
Connotative Meaning in *The Little Prince* by Antoine De Saint Exupéry (A Semantics Analysis)

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ABSTRACT

The Little Prince is a well-known children's literary work that conveys deep philosophical messages through simple language. Understanding how meaning is expressed beyond literal words is important to reveal the emotional, cultural, and social values reflected in the story. This study aims to analyze the emotional, cultural, and social connotations found in *The Little Prince* using Leech's (1981) theory of connotative meaning. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach using document analysis. The data were obtained from selected expressions in the novel and analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) qualitative data analysis model, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that emotional connotations reveal feelings of love, regret, sadness, and attachment; cultural connotations highlight the contrast between children's imaginative perspectives and adults' logical thinking; and social connotations emphasize responsibility and meaningful relationships. In conclusion, connotative meaning plays an essential role in expressing the novel's philosophical messages. These findings contribute to semantic studies and can support the teaching of linguistic and literary interpretation by helping students understand deeper meanings in literary texts.

INTRODUCTION

Children's literature is one of the literary works. According to Nurgiantoro (2018), children's literature is a form of literary work that places the child's point of view as the main point of storytelling. Children's literature not only presents interesting and entertaining stories but also serves as an educational medium that shapes children's character and imagination. As stated by Sarumpaet (2010), children's literature refers to literary works that are specifically designed for children's world, read by children, and - basically - guided by adults. One of the famous children's literature is *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupéry.

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, published in 1943, tells the story of a young prince who travels from planet to planet after leaving his home asteroid B-612. The narrative unfolds through the eyes of a stranded pilot who meets the prince in the Sahara Desert. Through the prince's journey and encounters with various characters, the author employs rich connotative meanings to explore profound themes of love, friendship, and the essence of human nature. The author crafts the story using meaningful elements, such as the prince's beloved rose described as "unique in all the world," and the wise fox teaching that "one sees clearly only with the heart," showing how language can carry significant messages beyond its simple meanings.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language. According to Kreidler et al. (2002), semantics is the study of the words meaning that is also the main study of the human mind-thought process, cognition, and conceptualization. Meanwhile, According to Chaer (1944) semantics is a field of linguistics that studies the relationship between linguistics signs and the things signify. In other

words, semantics is a field of study in linguistics that studies meaning in language. It means that semantics highlights the important connections between words and what they represent in the real world. In semantic studies, meaning can be analyzed through various perspectives, one of the perspectives is connotative meaning.

According to Chaer (2009), connotative meaning shows the feelings and values connected to a word. These meanings can be very personal and are influenced by culture, personal experience, and context. Kreidler (2002) adds that connotative meaning includes the emotional or psychological connections that words carry, which can be different for different people and societies. Keraf (2009) explains that connotative meaning involves emotional responses to words. (Palmer, 1981) defines connotative meaning as extra meaning that goes beyond a word's basic definition, often showing how people feel about the word. Based on these expert opinions, connotative meaning is indeed a complex aspect of language that plays a crucial role in how humans communicate and interpret messages. The way words carry emotional weight and cultural significance shows how language is not just about literal definitions, but also about the deeper layers of meaning people create through their shared experiences and cultural understanding. This makes studying connotative meaning essential for anyone interested in truly mastering language and communication. The analysis of connotative meaning in this research uses Leech's theory as the main theoretical foundation.

In analyzing meaning, Leech (1981) introduces seven types of meaning: conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic meaning. Among these types, connotative meaning holds particular significance as it refers to the communicative value that goes beyond the purely conceptual content. According to Leech (1981), connotative meaning is the relationship between an expression's communicative value and what it refers to. It is the personal aspect of the relationship between feeling and expression. This type of meaning becomes particularly valuable when analyzing children's literature because it helps explain how these stories can be meaningful to both children and adults in different ways. Children might understand the surface meaning while adults catch the deeper implications, yet both groups can find significance in the same text. This makes connotative meaning a crucial tool for understanding how authors Saint Exupéry create stories that work on multiple levels, speaking to readers of all ages through carefully chosen words and expressions that carry both simple and profound meanings. The study of connotative meaning becomes especially relevant in children's literature especially in *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupéry.

Previous researches related to connotative meaning analysis in *The Little Prince* have shown various approaches and findings. For instance, Fadqiliyah (2021) analyzes the connotative meaning of symbols in *The Little Prince* using semantic approach, while Indriani and Prasanti (2017) examine the connotative elements in *The Little Prince* movie adaptation through Barthes's semiotic perspective. Significant research is conducted by Purnamasari (2018) investigates connotative meaning in song lyrics inspired by *The Little Prince*, focusing on how the lyrics convey themes of loss and love. Additionally, Hasanah and Manugerden (2025) analyze symbolic constructs and thematic depth in *The Little Prince* by examining major symbols such as the rose, the fox, the desert, and the stars, and how these symbols represent philosophical themes including love, responsibility, and human connection. However, none of these studies specifically analyze the emotional, cultural, and social connotations in the novel using Leech's (1981) semantic framework. This is where the present study differs. It focuses on three specific types of connotative meaning such as emotional, cultural, and social, and examines how these connotations appear in selected expressions to reveal the deeper philosophical messages of *The Little Prince*.

This research aims to analyze the connotative meanings in *The Little Prince*, one of the most influential works of children's literature. It focuses on the dialogues and narrative expressions written by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry that contain meanings beyond their literal interpretation. In other words, this study examines how connotative meanings are used to convey messages about life, love, and human nature through simple language. Using Leech's (1981) semantic framework, this research also considers the role of context in interpreting these meanings, particularly the situations, relationships, and emotional nuances present in the interactions between characters.

Semantics

There are many branches of linguistics. They are phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. In this study, the researcher focusses on discussion about semantics. According to Pardede (2016), semantics is essential to the study of communication, and as communication becomes increasingly important in social life, the need to understand how meaning works also grows. Yule (2010) defines semantics as the linguistic study concerned with the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, emphasizing how language users understand and interpret meaning. In this study, semantics provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing connotative meaning in *The Little Prince*. It helps explain how expressions in the text carry not only literal meaning but also additional emotional, social, and cultural associations.

Connotative Meaning

In semantics, meaning is not limited to literal or dictionary definitions but also includes meanings influenced by emotion, culture, and personal experience (emotional). One important area of semantic study that addresses these aspects is connotative meaning. Connotation refers to the emotional, cultural, and associative meanings attached to a word beyond its literal or dictionary definition. While denotation concerns a word's explicit and fixed meaning, connotation involves the ideas, feelings, or values a word evokes in individuals or groups, which may carry positive or negative associations (Elnaili in Zuhdah & Alfain, 2020). These associations are often personal, shaped by individual experiences, although some connotations are shared collectively within a society. As Leech (1981:12) states "Connotations are relatively unstable: that is, they vary considerably, as we have seen, according to culture, historical period, and the experience of the individual." This means connotative meaning is not fixed or universal. It depends on cultural context, social context, and personal experiences (emotional).

Connotative meaning is influenced by several important factors that affect how words are understood beyond their literal meaning. Culture plays a significant role in shaping connotative meaning. As Kramsch (1998) argues, language expresses and embodies cultural reality, causing words to carry different connotations across cultures. For example, the word dog often has positive connotations in Western cultures, symbolizing loyalty and companionship, while in many Asian cultures it may carry negative associations. Thus, a word may have contrasting connotations depending on cultural background. Historical context also influences connotative meaning. According to Lyons (1977), meanings evolve along with social values and ideologies. A word's connotation may change over time, as seen in the word woman, which was formerly associated with passivity or fragility but is now often linked to independence and empowerment due to social change. Another important factor in connotative meaning is individual experience. Ogden and Richards (1923) state that meaning is closely related to psychological responses. The same word can evoke different emotional reactions depending on personal experiences, such as the word hospital, which may represent healing for some but trauma or loss for others. Based on these perspectives, connotative meaning is dynamic and context-dependent, shaped by culture, historical background, and personal experience (emotional). These factors are particularly relevant in *The Little Prince*, a literary work rich in emotional expression and cultural symbolism. Therefore, a semantic approach, particularly Leech's theory of connotative meaning, is essential for analyzing how emotional, cultural, and social connotations are constructed and interpreted in the novel through its linguistic expressions.

Children Literature

Children literature as a concept is defined as literature exclusively about children. According to Obi (2010) children's literature is exclusively written for children seems to rest on three criteria: the first is whether the heroes are children or teenagers, the second is whether the themes, that is the ideas, relationships and language, are simple or complex. Thirdly, children's literature is often aimed at teaching moral lessons. The researcher argues that children's literature must fulfill specific criteria focused on child appropriate content and characters. According to Kurniawan (2009) children's literature refers to stories that connect with children's world (a world that children understand) and uses language that matches children's mental and emotional growth (language that children can understand). From the explanation above, the researcher argues that children's literature must use stories and words children can easily relate to and comprehend.

METHOD

In conducting this study, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method. According to Creswell (2014) qualitative method is an approach to understanding and exploring the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem. This design is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for in-depth analysis of language use and meaning construction within the text. The kind of qualitative in this research was document analysis, because this research analyzed a children literature. According to Bowen (2009) stated that document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material.

The data sources in this research are *The Little Prince*, a children's literature written by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry published in 1943. The novel has twenty-seven chapters. The data then were collected by using these following steps: 1) Reading "*The Little Prince*" thoroughly from chapter one to chapter twenty seven to understand the overall story, 2) Identifying and marking dialogues and narratives containing connotative meanings in each chapter, 3) Writing down all words and phrases that have connotative meanings along with their contexts,

The collected data then were analyzed by using Miles and Huberman's (2014) three steps of data analysis: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected and focused only on expressions that showed meanings beyond their literal sense and were relevant to emotional, cultural, or social aspects. In the data display stage, the selected expressions were grouped into three categories such as emotional, cultural, and social connotations based on Leech's (1981) framework. Each expression was interpreted by considering its context in the story, including the situation, the characters involved, and the relationship between them. In the final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, the researcher drew conclusions about how connotative meanings were used in the novel to convey deeper messages. These conclusions were checked again against the data and theory to ensure that the interpretations were consistent and accurate.

FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of selected expressions in *The Little Prince*, three types of connotative meaning were found using Leech's (1981) framework: emotional, cultural, and social connotations. Emotional connotations appear in expressions that show sadness, affection, regret, and personal feelings, especially in the *Little Prince*'s interactions with the rose and the fox. Cultural connotations come from the difference between how children and adults see the world children use imagination, while adults focus on facts. Social connotations appear in expressions that highlight responsibility, loyalty, and meaningful relationships. The detailed findings of each type of connotative meaning are shown in the following table.

Table 1. Classification of Connotative Meanings in *The Little Prince*

| No | Quotation | Chapter and Page | Types |
|----|--|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1 | "And I threw out an explanation with it. 'This is only his box. The sheep you asked for is inside.' I was very surprised to see a light break over the face of my young judge: ' <i>That is exactly the way I wanted it!</i> Do you think that this sheep will have to have a great deal of grass?'" | Chapter 2, Page 8 | Emotional |
| 2 | "'One day,' you said to me, 'I saw the sunset forty-four times!' And a little later you added: ' <i>You know-- one loves the sunset, when one is so sad...</i> ' 'Were you so sad, then?' I asked, 'on the day of the forty-four sunsets?' But The Little Prince made no reply." | Chapter 6, Page 20 | Emotional |
| 3 | "So The Little Prince, in spite of all the good will that was inseparable from his love, had soon come to doubt her. He had taken seriously words which were without importance, and it made him very unhappy. ' <i>I ought not to have listened to her,' he confided to me one day. 'One never ought to listen to the flowers. One should simply look at them and breathe their fragrance. Mine perfumed all my planet. But I did not know how to take pleasure in all her grace.</i> ' This tale of claws, which | Chapter 8, Page 29-30 | Emotional |

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| | disturbed me so much, should only have filled my heart with tenderness and pity." | | |
| 4 | "And he continued his confidences: 'The fact is that I did not know how to understand anything! I ought to have judged by deeds and not by words. She cast her fragrance and her radiance over me. <i>I ought never to have run away from her... I ought to have guessed all the affection that lay behind her poor little strategems.</i> Flowers are so inconsistent! But I was too young to know how to love her...'" | Chapter 8, Page 30 | Emotional |
| 5 | <i>"I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups, and asked them whether the drawing frightened them. But they answered: 'Frighten? Why should any one be frightened by a hat?'"</i> | Chapter 1, Page 1 | Cultural |
| 6 | "That is why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter. I had been disheartened by the failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. <i>Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.</i> So then I chose another profession, and learned to pilot airplanes. I have flown a little over all parts of the world; and it is true that geography has been very useful to me. At a glance I can distinguish China from Arizona. If one gets lost in the night, such knowledge is valuable." | Chapter 1, Page 2 | Cultural |
| 7 | <i>"If I have told you these details about the asteroid, and made a note of its number for you, it is on account of the grown-ups and their ways. When you tell them that you have made a new friend, they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you, 'What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?' Instead, they demand: 'How old is he? How many brothers has he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?' Only from these figures do they think they have learned anything about him."</i> | Chapter 4, Page 13-14 | Cultural |
| 8 | "It is a question of discipline,' <i>The Little Prince</i> said to me later on. 'When you've finished your own toilet in the morning, then it is time to attend to the toilet of your planet, just so, with the greatest care. <i>You must see to it that you pull up regularly all the baobabs, at the very first moment when they can be distinguished from the rosebushes which they resemble so closely in their earliest youth. It is very tedious work,</i> ' <i>The Little Prince</i> added, 'but very easy.'" | Chapter 8, Page 18 | Social |
| 9 | "But he came back to his idea. 'My life is very monotonous,' the fox said. 'I hunt chickens; men hunt me. <i>All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life.</i> I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the colour of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat...'" | Chapter 21, Page 69 | Social |
| 10 | <i>"What is essential is invisible to the eye,' <i>The Little Prince</i> repeated, so that he would be sure to remember. 'It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."</i> | Chapter 21, Page 71 | Social |
| 11 | <i>"Men have forgotten this truth,' said the fox. 'But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose...'"</i> | Chapter 21, Page 71 | Social |

From the table above, it can be seen that *The Little Prince* contains emotional, cultural, and social connotations. Emotional connotations appear in expressions that describe *the Little Prince*'s feelings, such as love, sadness, regret, and attachment. Through simple language and dialogue, these expressions help readers understand the character's emotional sensitivity and personal growth, especially in his relationships with the rose and the fox.

Cultural connotations in *The Little Prince* can be seen in expressions that show how children and adults perceive the world in very different ways. The novel contrasts children's imaginative and emotional understanding with adults' logical and fact-based way of thinking. For example, when adults see the narrator's drawing only as a "hat," they fail to recognize the boa constrictor inside it, showing that they focus on surface appearance and overlook deeper meaning. This reflects a cultural tendency to value practicality and rationality over creativity and symbolic thinking. Likewise, when adults describe a new person only by numbers and facts, such as age, weight, and wealth, they ignore important human qualities like personality, feelings, and individuality. These expressions highlight how cultural values shape adults to think in rigid and measurable terms, while children still view the world with imagination and emotional sensitivity. Through this contrast, *The Little Prince* suggests that growing up often means losing the ability to see what is truly essential beyond facts and figures.

Social connotations in *The Little Prince* appear in expressions related to responsibility, discipline, and meaningful relationships. *The Little Prince*'s habit of cleaning his planet and removing baobabs does not only describe daily activity but also symbolizes the social responsibility to prevent small problems from becoming serious. This reflects the importance of discipline and care in maintaining balance in life. In addition, the fox's explanation of "taming" shows that relationships are not formed instantly but require time, patience, and emotional commitment. Through this process, relationships gain value, and individuals become important to one another. Statements such as "What is essential is invisible to the eye" and "You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed" emphasize that true relationships are based on care and long-term responsibility rather than appearance or convenience. Overall, these social connotations teach readers that meaningful relationships are built through effort, loyalty, and shared responsibility.

DISCUSSIONS

Emotional Connotation

Emotional connotation refers to the feelings or emotions that a word or expression creates beyond its literal meaning. This type of connotation is related to personal emotions and experiences, so it can affect readers differently. In literary works, emotional connotation helps express inner feelings such as love, sadness, loneliness, and happiness without stating them directly. In *The Little Prince*, emotional connotations are strongly presented through the characters' dialogues and thoughts, allowing readers to feel the emotional depth of the story.

Table 2. Emotional Connotation in *The Little Prince*

| No | Quotation | Explanation |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | <p>And I threw out an explanation with it. "This is only his box. The sheep you asked for is inside."</p> <p>I was very surprised to see a light break over the face of my young judge: <i>That is exactly the way I wanted it!</i> Do you think that this sheep will have to have a great deal of grass? – Chapter 2, Page 8)</p> | <p>In this quote, the narrator draws a simple box, but <i>the Little Prince</i> reacts with excitement because it matches his imagination. The emotional connotation appears in his response, "<i>That is exactly the way I wanted it!</i>" which shows joy, satisfaction, and a feeling of being understood. This moment reflects how children value imagination and emotional connection, while adults often think in literal terms. The happiness <i>the Little Prince</i> expresses reveals a warm emotional bond formed through understanding and acceptance.</p> |
| 2 | <p>"One day," you said to me, "I saw the sunset forty-four times!"</p> <p>And a little later you added: <i>"You know-- one loves the sunset, when one is so sad..."</i></p> <p>"Were you so sad, then?" I asked, "on the day of the forty-four sunsets?"</p> <p>But <i>The Little Prince</i> made no reply.</p> <p>Chapter 6, Page 20</p> | <p>In this part, <i>the Little Prince</i> explains that watching many sunsets brings him comfort when he feels sad. The sentence "<i>one loves the sunset when one is so sad</i>" carries an emotional connotation of sadness, longing, and quiet comfort. His silence when asked if he was sad shows that his feelings are deep and difficult to express. This moment highlights his emotional sensitivity and shows how simple things like the sunset can carry strong emotional meaning and help someone cope with sadness.</p> |

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| 3 | <p>So <i>The Little Prince</i>, in spite of all the good will that was inseparable from his love, had soon come to doubt her. He had taken seriously words which were without importance, and it made him very unhappy. "I ought not to have listened to her," he confided to me one day. "One never ought to listen to the flowers. One should simply look at them and breathe their fragrance. Mine perfumed all my planet. But I did not know how to take pleasure in all her grace. This tale of claws, which disturbed me so much, should only have filled my heart with tenderness and pity." – Chapter 8, Page 29-30</p> | <p>In this scene, <i>the Little Prince</i> reflects on his relationship with the rose and realizes that he misunderstood her. The expression "<i>I ought not to have listened to her</i>" shows strong emotional connotations of regret and sadness. He recognizes that her words were not meant to hurt him and that he failed to appreciate her true kindness. His statements reveal emotional maturity, as he understands that he should have responded with tenderness instead of doubt. This moment highlights his deep feelings of love and regret, showing that meaningful relationships require understanding, patience, and emotional awareness.</p> |
| 4 | <p>And he continued his confidences: "The fact is that I did not know how to understand anything! I ought to have judged by deeds and not by words. She cast her fragrance and her radiance over me. <i>I ought never to have run away from her... I ought to have guessed all the affection that lay behind her poor little strategems</i>. Flowers are so inconsistent! But I was too young to know how to love her..." – Chapter 8, Page 30</p> | <p>In this scene, <i>the Little Prince</i> admits that he misunderstood the rose and did not recognize the love behind her actions. The sentence "<i>I ought never to have run away from her</i>" expresses emotional connotations of regret and self-blame. He now understands that her behavior, although confusing, was her way of showing affection. His words reveal emotional maturity as he realizes that love is shown through actions rather than words. This moment highlights his growing understanding that relationships require patience, empathy, and the ability to see beyond misunderstandings.</p> |

From the table above, it can be seen that emotional connotation plays an important role in *The Little Prince*. Emotional connotation is used to express the characters' inner feelings, such as love, loneliness, sadness, and emotional attachment, through simple but meaningful expressions. These emotional meanings help readers understand the depth of the relationships between *the Little Prince*, the rose, the fox, and the narrator. By using emotional connotation, the novel presents emotional messages indirectly, making the story more touching and reflective. For readers, emotional connotations encourage empathy and emotional awareness, allowing them to connect the story with their own experiences and relationships.

Cultural Connotation

Cultural connotation refers to meanings that are influenced by cultural values, beliefs, and ways of thinking shared by a society. A word or expression may carry different connotations depending on a person's cultural background. In literary works, cultural connotation is used to show how culture shapes the way characters see and understand the world. In *The Little Prince*, cultural connotations often appear in the contrast between adults' logical thinking and children's imaginative perspective, highlighting how cultural norms can limit deeper understanding.

Table 3. Cultural Connotation in *The Little Prince*

| No | Quotation | Explanation |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | <p><i>I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups, and asked them whether the drawing frightened them. But they answered: 'Frighten? Why should any one be frightened by a hat?' – Chapter 1, Page 1</i></p> | <p>In this scene, the adults look at the narrator's drawing and see only a "hat," while the drawing actually represents a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. This reaction carries a cultural connotation that shows the difference between how adults and children interpret the world. Adults rely on literal thinking and practical logic, while children use imagination and see deeper meaning. The adults' response reflects a cultural pattern in which creativity is undervalued and symbolic thinking is often overlooked. This moment highlights the cultural gap between childhood imagination and adult rationality.</p> |
| 2 | <p>That is why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter. I had been disheartened by the</p> | <p>This statement reflects the narrator's frustration with adults who failed to understand his childhood drawings. The sentence carries a cultural connotation about the</p> |

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| | <p>failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. <i>Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.</i> So then I chose another profession, and learned to pilot airplanes. I have flown a little over all parts of the world; and it is true that geography has been very useful to me. At a glance I can distinguish China from Arizona. If one gets lost in the night, such knowledge is valuable. – Chapter 1, Page 2</p> | <p>difference between adult and child ways of thinking. Adults rely on logic and literal interpretation, while children use imagination and creativity. The phrase shows how adults often lose the ability to see beyond the surface, creating a cultural gap between the two groups. This moment reinforces the idea that society shapes adults to be practical and serious, while children naturally see deeper meaning.</p> |
| 3 | <p><i>If I have told you these details about the asteroid, and made a note of its number for you, it is on account of the grown-ups and their ways. When you tell them that you have made a new friend, they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you, "What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?" Instead, they demand: "How old is he? How many brothers has he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?" Only from these figures do they think they have learned anything about him.</i> – Chapter 4, Page 13-14</p> | <p>This passage shows how adults judge a person using facts and numbers instead of meaningful qualities. The cultural connotation appears in the contrast between what adults consider important (age, money, background) and what children value (personality, interests, and emotional connection). Adults focus on measurable information because their thinking is shaped by social norms and practicality. Children, however, look at what truly matters in understanding someone. This difference reflects the cultural gap in the novel, showing that adults often overlook deeper truths because they rely too much on surface-level facts.</p> |

From the table above, it can be seen that cultural connotation plays an important role in *The Little Prince*. Cultural connotation is used to highlight differences in ways of thinking between children and adults, especially in how they understand imagination, value, and meaning. Through culturally charged expressions, the novel criticizes the adult world that focuses too much on facts, numbers, and logic, while neglecting emotional and imaginative understanding. For readers, these cultural connotations encourage reflection on how culture shapes perception and understanding. They invite readers to question rigid ways of thinking and to appreciate imagination, creativity, and deeper meaning in everyday life.

Social Connotation

Social connotation refers to meanings that are shaped by social values, relationships, and shared norms within society. This type of connotation reflects ideas about responsibility, commitment, and how individuals relate to others. In literary works, social connotation is often used to show how relationships are built and how social roles influence behavior. In *The Little Prince*, social connotations appear in expressions related to friendship, responsibility, and caring for others, showing that meaningful relationships require time, effort, and commitment.

Table 3. Social Connotation in *The Little Prince*

| No | Quotation | Explanation |
|----|--|--|
| 1 | <p>"It is a question of discipline," <i>The Little Prince</i> said to me later on. "When you've finished your own toilet in the morning, then it is time to attend to the toilet of your planet, just so, with the greatest care. You must see to it that you pull up regularly all the baobabs, at the very first moment when they can be distinguished from the rosebushes which they resemble so closely in their earliest youth. It is very tedious work," <i>The Little Prince</i> added, "but very easy." – Chapter 8, Page 18</p> | <p>In this scene, <i>the Little Prince</i> explains the daily responsibility of removing baobabs before they grow and damage his planet. The expressions "a question of discipline" and "you must see to it" show social connotations of responsibility, routine, and duty. The baobabs symbolize problems that start small but become dangerous if ignored. This reflects the idea that people must take care of their responsibilities early and consistently. The moment highlights that discipline is not only a personal habit but also a social responsibility that keeps life in order.</p> |
| 2 | <p>But he came back to his idea. "My life is very monotonous," the fox said. "I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the</p> | <p>In this scene, the fox explains how his life feels boring and repetitive because he has no meaningful relationships. The sentence "all the chickens are just alike, and all the</p> |

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| | <p><i>chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the colour of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat..." – Chapter 21, Page 69</i></p> | <p><i>men are just alike</i>" shows a social connotation of loneliness and routine. Nothing feels special because he has no personal bond with anyone. The phrase "<i>if you tame me...</i>" expresses how forming a relationship can bring warmth, joy, and purpose into someone's life. "<i>Taming</i>" symbolizes building trust, connection, and responsibility between individuals. This reflects the novel's message that meaningful relationships make life unique and emotionally fulfilling.</p> |
| 3 | <p><i>"What is essential is invisible to the eye," The Little Prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember. "It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important." – Chapter 21, Page 71</i></p> | <p>In this moment, <i>the Little Prince</i> repeats the fox's lesson about the value of relationships. The sentence "<i>What is essential is invisible to the eye</i>" carries a social connotation that true meaning in relationships cannot be seen physically. It comes from love, care, and loyalty. The phrase "<i>the time you have wasted for your rose</i>" shows that someone becomes important because of the time and effort we invest in them. This highlights the social value of commitment and responsibility. The quote reinforces that meaningful relationships are built through care and shared experiences, not appearances.</p> |
| 4 | <p><i>"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose..." – Chapter 21, Page 71</i></p> | <p>In this scene, the fox explains the meaning of forming a bond. The sentence "<i>You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed</i>" carries a strong social connotation of loyalty, commitment, and moral responsibility. It shows that once a relationship is created, it brings lasting duties and care. The phrase "<i>You are responsible for your rose</i>" emphasizes that love is not only about feelings but also about taking care of someone. This moment highlights one of the novel's main messages: meaningful relationships require responsibility, consistency, and mutual care.</p> |

From the table above, it can be seen that social connotation plays an important role in *The Little Prince*. Social connotation is used to emphasize themes of responsibility, discipline, and meaningful relationships among characters. Through expressions about caring for the planet, removing baobabs, and "*taming*," the novel shows that relationships are built through time, effort, and commitment. These social meanings highlight that true connection involves responsibility rather than convenience. For readers, social connotations encourage awareness of social values such as care, loyalty, and moral responsibility, reminding readers that relationships gain meaning through consistent attention and sincere commitment.

Relevant Findings

The findings of this study show both similarities and differences when compared to previous research on *The Little Prince*. Fadqiliyah (2018) focuses on symbolic meaning using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach and reveals that symbols such as the rose, the fox, and the desert reflect children's hidden wisdom and criticize adults' ways of thinking. Similarly, Hasanah and Manugerden (2025) analyze major symbols in the novel and find that these symbols convey philosophical themes such as love, responsibility, loneliness, and human connection. The results of the present study support these findings, as emotional and social connotations in the novel also express themes of love, care, responsibility, and meaningful relationships. This shows that *The Little Prince* consistently uses indirect meaning to communicate deep philosophical messages. However, this study provides a new perspective compared to previous studies. Indriani and Prasanti (2017) analyze connotative meaning in the movie adaptation of *The Little Prince* using Barthes's semiotics and focus mainly on visual symbols and imagination, such as the image of the sheep in the box. In contrast, the present study examines

connotative meaning in the novel itself using Leech's (1981) semantic framework, specifically focusing on emotional, cultural, and social connotations expressed through language. Unlike earlier studies that emphasize symbols or visual representations, this research explains how connotative meaning operates at the linguistic level to reflect emotional depth, cultural ways of thinking, and social values. Therefore, this study not only confirms previous findings about the philosophical richness of *The Little Prince* but also extends them by offering a more detailed semantic analysis of how meaning is constructed through connotation.

Limitations & Recommendations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the analysis focuses only on emotional, cultural, and social connotations using Leech's (1981) semantic framework, leaving other types of connotative meaning unexplored. Second, the data are limited to selected quotations from the novel, so not all possible connotative expressions are examined. In addition, this study analyzes only the written text of the novel and does not include its adaptations, such as films or other media. Based on these limitations, future researchers are encouraged to investigate other types of connotations, apply different theoretical frameworks, or conduct comparative studies between the novel and its adaptations. Future studies may also use a larger set of data or examine how readers from different cultural backgrounds interpret connotative meaning to provide deeper insights.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of *The Little Prince*, this study concludes that connotative meaning plays an essential role in shaping the deeper messages of the story. Using Leech's (1981) framework, the study found that many expressions carry emotional, cultural, and social meanings beyond their literal form. Emotional connotations reveal the *Little Prince*'s feelings of love, regret, sadness, and attachment, especially in his relationships with the rose, the fox, and the narrator. Cultural connotations highlight the contrast between the imaginative world of children and the literal, logical mindset of adults. Social connotations emphasize responsibility, commitment, and the value of meaningful relationships, particularly through the concept of "taming." Overall, the findings show that simple language in the novel carries complex meanings about human connection, emotional growth, and moral values. Connotative meaning helps readers look beyond surface-level words and understand the deeper truths that make the story timeless and meaningful.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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