

## Contextual Meaning in *The Little Prince* Novel

<sup>1</sup>So Nathaniela Elizia Hendarto, <sup>2</sup>Raden Arief Nugroho

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, Semarang, Indonesia

[311202302558@mhs.dinus.ac.id](mailto:311202302558@mhs.dinus.ac.id)

**Abstract.** This study examines the contextual meaning in the novel *The Little Prince* by applying Parera's (2004) theory of contextual meaning. The research aims to categorize the types of contextual meaning present in the text. The findings indicate that **Linguistic Context** is the most prevalent type of contextual meaning (37.5%), followed by **Personal Context** (25.0%) while **Purposeful, Mood, and Situational Context** each account for 12.5%. The study highlights how the writer navigates the philosophical and symbolic nature of the text, utilizing adaptive strategies to preserve emotional nuances, and moral lessons. Ultimately, the results underscore the necessity aesthetic and philosophical language of literary works.

**Keywords:** contextual meaning; novel; the little prince

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Language is not only a system of words and grammar, but also a medium that carries meaning shaped by context. In linguistic studies, meaning cannot always be interpreted literally because it is influenced by various contextual factors such as situation, participants, purpose, and emotion (Gutt, 2000; Basari & Nugroho, 2017). This concept is known as contextual meaning, which emphasizes that meaning depends on how language is used in a particular context. According to Parera (2004), contextual meaning can be categorized into several types, including linguistic, situational, personal, mood, and purposeful context. This view is also supported by Halliday & Matthiessen (2013), who state that meaning is closely related to context of situation and context of culture, showing that language cannot be separated from its social function.

In literary works, contextual meaning plays a crucial role because authors often convey messages implicitly through symbols, metaphors, and emotional expressions. As explained by Leech (1981), literary language frequently contains meanings beyond the conceptual level, including connotative and affective meanings that rely heavily on context (Astiningsih & Nugroho, 2024; Pangaksmi & Nugroho, 2023; Fatmawati & Nugroho, 2024). One of the most well-known literary works that reflects rich contextual meaning is *The Little Prince* by Katherine Woods. This novel is not only a children's story but also a philosophical text that explores themes such as love, loneliness, and human relationships. The meaning in this kind of novel is rarely explicit instead, it is deeply dependent on context, making it an interesting object for contextual meaning analysis (Kumalasari & Nugroho, 2025).

Previous studies have mostly focused on symbolic meaning or general interpretation of the novel. For example, research on *The Little Prince* often highlights its allegorical elements and moral values rather than analyzing how meaning is constructed through context. However, there is still limited research that specifically categorizes the types of contextual meaning based on a systematic linguistic framework (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984). Without a clear classification, the interpretation of meaning may become too subjective and inconsistent (Putri & Nugroho, 2025).

Therefore, it is important to analyze contextual meaning using a structured theory to better understand how meaning is constructed in literary texts. This study aims to analyze the types of contextual meaning found in *The Little Prince* using Parera's (2004) theory. By identifying and categorizing the contextual meanings, this research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how language functions in conveying deeper messages in literary works (Sitio & Nugroho, 2023). In addition, this study contributes to linguistic and literary analysis by emphasizing the importance of context in interpreting meaning, especially in texts that contain philosophical and symbolic elements.

This study aims to:

1. Identify the types of contextual meaning in *The Little Prince* novel.
2. To explain how contextual meaning is constructed in the novel.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Individuals today use language as a primary tool to communicate and interact with others, both in spoken and written forms (Hatim & Mason, 1997). Communication enables humans to express ideas, emotions, intentions, and experiences. In the global era, English functions as an international language that is widely used in various fields such as education, literature, media, and cross-cultural communication, including in Indonesia. However, communicating in English is not always easy because meaning is not always conveyed literally through vocabulary alone (Susanto & Nugroho, 2024; Ulya & Nugroho, 2025).

One of the major difficulties in understanding English lies in interpreting meaning that is influenced by context (DwiAna & Nugroho, 2024). Many words or sentences cannot be fully understood without considering the situation, speaker intention, emotional condition, time, place, or linguistic environment (Isnaini & Nugroho, 2022). This phenomenon is known as contextual meaning. Contextual meaning plays an important role in communication because it helps speakers and listeners interpret messages appropriately based on the circumstances in which they are produced.

Parera (2004) explains that contextual meaning emerges from various contextual elements surrounding an utterance. Based on Parera's theory, contextual meaning is classified into eleven types. In this study, several types of contextual meaning were identified based on this theoretical framework, including the following:

1. **Personal Context** refers to meaning influenced by the speaker's personal background, such as age, experience, social role, or identity, which affects how an utterance is produced and interpreted by others.  
Example: The Lord came to the door, Sari (2023).
2. **Situational Context** is the situation in which an utterance occurs. The same expression can have different meanings depending on the circumstances.  
Example: They asked God every day. Sari (2023).

3. **Purposeful Context** relates to the speaker's intention, such as persuading, requesting, advising, or expressing feeling.  
Example: "Hey Issumboshi, do you want to be eaten by frog?" Sari (2023).
4. **Mood Context** is influenced by the speaker's emotional state, like happiness, sadness, or anger, which affects how the messages is understood.  
Example: The remaining demons were frightened. Sari (2023).
5. **Linguistic Context** refers to meaning shaped by language features, such as metaphor, figurative language, or sentence structure.  
Example: "Bravo! I employ you." Sari (2023).
6. **Formal or Informal Context in Conversation** refers to meaning influenced by the level of formality in communication, which affects word choice, expressions, and how the utterance is interpreted.  
Example: Thank you for your opinion, but may we can use your opinion in another chance. (Sari, 2023).
7. **Context of Time** refers to meaning shaped by the time when an utterance occurs, as different time settings may influence how the message is understood.  
Example: Ever since that day, Sari (2023).
8. **Context of Place** refers to meaning influenced by the location where the communication takes place, which can affect the interpretation of an utterance.  
Example: *small vilage*, Sari (2023).
9. **Object Context** refers to meaning determined by the object or topic being discussed, which may carry specific or symbolic meanings.  
Example: Issumboshi sheathed a needle sword in straw case, Sari (2023).
10. **Completeness of Context** refers to meaning influenced by whether the contextual information is complete or not, affecting how the utterance is interpreted.  
Example: Alif ate the apple, Sari (2023).
11. **Context of Language** refers to meaning influenced by the characteristics of the language used, such as style, variation, or linguistic features.  
Example: Because his father had passed away when he was a baby, Sari (2023).

## Previous Studies

A study conducted by Sari (2023) entitled "*Semantic Analysis of Contextual Meaning in Narrative Text English Textbook 10th Grade*" analyzes contextual meaning in narrative texts found in an English textbook for tenth-grade students using Parera's (2004) theory. The results show that meaning is strongly influenced by context. However, this study focuses only on semantic analysis in educational texts and does not explore contextual meaning in literary works. In contrast, the present study examines contextual meaning in a literary text, namely *The Little Prince*, which contains more complex and symbolic meanings.

A study by Yunita (2017) entitled “*Symbolism and Their Meanings in The Little Prince*” uses the same object as the present study, namely *The Little Prince*. Yunita’s research focuses on major symbols in the novel, such as the desert, stars, baobab trees, water, and the rose, and reveals their philosophical meanings. However, this study concentrates on symbolism rather than analyzing how meaning is constructed through contextual elements.

These previous studies indicate that contextual meaning and literary interpretation have been widely discussed. However, earlier research either focuses on semantic analysis in non-literary texts or examines literary elements without applying a systematic framework of contextual meaning. Therefore, this study analyzes contextual meaning based on Parera (2004), in the novel *The Little Prince* to provide a more structured and comprehensive understanding of how meaning is constructed in literary discourse.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data come from the English version of *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1943). The data consist of words, sentences, and utterances that contain contextual meaning.

The data were collected through document analysis (Shidik et al, 2025). The researcher selected 8 data points that show contextual meaning based on Parera, (2004) theory.

The analysis was carried out in three steps (Iriawan & Nugroho, 2023; Kamalia & Nugroho, 2024):

1. Identifying sentences or utterances that contain contextual meaning.
2. Classifying the types of contextual meaning.
3. Explaining the meaning based on the narrative context.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of 8 selected data from *The Little Prince* reveals how contextual meanings are formed in the text. The findings are summarized in the tables below:

**Table 1** Contextual Meaning in *The Little Prince* Novel

Quantities	Contextual Meaning	Percentage
3	Linguistic Context	37.5%
2	Personal Context	25.0%
1	Purposeful Context	12.5%
1	Mood Context	12.5%
1	Situational Context	12.5%

The results show that Linguistic Context (37.5%) is the most dominant type. This means that the novel contains a lot of figurative language. It also shows how important it is to maintain the original meaning and the author’s message when interpreting the text.

### Excerpt 1

"It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."

This utterance is spoken by the fox to *The Little Prince*. The phrase *your rose* does not only refer to a flower, but symbolize emotional attachment, care, and responsibility. *The Little Prince* values his rose not because of what it is, but because of the time and attention he has given to it. This is categorized as **Purposeful Context** because the fox is clearly trying to deliver a moral message about love and commitment.

### Excerpt 2

"You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed."

This statement is also said by the fox. The phrase *what you have tamed* does not literally mean controlling something, but it refers to building a relationship or emotional bond. The meaning depends on figurative understanding where "taming" represents forming connections with others. Therefore, it is categorized as **Linguistic Context** because the meaning comes from figurative language (metaphor).

### Excerpt 3

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly."

This utterance is spoken by the fox as a philosophical statement. The phrase *with the heart* has a contextual meaning because it refers to understand through feelings and inner perception, not through physical sight. The idea here is that important things cannot be seen with the eyes, but felt. This is categorized as **Linguistic Context** because it uses metaphorical meaning.

### Excerpt 4

"What is essential is invisible to the eye."

This statement is closely related to the previous one and is also spoken by the fox. The phrase *what is essential* contains contextual meaning because it refers to abstract values such as love, sincerity, and emotional connection, which cannot be seen physically. The interpretation depends on figurative understanding, so it is categorized as **Linguistic Context**.

### Excerpt 5

"It is a good thing to have a friend, even if one is about to die."

This utterance shows an emotional condition experienced by *The Little Prince*. The phrase *about to die* is not only about a physical state, but also reflects a deeper emotional situation. It shows how meaningful friendship is, even in difficult or final moments. Because the meaning is influenced by the speaker's emotional state, this is categorized as **Mood Context**.

### Excerpt 6

"All grown-ups were once children, although few of them remember it."

This sentence reflects a general truth about human life. It shows that everyone has experienced being a child, but many forget that part of themselves. The meaning is connected to personal experience and memory, so it is categorized as **Personal Context**.

### Excerpt 7

"You are beautiful, but you are empty."

This utterance is said by *The Little Prince* to the roses in the garden. The sentence shows a contrast between outer beauty and inner meaning. The roses are physically beautiful, but they are considered "empty" because they do not have a personal connection with him. The meaning depends on the situation when *The Little Prince* realizes that his own rose is special. Therefore, it is categorized as **Situational Context**.

### Excerpt 8

"You, you alone, will have the stars as no one else has them."

This statement utterance is said by *The Little Prince* to the narrator. The phrase *the stars* does not only refer to objects in the sky, but also symbolizes memories and emotional connection between them. The meaning comes from their unique relationship, so it is categorized as **Personal Context**.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of contextual meanings in the novel *The Little Prince* using Parera's (2004) theory, it can be concluded that Linguistic Context (37.5%) is the most dominant type identified in this study. This finding indicates that the narrative strongly relies on figurative language, metaphors, and symbolic expressions that require interpretation beyond literal meaning. In addition, Personal Context (25%) reflects the influence of characters' identities and experiences, while Purposeful, Mood, and Situational Contexts (12.5% each) highlight the role of intention, emotional state, and narrative situation in shaping meaning.

Overall, this study shows that contextual meaning frequently appears in the story of *The Little Prince* and plays an important role in conveying its philosophical and emotional messages. However, this research still has limitations, such as the limited amount of data and the need for more precise identification of contextual meaning types. Therefore, future research is suggested to

use a larger dataset and to combine contextual meaning analysis with translation techniques more comprehensively.

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