

# MIKHAIL'S PERSONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN PAULO COELHO'S THE ZAHIR

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**Abstract:** *Language is used not only for communication but also to reflect personality as well as to construct identity. The aim of this study is to examine Mikhail's personal identity construction through his language use. Therefore, the labels attached to him and his stancetakings are investigated. In conducting the study, the writer applies Discourse Analysis. Descriptive research is used in order to identify, classify, and describe his utterances which contain the use of label and stancetaking. The findings reveal that he is a kind of arrogant person based on the values of the labels given by self. Furthermore, the more he puts label on himself in a society, the less he gets label from others. The findings also indicate that his tendencies to position himself along epistemic scale 'certainty' and disalign with his interlocutors in talk-in-interaction have successfully transformed him into a superior person.*

**Keywords:** *identity construction; label; stance*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Fearon (1999), the concept of identity is originally used by German psychologist Erik Erikson in 1950s. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) define identity as the social positioning of self and other. Today, identity is studied in a variety of fields including sociology, anthropology, linguistics, education, and literature. Joseph notes the important studies focusing on linguistic aspects of identity appeared in early 1980s such as Gumperz's important collection on language and social identity in 1982 (as cited in Edwards, 2009).

In recent years, numerous studies on identity construction have been done by some scholars in various genres. Among the examples are analyzing a blog posting (Prihantoro, 2014), cross-cultural communication (Habib, 2008), female magazine (Crema, 2009), request e-mail (Ho, 2010), women focus group discussion (Mango, 2010), television program (Sharif, 2012), document education (Alméciga, 2013), and a story in the English translation of the holy Quran (Idiagbon, 2014). Hence, the recent studies have neglected a literary work, especially novel as the source of data. In addition, most of the

researchers are interested in studying social identity rather than personal identity. Thus, the writer intends to take this neglected genre by studying personal identity construction in a novel.

In this research, the subject of study is Mikhail. He is a minor character in *the Zahir* novel written by Paulo Coelho (2006). He is chosen because of three reasons. First, he has a significant role in the story. His meeting with Esther, a wife of the character I, considerably influences the plot development. Mikhail has a great contribution in Esther's decision to leave her husband and to stay far away in Mikhail's village which leads the conflict begins. Later, he regularly meets the character I and brings him to find Esther. Second, he is a stigmatized person. He is given a derogatory label "epilepsy" by his society and experiences discrimination. Galinsky et al. (2003) formulate three kinds of responses to combat derogatory label. Two of them are with labeling by self (re-label and re-appropriation). It allows Mikhail to use one of the strategies considering the story in the novel that he successfully copes with the bad views from others. The writer assumes there will be one label or more used by Mikhail to combat the derogatory label as well as to identify himself among his society. Third, he has a powerful speech. In Paris, he becomes a moderator and storyteller in a weekly performance in a restaurant. His speeches can attract the audience. By telling his history to other people in Paris, he manages to create his own community and becomes their spiritual leader. There will be something special in his speech. Therefore, he should take one stance or more to construct his personal identity in talk-in-interaction.

The study examines how Mikhail constructs his identity in social interaction through his language use. The writer applies Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) emergence principle as a mechanism to analyze identity. The principle generalizes that identity is a product of social interaction. Identity maybe linguistically indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, and entire languages and varieties. However, the writer limits the study on label and stance regarding the basic assumption on Mikhail's personal identity construction as explained before.

The limitation is not merely become the weakness of the study. On the other hands, it gives the writer great opportunities to deeply analyze the label and stance. Therefore, the study examines not only the labels attached to Mikhail given by self but also the labels given by others. By analyzing the labels given by self, the writer uncovers Mikhail's personal identity construction. However, by analyzing both labels given by self and others, it provides the contrastive views between Mikhail and others toward him and the correlation between both kinds of labels in constructing his personal identity. in addition, the study also examines all kinds of stances took by Mikhail in talk-in-interaction.

In summary, the writer intends to study Mikhail's personal identity construction through the use of label and stancetaking using Discourse Analysis by applying Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) emergence principle supported by some theories of label (e.g. Galinsky et al., 2003) and stance (e.g. Du Bois, 2007).

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Identity is the social positioning of self and other (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Meanwhile, personal identity is the characteristics and social position belonging to a particular person which make that person different from other people. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) propose five principles for the analysis of identity as apparent in linguistic interaction: emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness participle. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that indexicality principle is concerned with a mechanism whereby identity is constituted. This mechanism is fundamental to the way in which linguistic devices are used to construct identity. They include labels, implicatures, stances, styles, and entire languages and varieties.

### **A. Label**

Label is how a person identifies himself or others. McDonald describes label as a metaphoric word or phrase that defines the labeled individual's identity and constructs the relationship between the labeled and the labeler (as cited in Plangger et al., 2013). The term can be defined as a word or phrase used to identify or describe the characteristics or qualities of a person and group such as "white", "African-American", "smart", "poor", and "gay".

There are two ways for a person or group getting a label (Galinsky, 2003). They are label by self and label by others. Label by self means that people choose a label to themselves. Meanwhile, label by others means a label attached to them given by their society. Label possesses both positive and negative value. Its effect is varied depending on the respond of each person and society toward that label. However, not all labels attached to a person truly describe him/her. In reality, a labeled person has a little choice or opportunity to oppose what is attached to him/her rather than to accept it. Therefore, a label put on a person gradually influences his/her behavior and changes his/her identity.

Galinsky et al. (2003) argue that there are three kinds of responds for combating the negative implications of derogatory labels. The first is ignoring the label. The second is re-label (renaming) by deciding to use a different label altogether refer to oneself or one's group. This is important for situations in which a name or label develops negative connotations over time, and where label change can be accomplished legally. For example, the airlines USAir changed its name to USAirways because they have high profile crashes. The third is re-appropriation or revaluing an existing label.

For example, a label “queer” as a self-label for proud gay men and lesbians previously had been a resented epithet.

## **B. Stance**

According to Du Bois (2007), stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the socio cultural field. Du Bois characterizes stance as social action in the following terms: “I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and align with you.”

There are 3 kinds of stance related to Du Bois (2007). They are evaluation, positioning, and alignment.

### **1. Evaluation**

Evaluation can be defined as the process whereby a stancetaker orients to an object of stance and characterizes it as having some specific quality or value (Du Bois, 2007). For example, “That’s horrible”, “That’s ideal”, and “That’s nasty”.

### **2. Positioning**

Positioning can be defined as the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking socio cultural value (Du Bois, 2007). There are two kinds of positioning. They are affective positioning and epistemic positioning.

#### **a) Affective Positioning**

Affective is the speaker’s feeling about a proposition, an utterance, or a text (Irvine, 2009). For example, “I’m glad”, “I’m so glad”, and “I’m just amazed”. Chindamo et al. (2012) present an overview of the lexicogrammatical features connected with affective stance suggested by Biber and Finegan as below:

- Adverbs: e.g., amazingly, importantly, surprisingly, happily
- Stance complement clauses controlled by verbs: e.g., expect, hope, worry, enjoy, fear, feel, hope, wish, hate, love
- Stance complement clauses controlled by adjectives: e.g., amazed/amazing, shocked, surprised, afraid, disappointed, glad, happy, sorry
- Stance complement clauses controlled by nouns: e.g., hope, view, thought, view, grounds

## **b) Epistemic Positioning**

Epistemic stance is the speaker's degree of commitment to a proposition (Irvine, 2009). It concerns with the truth-value of a proposition and the speaker's degree of commitment to it. For example: "I know" and "I don't know". Chindamo et al. (2012) also present an overview of the lexicogrammatical features connected with epistemic stance suggested by Biber and Finegan as below:

- Adverbs:
  - expressing certainty: e.g., actually, certainly, in fact
  - expressing likelihood/doubt: e.g., possibly, perhaps
- Modals: might, may, should, could
- Stance complement clauses controlled by verbs:
  - expressing certainty: e.g., conclude, determine, know
  - expressing likelihood/doubt: e.g., believe, doubt, think
- Stance complement clauses controlled by adjectives:
  - expressing certainty: e.g., certain, clear, obvious, sure
  - expressing likelihood/doubt: e.g., (un)likely, possible
- Stance complement clauses controlled by nouns:
  - expressing certainty: e.g., conclusion, fact, observation,
  - expressing likelihood/doubt: e.g., assumption, claim

## **c) Alignment**

Alignment can be defined as the act of calibrating the relationship between two stances, and by implication between two stancetakers (Du Bois, 2007). For example, "I agree". Alignment can be divided into alignment, the stancetaker takes a positive pole toward others, and disalignment, the stancetaker takes a negative pole toward others. Pickering and Garrod (2006) argue that interlocutors show alignment in five ways. They are alignment via beliefs about one's interlocutor, imitation, agreement between interlocutors, feedback, and physical co-presence.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

In conducting the study, the writer applied Discourse Analysis to analyze Mikhail's utterances in *the Zahir* novel. Descriptive research was used in order to identify, classify, and describe Mikhail's utterances which contain the use of label and stance-taking. According to Tavakoli (2012), descriptive research attempts to look at individuals, groups, institutions, methods and materials in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyze, and interpret the entities and the events that constitute their various fields of inquiry. The study only used human instrument. The writer was the main instrument to collect the data. The data were collected by reading *the Zahir* novel and selecting only Mikhail's utterances. Meanwhile, the collected data

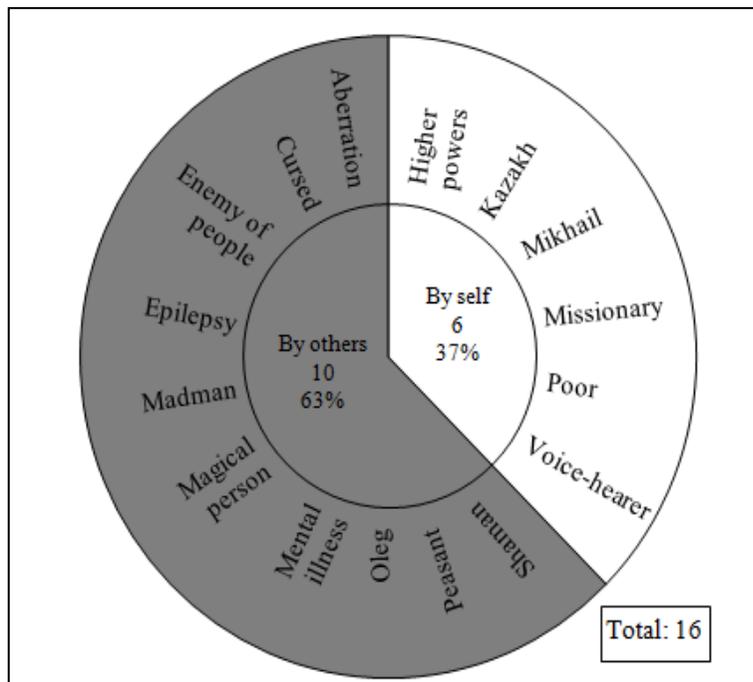
were analyzed by identifying the use of label and stance-taking, classifying them based on each type of labels and stances, describing the classified data, and drawing a conclusion.

#### 4. FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis, the writer finds linguistic devices, label and stance, which construct Mikhail’s personal identity. Label is divided into two categories. They are label by self and label by others. Meanwhile, stance consists of three types. They are evaluation, positioning (affective and epistemic), and alignment.

##### A. Label

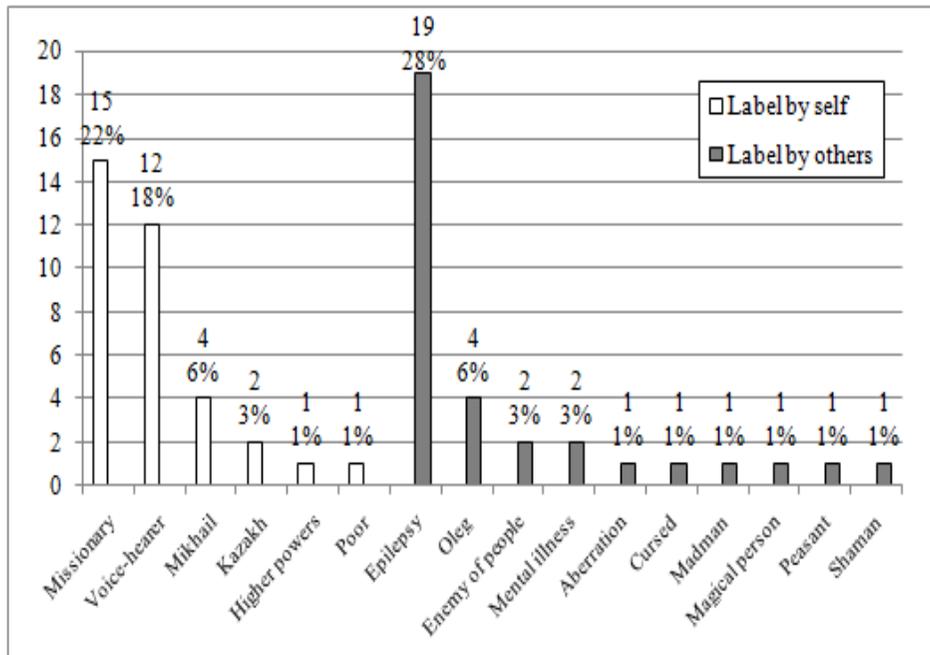
McDonald describes label as a metaphoric word or phrase that defines the labeled individual’s identity and constructs the relationship between the labeled and the labeler (as cited in Plangger et al., 2013). Referring to the result of the analyzed data on Mikhail’s utterances, there are 16 labels attached to him. Those labels are categorized based on the labels put by self (Mikhail) and by others (his society).



**Figure 1 Mikhail’s labels**

From the data taken in figure 1, there are 6 data or 37% labels attached to Mikhail put by him. They are “higher powers”, “Kazakh”, “Mikhail”,

“missionary”, “poor”, and “voice-hearer”. On the contrary, there are 10 data or 63% labels attached to Mikhail put by others. It is almost double the number of labels than by self. They are “aberration”, “cursed”, “enemy of people”, “epilepsy”, “madman”, “magical person”, “mental illness”, “Oleg”, “peasant”, and “shaman”. The frequency of use of each label is presented in figure 2.



**Figure 2 Mikhail’s labels frequency and percentage**

In figure 2 above the white bars signifies Mikhail’s labels put by him, whereas the grey bars signifies his labels put by others or his society. Among all labels attached to him, “epilepsy” has the highest frequency (19 times or 28%). Meanwhile “higher power”, “poor”, “aberration”, “cursed”, “madman”, “magical person”, “peasant”, and “shaman” have the lowest frequency (each used only once or 1%).

Among labels put by Mikhail himself, “missionary” is the most frequently used. It constitutes 15 times or 22%. It indicates that Mikhail more often uses the label to construct his personal identity. Whereas “higher powers” and “poor” is the least frequently used. It constitutes only once or 1%. Apart from “missionary”, the highest frequent label is “voice-hearer”. It is used 12 times or 18%. “Mikhail” and “Kazakh” are used respectively 4 times or 6% and twice or 3%.

Among labels put by others, “epilepsy” is the most frequently used. It constitutes 19 times or 28%. It indicates that “epilepsy” is commonly used by his society to identify him. It is followed by “Oleg” (4 times or 6%), “enemy of people”, and “mental illness” (each used twice or 3%). The least frequent labels are used only once or 1%. They are “aberration”, “cursed”, “madman”, “magical person”, “peasant”, and “shaman”.

The explanation of each label regarding Mikhail’s personal identity construction through the use of label will be presented in order of the highest frequent to the smallest frequent labels put by self (Mikhail) and his society.

## **B. Mikhail’s Labels Given by Self**

There are six labels used by Mikhail to identify him. They are “missionary”, “voice-hearer”, “Mikhail”, “Kazakh”, “higher powers”, and “poor”. Below are some examples of his labels given by him.

### **1) Missionary**

“Missionary” is a person undertaking a mission and especially a religious mission. Mikhail implicitly labels himself as “missionary” by saying, “I’m **a person with a mission**” (p. 64). Mikhail only identifies himself as “missionary” during his stay with Paris people. He decides to keep the mission until he meets Esther. Later, he dares to openly speak about his mission in Paris. It is the most significant label in constructing his personal identity. Among the labels given by him, it has the highest frequency (15 times or 22%). The label carries a positive value to him. It also plays a positive role on the success of his career as well as “voice-hearer”.

### **2) Voice-hearer**

Mikhail implicitly labels himself as “voice-hearer” to Kazakh steppes people and Paris people by claiming that he can hear a voice.

#### **Excerpt (1)**

“We (Mikhail and his mother) wake early and, when we  
arrive, the girl appears, but my mother cannot see her. My 1  
mother tells me to ask the girl something about my (dead) 2  
father...I do as she requests, and then, for the first time, I 3  
**hear the voice**. The girl does not move her lips, but I know 4  
she is talking to me: **She says** that my father is fine and is 5  
watching over us, and that he is being rewarded now for all  
his sufferings on earth.” (page 106)

Excerpt 1 is taken from his conversation with the character I and the beggars in Paris. He tells them about the first time he hears the voice. In line 3, “**the voice**” belongs to the little girl. He claims to know the condition of

dead people through the voice (lines 4-5). Besides this ability, he also claims to know the feeling of the character I by saying, “**The voice is telling me something now**. I know that you’re anxious and frightened.” (p. 84)

“Voice-hearer” is the second highest frequency (12 times or 18%). The label has a positive value. It defines Mikhail as having an extraordinary ability. The use of the label has a great deal of positive and negative effects on his position in his societies. It leads the emergence of new labels created by some people in the communities. Some Kazakh steppes people such as the hunter and poor villagers respect his presence. They regard him as “shaman” and “magical person”. Meanwhile the others such as the Communists, devout Muslims, and well educated people cannot accept him. The village people label him “aberration”, the headmaster labels him “mental illness”, and the Communist label him “enemy of people”. He also faces some discriminatory ill-treatment because of his claim, for example, being expelled from school, dismissed from his job, and betrayed by people he has helped.

On the other hand, Paris people tend to give a positive response. People who do not believe in his claim prefer to ignore him, whereas the others more appreciate him. The appreciation has some contributions to his career success in Paris. His weekly performance in a restaurant gets a lot of audiences. He successfully founds his community among people in the restaurant, a group of beggars, and a group of new nomads.

### 3) Mikhail

“Mikhail” is a name chosen by him when he decides to change his name. Since he moves to Paris, he introduces himself to other people as “Mikhail” instead of “Oleg”.

#### Excerpt (2)

Marie:	“What’s your name?”	1
Mikhail:	“ <b>Mikhail</b> .” (page 42)	2

Excerpt 2 is taken when he attends to a book signing in order to meet the character I. Marie is a character I’s girlfriend. It is the first time for her and other people in the book signing to see Mikhail. When Marie asks his name, he answers with “**Mikhail**” instead of his real name “Oleg”. In other occasion he explains to the character I about his decision to change his name.

#### Excerpt (3)

“**Mikhail** is the name I chose when I decided to be reborn to 1  
life. Like the warrior archangel, with his fiery sword, opening 2  
up a path so that... the ‘warriors of light’ can find each other. 3  
That is my mission.” (page 65)

Galinsky et al. (2003) assert that individuals will change their names and seek to dissociate from their disreputable past. Mikhail's concept of reborn to life (in line 1) indicates his aim to become a new person. He begins using a new name by labeling himself "Mikhail" to construct a new identity in order distance himself from his disreputable past and derogatory labels such as "epilepsy" and "enemy of people".

In addition to construct his personal identity, Mikhail's labels given by self have other functions such as to share national identity (e.g. Kazakh), describe his condition (e.g. poor), and combat some derogatory labels (e.g. Mikhail). Mikhail's changing name from "Oleg" to "Mikhail" is considered to be one of Galinsky et al.'s (2003) responds to stigmatizing labels. Galinsky et al. have suggested that re-labeling or renaming is a second way for combating the negative implication of derogatory labels. For example, Jeff Gilloley, the man who orchestrated the attack on skater Nancy Kerrigan during the Olympic trials, legally changed his name to Jeff Stone. Mikhail uses this strategy, re-labeling, to construct his new identity as well as to distance himself from some bad experiences and derogatory labels attached to him in past.

A label not only has a positive or negative value, but also has one or both of positive and negative impact to the labeled life. A label such as "voice-hearer" carries a positive value, having an extraordinary ability. In fact, it also brings some negative and positive impacts for Mikhail's life. The use of the label has successfully influenced some people in his village to respect his presence such as the hunters and poor villagers. In addition, it has some contributions to his career success in Paris as well as the use of "missionary" label. Apart from its positive impacts, it leads some discrimination and causes the emergence of other labels given by others such as "enemy of people" and "mental illness".

Based on the labels used by Mikhail to identify him, it can be concluded that he is an arrogant person. Ryan (1983) argues that arrogance is a form of positive self-reference that is motivated by anxiety and requires a person to resist the acquisition of information about self and therefore to resist change. Among six labels put by him, five labels have positive value. They are "higher powers", "Kazakh", "Mikhail", "missionary", and "voice-hearer". Mikhail confesses that the use of "higher powers" label to Almaty people instead of "voice-hearer" is influenced by his traumatic experiences during his stay with Kazakh steppes people. It indicates that the use of the label is motivated by his anxiety. He also refuses the derogatory labels given by his society such as "epilepsy". He prefers to keep label himself with "voice-hearer". It means that he cannot accept any negative view from other people.

### **C. Mikhail's Labels Given by Others**

There are 10 labels used by others (Mikhail's society) to identify him. They are "epilepsy", "Oleg", "enemy of people", "mental illness", "aberration", "cursed", "madman", "magical person", "peasant", and "shaman". Below are some examples of his labels given by others.

## 1. Epilepsy

Mikhail is firstly diagnosed with "epilepsy" by a doctor at the age of nearly fifteen years old when he still lives in the village:

### Excerpt (4)

"One day, she (his mother) takes me to see a doctor who is visiting the area. After listening attentively to my story, taking notes, peering into my eyes with a strange instrument, listening to my heart, and tapping my knee, **he diagnoses a form of epilepsy**. He says it isn't contagious and that the attacks will diminish with age. I know it isn't an **illness**, but I pretend to believe him so as to reassure my mother." (page 110)

In line 3, the doctor diagnoses him suffered from epilepsy. However, Mikhail does not blindly accept the diagnosis. He says that it is not an illness. It means that he believes that what he has experienced is not an epileptic fit.

Mikhail refuses to be labeled "epilepsy" by labeling himself as "voice-hearer". However, label "epilepsy" continued to attach on him put by some Almaty people such as his boss at garage (p. 110) and Paris people such as the owner of a pizzeria (p. 68). The sustainability of his seizure caused some people continued to label him "epilepsy".

"Epilepsy" label has the highest frequency among all labels. It is used 19 times or 28%. It is not only used by Kazakh steppes people but also Almaty people and Paris people. The label carries negative value. He is regarded as abnormal person. Therefore, he is only accepted by minority groups such as the hunter of the steppes and the beggars in Paris. The label also causes him experiencing some discrimination and getting difficult to look for a job.

## 2. Cursed

"Cursed" is a label given by Kazakh steppes people. It carries a negative connotation. It identifies Mikhail as a person who always carries or causes bad things happened. It is only used once:

### Excerpt (5)

"Since I have nowhere to go and study... I become a shepherd. 1  
During the first week, one of the sheep dies and a rumor goes 2  
around that I'm **cursed**, that I'm the son of a man who came 3

from far away and promised my mother great wealth, then 4  
ended up leaving us nothing” (page 109).

In excerpt 5, Mikhail tells about how he gets the label to the character I and the beggars in Paris. The label emerges after the sheep that he herds dies (lines 1-2). People in his village relate it to his father’s lie in the past. They assume that it is a part of his punishment, so they identify him as “**cursed**”.

### 3. Enemy of People

“Enemy of people” is put by Kazakh steppes people especially the Communists. Mikhail tells the character I and the beggars in Paris that after he is expelled from school, he becomes a shepherd. Unfortunately, during the first week, one of the sheep dies. People believe that he is cursed because of his father’s lie. The label “cursed” that attached to him makes the owner of sheep worried. Then, he continues his story:

#### Excerpt (6)

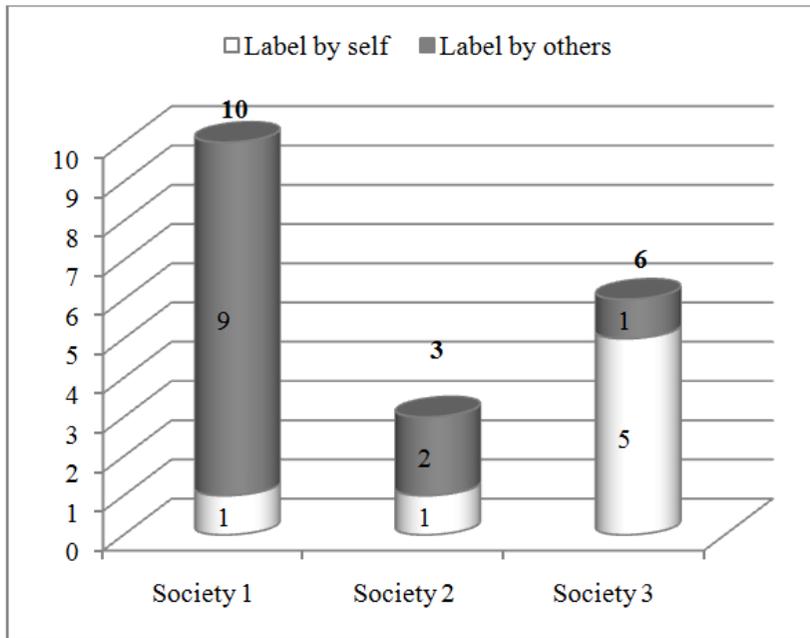
“One day, he (the owner of the sheep) decides to go to the 1  
Communist Party office in the next village, where he learns 2  
that both I and my mother are considered to be **enemies of the** 3  
**people**. I am immediately dismissed.” (p. 109).

In excerpt 6 Mikhail explains the label “enemy of people” not only attached to him but also to his mother. The label has negative impact on his life. He loses his job as a shepherd and becomes unemployed after the Communists label him as “**enemy of people**”.

As a result, among ten labels attached to Mikhail given by others, two labels have positive values (“Oleg” and “magical person”). Meanwhile, 8 labels have negative values (“epilepsy”, “enemy of people”, “mental illness”, “aberration”, “cursed”, “madman”, “peasant”, and “shaman”). Galinsky et al. (2003) argue that stigma is said to exist when individuals possess (or are believed to possess) some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context. Mikhail’s labels such as “epilepsy” and “cursed” have discredited him among society. Those labels also make him difficult to get a permanent job. Besides, he is not fully accepted by society and, sometimes, he should face some discrimination. Therefore, based on the number of those negative values and implications for his life, his societies regard him as stigmatized person. It is triggered by Galinsky et al.’s (2003) view that to be stigmatized often means to be economically disadvantaged, to be the target of negative stereotypes, and to be rejected interpersonally.

During Mikhail’s stay with the three societies (Kazakh steppes people, Almaty people, and Paris people), he always earns label. Sometimes the

labels keep attached to him such as “epilepsy” and sometimes it is used only by certain community or society such as “aberration”. It also applies to the labels created by himself.



**Figure 3 Mikhail’s labels in the societies**

From the data shown in figure 3, there are three categories: Society 1 (Kazakh steppes people), Society 2 (Almaty people), and Society 3 (Paris people); and there are two series: label by self (Mikhail) and label by others (his society).

In the first society there are 10 labels attached to Mikhail, 1 label by self (“voice-hearer”) and 9 labels by others (“aberration”, “cursed”, “enemy of people”, “epilepsy”, “madman”, “magical person”, “mental illness”, “Oleg”, and “shaman”). In the second society there are 3 labels attached to him, 1 label by self (“higher powers”) and 2 labels by others (“epilepsy” and “peasant”). Meanwhile in the third society there are 6 labels attached to Mikhail, 5 labels by self (“Kazakh”, “Mikhail”, “missionary”, “poor”, and “voice-hearer”) and 1 labels by others (“epilepsy”).

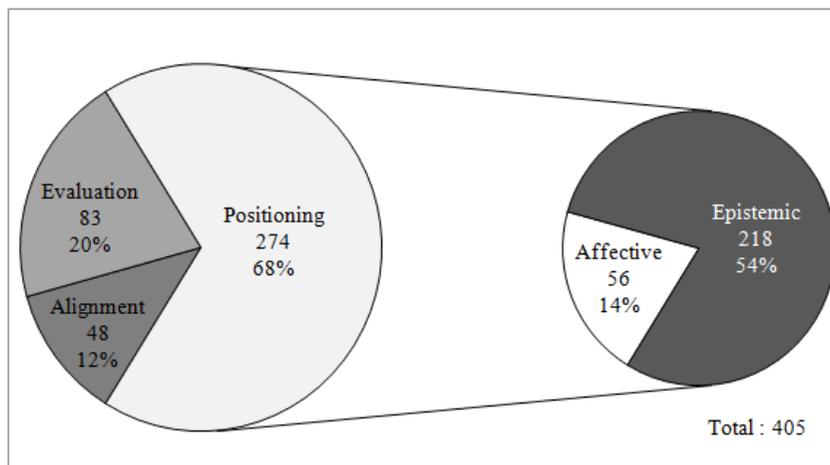
Based on the chart, Mikhail puts the highest number of labels on himself during his stay with Paris people (5 labels) and the lowest number of labels during his stay with Kazakh steppes people (1 label) and Almaty People (1 label). Meanwhile for the labels given by others, he gets the highest number of labels during his stay with Kazakh steppes people (9 labels) and the lowest number of labels during his stay with Paris people (1 label). It has been discovered that his moving to Paris successfully reduces derogatory labels.

He has more courage to identify himself with a variety of positive labels in a new society. As a result, the more he puts labels on himself, the less he gets labels from others.

## STANCE

In this part, the writer presents the analyzed data of Mikhail's utterances based on Du Bois's theory of stance. Stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the socio-cultural field (Du Bois, 2007). There are three types of stance acts. They are evaluation, positioning (epistemic and affective), and alignment. The following figure illustrates the findings in term of Mikhail's stancetakings.

In Figure 4, it can be seen that positioning stance is the most frequently used. It constitutes 274 data or 68%. It consists of two other types of stances, affective (56 data or 14%) and epistemic (218 data or 54%). Meanwhile the least frequent stance is alignment. It constitutes only 48 data or 12%. Evaluative stance is in the middle frequency which constitutes 83 data or 20%. The results will be presented in order of evaluation, positioning (epistemic and affective), and alignment.



**Figure 4 Mikhail's Stancetakings**

## EVALUATION

Evaluation is the process whereby a stancetaker orients to an object of stance and characterizes it as having some specific quality or value (Du Bois, 2007). The number of Mikhail's utterances containing evaluative stance are eighty three data (20%). Here are some examples of Mikhail's evaluative stance:

### Excerpt (7)

- The publisher: “He (character I) never usually invites anyone! 1  
Come on, let’s all go and have supper!” 2  
3
- Mikhail: “**It’s very kind of you**, but I have a meeting I go to  
every Thursday.” (page 42)

In utterance “**It’s very kind of you**”, the stance object that Mikhail evaluates is “you”. It refers to “the publisher”. Meanwhile the pronoun “it” has a function as expletive subject. The stance implies a positive judgment regarding the publisher’s generosity by requesting Mikhail to join.

### Excerpt (8)

- Mikhail: “Put the oil in the pan, but first offer it up to the 1  
Lady. Apart from salt, **it’s our most valuable** 2  
**commodity.**” (page 180)

In contrast to the previous example, the pronoun “it” in “**it’s our most valuable commodity**” stands for the object of evaluative stance. It refers to “the oil”. Mikhail uses evaluative predicate “our most valuable commodity” to give a positive value as well as the salt. The following example is evaluative stance toward a social issue.

### Excerpt (9)

- Mikhail: “**It was a bit of a waste of time for you really and a** 1  
**great opportunity to catch pneumonia.** I hope you 2  
realize that it was just his way of showing you how 3  
welcome you are.” (page 180)

Excerpt 9 is taken from his conversation with the character I. Mikhail evaluates his dedication ceremony. The ceremony is one of steppes culture. The object of stance “it” refers to “the dedication ceremony”. Mikhail evaluates the dedication ceremony by asserting two evaluative predicates. The first predicate “a bit of a waste of time for you really” indicates that it is unnecessary. The adjective “really” expresses his certainty of its unnecessary. The second predicate “a great opportunity to catch pneumonia” indicates his assumption of the bad effect of the ceremony on the character I’s health. The adjective “great” expresses his belief in strong possibility of catching pneumonia. The use of two adjectives “really” and “great” strengthens his evaluative predicates.

In summary, Mikhail's evaluative stance object covers people, things, and social phenomena. His evaluations consist of positive and negative value. It depends on his view toward the object.

## POSITIONING

Positioning is the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking socio cultural value (Du Bois, 2007). The number of Mikhail's utterances containing positioning stances are two hundreds and seventy four data (68%). The data are further divided into two types, those containing affective positioning and those containing epistemic positioning.

## AFFECTIVE POSITIONING

Affective is the speaker's feeling about a proposition, an utterance, or a text (Irvine, 2009). Mikhail's affective positioning stances are 56 data or 14%. There are three kinds of lexical features of Mikhail's affective stance predicate. They are verb, adjective, and noun. The lexical features are categorized as follow:

- Verbs : want, miss, feel, need, admire, sense, respect, like, regret, hope
- Adjectives: afraid, sorry, alone, amazed, worried, frightened, surprised, welcome, free, tired
- Nouns : state, love

Below are the examples of some Mikhail's affective stances controlled by verb, adjective, and noun:

### Excerpt (10)

Mikhail: "As long as you pay for my ticket, of course. I **need** to 1  
go back to Kazakhstan. I **miss** my country." (page 140) 2

In the above utterance there are two affective stances taken by Mikhail, "I **need** to go back to Kazakhstan" and "I **miss** my country". Both stance utterances index personal pronoun "I" as the stancetaker. They are followed by affective verb "need" and "miss", indexing the affective predicate. The first affective predicate expresses Mikhail's feeling: the need. The object of stance is "to go back to Kazakhstan". Meanwhile the second expresses his feeling: missing. The object of stance is "my country". Both affective predicates position Mikhail along an affective scale either "need something" or "miss something".

### Excerpt (11)

Mikhail: “**I am amazed** at the cars, the huge buildings, the neon signs, the escalators and—above all—the elevators.” 1  
(page 111) 2

In excerpt 11, Mikhail expresses his amazement at the cars, the huge buildings, and so on. He positions himself affectively by choosing a position along an affective adjective “amazed”. Mikhail performs the stancetaker, while “the cars, the huge buildings, the neon signs, the escalators and—above all—the elevators” becomes the stance object. The affective predicate is an adjective “amazed”.

### Excerpt (12)

Mikhail: “**I am in love with her**, with this woman I have only 1  
known for a matter of hours.” (page 112) 2

The bold words below index an affective stance. The stancetaker is the personal pronoun “I” that refers to Mikhail. The stance object is “her” that refers to “Esther”. Mikhail uses a noun “love”, a stance predicate, to express his deep affection feeling.

Hence, Mikhail performs affective stances in order to express his feeling and position himself along with the affective scale. The use of affective predicate is varied including verb, adjective, and noun. Meanwhile his object of stance includes the things, people, and places.

## EPISTEMIC POSITIONING

Epistemic stance is the speaker’s degree of commitment to a proposition (Irvine, 2009). It concerns the truth-value of a proposition and the speaker’s degree of commitment to it. Mikhail’s epistemic positioning stances are 218 data or 54%. The frequency is the highest among all distinction stances. The lexical features of Mikhail’s epistemic stance consist of adjective, adverb, conjunction, modal, noun, preposition, pronoun, and verb.

- Adjectives:
  - expressing certainty: sure, familiar, impossible, necessary
  - expressing uncertainty: possible
- Adverbs:
  - expressing certainty: really, exactly, of course, in fact, always, completely, entirely, obviously, properly
  - expressing uncertainty: perhaps, possibly, almost
- Verbs:

- expressing certainty: know, realize, say, understand, see, tell, look, believe, happen, notice, recognize, find, reckon
- expressing uncertainty: doubt, think, seem, suggest
- Modals: may, can, will, might, could, would, must
- Conjunction: whenever
- Noun: reason
- Preposition: according to
- Pronouns: all, anyone, everyone, no one

Below are the examples of Mikhail's epistemic stances:

### Excerpt (13)

Character I: "I need a bath. I need to change my clothes." 1

Mikhail: "**That's impossible**. You're in the middle of the steppes." (page 180) 2

Based on the conversation above, Mikhail performs epistemic stance by uttering "**that's impossible**". He expresses his degree of certainty that proposed information from the character I, taking bath and changing clothes, is unable to be done. Mikhail positions himself along with epistemic scale certainty using adjective "impossible". The stance predicate consists of one linguistic feature, an adjective. The next example presents epistemic stance using two linguistic features.

### Excerpt (14)

The beggar: "Did she never tell you her name?" 1

Mikhail: "Never. But it doesn't matter because **I always know** when she's talking to me." (page 107) 2  
3

The epistemic stance "**I always know**" consists of an adverb and verb. The adverb "always" is used to modify the value of epistemic verb "know". By uttering the epistemic stance, Mikhail positions himself along a strong epistemic scale as knowledgeable.

Chindamo et al. (2012) argue that yes/no or tag question and expressing one's opinion can apply epistemic scale. It is in line with the findings:

### Excerpt (15)

Character I: "What's she doing?" 1

Mikhail: “Do you really want to know?” 2  
 Character I: “Yes, I do.” (page 62) 3

The use of yes/no question above expresses Mikhail’ doubt about the question given by the character I. Mikhail’s question implies his request for confirmation from the character I. It indexes a certain degree of epistemic scale: likelihood or doubt.

**Excerpt (16)**

Mikhail: “Everyone thinks I’m just having an epileptic fit, and I let them believe that because it’s easier.” (page 84) 1  
 2

According to Chindamo et al.’s (2012) report, the phrase “everyone thinks” indicates Mikhail’s degree of certainty by claiming all people involved to do the same thing. It is similar with his utterance:

**Excerpt (17)**

Mikhail: “Whenever I say where I was born, about ten minutes later people are saying that I’m from Pakistan or Afghanistan” (page 44) 1  
 2

The use of subordinating conjunction “whenever” also indicates his degree of certainty. He claims that his opinion has been supported by regular facts. However, both conjunction (whenever) and pronoun (everyone) cannot stand alone to present an epistemic stance. The pronoun needs a verb, whereas conjunction should connect a dependent clause to an independent clause. For example, in excerpt 16, the phrase “everyone thinks” consists of pronoun “everyone” and verb “thinks”. The phrase indicates Mikhail’s degree of certainty by claiming all people involved in doing the same thing. Chindamo et al. (2012) write:

*Martin and White point out how appealing to common opinions might have a relational function: for example, in the utterance “Everyone knows the banks are greedy” (page 100) the phrase “everyone knows” introduces a degree of certainty by claiming consensual support for the speaker’s claim. (page 619)*

Meanwhile in excerpt 17 dependent clause “whenever I say where I was born” consists of subordinating conjunction “whenever”. It has a function as adverbial clause. The whole *whenever* clause answers the

question “when people are saying that I’m from Pakistan or Afghanistan?” The example also indicates Mikhail’s degree of certainty. He claims that his opinion has been supported by regular facts.

Based on the examples above, Mikhail tends to express the degree of certainty. It means that he usually speaks with confidence. Therefore, his speech is more powerful than other characters.

## ALIGNMENT

Alignment can be defined as the act of calibrating the relationship between two stances, and by implication between two stancetakers (Du Bois, 2007). The number of Mikhail’s utterances containing alignment stance are forty eight data (12%). It consists of alignment and disalignment. Mikhail takes alignment stance via imitation, feedback, and agreement. Meanwhile for disalignment, he takes the stance via changing topic, disagreement, and refusal. Below are the examples of Mikhail’s alignment stances, both alignment and disalignment:

### Excerpt (18)

The publisher:	“So it’s a place where no one can complain about the lack of space, then,”	1 2
Mikhail:	<b>“It’s a place where, during the last century, no one had the right to complain about anything, even if they wanted to. (page 44)”</b>	3

In order to provide a clear explanation, the writer adapts Du Bois’s (2007) diagraph as follows:

The publisher:	It’s a place where	no one	can complain	about the lack of space
Mikhail:	<b>It’s a place where,</b>	<b>during the last century,</b>	<b>no one had the right to complain</b>	<b>about anything</b>

The diagraph shows that Mikhail uses a similar utterance with the publisher. Concerning some divergent such as appositive, it does not influence the notion of its alignment. Du Bois (2007) argues that if the stancetaker uses a lexically identical utterance, the effect would likely somewhat strange.

Mikhail’s use of term “epileptic fit” in his utterance: “I only have ‘**epileptic fits**’ at moments when I am under great nervous strain” (page 118)

also indicates alignment stance. He uses the same term “epileptic fit” like other people. The next example is disagreement stance via disagreement.

### Excerpt (19)

Character I: “I could start with some small talk about the 1  
success of *A Time to Rend and a Time to Sew* or 2  
the contradictory emotions I felt last night as I 3  
watched your performance.” 4  
Mikhail: “**It’s not a performance, it’s a meeting.** We 5  
tell stories and we dance in order to feel the  
energy of love.” (page 60)

In Mikhail’s stance utterance “**It’s not a performance, it’s a meeting**”, the personal pronoun “it” refers to “your performance” uttered by the character I. The negation “not” asserts his disagreement with the character I. He takes a negative pole (disalignment) in term of alignment. Later, he corrects his interlocutor’s misperception by stating “**it’s a meeting**”.

It is undeniable that an utterance can contain two or all three kinds of stances as in the following example (taken from Du Bois, 2007):

### Excerpt (20)

Sam: “I don’t like those” 1  
Angela: “**I don’t (like those) either.**” (page 166) 2

Du Bois explains:

*As for the three stance actions, in these data, the verb specifies both the evaluation of the object and the positioning of the subject, so the two labels are combined in a single column. Angela’s use of the word either indexes alignment, taking account of the fact that Angela’s stance utterance is a stance follow which builds dialogically off of Sam’s prior stance lead. (p. 166)*

Mikhail’s utterance below also performs the three stances:

### Excerpt (21)

Character I: “I know that I’ll emerge bruised and battered, like 1  
the master who wanted to sit between the buffalo’s 2  
horns, but I deserve it. I deserve it because of the 3

pain I inflicted, however unconsciously. I don't 4  
believe Esther would have left me if I had respected 6  
her love."

**"You understand nothing,"** (page 57)

Mikhail:

In **"You understand nothing"**, Mikhail evaluates his interlocutor (the character I) and positions himself by giving epistemic value to his object of stance as ignorant. The utterance indexes alignment, particularly, in term of disalignment via disagreement. The character I implicitly says that he is knowledgeable by using verb "know". Mikhail takes a negative pole, disagreeing his statement. In sum, while Mikhail evaluates the character I, he positions himself. As he positions himself, he disaligns with the character I.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings show that Mikhail calibrates his relation to his interlocutor by taking alignment and disalignment. Mikhail takes alignment stance via imitation, feedback, and agreement. Meanwhile for disalignment, he takes the stance via changing topic, disagreement, and refusal. His disalignment has higher frequency than his alignment. It constitutes 32 times, whereas his alignment only constitutes 16 times. Since alignment is the act of calibrating the relationship between two stances, the high frequency of disalignment indicates his tendency to take a negative pole toward his interlocutor. Mikhail should have a strong mentality to express what he feels, thinks, or wants although it is contrary to what his interlocutors do. The writer concludes that he usually speaks with confidence. Therefore, his speech is more powerful than other characters. Thus, by taking epistemic and alignment stance, Mikhail successfully found his own community and become their spiritual leader.

To sum up, Mikhail constructs his personal identity by using some labels to identify himself among others and by taking some stances to evaluate the object, to position himself along affective scale or epistemic scale, and to align or disalign with his interlocutor.

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