portrays the offender as morally reprehensible and the victim as defenceless. This implies that by highlighting specific meanings, framing not only facilitates comprehension but also guides interpretation.

Importantly, this framing directed interpretation rather than only helping in comprehension. The results of the research showed that the students mainly relied on lexical cues that produced an understanding that emphasized emotion rather than analysis. Thus, students tended to accept it as an objective depiction of reality. This suggests that rather than being a completely neutral activity, listening comprehension in EFL situations involves both cognitive and ideological processes. The students' capacity to evaluate critically was obstructed by emotional domination, especially when it came to opposing viewpoints or challenging underlying presumptions (Latip, 2019; Tiantong & Teemuangjai, 2013). This emphasizes the need for listening teaching to include critical discourse awareness. By doing this, students are not only able to comprehend the material but also gain the capacity to challenge the ways in which language creates meaning, ideology, and social reality.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study emphasizes how important word choice and framing are in influencing how English language learners perceive and comprehend social issues in listening materials. The results show that listening comprehension is not just a linguistic process but also an interpretive and ideological one by using Goffman's three-tiered framework. By demonstrating how lexical choices such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives construct emotional meaning and power relations within language in addition to conveying information, the study advances EFL research. These linguistic characteristics generally prioritize emotional engagement over critical examination, leading learners toward specific interpretations. As a result, instead of seeing the narrative as a perspective created by language, pupils often absorb it as fact. Additionally, by concentrating on hearing materials, an area that has gotten less attention than written texts, this study expands on earlier studies on framing and discourse analysis. The results imply that listening materials serve as influencing media that shapes learners' attitudes, perceptions, and sociocultural understanding in addition to being instruments for language acquisition. As a result, this study emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate critical listening techniques into EFL training. These methods can assist students in developing a greater understanding of how language shapes meaning, emotion, and ideology in social circumstances.

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