

Linguistic Features of English Used in Indonesian and Native English Podcasts

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 2026-04-22

Revised 2026-05-26

Accepted 2026-06-27

Keywords:

English Language

Language in Podcast

Linguistic Feature

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic features of English used in Indonesian- and English-dominant podcasts through Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing on the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The study addresses the limited comparative research on how English is functionally realized across different podcast discourse contexts. The objective of the study is to identify and compare the linguistic features used in Indonesian and English-dominant podcasts and to interpret these differences through the SFL framework. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design using transcript data from six podcast segments selected from Indonesian podcasters (e.g., Deddy Corbuzier, Gita Wirjawan, and Indah G) and English-dominant podcasters (e.g., Joe Rogan, John Mearsheimer, and Kids Rock & Joe). The selected podcast segments discussed similar themes in current affairs and social commentary. The findings suggest that the selected Indonesian podcast data tends to foreground evaluative and affective positioning through stronger modality, rhetorical emphasis, inclusive pronouns, and thematic foregrounding. In contrast, the English-dominant podcast data more frequently demonstrates explanatory reasoning, moderated stance-taking, and linear thematic progression. These differences indicate that English in podcast discourse functions as a flexible communicative resource shaped by sociocultural context, discourse orientation, and audience engagement. The study contributes to discourse analysis, digital media studies, and English language education by demonstrating how English is adapted and functionally organized in multilingual digital communication contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of podcasts as a form of digital communication has created new opportunities for examining how language is used in spoken online discourse [1], [2], [3],

[4], [5]. Podcasts have become one of the most influential digital media platforms because they combine conversational interaction, narrative organization, and audience engagement in relatively spontaneous communication contexts. Unlike formal written texts, podcast discourse tends to reflect more dynamic linguistic choices, including informal expressions, interpersonal negotiation, and flexible discourse organization [6]. Consequently, podcasts are not merely channels for entertainment and information sharing, but also important spaces where speakers construct identity, negotiate social relationships, and position themselves toward audiences through language use [7].

The increasing popularity of podcasts discussing education, lifestyle, self-development, culture, and social issues has also intensified the use of English in multilingual societies, including Indonesia [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. The selected podcast theme is important because conversational podcasts commonly represent natural spoken interaction and reveal how speakers strategically employ language to build engagement, authority, and interpersonal closeness with listeners. In Indonesian digital media contexts, English is frequently used not as a fully standardized linguistic system, but as a localized communicative resource influenced by local linguistic and cultural practices [13]. Therefore, the English used in Indonesian podcasts reflects the dynamics of World Englishes, in which English adapts to sociocultural contexts and communicative purposes.

Previous studies have shown that English in Indonesian digital discourse is frequently characterized by translanguaging practices, code-switching, and localized linguistic expressions. Mai, Nurhayani, and Rusmawati, for example, explored translanguaging practices in *The Indah G Show* podcast and found that speakers dynamically combined Indonesian and English as communicative resources to facilitate interaction and meaning-making [14]. Similarly, Sadimah and Afriliani examined code-switching practices in the podcasts of *Boy William* and *Cinta Laura*. They demonstrated that bilingual language use plays an important role in maintaining conversational flow, expressing identity, and creating audience engagement [15]. Other studies on digital spoken discourse have further emphasized that English in online communication functions as a flexible communicative resource shaped by sociocultural positioning and audience expectations [16].

However, despite these findings, previous studies have primarily focused on translanguaging practices, code-switching frequency, and identity construction in podcast discourse. Limited attention has been paid to the broader linguistic features that organize meaning in podcasts, particularly from a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective. Moreover, few studies have comparatively examined how English is functionally realized in podcasts produced by Indonesian speakers and by English-dominant speakers. This indicates a research gap in understanding how linguistic features reflect different communicative strategies and sociocultural orientations across podcasting environments.

To address this gap, the present study analyzes the linguistic features of English used in Indonesian- and English-dominant podcasts through the SFL framework, which views language as a social semiotic system comprising the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. This framework is particularly relevant for podcast analysis because podcast communication relies heavily on interpersonal engagement, evaluation, and discourse organization in spoken interaction.

Accordingly, this study seeks to identify the linguistic features that characterize English used in Indonesian podcasts, compare them with those found in English-dominant podcasts, and interpret the differences through the SFL metafunctions. The study is expected to contribute, both theoretically and practically, to the fields of digital spoken discourse, World Englishes, and cross-cultural pragmatics. The findings may enrich discussions on English as a socially negotiated communicative resource in multilingual digital contexts and provide insights into how English is adapted across sociocultural settings. Furthermore, the study positions Indonesian English not as a deficient form measured against native standards, but as a legitimate and contextually meaningful variety shaped by local communicative practices and English-dominant discourse norms.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to explore and compare the linguistic features of English used in Indonesian and English-dominant podcasts. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating spoken discourse because it enables researchers to interpret language use within its social and communicative context. According to Willig [17], qualitative research emphasizes interpretation, meaning-making, and the analysis of naturally occurring discourse, making it particularly suitable for discourse-oriented studies. Therefore, this approach is relevant to examining how speakers construct meaning, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and organize discourse in podcast communication through Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework [8].

Data Sources

The primary data consisted of transcripts from selected English-language podcast episodes representing two groups: Indonesian podcasters using English (e.g., Deddy Corbuzier, Gita Wirjawan, and Indah G) and podcasters from English-dominant discourse contexts (e.g., John Mearsheimer, Joe Rogan, and Kid Rock & Joe Rogan). The podcast episodes were publicly available on YouTube. They selected purposively based on the following criteria: (1) the episodes were entirely or predominantly delivered in English, (2) the discussions addressed comparable themes such as current affairs, education, politics, or social commentary, (3) the interactions were semi-spontaneous or minimally scripted, and (4) the audio quality allowed accurate transcription and linguistic analysis.

To ensure comparability, the study focused on 15 selected podcast segments that featured substantial interpersonal interaction, evaluative language, and explanatory discourse. These segments were considered suitable for identifying ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings in spoken communication.

Data Collection Procedures

Two main techniques were employed in collecting the data:

1. Transcription

The selected podcast episodes were transcribed manually with the assistance of automatic speech recognition tools such as Tactiq.co. The transcripts were then reviewed

repeatedly to ensure transcription accuracy. After transcription, the data were segmented into clauses, as clauses are the primary unit of analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Each clause was labeled with speaker identifiers and, where necessary, contextual notes.

2. Documentation

Supporting information, such as podcast titles, publication dates, episode durations, speakers, and discussion topics, was documented to provide contextual background for interpretation.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analyzed qualitatively using Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, focusing on the three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The coding process was conducted manually by identifying linguistic features clause by clause within the transcripts.

In the ideational metafunction analysis, clauses were coded according to transitivity patterns, including process types (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential), participants, and circumstances. In the analysis of the interpersonal metafunction, the researchers identified mood structures, modality markers, evaluative expressions, and rhetorical strategies to examine how speakers negotiated stance, authority, and listener alignment. In the textual metafunction analysis, clauses were coded according to their thematic organization, including theme–rheme structures, marked and unmarked themes, repetition, and cohesive devices.

To improve analytical consistency, the coding categories were repeatedly reviewed throughout the analysis in accordance with the theoretical principles proposed by Halliday and Hasan [18]. Several transcript samples were re-examined and compared to ensure consistency in the identification of process types, modalities, and thematic patterns. After the coding process, the findings from Indonesian and English-dominant podcasts were compared to identify similarities, differences, and broader communicative tendencies across podcast discourse contexts.

Table 1. Analytical Framework Based on SFL Metafunctions

Metafunction	Linguistic Focus	Analytical Indicators	Example
Ideational	Representation of experience and reality	Process types, participants, circumstances, experiential meanings	“It’s a genocide” (relational process)
Interpersonal	Speaker stance and social relationship	Mood structures, modality, evaluation, and rhetorical questions	“Why should we listen to you?”
Textual	Organization of discourse and information flow	Theme–rheme structure, repetition, cohesive devices, thematic emphasis	“This is no secret anymore.”

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the linguistic features of English used in Indonesian and native English-language podcasts through Halliday’s systemic functional framework, with particular attention to the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The findings

suggest that the two groups differ not only in lexical preference or speaking style but also in how meaning is functionally organized in discourse. In general, Indonesian podcasters tend to use English in a more affective, evaluative, and solidarity-oriented manner. In contrast, native English podcasters tend to employ English as a more analytic, explanatory, and structurally controlled medium. These differences indicate that podcast discourse is shaped by cultural orientation, communicative purpose, and social expectations, in line with the SFL view that language is inseparable from its social context [18].

The analysis below is organized through four stages: transcript excerpt, SFL category identification, interpretation, and comparison across podcast groups. The excerpts presented were selected from podcast segments that contain substantial evaluative, explanatory, and interactional discourse to illustrate how linguistic meanings are functionally constructed in spoken digital communication.

3.1 Ideational Metafunction: Experience, Judgment, and Moral Framing

At the ideational level, the selected Indonesian podcast data tends to construct meanings through mental and relational processes that foreground emotion, belief, and evaluative interpretation. This pattern can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. Ideational Features in Indonesian Podcast Data

Podcast Excerpt	SFL Feature	Interpretation
"It's a genocide."	Relational process	The speaker classifies an event through evaluative labeling rather than neutral description.
"They don't want peace. One hundred percent."	Mental process + intensifier	The utterance interprets intention while strengthening the speaker's certainty and evaluative positioning.

The excerpts in Table 2 indicate that the speakers tend to position themselves as involved participants rather than neutral observers. The discourse constructs experience through judgment and conviction, reflecting evaluative involvement in meaning-making. This tendency aligns with Martin and White's appraisal framework, particularly the attitude subsystem, where speakers encode affect, judgment, and appreciation in discourse [19]. It also resonates with the orientation in Indonesian discourse studies that emphasizes evaluative involvement and socially situated meaning-making [20].

This pattern suggests that Indonesian podcasters use English not simply to describe the world, but to morally frame it. English here functions as a medium for positioning, witnessing, and expressing collective concern. The ideational choices, therefore, reflect a localized use of English, in which the language retains global communicative value while being adapted to local rhetorical and cultural preferences. In this sense, meaning is constructed not through detached exposition but through socially and emotionally charged experiential interpretation. Such use supports the SFL claim that experience is always construed through socially motivated linguistic selections rather than neutrally mirrored in language [18].

By contrast, the English-dominant podcast data tends to display a more analytic ideational structure characterized by explanatory and classificatory discourse patterns, as presented in Table 3

Table 3. Ideational Features in English-Dominant Podcast Data

Podcast Excerpt	SFL Feature	Interpretation
"Domestic politics drive foreign policy."	Material-relational process	The utterance constructs a causal explanation and engages in systemic reasoning.
"Realism is an approach to international affairs."	Relational identifying process	The clause categorizes and defines an abstract concept.

The excerpts in Table 3 indicate that the speakers tend to construct issues through conceptual relations and causal reasoning rather than moral evaluation. The discourse presents events as components of broader explanatory systems, producing a more abstract and analytically organized representation. Such patterns are commonly associated with expository and commentary-oriented discourse that emphasizes categorization, explanation, and logical sequencing [21], [22].

The ideational comparison suggests that the selected Indonesian podcast data foregrounds evaluative and experiential interpretation, whereas the English-dominant podcast data more frequently emphasizes abstraction, categorization, and explanatory reasoning. This finding suggests that the same language, English, is used to build different semiotic worlds depending on discourse culture and communicative orientation.

3.2 Interpersonal Metafunction: Stance, Alignment, and Speaker Role

The interpersonal metafunction reveals a noticeable contrast between the two podcast groups in the way speakers negotiate stance, listener alignment, and evaluative positioning. The selected Indonesian podcast data frequently employs high-modality expressions, rhetorical questions, emphatic formulations, and inclusive pronouns to strengthen interpersonal engagement, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Interpersonal Features in Indonesian Podcast Data

Podcast Excerpt	SFL Feature	Interpretation
"Why should we listen to you?"	Rhetorical question + modality	The speaker invites the listener to align through evaluative challenge and interpersonal involvement.
"We should work for peace."	Inclusive pronoun + high modality	The utterance constructs solidarity and shared obligation between speaker and audience.

The excerpts in Table 4 indicate that the selected Indonesian podcast data tends to position speakers as highly involved participants who seek listener engagement and evaluative alignment. The use of modality and rhetorical questioning reduces interpersonal distance and reinforces a sense of collective stance. In podcast discourse, such strategies contribute to audience intimacy and interactional immediacy, making speakers appear as recognizable personal voices rather than impersonal institutional narrators. These findings support previous observations that interpersonal meaning plays an important role in negotiating solidarity, authority, and alignment in discourse [19], [23].

By contrast, the English-dominant podcast data tends to construct interpersonal meaning through lower modality, speculative stance-taking, and measured evaluation, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Interpersonal Features in English-Dominant Podcast Data

Podcast Excerpt	SFL Feature	Interpretation
“Could we be heading toward World War III?”	Low modality + speculative stance	The speaker opens interpretive space through cautious and tentative evaluation.

The excerpt in Table 5 suggests that the speaker projects authority through moderation, speculation, and discursive control rather than strong evaluative alignment. The use of low modality creates interpretive openness and allows space for reflection rather than immediate persuasion. Such patterns are commonly associated with commentary and expert-oriented discourse in which credibility is often constructed through analytical distance and calibrated judgment [23], [24].

Overall, the interpersonal comparison indicates that the selected Indonesian podcast data tends to employ stronger evaluative positioning and listener engagement, whereas the English-dominant podcast data more frequently demonstrates hedging and moderated stance-taking. These patterns should not be interpreted as fixed cultural characteristics, but rather as discourse tendencies identified within the selected podcast contexts.

3.3 Textual Metafunction: Theme, Emphasis, and Discourse Flow

At the textual level, the selected Indonesian podcast data tends to employ repetition, evaluative thematization, and figurative emphasis to foreground interpretation and strengthen rhetorical impact. This pattern is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Textual Features in Indonesian Podcast Data

Podcast Excerpt	SFL Feature	Interpretation
“This is no secret anymore.”	Marked thematic emphasis	The clause foregrounds evaluation before presenting further information.
“There’s a war behind the war.”	Figurative thematic construction	Repetition creates rhetorical emphasis and dramatic framing.

The excerpts in Table 6 indicate that thematic choices in the selected Indonesian podcast data function not only to organize information but also to guide audience interpretation by emphasizing urgency and significance. Repetition and figurative framing strengthen persuasive rhythm and emotional coherence, making the discourse more emphatic and memorable [21], [22]. From an SFL perspective, the thematic organization strategically shapes how listeners process and evaluate the message. This pattern suggests that the selected Indonesian podcast data tends to organize discourse around rhetorical salience and evaluative framing rather than purely informational progression.

By contrast, the English-dominant podcast data tend to favor unmarked themes and more linear thematic progression, which support clarity and conceptual development, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Textual Features in English-Dominant Podcast Data

Podcast Excerpt	SFL Feature	Interpretation
The only way to achieve peace is through diplomacy	Textual metafunction	The clause develops information through structured conceptual progression.

The excerpt in Table 7 demonstrates how thematic organization facilitates coherence, cumulative reasoning, and explanatory clarity. Rather than foregrounding dramatic emphasis, the discourse develops ideas through orderly progression and conceptual sequencing. Such textual organization is commonly associated with informative and expository discourse in which speakers guide listeners through a structured flow of information [21], [25].

Overall, the textual comparison suggests that the selected Indonesian podcast data tends to foreground persuasive emphasis and evaluative framing. In contrast, the English-dominant podcast data more frequently emphasizes linear informational flow and conceptual clarity.

Table 8. Comparative Patterns Across Podcast Groups

Metafunction	Indonesian Podcast Data	English-Dominant Podcast Data
Ideational	Evaluative and experiential representation	Explanatory and conceptual representation
Interpersonal	Stronger modality and rhetorical engagement	Hedging and a moderated stance
Textual	Thematic emphasis and persuasive framing	Linear progression and informational clarity

3.4. Comparative Patterns and Cultural Implications

Taken together, the findings across the three metafunctions show that English in Indonesian podcasts is functionally localized. The selected Indonesian podcast data tends to demonstrate stronger evaluative and affective positioning, whereas the English-dominant podcast data more frequently reflects explanatory and analytically structured discourse patterns. By contrast, English in native-speaker podcasts tends to be more analytic, more moderated, and more explanation-oriented. These are not simply stylistic differences, but indicators of distinct communicative cultures and discourse expectations. The findings therefore support Halliday and Hasan’s argument that linguistic form is shaped by both the context of situation and the broader cultural context [18].

This comparison also has a broader implication for the study of English in digital media. It suggests that English should not be treated as a uniform linguistic code whose value lies only in its conformity to native norms. Instead, it functions as a flexible semiotic resource that speakers adapt to their own discourse goals, ideological commitments, and audience relationships. In Indonesian podcasts, English becomes a medium for national voice, moral positioning, and social commentary. In native English podcasts, it more often functions as a medium of structured deliberation and public intellectual reasoning. The

present study, therefore, contributes to understanding English as a socially negotiated language in digital spoken discourse rather than as a fixed external standard.

Several limitations should be acknowledged in this study. First, the podcast sample was limited to selected Indonesian- and English-dominant episodes and may therefore not represent broader podcast discourse practices. Second, the analysis focused only on selected podcast segments, which may not capture the full linguistic variation within each podcast. Third, some podcast discussions addressed sensitive political and social topics that may have influenced speakers' evaluative language choices. Finally, because SFL analysis involves interpretative coding, the possibility of researcher subjectivity in identifying process types, modality, and thematic structures cannot be fully eliminated.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the linguistic features of English in Indonesian- and English-dominant podcasts using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, focusing on the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The findings suggest that the two podcast groups exhibit different tendencies in organizing meaning and interaction in digital spoken discourse. The selected Indonesian podcast data tends to foreground evaluative and affective positioning through stronger modality, rhetorical emphasis, and thematic foregrounding. In contrast, the English-dominant podcast data more frequently demonstrates explanatory reasoning, moderated stance-taking, and linear thematic progression. These findings indicate that English in podcast discourse functions as a flexible communicative resource shaped by discourse context, speaker orientation, and audience engagement rather than as a uniform linguistic standard. The study, therefore, contributes to discussions on digital spoken discourse, World Englishes, and cross-cultural pragmatics by showing how English is adapted differently across podcast environments. Practically, the findings may contribute to English language teaching by increasing awareness of authentic digital communication practices, supporting discourse analysis research through the application of SFL to spoken digital interaction, and providing insights for digital media studies regarding the construction of stance and audience engagement in podcast discourse. Nevertheless, this study was limited by the relatively small podcast sample, the restricted duration of analyzed segments, and the interpretative nature of qualitative SFL analysis, which may involve researcher subjectivity. Future research is therefore recommended to investigate larger podcast corpora, include different podcast genres, incorporate quantitative support for SFL patterns, and explore audience reception in order to develop a broader understanding of meaning-making in digital podcast communication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and parties who contributed to the completion of this study. Special appreciation is extended to the podcast creators and speakers whose publicly available content provided valuable data for this research. The authors also wish to thank colleagues, lecturers, and academic mentors for their insightful feedback, guidance, and encouragement throughout the research and writing

process. Finally, the authors are deeply grateful to their families for their continuous support and motivation.

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