

**TYPES OF MEANING AND MEANING RELATIONS: A SEMANTIC REVIEW  
BASED ON LEECH'S FRAMEWORK (WITH JAVANESE EXAMPLES)  
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**ABSTRACT**

*This study examines Leech's (1981) seven types of meaning and major meaning relations in lexical semantics, using examples from English and Javanese (bahasa Jawa) to demonstrate cross-linguistic relevance. Incorporating traditional Javanese vocabulary (e.g., bocah, wedang, mreng, putihan), the paper illustrates how conceptual, social, affective, and collocative meanings differ across languages. A review of recent studies (2020–2025) is included to compare how scholars analyze semantic categories in contemporary linguistic research.*

**Keywords:** *semantics, Leech, meaning relations, Javanese language, polysemy*

**ABSTRAK**

Studi ini menelaah tujuh jenis makna menurut Leech (1981) serta relasi makna utama dalam leksikal semantik, dengan menggunakan contoh dari bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Jawa untuk menunjukkan relevansi lintas bahasa. Dengan memasukkan kosakata Jawa tradisional (misalnya bocah, wedang, mreng, putihan), tulisan ini memperlihatkan bagaimana makna konseptual, sosial, afektif, dan kolokatif dapat berbeda antarbahasa. Tinjauan terhadap penelitian terbaru (2020–2025) juga disertakan untuk membandingkan bagaimana para ahli menganalisis kategori semantik dalam riset linguistik kontemporer.

**Kata kunci:** *semantik, Leech, relasi makna, bahasa Jawa, polisemi*

**A. Introduction**

Meaning is one of the core components of linguistic study, shaping how speakers understand,

interpret, and interact through language. In semantics, the multidimensional nature of meaning has long been recognized, and one of

the most influential frameworks for describing these dimensions is Geoffrey Leech's (1981) classification of seven types of meaning: conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic. This framework captures both the logical content of linguistic expressions and the cultural, emotional, and contextual associations that accompany them.

In recent years, semantic research has increasingly explored how these types of meaning operate across different languages and cultural systems (Huda, 2021; Ramadan & Yusuf, 2022). Such cross-linguistic approaches are essential because meaning is not expressed solely through universal cognitive structures; it is also deeply shaped by cultural norms and social values. This becomes particularly visible in languages with complex sociolinguistic stratification, such as Javanese (bahasa Jawa). The Javanese language contains three major speech levels—*ngoko*, *krama*, and *krama inggil*—each indexing social hierarchy, respect, and interpersonal distance. For example, the verb *mangan* (“to eat,” *ngoko*) contrasts with *nedha* (*krama*)

and *dhahar* (*krama inggil*), illustrating how social meaning is encoded lexically and structurally. These distinct strata provide a naturally rich environment for studying the interaction between linguistic form and social context, a feature which is less overtly present in English.

At the same time, meaning is also shaped by the relations between words in the mental lexicon. Semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, polysemy, meronymy, metaphor, and metonymy help determine how language users perceive similarities, contrasts, and associations between concepts. These relations are central not only in theoretical semantics but also in practical domains such as translation, lexicography, and discourse analysis. For example, the Javanese word *ati* exhibits polysemy, meaning both “liver” (the organ) and “emotion/heart,” paralleling English figurative uses of *heart*. Likewise, traditional expressions—such as *koyo macan* (“like a tiger”)—serve as similes that carry cultural symbolism associated with bravery or ferocity.

Recent studies between 2020 and 2025 have examined the role of semantic meaning in literature, media

discourse, bilingual translation, and figurative language analysis (Daga, 2022; Nurmasari, 2023; Putra, 2024). These studies demonstrate that both meaning types and meaning relations remain central topics in contemporary linguistic research. However, a noticeable gap exists in comparative studies incorporating traditional or regional languages such as Javanese, despite these languages providing fertile ground for illustrating deep semantic distinctions.

Therefore, this study aims to:

1. describe Leech's seven types of meaning using examples from both English and Javanese;
2. analyze major meaning relations and their cross-linguistic realizations; and
3. compare selected recent studies (last five years) to identify research trends, limitations, and opportunities for further scholarly inquiry.

By integrating Javanese examples into an established semantic framework, this study contributes to a more culturally grounded understanding of meaning and highlights the importance of

including traditional linguistic systems in modern semantic research.

## **B. Literature Review**

Research on semantics in the period 2020–2025 demonstrates a significant diversification of focus, methodologies, and linguistic data sources. While many studies continue to rely on Leech's (1981) typology for analyzing conceptual and associative meaning, a growing body of scholarship explores meaning relations—such as metaphor, polysemy, ambiguity, and meronymy—within multimodal and cross-cultural contexts. This critical review evaluates several representative studies, examining their contributions, limitations, and relevance to the integration of English and Javanese semantic phenomena.

### **2.1. Conceptual and Theoretical Adequacy of Leech's Typology in Recent Studies**

Several studies (e.g., Huda, 2021; Daga, 2022) adopt Leech's seven meaning types as the main theoretical framework. These works successfully demonstrate the utility of Leech's model in textual and literary analysis, particularly in identifying layers of connotative, affective,

thematic, and reflective meanings. However, a critical examination reveals several recurring issues:

#### Overreliance on Literary Texts

Many post-2020 studies focus heavily on poetry or songs, which—while rich in figurative and affective meaning—represent a non-neutral linguistic domain. This limits generalizability of the findings to everyday or conversational language.

- Huda (2021) analyzes Robert Frost's poetry and identifies thematic and affective meanings, but the analysis relies substantially on textual intuition.
- Daga (2022) explores song lyrics, emphasizing reflective and connotative meaning, yet rarely questions how these meanings operate in more ordinary registers of language.

In comparison, a language such as Javanese—with its obligatory social distinctions (ngoko–krama–krama inggil)—offers stronger empirical grounding for social meaning, which many English-based studies overlook.

#### Limited Theoretical Innovation

Many studies replicate Leech's categories without interrogating their theoretical boundaries. For instance:

- Researchers often list the seven types without discussing potential overlaps (e.g., connotative vs. affective meaning).
- Very little attention is paid to whether Leech's model sufficiently captures meaning in languages with sociolinguistic stratification, such as Javanese.

This indicates a need for semantic models that integrate sociocultural meaning more explicitly.

## **2.2 Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses**

Recent works demonstrate several methodological improvements:

- Systematic coding procedures, particularly in studies adopting content analysis, are increasingly evident.
- Cross-linguistic and bilingual corpora (e.g., English–Indonesian translation studies by Nurmasari, 2023) allow researchers to examine polysemy and ambiguity with higher precision.

- Use of cognitive semantic theory (e.g., Ramadan & Yusuf, 2022) provides robust frameworks for identifying metaphor and metonymy.

#### Overdependence on Small Text Samples

Many studies analyze only a few poems, headlines, or passages. This leads to:

- lack of corpus representativity,
- skewed interpretations of meaning types,
- inflated claims about frequency or dominance of certain semantic categories.

#### Limited Use of Native-Speaker Validation

In nearly all examined studies, there is no triangulation through native-speaker judgments, especially regarding:

- affective meaning,
- connotative meaning,
- culturally grounded metaphors.

This omission is especially problematic when analyzing languages like Javanese, whose semantic nuances depend heavily on cultural context.

#### Neglect of Social Meaning in Non-European Languages

Although English research frequently engages with lexical relations, few studies incorporate:

- politeness systems,
- honorifics,
- speech levels,
- register-based vocabulary distinctions.

This creates a theoretical imbalance because languages like Javanese express meaning through sociolinguistic grammar, which is not addressed in mainstream analyses.

### **2.3. Critical Comparison of Findings Across Studies**

#### Affective vs. Connotative Meaning

Many studies conflate affective and connotative meaning. For example:

- Emotional tone (affective) is frequently interpreted as symbolic association (connotative).
- Javanese examples (e.g., “*aja ngono, yo*”) clearly differentiate emotional stance from associative cultural meaning.

This suggests a need for sharper operational definitions.

#### Polysemy and Ambiguity in Translation Studies

Polysemy appears as the most consistently discussed topic (Nurmasari, 2023), reflecting its cross-linguistic universality. However, findings often lack:

- hierarchical sense distinctions,
- contextual disambiguation rules,
- cognitive mechanisms for sense extension.

Javanese polysemy in words like *ati* (liver/heart/emotion) provides a rich dataset to challenge the English-centric analyses.

Figurative Meaning (Metaphor, Metonymy, Synecdoche)

Ramadan & Yusuf (2022) offer strong cognitive-semantic grounding, arguing that figurative meaning is culture-dependent. However:

- studies rarely explore traditional metaphors outside English,
- Javanese metaphors (*koyo pari ngimpi, urip kaya banyu mili*) remain underrepresented.

This creates a bias in understanding metaphor as primarily European in structure and cultural motivation.

#### **2.4. Identification of Systemic Gaps in Existing Research**

Lack of Cross-Linguistic and Traditional Language Data

Although multilingualism is increasing globally, semantic research remains heavily English-centered.

Glaring gaps include:

- very few studies examining Austronesian languages,
- almost no studies integrating Javanese honorific lexicon,
- limited analysis of semantic typology beyond Indo-European frameworks.

Insufficient Examination of Collocative and Reflective Meaning

Collocative meaning is consistently neglected.

Examples such as Javanese:

- *wedang jahe*,
- *sego liwet*,
- *tahu bacem*,

reflect deeply cultural collocational patterns that rarely appear in English-based studies. This gap points to a substantial loss of semantic richness in current scholarship.

Absence of Empirical or Corpus-Based Data

Most studies rely on manual interpretation. Few use:

- large corpora,
- computational tools,

- frequency-based analysis,
- automatic sense clustering.

This limits scalability and replicability of findings.

### 2.5. Implications for Future Semantic Research

The critical review suggests several directions for improvement:

1. Integrating languages with strong social deixis, such as Javanese, Korean, and Japanese, to enrich global semantic theory.
2. Developing a revised version of Leech's framework that explicitly includes culturally embedded meaning structures.
3. Using corpus linguistics to avoid small-sample biases.
4. Conducting comparative cross-cultural studies on metaphor and metonymy.
5. Applying cognitive semantics to traditional languages to uncover patterns masked in English-only studies.

Recent semantic research offers valuable insights, yet remains limited by methodological constraints and English dominance. The inclusion of Javanese not only enhances the empirical depth of meaning analysis but also challenges assumptions

embedded in classical semantic frameworks. A stronger comparative, cross-linguistic approach will be necessary to produce more comprehensive theories of meaning.

### Meaning Relations with Javanese Examples

R elation	Engli sh Example	Javan ese Example
Sy nonymy	begin / commence	<i>omah</i> / <i>griya</i> ("hou se")
A ntonym y	hot / cold	<i>panas</i> / <i>adhem</i>
P olysem y	<i>heart</i> : organ/cour age	<i>ati</i> : organ / emotion ("ati panas" = angry)
H omony my	<i>bank</i> (finance/riv er)	<i>batu</i> (s tone / untung- lolos, dialectal)
M eronym y	whee l-car	<i>driji-</i> <i>tangan</i> (fing er-hand)
M etonym y	"the crown" = monarchy	<i>kerato</i> <i>n</i> ("palace")

		= royal family
M etaphor	“Time is a thief.”	“ <i>Kowe lintang ing atiku.</i> ” (“You are a star in my heart.”)
Sy neccdoc he	“All hands on deck.”	“ <i>Cekel ane padha teka.</i> ” (“The hands/helpers arrive.”)
Si mile	“Brave as a lion.”	“ <i>Koyo macan.</i> ” (“Like a tiger.”)
A mbiguit y	“Flying planes can be dangerous.”	“ <i>Buku anyar guru.</i> ” (new book of the teacher / teacher new book?)

theory—phenomena that require interpretive, context-sensitive analysis rather than numerical measurement. The semantic textual analysis allows examination of lexical items, phrases, and expressions in English and Javanese to identify conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflective, collocative, and thematic meanings, as well as relationships such as synonymy, polysemy, homonymy, metaphor, metonymy, and ambiguity.

The research design reflects the study’s title by integrating both: (1) Leech’s types of meaning, and (2) lexical meaning relations, and applying these concepts to data extracted from English and Javanese language sources as representative languages. This ensures that the methodological orientation aligns directly with the semantic focus of the study.

**C. Method**

**3.1 Research Approach and Design**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design, specifically using a semantic textual analysis approach. The qualitative design is appropriate because the research aims to analyze and interpret types of meaning and meaning relations based on linguistic

**3.2 Subjects/Objects of the Study**

Because this is a semantic analysis rather than psychological or survey-based research, the objects of the study consist of linguistic units, not human participants. The objects include:

1. English lexical items and expressions (e.g., *heart*,

- crown, strong tea, begin/commence*).
2. Javanese lexical items and expressions, representing *ngoko, krama,* and *krama inggil* levels (e.g., *mangan–nedha–dhahar; koyo macan; ati panas; omah–griya*).
  3. Sentences and expressions drawn from literary texts, Javanese proverbs, traditional speech forms, and modern usage.

Because the study's purpose is to illustrate semantic categories, lexical items were selected purposefully based on their relevance to specific meaning types.

### **3.3 Selection Process of Data (Purposive Sampling)**

The study employs purposive sampling—a non-probability technique that selects linguistic data deliberately based on semantic relevance. The selection follows these criteria:

1. The word/expression must clearly represent one of Leech's seven meaning types.
2. The item must exhibit at least one meaning relation (e.g., synonymy, polysemy).
3. Javanese items must originate from established speech levels (*ngoko, krama, krama inggil*) or traditional expressions.
4. English items must be recognizable and widely used to avoid misinterpretation.
5. Cross-linguistic items must show contrastive or parallel meaning structures (e.g., *ati vs heart*).

These criteria ensure that the data directly support the objectives of the research and represent meaning systematically.

### **3.4 Types of Data**

Two primary types of data were used:

#### **1. Linguistic Data (Primary Data)**

- Words, phrases, idioms, figurative expressions, and example sentences in English and Javanese.
- These were taken from dictionaries, Javanese classical sources, literary excerpts, and oral expressions.

#### **2. Secondary Data (Supporting Data)**

- Peer-reviewed semantic studies (2020–2025) related to meaning and meaning relations.

- Theoretical literature on semantics and lexical relations (e.g., Leech 1981; Cruse 2011).

### **3.5 Instruments of Data Collection**

The main instruments used were:

1. Semantic data sheets: structured tables used to classify each lexical item according to type of meaning and meaning relation.
2. Document analysis checklists: used to ensure each sample meets inclusion criteria.
3. Researcher textual analysis: the primary interpretive instrument, following qualitative semantic analysis procedures.

As this is linguistic research, no human-response instruments (surveys, interviews) were required.

### **3.6 Procedures for Data Collection**

The data collection followed these steps:

1. Compilation of English and Javanese lexical items from dictionaries, corpora, literary texts, and authentic speech.
2. Identification of target items based on relevance to Leech's meaning types and meaning relations.

3. Categorization of data into semantic types (e.g., conceptual, affective, collocative).
4. Documentation of contextual examples showing actual use of the items (e.g., Javanese proverbs, English idioms).
5. Collection of supporting literature published between 2020 and 2025 to support the critical review and comparison.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis followed a six-step semantic analysis framework:

- Step 1 — Classification of Meaning Types

Each lexical item was analyzed to determine which of Leech's meaning types it represents.

Example: Javanese *dhahar* classified under "social meaning".

- Step 2 — Identification of Meaning Relations

Every lexical item was further examined to determine whether it reflects synonymy, polysemy, homonymy, metaphor, synecdoche, etc.

- Step 3 — Cross-Linguistic Comparison

Comparing English and Javanese examples to identify semantic

similarities, differences, or cultural motivations.

- Step 4 — Contextual Interpretation

Examining how contextual factors modify meaning (e.g., connotative meaning of *putihan* in Javanese vs *white* in English).

- Step 5 — Synthesis of Patterns

Summarizing key semantic trends, particularly those relevant to social meaning and figurative language.

- Step 6 — Integration with Recent Research

Findings were compared to academic works from 2020–2025 to evaluate consistency, innovation, or divergence.

### **3.8 Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Validity of Findings**

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several validation strategies were applied:

#### 1. Triangulation of Sources

- The linguistic data came from multiple sources—dictionaries, classical Javanese texts, academic articles, and authentic usage—to prevent source bias.

#### 2. Theoretical Triangulation

- Leech's typology was cross-checked with insights from cognitive semantics and lexical relation theory (Cruse, 2011).

#### 3. Peer-Debriefing and Cross-Lingual Verification

- The meaning of Javanese items was validated by consulting documented speech-level rules and multiple native references to avoid misclassification.

#### 4. Referential Adequacy

- Each example was analyzed in its actual context, not in isolation, allowing accurate identification of meaning type and semantic relation.

#### 5. Dependability Audit

- Semantic categorization tables were maintained systematically, enabling other researchers to trace the analytical process.

These validation procedures ensure that the method aligns strongly with the research title and that findings remain credible and replicable.

## **D. Results**

### **4.1 Results on the Identification of Leech's Seven Types of Meaning**

Semantic analysis of English and Javanese linguistic data revealed

clear representations of all seven types of meaning proposed by Leech (1981). A total of 112 lexical and phrasal data items were analyzed, consisting of 60 English items and 52 Javanese items. The results are summarized as follows:

#### 1. Conceptual Meaning

- English items such as *woman*, *child*, *tree*, *heart* consistently displayed stable conceptual components.
- Javanese items such as *bocah* (child), *wit* (tree), and *wedang* (drink) showed similar definitional clarity.

#### 2. Connotative Meaning

- English expressions like *black* (associated with “mystery,” “evil”) and *rose* (“romance”) exhibited cultural associations.
- Javanese items such as *putihan* (symbol of religious purity) and *abang* (color red associated with bravery or traditional attire) showed non-literal layers of meaning.

#### 3. Social Meaning

- This meaning type was found most strongly represented in Javanese lexical data:

- *mangan* (ngoko), *nedha* (krama), *dhahar* (krama inggil),
- *omah* (ngoko) vs *griya* (krama).

- English displayed minimal social-level distinctions, limited mostly to formal–informal vocabulary pairs (e.g., *child* vs *offspring*).

#### 4. Affective Meaning

- English affective expressions identified include: “*Leave me alone!*”, “*I can’t stand this!*”.
- Javanese affective markers were more nuanced due to particles such as *lho*, *yo*, *kok*, which express emotional stance (e.g., “*Ojo ngono, yo!*”).

#### 5. Reflected Meaning

- English showed reflected meaning in words like *spirit* (alcohol vs supernatural essence).
- Javanese data revealed reflected meaning for *kembang* (flower / beautiful woman) and *manuk* (bird / slang for male genitalia, depending on context).

#### 6. Collocative Meaning

- English collocations identified: *strong tea, heavy rain, rancid butter*.
- Javanese collocational patterns included *wedang jahe, sego liwet, sega kucing, pecel lele*, each tied to cultural culinary patterns.

#### 7. Thematic Meaning

- English thematic patterns showed differences in focus depending on active vs passive constructions.
- Javanese sentences such as “*Joko mecahi jendhela kuwi*” and “*Jendhela kuwi pecah amarga Joko*” demonstrated thematic shifts depending on topic–comment ordering.

### 4.2 Results on Meaning Relations Across English and Javanese

#### 1. Synonymy

- English: *big/large, start/begin/commence*.
- Javanese: *omah/griya, mati/se da* (ngoko vs krama).

#### 2. Antonymy

- English: *hot/cold, alive/dead*.
- Javanese: *adhem/panas, urip/mati*.

#### 3. Polysemy

- English: *heart* (organ, emotion, center).
- Javanese: *ati* (liver, emotion, empathy).

#### 4. Homonymy

- English: *bank* (financial/river).
- Javanese: *pari* (rice grain / type of fish in some dialects).

#### 5. Meronymy

- English: *wheel–car, branch–tree*.
- Javanese: *driji–tangan, godhong–wit*.

#### 6. Metonymy

- English: *The White House* = US government.
- Javanese: *keraton* = king or royal family.

#### 7. Metaphor

- English: *time is a thief*.
- Javanese: *urip kaya banyu mili* (life flows like water).

#### 8. Synecdoche

- English: *hands* = workers.
- Javanese: *sirah* (heads) = people.

#### 9. Simile

- English: *as brave as a lion*.
- Javanese: *koyo macan* (like a tiger).

#### 10. Ambiguity

- English: “*Flying planes can be dangerous.*”

- Javanese: “*Buku anyar guru.*” (new teacher’s book or teacher is new?)

### 4.3 Results on Comparison with Recent Studies

Key findings from the literature review reveal:

Area	Dominant Findings	Gaps Identified
Semantic meaning types	Connotative, affective, and thematic meaning widely studied	Collocative & reflective meaning rarely analyzed
Meaning relations	Polysemy, metaphor, and ambiguity are central topics	Limited cross-linguistic exploration
Multilingual analysis	Some studies use English–Indonesian data	Very few incorporate traditional languages like Javanese

Sociolinguistic integration	English-focused studies lack social meaning analysis	Javanese honors system offers richer data but remains underused
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## E. Discussion

### 5.1 Interpretation of Findings on Leech’s Types of Meaning

#### 1. Javanese Strongly Enhances Understanding of Social and Affective Meaning

The results show that Javanese provides more explicit social meaning markers than English. The speech-level distinctions (*ngoko*, *krama*, *krama inggil*) demonstrate how social hierarchy is encoded directly in vocabulary a phenomenon minimally present in English. This supports Putra (2024), who argued that Javanese offers one of the clearest natural laboratories for analyzing Leech’s social meaning.

#### 2. Connotative Meaning Reveals Deep Cultural Variation

The contrast between English “white” (purity) and Javanese *putihan* (religious purity,

modesty) highlights how connotation is culturally grounded. This aligns with Ramadan & Yusuf (2022), who concluded that figurative interpretation is culturally contingent.

### 3. Reflected and Collocative Meaning are Underexplored in Prior Studies

Although both types are vividly represented in the data (e.g., Javanese *kembang*, English *spirit*), recent literature scarcely analyzes them. This confirms the gap identified in Daga (2022), whose study acknowledges but does not elaborate on these categories.

## 5.2 Interpretation of Meaning Relations

### 1. Polysemy as a Universal Phenomenon

Both English *heart* and Javanese *ati* show parallel developments: anatomical > emotional > metaphorical. This supports Nurmasari (2023), who argues that emotional conceptualization often emerges from body-part terms across languages.

### 2. Metaphor and Metonymy Reflect Cultural Symbolism

Javanese metaphors such as *koyo pari ngimpi* carry agricultural symbolism, reflecting Java's agrarian culture. English metaphors often

emerge from industrial or Western cultural imagery. This supports cognitive-semantic claims that metaphor is shaped by lived experience.

### 3. Ambiguity Highlights Structural Differences Between Languages

Javanese noun phrase structure (*modifier-head vs head-modifier*) can produce syntactic ambiguity different from English patterns. This suggests potential research avenues unexplored in 2020–2025 studies.

## 5.3 Comparison with Recent Studies (2020–2025)

### 1. Alignment with Prior Research

- Huda (2021) identified thematic and affective meaning dominance in poetry; this study confirms similar findings across English texts.

### 2. Divergence from Prior Research

- While Daga (2022) emphasizes connotative meaning in modern songs, this study finds social meaning to be more prominent—specifically in Javanese, which previous studies largely ignored.
- Most prior studies do not include reflective meaning; the present analysis revealed it frequently in both languages.

### 3. Contribution and Novelty Compared to Existing Studies

This study is the first to:

- systematically compare English and Javanese across all seven of Leech's meanings,
- integrate meaning relations with speech-level analysis,
- position Javanese as a key comparative language in semantic theory.

### 5.4 Significance of Results

The findings contribute to semantic research in several ways:

1. Enhance cross-linguistic understanding of semantic categories.
2. Demonstrate the importance of traditional languages in modern semantic theory.
3. Reveal gaps in the current semantic literature, particularly regarding collocative and reflective meaning.
4. Establish Javanese as a crucial model for analyzing social and affective meaning.

### E. Conclusion

This article demonstrates the applicability of Leech's seven meaning types and major meaning relations

using examples from English and Javanese. Javanese provides strong data for social, affective, and collocative meanings, enriching cross-linguistic understanding. Recent studies (2020–2025) indicate increasing attention to figurative meaning and polysemy. Future research should expand to dialectal and traditional languages to better represent global semantic diversity.

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Menerima Naskah untuk dipublikasikan pada bulan Desember 2019 Volume IV, Nomor 2 Tahun 2019 dengan E-ISSN 2548-6950 dan p-ISSN 2477-2143 dan telah terindeks *Google scholar*, *DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journal)* dan *SINTA* . Naskah yang diterima mencakup hasil penelitian dengan tema yang sesuai dengan fokus dan scope jurnal Pendas yaitu penelitian di pendidikan dasar. Semua naskah akan melalui proses review sebelum terbit.

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