



# The Title 'Gus' from the Perspective of X Social Media Users in Indonesia: A Cognitive Linguistics Study and Its Implementation in Critical Literacy Learning

Rai Bagus Triadi<sup>1</sup>, Hilda Hilaliyah<sup>2</sup>, Widyapuri Prasastiningtyas<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Pamulang, South Tangerang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Sangga Buana, Indonesia



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## ABSTRACT

His study examines emerging perspectives on the term *Gus* on social media, particularly on the X platform in Indonesia. Traditionally, *Gus* carries a positive connotation within Indonesian Islamic culture, symbolizing individuals of moral integrity and religious devotion. However, this perception has shifted following a viral incident involving Gus Miftah, who was accused of insulting a tea seller during a religious event. The controversy sparked public debate and criticism, reshaping how the title is viewed online. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this research collected and analyzed posts containing the keyword *Gus* to explore how the term's meaning has evolved. The study is grounded in cognitive linguistics, focusing on imaginative processes such as model manipulation, cognitive planning, image schemas, and semantic interpretation. Findings reveal that *Gus* is no longer universally regarded as a symbol of piety, but increasingly perceived as a title used for personal or political interests. Public discourse now questions the legitimacy and moral authority of individuals bearing the title, reflecting broader skepticism toward religious figures. The results contribute to the development of teaching materials for Critical Discourse Analysis, helping students identify power dynamics and ideological bias in language. This study highlights how digital platforms shape public perception and demonstrates the role of language, power, and ideology in constructing meaning in online spaces

## INTRODUCTION

The term "Gus" first gained popularity in Indonesia, particularly in East Java, as a form of address given to boys who are descendants of a *kyai* (Islamic cleric), the leader of a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). Like other honorific titles, the title "Gus" carries a responsibility for its bearer. This responsibility must be demonstrated through attitude, appearance, and speech. A *pesantren* is typically identified as an educational institution with a heavier emphasis on religious learning compared to regular schools. Additionally, *pesantren* are managed in a boarding system where students (*santri*) live communally in dormitories under the guidance of a *kyai* as the central figure.

Over time, the term "Gus" has become associated with individuals who possess religious knowledge and often deliver sermons. Furthermore, "Gus" is now commonly linked with figures of charisma who are respected by the public. The image of a "Gus" thus transforms the title into a heavy responsibility and a valuable identity that must be preserved by its holders. This ideal stands in contrast to a controversial incident that went viral in Indonesia involving the utterance of a "Gus" to a tea vendor during a religious event. As is widely known, this case involved Gus Miftah, a preacher and leader of a *pesantren* who is known for his humorous style in delivering religious messages. This humorous preaching approach has become a hallmark for him, and

similarly can be observed in the speech styles of other figures like Gus Dur and Gus Baha.

This pattern of educational-cultural jokes is seen as a necessary skill for a "Gus" when delivering religious material. Such soft skills are used to keep audiences entertained and alert, especially since sermons or religious gatherings (*tabligh akbar*) are often held at night. Consequently, this style has become a general cultural tradition in *pesantren* education, preparing santri for community engagement. However, the use of jokes must be sensitive to timing and context to avoid shifting into offensive territory, such as bullying or verbal abuse. This aligns with Allan & Burridge (2006: 75) statement that a statement can turn into an insult if one fails to consider certain elements: who we are talking to, what is being discussed, where the conversation takes place, and the speaker's emotional state. This is also described as the author's background having a significant impact on the creation of discourse (Hermina, 2014; Payuyasa, 2017). This implies that critical discourse analysis does not only encompass a single context but also includes other related contexts as a unified whole, particularly statements regarding the ideology of a group that influence the discourse (Ghaderinezhad, 2015). In this case, the character of conflict is closely related to discourse structures formed by linguistic constructions. This shows that discourse is strongly connected to the development and eventual escalation of conflict (Chiluwa, 2021). Two expert opinions explain that this case process will demonstrate the role of language in conflict initiation and illustrate how language shapes and processes the development of conflict (Holt-Graves, 2014; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2013)."

In this case, the word "Goblok" (stupid) uttered by Gus Miftah to a tea vendor drew the attention of netizens, who criticized the remark as an inappropriate and excessive joke that ultimately crossed the line into insult. Triadi (2017: 6) categorizes verbal insults into two types: base-form insults and derived-form insults. Base-form insults include simple words like *babi* (pig), *bangsat* (bastard), *setan* (devil), *goblok* (stupid), and so on. Derived-form insults include polymorphemic words such as affixed insults (*sialan*, *bajingan*, *kampungan*, *diancuk*, *diamput*), reduplications, and compound words. This viral incident prompted netizens to revisit and scrutinize preaching styles employed by various "Gus" figures and clerics within their circles. Observations revealed other instances of verbal insult and comparisons were drawn between one "Gus" and another, giving rise to varied perspectives on the legitimacy and appropriateness of awarding the "Gus" title to certain individuals. As is well-known, the flow of information on social media is incredibly fast. A single piece of viral content can be accessed and commented on by a vast audience, each offering opinions based on individual perspectives. Beyond that, the cultural pattern of Indonesian social media use is deeply rooted in resharing behavior, making viral spread almost inevitable. This phenomenon is described by Cross (2011: 23) as an unavoidable cultural effect of the ongoing digital revolution: "*We are already experiencing the cultural effects of the digital revolution that is underway.*" In a similar vein, Nurdin (2012: 11) explained that people tend to avoid openly opposing the views or opinions of others in their social environment, even if they disagree.

Research on the figure of "Gus" has been conducted several times. Researchers have mainly focused on analyzing Gus from the perspectives of education and social sciences, including studies on Gus's parenting strategies, preaching rhetoric, controversies surrounding preaching styles, and politeness in Gus's preaching.

Consequently, these studies have produced findings related to preaching patterns in the form of rhetoric. In contrast to previous research, the findings in this study highlight a shift in the perception of the figure of Gus as a title that originates from Indonesian culture. This is because other cultures or nations do not recognize this form of address. Therefore, the positive image of the Gus figure must always be maintained consistently.

Public perceptions of the "Gus" figure have shifted, both on an individual and collective level, resulting in a more critical stance toward the appropriateness of assigning this title. This study analyzes the shift in perception using a cognitive linguistics approach, based on social media comments about "Gus" figures. Cognitive science is the study of mental representations which, in cognitive linguistics, include symbols, formulas, images, ideas, and other representational forms (Aryadoust, 2019; Beck, 2019; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Further, cognitive linguistics examines the meaning of symbols or title representations through the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (2003), which sees metaphors as mental constructions based on analogical conceptualization of one domain in terms of another.

The key components of metaphor in cognitive linguistics are:

1. Source domain – usually concrete
2. Target domain – usually abstract
3. Mapping between the two domains (Subhan, R. F., Nur, T., & Nugraha, 2019)

Lakoff & Johnson (2003) in Dessiliona & Nur (2018) classify conceptual metaphors into three types:

1. Structural metaphors – where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. This type relies on systematic correlations in everyday experience.
2. Orientational metaphors – related to spatial orientation such as up-down, in-out, front-back, which are based on physical experiences and bodily interaction with the world.
3. Ontological metaphors – where abstract experiences, thoughts, or processes are treated as concrete entities. For example: "*The mind is a machine*" in the sentence "*My mind just isn't operating today.*"

Ungerer (2006) illustrates that a language producer inevitably engages in the process of concept formation influenced by their cognitive domain. This process gives rise to creative linguistic forms, such as the emergence of metaphorical expressions. (Hart, 2014) explains that the objective of the cognitive linguistic approach in Critical Discourse Analysis is to depict the model of conceptual structures represented through language structures, thereby enabling the revelation of ideological characteristics and potential legitimacy that may be inherent in the use of certain words within the context of social and political communication. This indicates that the cognitive linguistic approach focuses on the interpretative stage, which requires deeper attention to psychological and cognitive aspects in the process of meaning construction. (Chilton, 2005) explains that the cognitive linguistic orientation toward discourse analysis consists of several indicators. First, this approach is based on the assumption that text construction involves assigning meaning to parts of the text that possess social power and actions occurring within the mind of the text's recipient. Second, cognitive linguistic research in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged as a response to previous analyses

Rasse (2020:311) In Western culture, our conceptualization of time is partially structured by the knowledge we possess about money. This is evidenced in common English expressions such as “Time is money,” “She spends her time unwisely,” and “The diversion should buy him some time.” According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), individuals think and communicate about time by mapping the knowledge they have of the concrete source domain of “money” onto the abstract target domain of “time.”

In this regard, data reduction was carried out using a corpus approach in the form of linguistic texts that have been documented on social media platform X. The search using corpus data was conducted by paying attention to contextual relevance, namely shifts in evaluation, whether from positive to negative, positive remaining positive, or conversely, negative images being defended positively. This was used as the basis for data classification according to conceptual metaphors to avoid excessive researcher subjectivity. Information extraction from the corpus data was performed multiple times to avoid similar data forms related to the subject of “Gus”

Kovencses (2010: 103) notes that not all elements of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain. In conceptual metaphors, this selective mapping is called highlighting, while the non-mapped elements are hidden. To support conceptual metaphor theory in this study, the concept of image schemas is employed. According to Speed (2003: 366), image schemas are crucial forms of conceptual structure in cognitive semantics. These schemas are experiential in nature and arise from how the body interacts with the world. They are essential for understanding abstract concepts and logical reasoning. Danesi (in Lyra, et al., 2016: 167-176) expands on this by defining image schemas as unconscious mental frameworks based on recurring forms, actions, dimensions, etc., rooted in perception and emotion.

**Table 1.** Tabel ketegori Cruse & Croft (2004)

Schema	Types
Space	Up-Down, Front-Back, Left-Right, Near-Far, Center-Periphery, Contact
Scale	Path
Container	Containment, In-Out, Surface, Full-Empty, Content
Force	Balance, Counterforce, Compulsion, Restraint, Enablement, Blockage, Diversion, Attraction
Multiplicity	Merging, Collection, Splitting, Iteration, Part-Whole, Mass-Count, Link
Identity	Matching, Superimposition
Existence	Removal, Bounded Space, Cycle, Object, Process

Source: Amant, Morrison, Mu, Cohen & Beal, 2006

In relation to this, image schema of identity is used to conceptualize a person’s or entity’s identity. According to Sprecher & Duck (1994) image schema of identity includes two types:

1. Matching – alignment between personal and social identity.
2. Superimposition – when personal and social identities do not align perfectly.

This study adopts a critical constructionist approach. Tose (1997) explains that critical constructionist procedures cannot fully capture objective reality. The research merely



describes selected realities and controls the effects resulting from them. Furthermore, Jorgensen and Louise emphasize that social constructionism cannot determine what is definitively good or bad, as every outcome represents only one of many possible interpretations of reality.

Based on the research variables, the results of this analysis can serve as a recommendation for the development of teaching materials aimed at enhancing critical literacy in the *Discourse Analysis* course. The targeted literacy specifically focuses on the process of reading various texts that reflect diverse perspectives and are often ideologically driven. This is considered urgent, as Rohman (2017) reports findings from a survey conducted by the International Education Achievement (IEA) in the early 2000s, which showed that Indonesian children ranked 29th out of 31 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, and America in terms of reading quality.

The urgency of integrating critical literacy into modern education stems from its central role in developing key competencies aligned with 21st-century skills (Bellanca & Brandt, 2010). In the digital age, the proliferation of unregulated and misleading information further amplifies the need for critical evaluation skills. As noted by Hämäläinen et al. (2020), the internet has become a platform for the widespread dissemination of fake news and disinformation. Numerous studies have confirmed that adult learners often struggle to evaluate the content and credibility of news sources effectively. Therefore, fostering critical literacy is essential for improving individuals' ability to assess the quality and reliability of information sources.

In large-scale international reading literacy assessments, critical literacy is acknowledged as a vital component of academic success. These assessments are comparative in nature and measure the extent to which respondents can understand and evaluate information (Mullis & Martin, 2019).

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the research method used is qualitative, with data elaboration presented descriptively. The research procedure involves collecting and analyzing written data that develops on social media platform X. The data is collected systematically and accurately according to the context that is the focus of this study. This aligns with Triadi's explanation (2004: 102) that the basic concept of qualitative research models is that the researcher interacts with theories based on initial considerations which may include assumptions, expectations, and beliefs. This theoretical interaction process is implemented by seeking supporting theories obtained from existing literature.

Data collection in this study is divided into several categories: observation (*simak*), screenshots, and notes. According to Mahsun (2014), this data collection method is called the *simak* method because the data is obtained by observing language use. The term *simak* refers not only to oral language use but also to written language use. Furthermore, data collection is carried out using screenshot techniques related to comments regarding the public image of the "Gus" figure on social media platform X. The data collection process follows these steps:

1. conducting focused observation on the research data,
2. collecting data by taking screenshots,
3. classifying data according to the research objectives.

The data analysis is conducted in two stages:

1. the researcher performs data reduction, resulting in classification of conceptual metaphor data and classification based on Lakoff & Johnson's types of metaphors,
2. determining the discourse image that leads to conclusions about the shift in the figure of "Gus" on social media platform X.



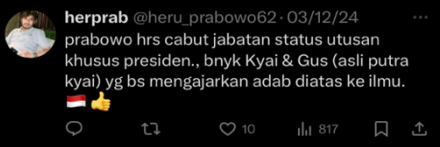

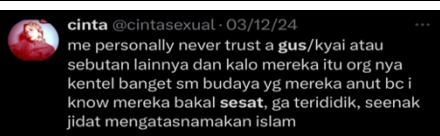
This serves as an overarching analytical framework to ensure that the research focus remains aligned with real-world conditions. According to Arimi (2015: 127), there are three types of conceptual metaphors: structural, orientational, and ontological.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Research data were obtained based on the time frame of the insults committed by Gus Miftah. In addition, the research data consisted of posts or excerpts of comments found on those posts. The details are as follows:

**Table 2. Research Data**

No	Research Data
D01	 This post was publisher on December 14, 2024, by account @Jayabaya
D02	 This post was publisher on Desember 14, 2024, by account @lim Fahima Jachja
D03	 This post was publisher on Desember 14, 2024, by account @herprab
D04	 This post was publisher on Desember 08,2024 @musangqueen
D05	 This Post Was Publisher on Desember 03, 2024 @cintasexual

Based on the five posts used as data in this study, there are different conceptual metaphors, but when generalized, they share the same proposition, which tends toward a negative position. This is evident in data 01, which shows an ontological conceptual metaphor related to the statement: "Gus is the son of a kyai who is not yet worthy of being called a kyai, even though he is old. But after the phenomenon of Gus Dur, Gus was promoted above kyai." This data reflects the conceptualization of thought related to the hierarchy between gus and kyai that has undergone change, while in reality, the term *gus* is a status that one must have before becoming a kyai.

In this data, the abstract process of insults committed by Gus Miftah becomes a non-linguistic form that shows a concrete change in the order between kyai and gus. The societal conceptualization is indeed like this. *Gus* is more of a popular title with greater social appeal compared to the title *kyai*. This is seen in many kyai who retain the title *gus* for themselves even though they are eligible to be called kyai, both in terms of position at the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) and in terms of age and experience in religious knowledge. The conceptualization table for data 01 is as follows:

**Table 3.** Conceptualization of Data 01

<i>Gus rose to the top of Kyai</i>	
source domain	Target Domain
The position of gus will change, replacing kyai's position when gus already has proper religious knowledge and maturity in age.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gus is more popular in society than kyai.</li> <li>2. Gus has higher prestige than kyai.</li> <li>3. Society often invites gus as speakers at religious events.</li> </ol>
<b>Mapping Conceptualization between the Two Domains</b>	Many <i>gus</i> retain this title, although they are said to be already qualified to be kyai.

Based on the researcher's observation, this post received many comments mostly confirming this view. A shift in perspective occurred in the comments section, showing the public's lack of understanding of the position of *gus* as a status that must be passed before becoming a kyai.

In data 02, there is a post stating, "Apart from Miftah's unclear origin of the title Gus. I have been concerned for a long time about many people using the title gus nang ning and acting like little kings followed by many people." This data shows a conceptual analogy related to the possession of the *gus* title widely used by many people in Indonesia. In this data, the insult case involving Gus Miftah triggers a conceptual metaphor related to the reality in Indonesian cultural life, where individuals who should not have the *gus* title often use it for certain purposes.

To date, there is a conflicting perception about the awarding of the *gus* title to someone. The *gus* title can be obtained when the individual is the child of a kyai who owns a pesantren. Additionally, the individual must have strong religious knowledge and be skilled in delivering religious sermons directly to the community. The reality is that the *gus* title is often acquired improperly. Many individuals label themselves personally and seek support from kyai or other religious figures to legitimize their *gus* title.

This data indirectly provokes netizens to comment by highlighting various individuals who are undeservedly given the *gus* title based on their religious knowledge and moral conduct. Many individuals use the *gus* title for other interests, such as political purposes, community organizations, or to increase their popularity. The conceptualization table for data 02 is as follows:

**Table 4.** Conceptualization of Data 02

*I have always been concerned about the number of people who use gas and feel like a small king who is followed by many people*

source domain	target domain
Many people use the <i>gus</i> title for personal and group interests.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Many <i>gus</i> are not children of a kyai.</li> <li>2. Many <i>gus</i> lack deep religious knowledge.</li> </ol>

	3. Many <i>gus</i> do not come from pesantren education.
	4. Many <i>gus</i> become leaders of community organizations.
<b>Mapping Conceptualization between the Two Domains</b>	Many individuals use the <i>gus</i> title for personal or group interests.

The analysis in this table shows that misuse of the *gus* title by certain individuals for personal or group interests indeed exists. This certainly harms the legitimate holders of the *gus* title, as aside from the absolute requirements, a *gus* must also embody good ethics and morals and always be a role model for the community. This is proven by the public's judgment of the Gus Miftah case, where he did not reflect the ethics and morals expected of a *gus*. This data also proves that the positive value of the *gus* title has shifted negatively due to several factors, including various negative cases involving individuals claiming the *gus* title.

In data 03, there is a post expressing a netizen's opinion on the Gus Miftah case with the statement: "Prabowo must revoke the special presidential envoy position; there are many kyai and *gus* (real sons of kyai) who can teach manners above knowledge." This data shows a conceptual metaphor related to the special staff position held by Gus Miftah, which is deemed no longer appropriate due to the insults he made, which no longer reflect the manners of a *gus*. Furthermore, this data shows that many kyai and *gus* in Indonesia are more qualified to hold this position.

Before this case arose, Gus Miftah held a strategic position as a special presidential envoy in the field of religious harmony and religious facility development. This position requires interfaith conditions of mutual acceptance, respect, and cooperation in society. Therefore, someone with adequate religious knowledge and good manners is needed to handle such issues.

This data also contains a source domain in the form of a satire directed at fake *gus*, seen in the phrase "real sons of kyai." This excerpt carries the same conceptual metaphor as the previous data. The conceptualization table for data 03 is as follows:

**Table 5.** Conceptualization of Data 03

<i>"Prabowo has revoked the position of special envoy of the president, bnyk kyai and gus (originally the son of kyai) who can teach the above manners to science"</i>	
Source domain	target domain
The special staff position held by Gus Miftah must be revoked. Many kyai and <i>gus</i> have greater competence than Gus Miftah.	1. Gus Miftah is no longer suitable for the special staff position in religious harmony. 2. Many <i>gus</i> and kyai deserve the special envoy position. 3. Gus Miftah's title as a real son of a kyai is questionable
<b>Mapping Conceptualization:</b>	Many <i>gus</i> are more worthy of holding the special staff position in religious harmony.

In this table, the source domain in the post shows an orientational metaphor based on human physical experience in managing opposite directional orientations. This is evident in the depiction of ability as a positive orientation and inability as a negative orientation. The phrase "many kyai and *gus* who can teach manners above knowledge"



gives a metaphor related to human physical experience in orienting life directions daily. This positive orientation provides a source domain to society that the *gus* title is given to someone who has good religious knowledge and behavior showing high morals.

Therefore, data 03 reflects a shift in the public's assessment of the *gus* figure, showing not only negative but also some positive aspects. This is seen in the public's trust in other *kyai* and *gus* figures capable of replacing the position. Moreover, many *gus* have better manners than Gus Miftah.

In data 04, there is a post commenting on many behaviors and thoughts of *gus* that have deviated from expected attitudes. The statement reads: "Is Gus misguided?" The *gus* title is a social title that distinguishes someone from others generally. This is because a *gus* possesses intelligence in religious knowledge, moral exemplarity, and the ability to interact socially across various social statuses.

Lexically, the word "misguided" means something wrong, not following the right path; acting indecently or deviating from religious truth, and so on. It is known that the Gus Miftah case acted as a catalyst that rekindled several previously viral cases involving *gus* with deviant sects, such as the case of Gus Samsudin who allowed partner swapping, corruption cases involving Gus Adib, sexual misconduct cases involving *gus* in Trenggalek, and others. The analysis table for data 04 is as follows:

**Table 6.** Conceptualization of Data 04

<i>Is that Gus Sesat?</i>	
<i>source domain</i>	<i>target domain</i>
<i>Gus</i> who deviate either in teachings or behavior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachings of Gus Samsudin allowing partner swapping.</li> <li>2. Gus Adib involved in corruption cases.</li> <li>3. Various sexual misconduct cases involving <i>gus</i></li> </ol>
<b>Mapping Conceptualization:</b>	There are misguided <i>gus</i> whose teachings deviate from proper Islamic teachings.

This table shows that the source domain exhibits an ontological conceptual metaphor. The post reflects a conceptualization based on experiences related to *gus* attitudes and teachings that are inconsistent with true Islamic teachings. The use of the word "misguided" in the post does not only accuse one case but climaxes multiple chronological cases involving *gus*.

Labeling *gus* as misguided becomes a way to give a negative value to an individual as a generalized judgment. Such a pattern frequently occurs in information dissemination patterns found in the mass media. Generalization failure occurs due to a series of similar propositions supporting that generalization.

The last data, data 05, consists of a post stating: "Me personally never trust a *gus*/*kyai* or other titles, and if they are people who are deeply attached to the culture they follow because I know they will be misguided, uneducated, doing as they please in the name of Islam." This data reflects someone's distrust of *gus* or *kyai* figures because these figures often align more closely with the cultural values they follow than with Islamic values. This statement carries the perception that *gus* often adopt local traditions and cultural identities in delivering Islamic knowledge. Therefore, it is common to find many *gus* preaching using traditional teachings and providing local examples.

In this data, the conceptual metaphor can be categorized as an orientational metaphor showing opposing concepts between cultural values and religious values. The Indonesian public, especially the urban community, perceives culture as a separate unit distinct from religious values. Urban society tends to view cultural values as local wisdom that should be separated from religious values. This concept contradicts the view that local cultural values cannot be separated entirely from religious values. There are many positive values contained in local culture, enriching religious practice and strengthening national cultural identity. The conceptualization analysis table for data 05 is as follows:

**Table 7.** Conceptualization of Data 05

<i>Me personally never trust a gus/kyai or any other name and if they are people who are very thick with the culture that they are the I know they will be lost, not educated, as good as jidat in the name of Islam</i>	
source domain	target domain
Distrust towards the figure of <i>gus</i> or <i>kyai</i> . <i>Gus</i> is more attached to cultural values than religious ones.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public distrust towards <i>gus</i> and <i>kyai</i>.</li> <li>2. Cultural values differ from Islamic religious values.</li> <li>3. <i>Gus</i> is often considered to provide theological doctrines to society.</li> </ol>
<b>Mapping Conceptualization</b>	Some <i>gus</i> carry out theological doctrination towards the community.

This table shows a clear contradiction in the conceptual metaphor related to mixing Islamic teachings with Nusantara (Indonesian archipelago) cultural values. This becomes contradictory because mixing the two can be considered as shirk (associating others with Allah) in worship or devotion. This conceptualization reflects the perspective that many religious figures in Indonesia still practice local cultural traditions framed with religious values.

The formation of the image in these five data points relatively shows the same direction. Negative image assessments appear more frequently than positive images. The insult case involving Gus Miftah results in the formation of matching identity images and superimposition identity image schemes in the concept of the *gus* title in Indonesian society. The negative matching image can be seen in several conceptual formations such as:

1. many fake *gus* meaning those not from pesantren families and lacking sufficient religious knowledge,
2. the *gus* title is used as a tool to boost popularity for political or other power interests,
3. the *gus* title is considered to surpass the *kyai* title, and
4. the *gus* title is identified with religious teachings based on culture and local traditions.

Meanwhile, the positive matching image emerges related to the *gus* title as an honorary title given to the son of a *kyai* who possesses high religious knowledge, good morals, and manners. This title must be protected from individuals or groups who deliberately

## Discussion

Critical literacy learning at the university level can be implemented in various contexts. Instructors can utilize different courses to apply this type of learning, one of the most relevant being Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In practice, however, many instructors tend to guide students only to analyze language phenomena at the structural level, without progressing into critical analysis. This means that students are primarily directed to use structural approaches, such as morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and semantics. Furthermore, in interpreting a text, critical literacy skills are often used merely to understand the information at face value, while in fact, texts often carry deeper ideological content—which plays a significant role in shaping readers' perspectives and constructing the image being conveyed. This is in line with Locke (2004: 5), who defines discourse as a narrative that constructs meaning circulating within society and cannot be tied to a single source. Parker (2012: 245) also states that discourse is a set of statements that construct objects and various subject positions. Fairclough (1995: 132). Argues that discourse analysis should address opaque relationships of causality and determination, which are ideologically shaped by power relations and struggles over power. It seeks to show how ideological presuppositions are hidden underneath the surface structures of language choices in text (Machin & Mary, 2012).

The relationship between Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Linguistics is very close, as both disciplines analyze texts from the perspective of how society interprets phenomena. A new phenomenon in the digital era is that individuals read news about an event, interpret and form a perspective on it, and then express their views through texts they publish on social media. Kovencses (2005: 55) explains that viewing metaphorical perspectives through the lens of cognitive linguistics reveals how societies conceptualize language use—both in spoken and written forms. This conceptualization serves to understand abstract ideas and emotions present in each individual's mind. Mulyadi (2010: 17) also argues that almost all areas of human language activity involve metaphor. Based on similarities in meaning, words are used in various contexts and refer to different features often more abstract than concrete.

Aligned with the aforementioned theoretical orientation, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) informed by cognitive linguistics offers a robust framework for examining how language functions to reveal embedded social and political dynamics within society. In the present study, discourse is not limited to the analysis of verbal or textual elements; rather, it also incorporates symbolic dimensions and other multimodal forms that collectively shape the representation of the term *Gus*. The communicative practices surrounding the construction of *Gus*'s image on the social media platform X play a significant role in both the reproduction and contestation of power relations in contemporary society. As asserted by Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard (1996) and further developed by Flowerdew and Richardson (2017), discourse constitutes an ideological arena where meanings are negotiated and contested, and where language and semiotic resources operate as mechanisms of domination, persuasion, and identity formation. Within this context, CDA serves as a relevant and comprehensive analytical approach for uncovering the intricate relationship between representational practices and broader sociopolitical structures.

Teaching materials for CDA learning must be phenomenon-based, meaning that they should reflect real-world situations that can be directly observed and experienced by students. Students will grasp the techniques of discourse analysis more effectively when the materials are well-structured and present a clear analytical flow. According to Daryanto & Dwicahyono (2016: 170), teaching materials can be described as a learning design that contains explanations or information related to indicators presented in classroom instruction. These materials include learning guidelines, targeted competencies, supporting information, exercises, work instructions, and assessments. The process of transforming research into teaching material represents a tangible benefit that researchers—especially those who also teach—aspire to achieve. Expertise in a particular field can be academically justified and demonstrated in front of students.

In a research study, a phenomenon can be elevated into a theme that allows for generalization. This can be achieved in several ways, such as expanding the corpus data by including various social media platforms, rather than relying on just one. Moreover, the study of phenomena is highly time-sensitive, as public responses tend to be immediate in expressing judgments toward an object's image. The final stage of the research involves testing the reliability and validity of the data, particularly when it takes a quantitative form.

## CONCLUSION

The insult case involving Gus Miftah and a beverage seller during a religious event has triggered widespread public reaction, primarily expressed through social media. Although the incident occurred within a specific context, its impact has extended far beyond the immediate situation, shaping broader public opinion regarding the figure bearing the title Gus—an honorary designation traditionally associated with religious leaders from pesantren (Islamic boarding school) families. Public responses, particularly those captured on the social media platform X, indicate that this incident is not merely perceived as a personal misstep but rather as a reflection of a broader shift in the values and meanings associated with the title Gus.

Historically and culturally, the title Gus is conferred upon the sons of *kiai* or religious leaders who are raised within the pesantren milieu and are presumed to inherit not only religious knowledge but also moral authority from their predecessors. This title carries with it connotations of piety, wisdom, and significant spiritual authority in the eyes of the community. However, with the evolution of the digital age and the increasing transparency brought about by social media, the public has become more critical in assessing individuals who bear the Gus title. The Gus Miftah incident thus serves as a catalyst, igniting a cognitive reconfiguration of the title's meaning, particularly concerning the moral and intellectual credibility of its holders.

Moreover, the proliferation of public commentary, criticism, and discourse following the incident further illustrates that the *Gus* title is no longer accepted uncritically as a symbol of moral authority. On the contrary, there is a growing perception of a disconnect between the religious symbolism associated with the title and the actual behavior of some individuals who claim it. This perception has been exacerbated by the re-emergence of various other cases involving figures with the *Gus* title, including those related to deviant teachings, sexual misconduct, and involvement in political or corrupt practices. These developments have contributed to the formation



of a more critical collective consciousness in which religious titles are no longer immune to public scrutiny.

In this light, the case involving Gus Miftah is not merely a fleeting controversy but has become a significant turning point in the transformation of social perceptions regarding the *Gus* title. What was once an emblem of honor and religious legitimacy is now increasingly viewed through a critical lens, calling into question the integrity and moral authority of its bearers. This phenomenon underscores the fluidity of social meanings attached to titles or identities, which are not fixed but are subject to change in response to broader social dynamics and discursive interactions—especially within the digital age, which rapidly amplifies issues pertaining to public ethics.

Conceptual metaphor patterns emerge to provide meaning regarding the shift in perception of the *gus* title, caused by several factors, such as, 1) The *gus* title is often used as a tool to serve personal or political interests. As a result, many individuals adopt the *gus* title for themselves despite not coming from a *pesantren* background. 2) The Gus Miftah case has triggered the resurfacing of other cases involving individuals with the *gus* title, including cases of deviant teachings, corruption, and sexual misconduct. 3) The conferral and use of the *gus* title must be more carefully considered based on the individual's religious knowledge and moral character.

The recommendation from this study is in the form of teaching materials that can be used in the learning process of critical literacy in the Discourse Analysis course. Students will become more sensitive in interpreting texts through analysis, allowing them to uncover the motives, biases, and purposes behind the presence of a text. When reading a text, students will no longer merely understand its explicit meaning, but also recognize the perspective presented by the author, which can influence the portrayal of an object—whether personal or collective. This aligns with the cognitive abilities that students are expected to possess, which go beyond simply understanding and explaining, and must reach the highest level of thinking: evaluating and making judgments based on predetermined components.

The application of research findings in teaching critical discourse analysis can be carried out through several stages, namely: The first step, the instructor can select the theme of the text to be used as the critical analysis data. The second step, the instructor can guide students to understand the context contained in the theme by making contextual comparisons between discourses. The third step, discourse identification is done by showing the rhetorical strategies present in each text. The final step can be carried out by having students begin to analyze and present interpretations of meaning and ideology. This is done to build critical reflection in each student.

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**\*Rai Bagus Triadi (Corresponding Author)**

Indonesian Literature Study Program, Faculty of Literature, Pamulang University  
Jalan Surya Kencana No.1, Pamulang Barat, Kecamatan Pamulang, Tangerang Selatan, Banten, Indonesia.  
Email: [Molikejora12@gmail.com](mailto:Molikejora12@gmail.com)

**Hilda Hilaliyah**

Jl. Raya Mabas Hankam No.Kav 9, Setu, Cipayung, Jakarta Timur 13880  
Email: [hilda.unindra@gmail.com](mailto:hilda.unindra@gmail.com)

**Widyapuri Prasastiningtyas**

Jl. PHH Mustofa (Suci) No.68  
Email: [widyapuri.prasastiningtyas@gmail.com](mailto:widyapuri.prasastiningtyas@gmail.com)

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