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## Contents

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Tanzin Ara Ashraf, M.A. in English Literature Reading Comprehension Challenges Confronted by Saudi EFL Learners	1-11
M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D. Inspiring Speech of Gautam Adani To Students	12-13
Dr. Narendra Ranjan Malas, M.A., Ph.D. Emergence of Englishes and the Issues of Teaching English Pronunciation to Indian Learners	14-21
Debraj Gogoi, Ph.D. Scholar and Dr. Sweta Sinha, Ph.D. Linguistic Landscape of a North-East India Town: A Case Study of Sivasagar	22-36
M. Shajedul Arifeen Classroom Dynamics in EFLL Context: Does It Minimize Learner Anxiety and Develop Learner Autonomy in a Collaborative Learning Environment?	37-45
B. A. Mahalakshmi Prasad, M.A. An Analysis of Class X English Textbook Used in Madhya Pradesh Secondary School Board High Schools	46-52
B. A. Mahalakshmi Prasad, M.A. Journey into the Realm of Mathematics and Language	53-57
Mohammad Nazir Rohani, Seraj Ahmad Habibi and Said Ghulam Mohammad Hashmi The Prose System in the Poetry of Pashto: Scales of Pashto Poetry	58-68

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## Reading Comprehension Challenges Confronted by Saudi EFL Learners

**Tanzin Ara Ashraf, M.A. in English Literature**

[tanzen@kku.edu.sa](mailto:tanzen@kku.edu.sa)

**Department of Languages and Translation**

**King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia**

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### Abstract

This study is based on action research carried out in King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this study is to identify the major reading comprehension problems confronted by Saudi EFL learners. Some major problems include limited vocabulary, less exposure to target language, unrelated and monotonous reading material, increasing anxiety due to lack of understanding and poor teaching strategies. The research is conducted among the first year Business Administration, Chemistry, Computer Science and Mathematics majors of King Khalid University, studying Intensive English Program (Blended Course) as university requirement for 12 hours a week for 12 weeks. 84 non- English major students and 9 EFL teachers participated in this research. The study proposes some recommendations which might be beneficial for the teachers, moderators and policy makers.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension challenges, exposure to English, Saudi EFL learners, reading skill, teaching strategies

### Introduction

English was first introduced in the elementary level in Saudi Arabia in 2005. Prior to this it was taught only in intermediate and secondary levels. (Alamri, 2008; Al-Qahtani, 2010). Recently, English has been introduced in the primary level. The Ministry of Education has taken considerable measures to upgrade the level of teaching and learning English, yet enhancement is still required. Reading is considered as the most essential skills among the four language skills (Krashen & Brown, 2007). Reading can touch the soul of the reader. People read to learn, to gather information, to enjoy and to connect with other people's thoughts and ideas. Thus, reading comprehension is not an exception. In fact, identifying or understanding specific word or information does not define reading comprehension rather it helps readers to relate to the text by building a bridge between the readers and the messages that has been conveyed through the text. (Kintsch, 1998).

## Statement of the Problem

The Saudi EFL learners are not adequately efficient in all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Khan et al., 2019; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020; Shahbaz & Khan, 2017). However, reading can be termed as the most challenging skill for the EFL learners. Lack of understanding, limited vocabulary, poor grammatical skill, inability to comprehend new vocabulary and meaning are some of the major factors for which the learners struggle. A considerable number of studies have diagnosed similar problems such as Jdetawy, 2011; Nation, 2003; Al-Abdan, 1993. In addition, learner's inability to spell correctly escalates their reading comprehension challenges (Dewanti, 2020). Several studies have been conducted on the issue, but the problem still largely prevails.

## Purpose of the Study

1. To diagnose the reading comprehension problems confronted by the Saudi EFL learners.
2. To identify the major causes of these problems.

## Methodology

### *Participants*

A total of 84 students of King Khalid University of the departments of Business Administration, Chemistry, Computer Science and Mathematics of Sciences and Arts College of Sarat Abidah, around 6 EFL teachers teaching in different colleges of King Khalid University, 3 EFL teachers teaching in the schools of Sarat Abidah, Khamis and Abha participated in this study. The students were studying Intensive English Program (Blended Learning Course) as university requirement for 12 hours a week for 12 weeks. The enthusiastic students willingly participated and discussed their problems about their failure to comprehend reading texts. The learners even discussed possible solutions from their own point of views with the researcher. Teachers were interviewed and accordingly suggested possible and practical remedies.

### *Data Collection System*

Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with teachers, discussions, face to face and online classroom observations and the researcher's own experience were the main research tools for collecting data.

90 questionnaires were distributed, and 84 responses were returned. The questionnaire for the learners contained close-ended questions. It was thoughtfully designed to identify the challenges faced by the learners. The questionnaire was verified by experts and colleagues. The questionnaire consisted of 14 items.

The teachers were interviewed directly by the researcher.

The objectives of the survey required for the action research were explained in the appendices.

### ***Data Analysis***

Collected data were sorted and analyzed. The researchers own experience of more than a decade also contributed to the analysis of the data.

### **Results**

#### ***Questionnaire for EFL learners***

#### **Linguistic Challenges faced by learners:**

### Phycological challenges faced by the learners

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. I always think that I will not be able to understand the entire text.	(N=20) 23.80 %	(N=13) 15.47 %	(N=3) 3.4 %	(N=35) 41.66 %	(N=13) 15.47 %

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I find it difficult to figure out the meanings of the words of reading text.	(N=64) 76.19 %	(N=11) 13.09 %	(N=5) 5.9 %	(N=3) 3.5 %	(N=1) 1.19 %
2. I completely fail to understand the meaning of the text.	(N=12) 14.28 %	(N=25) 29.7 %	(N=7) 8.33 %	(N=14) 16.66 %	(N=26) 30.95 %
3. I fail to guess the meaning of a new or unfamiliar word.	(N=35) 41.66 %	(N=16) 19.04 %	(N=9) 10.71 %	(N=11) 13.09 %	(N=13) 15.47 %
4. I can identify the main idea/ supporting ideas of the text.	(N=4) 4.85 %	(N=3) 3.57 %	(N=5) 5.95 %	(N=33) 39.28 %	(N=39) 46.42 %
5. I want to translate the meaning from English to Arabic while doing a reading comprehension.	(N=67) 79.76%	(N=11) 13.09%	(N=0) 0%	(N=4) 4.76%	(N=2) 2.38%

7. I become frustrated when I fail to identify the meaning of a new word.	(N=61) 72.61 %	(N=12) 14.28 %	(N=7) 8.5 %	(N=2) 2.3 %	(N=2) 2.3 %
8. I get stressed as I find the allocated time is not sufficient to identify the meaning.	(N=69) 82.14 %	(N=13) 15.78 %	(N=0) 0 %	(N=1) 1.19 %	(N=1) 1.19 %
9. I get anxious if the reading comprehension is given from outside the textbook during exam.	(N=72) 85.71 %	(N=10) 11.90 %	(N=0) 0 %	(N=1) 1.19 %	(N=1) 1.19 %

### Challenges faced due to ineffective learning and teaching strategy

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. My English teacher uses English as a medium of instruction in the classroom.	(N=4) 4.7 %	(N=12) 14.28 %	(N=35) 41.66 %	(N=10) 11.90 %	(N=23) 27.38 %
11. I know how to scan / skim a text.	(N=3) 3.57%	(N=2) 2.38 %	(N=12) 14.28 %	(N=12) 14.28 %	(N=55) 65.47 %
12. I can identify the key	(N=6) 7.14 %	(N=3) 3.57 %	(N=29) 34.52 %	(N=14) 16.66 %	(N=32) 38.09 %

words while scanning a text.					
13. The reading comprehensions included in my textbooks are interesting and familiar.	(N=11) 13.09 %	(N=9) 10.71 %	(N=11) 13.09 %	(N=37) 44.04 %	(N=16) 19.04 %
14. I memorize answers of reading texts to pass the exam.	(N=49) 58.33 %	(N=24) 28.57 %	(N=3) 3.57 %	(N=4) 4.76 %	(N=4) 4.7 %

### ***Open ended questions for teachers***

1. What are the major reading comprehension challenges faced by Saudi EFL learners?
2. What are the possible causes?

### **Analysis**

*Item 1: I find it difficult to figure out the meanings of the words of reading text.*

In item 1, 76.19% of the participants strongly agree that it is difficult for them to identify the meaning of the words of reading comprehension. 13.09% of the participants agrees, 5.9% remains undecided, 3.5% disagrees and 1.19% strongly disagrees. The percentages indicate clearly that the majority of the learners face challenges to understand the meaning of the text due to having limited vocabulary.

*Item 2: I completely fail to understand the meaning of the text.*

In item 2, 14.28% strongly agrees and 29.7% agrees that they completely fail to understand the meaning of the text. 8.33% of the learners cannot decide. 16.66 % disagrees and 30.95% strongly disagrees. The percentages suggest that learners do possess some skills to understand the text as a whole.

*Item 3: I fail to guess the meaning of a new or unfamiliar word.*

In item 3, 41.66 % strongly agrees and 29.7% agrees that new vocabularies are difficult for learners to identify and understand. The percentages show that maximum learners do not have the ability to predict the meaning.

*Item 4: I can identify the main idea/ supporting ideas of the text.*



In item 4, 39.38% disagrees and 46.42% strongly disagrees, which highlight the fact that the learners do not have adequate ability or training to identify main idea / supporting ideas from given texts.

*Item 5: I want to translate the meaning from English to Arabic while doing a reading comprehension.*

In item 5, Maximum (79.76% strongly agrees and 13.09% agrees) learners want to translate the text from English to Arabic in order to comprehend the meaning.

*Item 6: I always think that I will not be able to understand the entire text.*

In item 6, the percentages indicate that majority of the learners do not lack the confidence to accomplish the task. 41.66% of the learners disagrees while 15.47% strongly disagrees.

*Item 7: I become frustrated when I fail to identify the meaning of a new word.*

In item 7, majority (72.61% strongly agrees and 14.28% agrees) accepted that they get frustrated when they fail to identify new vocabulary.

Item 8: I get stressed as I find the allocated time is not sufficient to identify the meaning.

In item 8, 82.14% of the participants strongly agree that they find the allocated time insufficient for them to accomplish their reading tasks and therefore get stressed.

*Item 9: I get anxious if the reading comprehension is given from outside the textbook.*

In item 9, 85.71 % of the learners strongly agree that if the reading texts are given from outside the textbook during exams, they suffer from anxiety.

*Item 10: My English teacher uses English as a medium of instruction in the classroom.*

In item 10, 4.7 % strongly agrees, 41.66% remains undecided while 27.38% strongly disagrees. The percentages suggest that teachers use both English and Arabic as mediums of instruction in EFL classrooms.

*Item 11: I know how to scan / skim a text.*

In item 11, only 3.75% strongly agrees and 2.38% agrees that they can skim and scan reading texts. Thus, highlighting the fact that majority lacks the skills of skimming and scanning.

Item 12: I can identify the key words while scanning a text.

In item 12, 7.14% strongly agrees while 16.66 % disagrees and 38.09% strongly disagrees. The percentages emphasize the need of proper training.

Item 13: The reading comprehensions included in my text books are interesting and familiar.

In item 13, 13.09% remains undecided, 44.04% disagrees and 19.04% strongly disagrees. Therefore, the percentages suggest that the materials used for teaching reading comprehension are not interesting enough to attract the Saudi EFL learners.

Item 14: I memorize answers of reading texts to pass the exam.

In item 14, 58.33% strongly agrees and 28.57% agrees which specify that fact that most of the learners learn the answers by heart instead of understanding.

### ***Observation of the teachers***

6 EFL teachers teaching in university and 3 EFL teachers teaching in schools were interviewed by the researcher. The teachers thoroughly discussed the issues related to poor reading skills of the learners. Nearly all of the teachers identified “lack of vocabulary”, “limited exposure to English”, “poor grammatical skills”, “learners’ unwillingness to learn the target language”, “ineffective teaching strategy” and “learners’ anxiety” as the common major factors. One teacher highlighted the fact that many of her learners failed to identify all the English alphabets. Another suggested that the learners must be trained to identify the sounds of English alphabets which will enable them to pronounce and spell correctly. In addition, the learners need to develop reading habits. Moreover, some teachers emphasized for adequate teacher training to teach reading skills. Incompetent teachers demotivate the learners to a great extent. At the same time some teachers suggested that the teaching materials should relate the students to their day to day lives and must be interesting.

### ***Observation of the researcher***

The researcher has been teaching English in Saudi Arabia for more than a decade which in fact enables her to identify the most challenging reading comprehension problems confronted by the Saudi EFL learners. She has become familiar with the Saudi culture and can understand their beliefs and attitude towards learning English. She finds that the learners are enthusiastic to learn the international language and understand the importance of learning this foreign language. However, poor teaching and learning strategies, unfamiliar and unattractive teaching materials demotivate the learners to learn the target language. Some learners suffer from anxiety when they fail to identify the meaning of new vocabularies. Due to having limited vocabulary the learners fail to comprehend the meaning of the texts. Resultantly, they keep losing their interests. Moreover, the learning materials fail to draw the attention of the learners of digital age. In addition, day to exposure of the target language is extremely limited for the learners. The learners who are appreciated to learn English at home tend to show better performance in reading skills. In the schools, the learners try to memorize the answers of the reading texts without understanding. In exams, reading texts are mostly selected from textbooks which have been previously solved in the classrooms. Therefore, the learners pass not by understanding but by memorizing. As a result, the aim of teaching reading skills remains unaccomplished even in the institutions. Furthermore, from

the beginning of primary level, the learners are never introduced with the sounds of the English alphabets which affects their ability to pronounce and spell correctly.

## **Findings**

### ***Lack of exposure to target language***

Due to the predominance of mother tongue, the Saudi EFL learners fail to get enough exposure to English in their day to day life. The young learners are rarely introduced to read English story books during their early age. In addition, even in EFL classrooms the teachers repeatedly switch to Arabic to give instructions. (Al-Nofaie,2010)

### ***Limited vocabulary***

Most of the learners suffer due to insufficient vocabulary. From the beginning of primary level, learners are not trained properly to learn vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary prevents them from comprehending the meaning of the given texts. (e.g., Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Nezami, 2012; Alkhawaldeh, 2012; Iqbal et al., 2015).

### ***Unrelated teaching material***

Selected textbooks are not sufficient enough to meet the requirements of the learners. The study materials should be relatable to the learners' day to day life. (Rahman, 2013). Boring textbooks demotivate the learners and therefore they keep losing their interests.

### ***Anxiety due to lack of understanding and insufficient time***

Learners face anxiety when they fail to extract the meaning from the text. (Qarqez & Ab-Rashid, 2017). During exams, due to possessing poor reading skills the learners feel stressed as they struggle to complete the given task within the allotted time. As a result, the learners suffer from frustration.

### ***Poor teaching strategies***

Poor and outdated teaching styles of the teachers are widely responsible for the reading challenges faced by the learners. While discussing the issues related to reading comprehension, many of the learners highlighted that fact that they lost interest in reading due to their teachers inadequate teaching strategies. In service training is a must to ensure updated teaching strategy. (Khan, 2011)

## **Recommendations**

1. Introduce English alphabet along with alphabet sounds from the beginning of primary level.
2. Teach vocabulary using updated and effective strategies.
3. Only English should be the medium of instructions in EFL classrooms.

4. Parents, institutions and the nation as a whole should ensure greater exposure to English in everyday life.
5. While designing or selecting teaching materials the learners' interests should be prioritized.
6. Learners should never be allowed to memorize reading comprehension answers.
7. Learners should be trained properly to tackle reading comprehension challenges.
8. Teachers should ensure friendly atmosphere in reading comprehension classes in order to deal with the anxiety of the learners.
9. Learners should be encouraged to develop reading habits both in English and Arabic.
10. English should not be considered as a subject required to pass only.

## Conclusion

Several studies have been conducted on reading comprehension issue. However, the problems still exist. Teachers, parents, moderators, and policy makers should work together to guarantee effective, up to date learning to the learners.

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	<p><b>Tanzin Ara Ashraf</b> M.A. in English Literature <a href="mailto:tanzin@kku.edu.sa">tanzin@kku.edu.sa</a> Department of Languages and Translation King Khalid University, Abha, Saudi Arabia</p>
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## Inspiring Speech of Gautam Adani To Students

M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

[msthirumalai2@gmail.com](mailto:msthirumalai2@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

On January 8, 2023, *The Hindu* newspaper published a very interesting and encouraging report with the heading “**Gautam Adani regrets not completing college education**”. Mr. Adani spoke at the 75th year celebrations of Vidya Mandir Trust Palanpur in Gujarat. The speech was encouraging to all, especially to young students in rural schools. Adani Group is the largest solar power company, “largest airport and sea port operator in India, nation's largest integrated energy player, country's second-largest cement manufacturer and a conglomerate with market capitalisation of over \$225 billion” ([https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/gautam-adani-says-regrets-not-completing-college-education/article66353089.ece?cx\\_testId=11&cx\\_testVariant=cx\\_1&cx\\_artPos=0&cx\\_experienceId=EXKW3XAQS9E#cxrecs\\_s](https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/gautam-adani-says-regrets-not-completing-college-education/article66353089.ece?cx_testId=11&cx_testVariant=cx_1&cx_artPos=0&cx_experienceId=EXKW3XAQS9E#cxrecs_s)).

I wanted to find out how 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in a Matric-Higher Secondary School (who will qualify to go to college) respond to his inspiring speech.

The Matric-Higher Secondary School (name withheld) is located in a low-income locality of the town. However, students from other middle-income groups also attend this school.

This is a co-educational School. Boys and girls are almost 50/50 attending this school. Among the students, 52% are from Islamic families. Students from Dalit communities and students from Most Backward and Backward communities attend this school.

The above cited article was printed and handed over to the students. They were requested to read it and give in writing their response to the speech of **Gautam Adani**. 29 Students responded. A brief qualitative analysis of the students is offered.

**Keywords:** Gautam Adani, inspiring speech, Vidya Mandir, Gujarat.

### Responses

Students of 12th grade were to read this page and write a short note in their own English on what they have learned from the autobiographical speech of Adani.

One girl student responded: “I am going to study in college then when I put hard work, then I reach what I want. And his words inspire me that “I had nothing to prove to anybody. But had an opportunity to prove to my own self that I could rise.

I had nothing to risk by jumping into uncharted waters. I had no expectations to fulfill except those of my own. These beliefs became a part of me”.

One boy student responded: “Adani said INDIA will be land of massive opportunity over the next 30 years and this is the time to dream big.”

We see here two categories of response: one response is specific, and the responder feels personally inspired. The other responder recognizes the achievements of Gautam Adani calls for all to dream big.

One boy observed: “While the tough living conditions of Gujarat Banaskantha shaped his social behavior his father involvement is now known as forward traders gave him the initial learning.”

One girl student wrote: “He did not study about the business and other thing. But he achieve(d) ... He grow up step by step. I want to dream big and achieve it. ... Self-belief and hard work will earn success.”

We see here two responses – tough living conditions and father’s involvement helped Gautam Adani. Social behaviour is also emphasized.

One girl student observed: “Sometimes reading the stories of successful personalities gives us the direction in life we sought. ... unlike other business tycoons, Adani didn't inherit the fortune from his father Instead, he worked hard to change his fate. If you Look at the success story of Gautam Adani, it reveals his strong will, business acumen, and hard work, which he used to build his stair of success.”

One boy student responded: “he feels to go to college and gain many things.”

Very interesting observation that helps low income group/first generation learners, etc. “unlike other business tycoons, Adani didn't inherit the fortune from his father.”

One boy student wrote: “I learn beautiful lesson of Gautam Adani life.” This response related to Gautam Adani’s quick learning how to assort diamonds’ and making solid amount.

One girl student wrote: “I like the part that he said ‘to acquire wisdom, one must experience, but to acquire knowledge, one must study.’ I had taken it to my mind. I learnt that we need to utilize the opportunity. I was inspire(d) to dream big with my education and by hard work.”

## **To Conclude**

This brief descriptive analysis shows various aspects of Gautam Adani’s life and how he how he moved up in a competitive economic world. His hard work is emphasized. There is an emphasis on how he earned his socioeconomic position without any inheritance from his family.



## Emergence of Englishes and the Issues of Teaching English Pronunciation to Indian Learners

**Dr. Narendra Ranjan Malas, M.A., Ph.D.** Associate Professor  
Department of English (UG & PG)  
Ramananda College  
Bishnupur, Bankura, West Bengal  
[nrmalas@rediffmail.com](mailto:nrmalas@rediffmail.com)  
+91 9434144468

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### Abstract

The focus of this paper is the emergence of various versions of the English language and the issues and challenges faced by the non-native learners of English in the English language teaching-learning context. These Englishes have been developed by non-native speakers/users of the language and they are identifiable by their distinctive linguistic features. The problem for teachers and learners of English as a second language is which version of the language they should deal with in the classroom. The differences among these Englishes are more in speech, especially in pronunciation, than in any other levels of linguistic representations. This study also examines the problems of teaching – learning of English in India where the situation is more complex because in the multilingual setting in India English language has developed several regional varieties. The differences at the phonological level have been studied with examples from some varieties of English. Finally, this paper argues that the pedagogical framework of teaching English in the non-native context should be restructured so that it can accommodate variations of vowels and consonant sounds of different versions of English. It would enable the learner of a particular regional variety of the English language to recognize the existence of other varieties of the same language.

**Keywords:** Englishes, non-native, pronunciation, teaching-learning

The main objective of this paper is to focus on the issue of emergence of varieties of Englishes variously termed as Postcolonial Englishes (Schneider, 2007), World Englishes (Braj



Kachru,1976) , etc. and the challenges faced by the non-native learners of English in the English language teaching-learning context. In last few decades or so in many parts of the world, English has diversified and grown various versions with regional identities. The global spread of English ascertains that all these Englishes around the world are valid and each of them can be recognized by its use of sounds, vocabulary and grammar. The English used in Great Britain and in the United States are two dominating varieties of the language and have been studied elaborately. Recent studies of the English language include new Englishes and all other varieties of English outside Britain and America. The concept of a standard model of the English language is challenged by the emergence of African English, Australian English, Caribbean English, Indian English, Singapore English and so on and they contribute to *“the linguistic mosaic which the speakers of the English language have created in the English-speaking world”* (Kachru,1976, p. 236). In Jamaica English serves the Jamaican ways of life, in India it is used to express Indian ways of life, in Nigeria it is used to meet the needs of Nigerians. The Englishes used in these countries have developed home-grown forms and all these varieties of English can be identifiable by their distinctive linguistic features. The local and indigenous population of different parts of the world *“have adopted and appropriated the English language for themselves, thus contributing to its diversification and the emergence of new varieties”* (Schneider,2007, p. 2).

The emergence of these varieties of English poses challenges to the language teachers teaching English to the non-native learners in a non-native teaching-learning context. These newly evolved forms of English do not always conform to the standard British or American English which are normally taken as reference points by most of the English language teachers. There are differences in vocabulary, grammar, spelling, pronunciation, usage, etc. among these several versions of English. This paper investigates how the non-native teachers and learners face difficulties to cope with these Englishes in the language classroom. The study also examines the problems of teaching English in India where the situation is more complex because in the multilingual setting in India English language has developed regional varieties like Tamil English, Marathi English, Bengali English, Punjabi English, etc. The focus of this study is restricted to the problems in relation to the pronunciation of these different Englishes in the teaching –learning context.

The challenge for an English teacher in the non-native context is multi-dimensional. Along with the usual difficulties faced by a language teacher, he/she has to consider the mother tongue influences of the learners coming with different linguistic backgrounds. Another significant issue is which model to follow: the British R.P or the nativized form of English. The nativized varieties are distinguishable and they, in many ways, differ from each other. The differences are more in speech, especially in pronunciation, than in any other aspect of the language. Let us go through some such distinctive features of some of these varieties at the level of phonology:

**i) Phonological Properties of Australian English show some differences from British R.P.**

- a) In certain words, the R.P. diphthong /ei/ is changed into /æi/ in Australian English. Thus the word *face* /feis/ is pronounced as /fæis/ in Australian English.
- b) The diphthong /əu/ is used in the word *though* /ðəu/, but in Australian English this diphthong is converted into the long monophthong /o:/ and the same word is produced as /ðo:/.

**ii) Singapore English has certain variation from the British R.P.**

- a) Long and short vowel distinctions are generally not observed in Singapore English. As a result, pairs of words which are quite distinct in R.P., often have the same pronunciation in Singapore English:

*Sit* and *seat* are pronounced as /sit/.

Likewise, there is no difference between *cot* and *caught*.

- b) The vowel sound /e/ is often pronounced as /æ/ in Singapore English.

*Bed* is pronounced as /bæd/. So *bed* and *bad* are pronounced alike.

- c) Vowel reduction is less frequent in Singapore English:

The word *affect* is pronounced as /əfekt/ in R.P., but it is pronounced as /æfekt/ in Singapore English.

American English is a dominating variety of the English language. It differs from the British R.P. in vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation. Americans use / æ / in place of /ɑ:/ in words like dance, grass, fast, etc. The vowel sound / i / is used in place of diphthong /ai/ in words like *either* and *neither*. Whereas /r/ sound is not uttered before consonant and at word final position in British English, in American English it is used in all positions.

Another important variety is Indian English. According to Parasher, “by the term Indian English (IE) we mean that variety of English which is learnt and used by a large number of educated Indians as a second language” (Parasher, 1991,p. 48).But the term Indian English is controversial. The multi-lingual context in India has made the English language develop its regional and social varieties. Indian English is a variety of South Asian English, and within Indian English there are distinct regional varieties, like Tamil English, Kannada English, Bengali English, Oriya English, Punjabi English, Marathi English and so on. Speakers of each variety of English are strongly influenced by their mother tongue linguistic habits. They differ from each other at different levels of linguistic representations. Whereas most of the basic components of grammar and morphology are taught and learned without much variation, there are certainly differences of pronunciation in these varieties of Indian English. Let us examine some such variations in different forms of Indian English:

Study of vowel and consonant sounds in Tamil English shows that pronunciation of these sounds greatly vary from British English. BE has twenty vowel sounds, but as Shanmugam notes, Tamil has five pairs of short and long vowels and two diphthongs. Again the diphthong /ei/ is articulated as the pure vowel /e:/ in Tamil English. So, the word late/leit/ is pronounced as /le:t/ in Tamil English. Another example is the articulation of the diphthong / ɔi/.In Tamil English it is produced as /a:i/.As a result the word boy /bɔi / is pronounced as /ba:i/ by a Tamil speaker of English.

English spoken by Assamese speakers can be marked as different from the British R.P. These points of dissimilarities may sometimes be considered as deviations, but they are, in fact , regional variations of the Indian English. Khammoun Phukan has pointed out that some words, used in Assamese English are pronounced in a different way by Assamese learners in English:

The word ‘enough’ /ɪˈnʌf/ is often pronounced as /eɪˈnʌf/. Similarly, ‘pie’ /paɪ/ is articulated as /pi/ by Assamese learners in English.

The problem of teaching English in the non-native context has become more complex because teaching pronunciation is very often neglected in the language teaching–learning curriculum particularly in the context of teaching English as a second language. If the learner’s general aim is to speak intelligibly in English, his endeavour should be to acquire some skill in pronunciation. Even when a second language learner’s grammar and vocabulary are good, he/she won’t be able to communicate effectively without attaining certain level of pronunciation skill. An Indian learner of English tries to learn pronunciation of English words by looking at their spellings and thus he/she learns incorrect pronunciation of many English words. Moreover, the learner’s mother tongue plays a vital role in the second language teaching –learning activity. In most cases second language learners are in the habit of transferring their L<sub>1</sub> linguistic habits while learning L<sub>2</sub>. This is another very problematic area for the L<sub>2</sub> teacher. This is responsible for serious intelligibility problem. As a practicing English teacher in West Bengal, I would like to highlight some inconveniences faced by the Bengali speakers in the pronunciation of some English sounds.

The English sound /f/ as in *fan* is a voiceless labio-dental fricative and the articulatory organs used for its production are lower lip and upper teeth. But in the Bangla sound system, there is a similar sound /p<sup>h</sup>/ which is a voiceless bilabial stop and the articulatory organs are two lips. Very often while producing this sound Bengali speakers change the labio-dental fricative /f/ into bilabial stop /p<sup>h</sup>/.

Again, a Bengali learner of English may find it difficult to pronounce the English alveolar fricative /z/ as it does not exist in the Bangla sound system. Very often he/she converts it into palato-alveolar affricate /dʒ/. Thus, the English word *zoo* is pronounced as /dʒu:/ or *easy* is pronounced as /idʒi/ by a Bengali learner of English.

Vowel length in R.P. also causes problem to the Bengali speakers of English. Vowel length is strictly observed in R.P. There are long *i* /i:/, short *i* /i/, long *u* /u:/, short *u* /u/ in English. In the written form of Bangla there are long *i* /dirgh-i/, short *i* /hr̥ss̥-i/, long *u* /dirgh-u/

u /, short u /hrɔssɔ-u/, but in the spoken form this distinction is not maintained. So very often *full* becomes *fool*, *fill* becomes *feel* in Bengali English.

Use of /s/ and /ʃ/ is another area of difficulty for the Bengali speakers of English. They normally do not distinguish between alveolar fricative /s/ and palato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/. As a result, *save* may be understood as *shave*, *same* may be realized as *shame*. This may cause intelligibility problem.

The areas of unintelligibility noted above are only a few examples to the context. It is possible to identify several intelligibility problems, caused by inappropriate pronunciation by the Indian speakers of English. As there are sub varieties within Indian English, it is necessary for a language teacher to identify the areas of ‘ease’ and ‘difficulty’ of the second language learner. A contrastive study between the mother tongue and the second language of the learner may help the language teacher to know the possible reasons of wrong pronunciation. It is mentioned earlier that the multi-lingual setting of India has made the task of the second language teacher more critical. The varieties of English in India are being nativized by acquiring new identities based on regional, social, cultural factors. For each such variety appropriate measures are to be taken so that these Englishes are mutually intelligible and acceptable to the speakers of other English-speaking communities. It should be remembered that in India English will be taught by non-native speakers to the non-native learners to meet the need of the non-native users of the language. It cannot be expected that a non-native speaker will speak or write like a British or an American. Considering the pedagogical issue of teaching English to the non-native speakers, Smith comments,

The spread of English is not a homogenizing factor which causes cultural differences to disappear ... There is no desire among the members of the world community when using English to become more like native speakers in their lifestyle. Native speakers must realize that there are many valid varieties of English and that non-native speakers need not sound or act like Americans, the British, or any other group of native speakers in order to be effective English users (qtd.in Strevens, 2004).

## Conclusion

Evolution of these varieties of English or the nativized versions of the language shattered the concept of standard, universal English. Speakers/users of the English language in different countries around the globe break away from the Anglo-centric view of English and the world now recognises not only the existence but also the importance of all these varieties of English. Expansion of the English-speaking world due to globalization needs reconsideration of the mechanism of teaching English as a second language in the classroom. A regional variety of English should be accepted as valid English and be strengthened so that it can be incorporated in the teaching-learning process. In India teachers face greater problems as there are many other varieties with regional identities. The pedagogical framework should be restructured in such a way that non-native learners of English should have exposure to other varieties and should learn as many accents as possible for effective communication with speakers of other varieties of English. At the same time the regional varieties need linguistic descriptions to be acceptable in their socio-linguistic settings and to establish themselves as varieties of English in their own right. More studies are required to develop a dynamic poly model which will accommodate variations of vowels and consonant sounds in different versions of English. It will help the teacher as well as the learner become aware of the existence of variations of the same vowel or consonant sound and the pronunciation of the learners of different forms of the English language will be mutually intelligible.

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Dr. Narendra Ranjan Malas, M.A., Ph.D. Associate Professor  
Department of English (UG & PG)  
Ramananda College  
Bishnupur, Bankura, West Bengal  
[nrmalas@rediffmail.com](mailto:nrmalas@rediffmail.com)  
+91 9434144468

## Linguistic Landscape of a North-East India Town: A Case Study of Sivasagar

**Debraj Gogoi, Ph.D. Scholar**

debraj.1495@gmail.com +91 6000573239

C-608, APJ Kalam Hostel

Indian Institute of Technology Patna, Bihar- 801106

**Dr. Sweta Sinha, Ph.D.**

[apna1982@gmail.com](mailto:apna1982@gmail.com)

Indian Institute of Technology Patna

Bihar- 801106

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### Abstract

Linguistic landscape refers to the study of the languages that are seen in the public spaces of a given area. It is a way of observing the language use in a particular region and the visibility of different languages. Linguistic vitality, which refers to the strength and status of a language, is also studied through the process of linguistic landscape analysis. The study of the linguistic landscape of Sivasagar town focuses on identifying the languages that are visible in public spaces, such as signs, advertisements, and street names. It aims to determine the dominant languages and the representation of other languages in the town's linguistic landscape. By analysing the languages seen in the town's public spaces, the study provides insights into the linguistic diversity of the area and the relative status of different languages. The data has been analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings suggest that English is the major language found in the linguistic landscape, followed by Assamese and Hindi. Other languages are not visible in the landscape.

**Keywords:** Assamese, North-East, linguistic landscape, language vitality, Sivasagar

### 1. Introduction

Linguistic signs are visible everywhere, especially written language, such as street names, road signs, graffiti or murals, storefronts and shop windows, commercial billboards, posters, etc. These signs are used by companies, the government or individuals for advertising or marketing purposes like promotion of new products in the market, making the public aware about a new scheme, etc. Of late, however even researchers have shown a keen interest in studying the linguistic texts that are present in the public space (Gorter, 2006). The visibility of written languages in the landscape is called as 'linguistic landscape.' According to Landry & Bourhis (1997) linguistic landscape is thus defined as:

The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings



combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

Gorter (2006) stresses on this point and adds that linguistic landscape studies the ‘use of language in its written form in the public sphere.’ Furthermore, he mentions that with recent developments in technology, linguistic landscape also includes the study of language on new signs such as electronic flat panel displays, electronic boards and message centres, foam boards, LED neon lights, interactive touch screens and scrolling banners (Gorter, 2013). Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) defines linguistic landscape as ‘any sign or announcement located outside or inside a public institution or a private business in a given geographical location.’ According to Motschenbacher (2020), linguistic landscape is the study of signs that influence the public realm on a social, political, cultural, or economic level. The written language visible in the landscape marks as a boundary of linguistic territories. The speech communities in a particular place uses their native language in signs to show their identity.

The linguistic signs in the landscape are of different types. Landry & Bourhis (1997) classified the signs as ‘government’ and ‘private’ signs. Later Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) renamed the ‘government’ and ‘private’ linguistic signs as ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ signs respectively. The ‘top-down’ items are those that are published by administrative agencies, such as public institutions, signs on public property, street names, and public announcements, whereas, items that are developed by individual social actors, such as shop owners and private businesses, such as store names, private company signs, and private announcements, are referred to as ‘bottom-up’ items (Ben-Rafael et al., 2006; Begum & Sinha, 2019). Generally, top-down signs are formed in accordance with the dominant language and culture of the region, whereas, while making bottom-up signs, individuals have some liberty to use their own language (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006). As top-down signs are issued by the local or central government bodies, they are mostly written in the official language to be in solidarity with the public. So, by looking at top-down signs, one can understand the linguistic situation in a particular place. In the case of bottom-up signs, individual actors have their own liberty of using the language of their choice, as these signs are considered to be a part of the individual’s freedom of speech (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

Basically, there are two functions of linguistic landscape studies: Informational function and symbolic function (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The linguistic landscape’s informational function is that linguistic landscape serves as a way to identify and distinguish the geographical area inhabited by a specific language community and set the boundaries between the language group and others. The consistent use of one language within the territory can lead to well-defined language borders between neighbouring language communities. The linguistic landscape holds symbolic significance as the presence or absence of a language on public signs can influence the emotions of a language community member within a bilingual or multilingual environment. The representation of languages in public spaces symbolizes the power dynamic between competing language groups, both within the group and between groups.

## 1.1. Literature Review

The first study of linguistic landscape studies can be traced back to Spolsky & Cooper's (1991) study of signs in Jerusalem, though there were a few studies before that (see Rosebaum et al. 1977; Tulp, 1978). Landry & Bourhis (1997) study of language in public space in Quebec is regarded as the first in modern linguistic landscape studies. Gorter (2006) discusses four cases of linguistic landscape studies in the special issue that was published in *International Journal of Multilingualism*. This issue includes Ben-Rafael et al.'s (2006) study of the diverse linguistic signs present in the Israeli-Palestinian neighbourhoods of Israel; Huebner's (2006) study of the English, Thai, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic language patterns of linguistic landscape in Bangkok; Backhaus' (2006) study of the multilingual linguistic landscape of Tokyo, Japan; and Cenoz and Gorter's (2006) study of the linguistic landscape of two European multilingual places: Basque Country (Spain) and Friesland (Netherlands). It also includes a scholarly introduction and conclusion from the editor. Coluzzi (2016) analysed the street signs in Brunei Darussalam, a Southeast Asian nation, and discovered a prominent use of Chinese language despite a lack of official support. This is due to factors such as its high prestige, literary history, practicality, and widespread usage by millions globally.

In the Indian context also, a few studies of linguistic landscape have been done, mainly focussing on the multilingual setting. Singh (2002) remarks that 'linguistic landscaping is of great significance in India and has even greater potential in many parts of the world and that it will lead to formation of an independent branch through which multilingualism can be portrayed toponymically, politonymically, ethnonymically and social psychologically.' Naik (2002) examines the social, economic, and political ramifications of linguistic landscaping in India as it relates to the country's industrial belt. Begum & Sinha (2019) examined the number of languages in the linguistic landscape of Patna and also investigated the linguistic attitude of the native residents of Bihar towards the languages.

In the context of Assam, Bharadwaz & Shukla (2018) investigated the linguistic landscape of Tezpur, a town in the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River in Sonitpur district. They found that English has a dominance over other languages in the linguistic landscape and the use of Assamese language in many signs is associated with the pride the people feel for the Assamese language.

The present study tries to study the multilingual landscape of Sivasagar district. The study focuses on exploring the linguistic landscape of the town by finding out which languages are visible in the linguistic landscape. It also addresses which is the dominant language in the landscape and the differences in the top-down and bottom-up signs.

## 2. Significance of the Study

India is a land of people with different cultures and traditions. Each group also have its own language. Like India, Assam, a state situated in the North-eastern part of India, also known as mini- India; because for centuries different national, ethnic, religious and linguistic and tribal

groups have been living together in this state (Srikanth, 2000). Assam is also considered as the gateway to the northeast, as it is connected by a narrow patch of land about 22 kms wide, called the Siliguri Corridor or more popularly known as the Chicken's Neck with the rest of India (Srikanth, 2000). Assam shares its border with six other north-eastern states: Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura and two international boundaries with Bhutan to the north and Bangladesh to the south-west. There are many ethnic groups residing in Assam. They are the Ahoms, Chutias, Morans, Kacharis, Khamtis, Bodos, Tiwas, Karbis, Mishings, Rabhas, Dimasas to name a few. Linguistically all these groups have their own language which is different from one another, but Assamese which is spoken by majority of the population of the state is considered as the lingua-franca. Other than these ethnic groups, there are also people from other speech communities such as Bengali, Marwari, Gujarati, Nepali, etc. Bengali speaking population consists of the second highest population of the state after Assamese speakers.

Assam is divided into two valleys: the Brahmaputra Valley and the Barak Valley based on the state's geography, and an interesting fact is that these two regions are linguistically different. The official language of the state is Assamese in the Brahmaputra Valley and in the Barak Valley the official language is Bengali. Although majority of the Bengali speaking people reside in Barak Valley, there are Bengali speaking people residing in many districts of the Brahmaputra Valley too. Hindi speaking people are also found both in the Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley. Bodo a Tibeto-Burman language is spoken by the Bodo people who resides in parts of Nagaon, Karbi Anglong, Darrang, Sonitpur and mainly in the four districts that come under the BTAD area: Udalguri, Kokrajhar, Baga and Chirang.

According to Articles 344 (1) and 351 of the Indian Constitution that is titled as Eighth Schedule, Government of India recognizes 22 languages as scheduled languages; three of them are spoken in Assam: Assamese, Bengali and Bodo. Other than these three languages, Mishing is spoken by the Mishing community residing in the districts of Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Majuli. Karbi is spoken by the Karbi community in East and West Karbi Anglong. Dimasa is spoken in Dima Hasao. A few languages of Tai-Kadai family such as Tai- Khamti and Tai- Aiton are also spoken in parts of the state by a very less amount of people. Tai-Ahom, the language of the Ahoms have become extinct since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, except for a few kinship terms still used by the community. Also, in some rituals like marriage it is used. It was the court language of the Ahom kingdom before being replaced by the Assamese language.

The present study tries to focus on the languages visible in the landscape of Sivasagar, a town in the Upper Assam region, which was the erstwhile capital of the Ahom kingdom.



Figure 1: Map of Assam highlighting Sivasagar district.

Sivasagar is a place with a lot of historical significance. As it was the capital of the Ahom kingdom, there are many historical buildings present in the district. To its east is Dibrugarh district, and to its west is Jorhat district. The Brahmaputra River lies to the north and to its south is Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The total population of Sivasagar is 1,151,050 (2011 census data). Majority of the people in the district speak Assamese followed by Hindi and Bengali. According to the 2011 census, of the total population of the district: 969831 people speak Assamese, 84287 speak Hindi and 30645 speak Bengali, followed by other languages like Mishing, Odia, Nepali, etc. Majority of the population of the district are Hindus, followed by Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, etc.

### 3. Methodology

Linguistic landscape research aims at finding out the visibility of languages in the landscape of a particular place through various linguistic signs available. The purpose of the present study is to assess the prominence of various languages in Sivasagar district and to compare the differences between top-down and bottom-up signs. To analyse the signs Cenoz & Gorter's (2006) methodology is followed. According to this method, each establishment, not each sign, is considered as one unit of analysis for counting signs. This method involves counting and categorizing the signs according to their language, size, font, and placement to determine the relative prominence of different languages.

### 4. Data Collection

For this research photographic data have been collected from busy commercial area of the town, mainly Dolmukh Chariali, which comprises of the following streets: Temple Road, Boarding Road, GNG Road, and HCB Road. The survey of the signs was conducted in November 2022. The sampling method used for this study is purposive sampling. The rationale behind selecting this location is that this is the central part of the town, with majority of the

business, educational institutes, and the administrative offices of the district being present here, thus leading to the highest density of signs. For this research a total of 72 signs have been collected.

## 5. Findings

This section presents the analysis of the linguistic signs found in the linguistic landscape of Sivasagar. The authors have analysed the data both quantitatively and qualitatively.

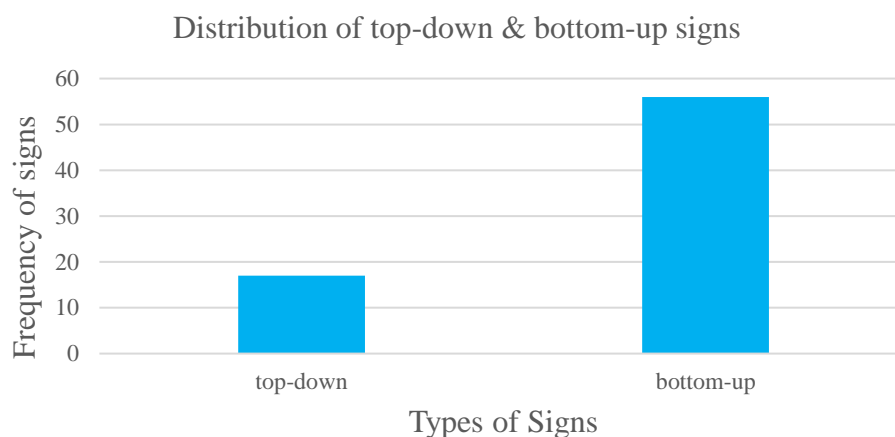


Figure 2: Distribution of top-down and bottom-up signs

In this study, out of 72 signs, 17 top-down signs and 55 bottom-up signs were found as shown in the bar diagram (Figure 2).

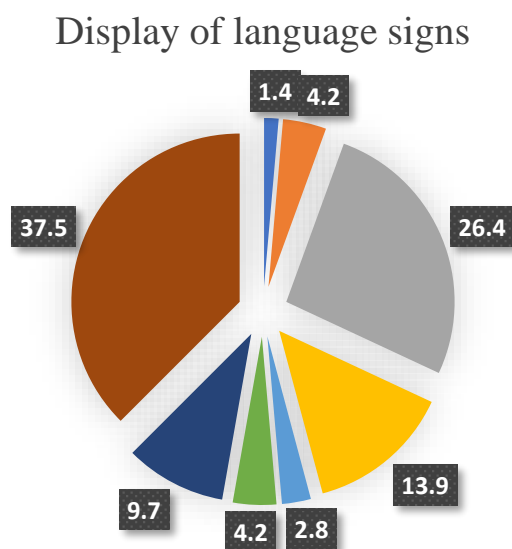


Figure 3: Languages displayed in signs (in percentage)

Based on the use of languages, signs can be mainly categorised into three types: monolingual, bilingual and trilingual.



It has been found that in the linguistic landscape of Sivasagar, bilingual signs using Roman and Assamese scripts showed the highest percentage of 37.5%. It is followed by signs using monolingual Roman script (26.4%) and signs using monolingual Assamese script (13.9%). Thus, there is dominance of the use of Roman script in the linguistic landscape of Sivasagar. Signs written in Hindi (Devanagari script) is mostly seen in top-down signs. There were only 3 monolingual Devanagari signs, other signs having Devanagari script were either bilingual or trilingual. Other than these signs, only one sign in Gurmukhi script is present. Other languages like Bengali and Urdu signs are not present at all.

### 5.1. Monolingual Signs in the Dataset

There was a total of 33 signs that were monolingual. As already mentioned, the highest number of monolingual signs were written in Roman script, followed by signs written in Assamese, Hindi, and Gurmukhi.



Figure 4: Assamese monolingual sign

Figure 4 is the name of a shop written in Assamese script. Interestingly, the owner has used Assamese script to write English words. The words ‘optical’ and ‘power’ are written in Assamese script.



Figure 5: Assamese monolingual sign

Figure 5 is a signboard of a street name. In this figure too, there is one English word written in Assamese script. The word ‘road’ written as /rud/.



Figure 6: English monolingual sign

Figure 6 is an English monolingual road sign. In this sign, the Assamese word ‘nagar’ is written in Roman script.



Figure 7: English monolingual sign

## 5.2. Bilingual and Trilingual Signs in the Dataset

There was a total of 39 signs out of which 32 were bilingual signs and 7 were trilingual signs. The trilingual signs containing Devanagari, Roman and Assamese script were mostly top-down signs and two bilingual signs having Devanagari and Roman script also belong to the same category of signs.





Figure 8: Trilingual sign (Assamese, Devanagari and Roman)



Figure 9: Trilingual sign (Assamese, Devanagari and Roman)



Figure 10: Bilingual sign (Roman and Devanagari)





Figure 11: Trilingual sign (Assamese, Devanagari and Roman)

Figures 8, 9, 10 and 11 show images with trilingual signs. Each of these signs are top-down signs as they are the properties of the government. Figure 8 is a multilingual sign of the inscriptions by Archaeological survey of India of the famous Siva Temple, which is at the heart of the town. As the site is government by the Archaeological Survey of India, it adheres to the three-language policy of India. The other two images, also multilingual signs: Figure 9 is the name of the railway junction which is maintained by Indian Railways, and Figure 10 is a letter-box in front of the general post office. In Figure 9, the word 'town' from English is written the same in both Devanagari script and Assamese script instead of writing the translated term. Figure 11 is a trilingual sign (nameplate of a shop). In figure 11, the word for tea is written in Assamese /sah/ and in Hindi /tjai/, again keeping the three-language policy rule of the Indian government.

Interestingly among the bilingual signs, two signs were found using code-mixing.



Figure 12: Code-mixing (Roman and Assamese)

Figure 12 shows code-mixing, of the Roman and Assamese scripts: the word coffee which is of non-Assamese is written in Roman script and the term for house /g<sup>h</sup>ɔɪ/ is written in Assamese script. The name of the shop is written as *Coffee Ghor*, which literally means Coffee House. This is a unique way of capturing the attention of the public.

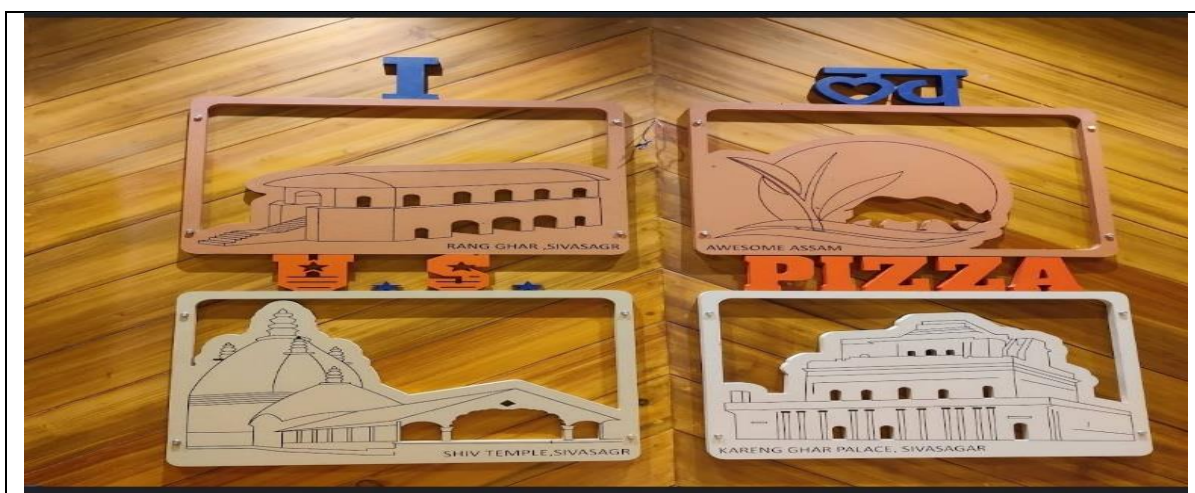


Figure 13: Code-mixing (Roman and Devanagari)

Figure 13 also shows code-mixing of the Roman and Devanagari scripts. In this image the sentence 'I love US Pizza' is written with the words I, US and Pizza written in Roman and the word 'love' is written in Devanagari script.

The other bilingual signs include shop names, posters, advertisements, mostly comprising of Roman and Assamese scripts.



Figure 14: Bilingual sign (Assamese and Roman)



Figure 15: Bilingual sign (Assamese and Roman)

In both figures 14 and 15, although, both Roman and Assamese scripts are used, the Assamese version is just the transliteration of the English words. Here instead of using the

native terms for words such as ‘pork’, ‘house’, ‘indoor’ and ‘stadium’, the sign owners transliterated the English terms into Assamese script.

### 5.3. Types and Distribution of Top-down and Bottom-up Signs

Table 1: Distribution of top-down signs

Top-down signs			
Types	Unilingual	Assamese	4
		Hindi	1
		English	1
	Bilingual	Hindi and English	2
		Assamese and English	2
		Hindi and Assamese	2
	Multilingual	English, Hindi, and Assamese	5

Table 2: Distribution of bottom-up signs

Bottom-up signs			
Types	Unilingual	Assamese	7
		Hindi	3
		English	18
	Bilingual	Hindi and English	1
		Assamese and English	26

Table 1 and table 2 exhibits the types and distribution of top-down and bottom-up signs in the linguistic landscape of Sivasagar. Among the top-down signs, 4 unilingual signs are in Assamese, 1 in Hindi and 1 in English. In the case of top-down bilingual signs there are 2 signs in each set of combinations that is Hindi and English, Assamese and English and Hindi and Assamese. There are 5 multilingual top-down signs. Among the bottom-up signs, 18 unilingual signs are in English, followed by 7 unilingual signs in Assamese and 3 unilingual signs in Hindi. In the case of bilingual signs, there is only 1 sign that is in Hindi and English, the other 26 bilingual signs are in English and Assamese. Interestingly there is no trilingual or multilingual bottom-up signs.

## 6. Discussion

Though Assamese is the lingua franca of the Brahmaputra Valley, the reason behind the dominance of English in the linguistic landscape of Sivasagar is because of globalization and English has become the medium of instruction in most of the educational institutes. Except for the vernacular medium schools, all higher educational institutes in the district use English as the medium of instruction. Even in the case of top-down signs, the presence of English is found not only in bilingual and multilingual signs, but even in monolingual signs. But, if the order of languages is to be considered then, it can be noted that Assamese gets the top position. The language used on top or in the centre is the one which dominates the landscape. In all the



top-down and bottom-up signs, Assamese language is used and written in bold fonts or highlighted.

The use of Hindi is very less as compared to English and Assamese, though many businesses, specially shop owners are second generation Assamese speakers, most of them either belonging to Bengali, Gujarati or Marwari communities. This demonstrates the integration of these communities into the diverse Assamese culture. Though they have their own languages, including Marwari, Gujarati, Bengali, etc., yet they prefer Assamese over Hindi or any other language as the common language to use. Hindi was only found in the top-down signs like the bank names, railway station names, which are properties of the Central Government, keeping in view the three-language policy of the Indian government. In the case of state government properties, bilingual signs of Assamese and English was mostly found.

Another interesting case is that in English-Assamese bilingual signs, translation, and transliteration of English words into Assamese is common, but translation of Assamese into English is rare. English signs are mostly just transliterated and not translated, while Assamese signs are usually not translated into English, as Assamese is the widely used language.

## 7. Conclusion

Although the data for this study was very less, but it did show the representation of different languages in the landscape. Though Assamese is considered as the lingua franca of the state, yet it can be understood that English dominates the linguistic landscape, the reason behind this is globalization and use of English in the higher education of not only Assam but in whole of India. Another fact is that, because of the state's language policy, except Assamese and English, no other languages are visible in the landscape. It was noticed that the non-Assamese speakers mainly Bengali and Marwari community who are associated with business like traders, shop owners, etc., prefer to use Assamese rather than any other language. This is why there is absence of trilingual or multilingual bottom-up signs in the linguistic landscape. They did this in order to assimilate with the Assamese society. They even speak Assamese while interacting with their customers. During the colonial period, Bengali was made the official language of the state by the British, but after independence and after the Assamese language movement of 1950, Assamese has been the official language the Brahmaputra Valley.

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**Debraj Gogoi, Ph.D. Scholar (Linguistics)**

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Patna

Bihta, Patna – 801106

[debraj.1495@gmail.com](mailto:debraj.1495@gmail.com)

**Sweta Sinha, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor, Linguistics

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Patna

Bihta, Patna – 801106

[apna1982@gmail.com](mailto:apna1982@gmail.com)

## Classroom Dynamics in EFL Context: Does It Minimize Learner Anxiety and Develop Learner Autonomy in a Collaborative Learning Environment?

**M. Shajedul Arifeen**  
Department of Languages  
Bangladesh Agricultural University  
Mymensingh 2202  
Bangladesh  
[ms.arifeenbau@gmail.com](mailto:ms.arifeenbau@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

This study tries to investigate the implementation of classroom dynamics and its impact on learner anxiety and on the development of the learners' autonomy in a collaborative EFL learning environment. To this aim, classroom dynamics and learning anxiety inventories were completed on 240 EFL learners. The results of Pearson correlation analysis revealed that classroom dynamics developed a sense of collaboration among the learners implying learner autonomy to EFL learning. The results also indicated that classroom dynamics was highly applied in learners' collaborative EFL learning and accelerated learners' performance in the EFL classroom. The findings also revealed that classroom dynamics is remarkably associated with learner autonomy and to the minimization of the factors associated with learners' anxiety.

**Keywords:** English as Foreign Language (EFL), Classroom dynamics, Learner anxiety, Collaborative learning, Learner autonomy

### Introduction

Language teaching and learning have been faced with fundamental shifts due to dissatisfaction with the existing methods and approaches and led the teachers and language trainers develop their individual techniques known as Classroom dynamics. It is quite impossible for a teacher to follow a specific approach; rather s/he develops a new approach based on their intuitive ability and avoids teaching techniques that change according to the current fad. Thus, classroom dynamics is a term to indicate quality of learning environment, which includes everything from the premises where a class is taught to the whole range of interactions between class participants. In other words, it tends to instill in learners a sense of belonging and empathy much needed to establish supportive and sustainable group rapport. According to Stevick (1980),

“what goes inside and between the learners in the classroom” is classroom dynamics. It is especially important for adult second/ foreign language (L2) learners, as they are fully aware of their purpose of acquiring desired skills in a foreign language, although victimized by a number of negative traits like anxiety, nervousness and insecurity.

To Ohata (2005), anxiety is divided into three types: **state, trait, and language**. The first type of anxiety, state anxiety, occurs under the specific situations and conditions that a learner experiences. The second type of anxiety, trait anxiety or general one (Ozuturk & Hursen, 2013), occurs when the learner faces difficult situations that bring him tension and anxiousness. The third type of anxiety, so called language anxiety, is the one that is connected to second language learning exposures, which can be the results of various resources (Otaha, 2005; Skehan, 1989; Young, 1991).

Regarding the direct relation of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) to academic achievement, many studies have scrutinized the direct connection between academic achievement and language anxiety (Botes et al., 2020). Horwitz (2001) and MacIntyre (1995a, 1995b) defended the FLCA, saying that FLCA is an independent construct, distinct from aptitude, that can affect the language learning performance of the learners. In contrast, some studies (Sparks & Ganchow, 1995, 2007; Sparks et al., 2009) questioned the FLCA as an independent construct in language learning and claimed anxiety is just a natural result of learning difficulties or deficits. Trang et al. (2013) stated that students’ anxiety in EFL classes arises from four different sources: student-related factors, instructor-related factors, external ones, and finally, the English language complications. Daintes et al. (1993) claim that any anxiety is a handicap especially in over- competitive and hostile situations. That is why we need to look at language anxiety not only as the result of how the learner perceives him/herself and his/her learning environment but also, and more importantly, of what actually “goes on ... between the people in the classroom” (Stevick 1980:4).

The social apprehension which is the result of unfavourable attitudes can be strengthened by how the teacher and peer students actually react, both verbally and non-verbally, to the efforts an individual makes to learn, assimilate knowledge and perform. Davies and Rinvolucris (1990) encourage looking at the problem of anxiety from the perspective of classroom interaction. They define three inhibition-breeding aspects of the language classroom: being judged, being isolated and feeling out of control.

It is classroom dynamics that can help them to attain a clear sense of direction and to provide a solid basis for ensuring learner autonomy (Turula, 2002). Language Anxiety and Classroom Dynamics examine the interdependence between the feeling of tension and



apprehension associated with language learning seen at the background of what happens in the language classroom. The research, which was carried out to determine their mutual relations, concentrated on the adult beginner. The age was important because it seems that adults more than other age groups suffer from classroom-related tensions.

In view of the client-centered approach of Rogers (1951), we learn only with the help of others - we need somebody to remove the shutters and blinkers off our eyes. As Malamah-Thomas (Castillo 1998) states “Learning a language, like the learning of anything else, is essentially an individual achievement ... But typically, this private process takes place in the public context of the classroom, the individual is one of a group”. The already-quoted analysis of adult learner diaries (Coare and Thomson 1996) proves that mature students emphasise the positive effect of group work seeing it as inspiring and enjoyable. However, it is the kind of learning environment in the group that is important because certain study contexts are more efficient than others.

Stevens, Madden, Slavin and Farnish (Nunan 1993: 146) arrived at similar conclusions proving that students learning in co-operative groups outperformed those from competitive learning environments. This was most probably possible because collaborative classroom is conducive to learning in four ways: they lower the affective filter; they promote interaction; they enable strategy exchange; and they encourage the individual to conform – give up his/her objectives for the sake of the group’s overall aims – which makes it possible for the whole group to achieve the overall goal of the course. In this way, the collaborative classroom - where “there is a positive supportive atmosphere”; “members have positive self-image which is reinforced by the group, so they feel secure enough to express their individuality”; “the group is tolerant of all its members”; “members feel secure and accepted”; “the members of the group trust each other”; “individuals in the group are not competitive and do not seek individual attention at the expense of others”; “the group has a sense of fun” (Hadfield 1992:12) – will be synonymous with Krashen’s friendly learning environment.

Thus, by being a low-anxiety learning environment, the collaborative classroom fosters genuine interaction more than any other educational context, because if students trust one another, they are not afraid to express their opinions and feelings. Communication, in turn, develops and reinforces such skills as listening to others, talking with others and negotiating meaning in a shared context. Rivers (1988) states that through such meaningful interaction students increase their language store by learning from their peers, utilise all the language they know in real-life - or at least quasi- real-life – exchanges where expressing the actual meaning is important.

## The Role of the Teacher

The above-listed advantages, promoting collaboration in the language classroom seems indispensable. For a number of reasons, the process, at least initially, is in the hands of the teacher. Heterogeneous as it is, a group of adults as any other group of novices in a given environment is ready to accept and comply with the rules suggested by the person in charge of the formative process and this person is inevitably the teacher. The students very often mirror the teacher's behaviour and attitudes giving back as much as they get. That is why it is the teacher's duty to set the initial mood of the group and class experience.

Therefore, if the teacher wants to create a collaborative classroom, (s)he will, first of all, need to take the initiative in sharing him/herself – his/her feelings and thoughts - with the students (Rogers 1969, Dörnyei and Malderez 1999) on the one hand and enhance peer affiliation on the other. If the collaborative classroom is to be based on the interaction of adults, the only teacher-learner symbiosis conducive to such a transactional model will be the adult-adult one. This implies that the teacher must not dominate the group and facilitation should be prior to management. It also means allowing room for learner autonomy. It is true that the positive affective factors of the collaborative classroom improve the learners' morale and thus, by increasing his/her self-esteem and motivation, encourage autonomy. It has to be emphasised that autonomy is a result of conscious effort on the part of the learner and, more often, the teacher.

With regard to the significance of classroom dynamics on learner anxiety to a collaborative and autonomous environment in EFL context, there were a few empirical researches in the literature on classroom dynamics. So, the present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any relation between EFL Learners' anxiety with the principles of Classroom dynamics (CLD)?
2. How does classroom dynamics create learner autonomy in a collaborative learning environment?
3. To what extent principles of classroom dynamics works in English as Foreign Language (EFL) context?

## METHOD

### Participants

A total of 240 EFL learners having same educational background (level-1 semester-1 students at Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh) took part in the study. They range in age from 20 to 22. The participants were selected on the basis of convenient

sampling method. This study is limited because it relies on the narratives of a small sample of selected learners. Yet the goal of the study is to develop hypotheses about the most important factors contributing to successful anxiety free collaborative learning for EFL learners.

### Instruments

In order to measure learners' autonomy to classroom dynamics, a questionnaire, was employed. It includes factors: classroom atmosphere, learner anxiety and EFL learning enthusiasm. Each item is followed by a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The reliability of the questionnaire, computed by Cronbach alpha, was reported to be 0.78.

### Procedure

In order to determine the relationship between the learners' autonomy to classroom dynamics and their level of anxiety, the two instruments were simultaneously administered to the participants of the study. Then they filled out them and returned them to the researcher. Scores from each of the instruments were computed and entered into SPSS version 20.

### Data Analysis

First, addressing the research question one-sample T-test run on the mean score of the autonomy to classroom dynamics principles. Based on the classroom dynamics questionnaire, the maximum score that can be obtained and implies the highest degree of autonomy to the proponents of classroom dynamics equals 120, 61 as a lowest degree of autonomy and 102 is middle score. So, 102 is considered as critical value.

**Table 1.** One-sample T-test results for the mean score of the autonomy to classroom dynamics principles

Classroom dynamics conformity	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error mean	t	Df	Sig
	240	82.32	17.32	1.71	2.14	80	0.010

As it can be seen, there is a significantly level of autonomy to the principles of classroom dynamics among the learners ( $t = 2.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Next, normality of the distributions was examined using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Then, a correlation design using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was manipulated to answer the research question of the study.

Regarding to the research question, first the normality of distribution for the scores was investigated. To check the normality assumption, one sample Kolmogorov- Smirnov (K-S) test was conducted on classroom dynamics, learner anxiety and learners autonomy to collaborative learning scores. In one- sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, if the significance level is larger than .05, it shows that the data are normally distributed. As it clears in Table 1 the results of one- sample K-S test revealed that the data was normally distributed.

**Table 2.** One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Classroom Dynamics (CD)	Learner Anxiety (LA)	Collaboration, and Learner Autonomy (CLAu)
N		240	240	240
Normal Parameters	Mean	85.51	65.61	67.68
	Std. Deviation	22.47	21.37	21.15
Differences	Absolute	.050	.051	.052
	positive	.060	.084	.086
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.224	1.336	1.234
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.071	.165	.175

To examine the effect of Classroom Dynamics on Learner Anxiety along with Collaborative and autonomous learning, Pearson product– moment correlation was conducted. The results (Table 2) revealed significant correlations among CLD, LA and CLAu ( $r=0.85$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 3.** Correlation between Classroom Dynamics and Learner Anxiety

Classroom Dynamics (CLD)			Learner Anxiety
Classroom Dynamics (CLD)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.85**
Learner Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	0.85**	1

\*\*.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4.** Cronbach  $\alpha$  Coefficient of the scale.

Foreign Language Anxiety	$\alpha$ value
	.897

The reliability coefficients of the scale and sub-dimensions used in the research were calculated. It was concluded that the  $\alpha$  coefficients of the validity of the scale were over .70.

## DISCUSSION

The present study probed EFL learners' autonomy to the principles of classroom dynamics and its effects on learners' anxiety in the EFL context. The results indicated that EFL learners achieved high level of autonomy with the principles of classroom dynamics (CLD).

Accordingly, the role of the learners in CLD is central. They need to be autonomous, creative, and reflective. Addressing the research questions, the results indicated significant relationship between learners' anxiety and learners' autonomy to principles of CLD. It implied that more commitment to principles of CLD lead to decrease the level of anxiety to a collaborative learning environment. It also helps learners to develop their learning in an autonomous way through developing collaborative environment, what they do and to practice what they theorized, because they know their needs, interests, backgrounds and classroom environment.

## CONCLUSION

This study intended to examine the relationship of classroom dynamics and EFL learners' anxiety in terms of developing collaborative EFL communication and a sense of learner autonomy in the EFL context. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between variables, implies that more classroom dynamics in the classroom, the less level of learners' anxiety would be. Further, it was found that the level of reflection of classroom dynamics in the EFL classes was high. In addition, a unifying theme of this study is that successful collaborative learning takes significant planning and preparation as well as on- going monitoring and refinement. The learners who participated in this study valued collaborative learning for its potential to boost EFL learning at academic engagement in the classroom, and for the gains in content and language proficiency have been observed.

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M. Shajedul Arifeen

Classroom Dynamics in EFL Context: Does It Minimize Learner Anxiety and Develop Learner Autonomy in a Collaborative Learning Environment?

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## An Analysis of Class X English Textbook Used in Madhya Pradesh Secondary School Board High Schools

**B. A. Mahalakshmi Prasad, M.A.**

Sagar Institute of Science and Technology, Ratibad

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Email: [machiprasad@gmail.com](mailto:machiprasad@gmail.com) Ph: +91 9844808821

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### Abstract

This paper presents a brief evaluation of the English Textbook used in Class X in Madhya Pradesh State Board High Schools.

**Keywords:** English Textbook, Class X, Madhya Pradesh State Board High Schools.

### Introduction

English Language is the *lingua franca* and a skill that is most essential in today's technological world.

It is widely known that students studying English following the State syllabus and hailing from the rural areas have limited ability of comprehension and expression in English. These students further go on to study professional courses in Science and Humanities. However, when they join the undergraduate program, they face the uphill task of relearning the English language. More often than not, they have to unlearn the erroneous use of structures and then relearn their correct use. The process of unlearning the erroneous use structures that are wrong becomes an uphill task for the students.

This got me thinking and I started asking the students about the difficulties they encountered. Often they replied me either in Hindi or a mixed blend of English and Hindi words "Ma'am, we started struggling in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Classes, and gradually the subject English took on proportions of a monster that we dread and continue to grapple with on an everyday basis."

In this paper I present a brief analysis of the English Textbook that is currently used in Class X in the MPSC Board (Madhya Pradesh, Secondary School) schools.

### Structure of the Textbook

The textbook has been published by the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi), compiled by eminent scholars of English Language Teaching as a Foreign Language (EFL). The first edition of this Class X textbook in English was published in 2007. The current edition was published in 2021 and it is used presently in



the current X classes in Madhya Pradesh Secondary School Board schools in the State of Madhya Pradesh.

The textbook begins with a very useful and insightful Foreword written in 2006 by the Director of National Council of Educational Research and Training. The Director's Foreword begins with the statement: "The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school", and so the textbook tries to avoid "bookish learning" which "causes a gap between the school, home and community." The textbooks "also attempt to discourage rote learning." The Director recommends that we should "perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge."

One may raise a question as to whether the Class X English textbook under discussion links the students to their life outside the school. Teaching and learning a language as a Foreign Language usually must make extra-effort in creating such links. One strategy that may offer stronger links is to include the themes/topics/essential vocabulary and expressions from the students' outside world into the choice of topics, forms of presentation, etc. of the textbook lessons. Indianization of English textbook contents and conversations, etc. is an important strategy.

The next item *To the Teacher* has only two full pages, but the contents are very useful to the teachers, provided the teachers read this part carefully, discuss it with their colleagues and the schools organize discussions and seminars to understand and follow the contents and methods in day to day work. Very highly commended section, indeed. My conversation with some teachers of a high school under the Madhya Pradesh Secondary School Board high schools revealed the necessity to insist on the teachers to read this section and also conduct group discussions/seminars, etc. to elaborate on the points raised and for identifying practical classroom strategies for rural high schools in particular.

The textbook contains 11 lessons running to a total of 162 pages. Each lesson's primary text is intermixed with questions, exercises, etc. After every lesson's prose text, one or two poems follow the prose text. Thus, poems become an integral part of Class X and the textbook.

1. A Letter to God by G.L. FUENTES

Followed by two poems:

Dust of Snow ROBERT FROST

Fire and Ice ROBERT FROST

2. Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom by NELSON ROLIHLEHLA MANDELA

Followed by a poem:

A Tiger in the Zoo by LESLIE NORRIS

3. Two Stories about Flying

I. His First Flight LIAM O' FLAHERTY

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B. A. Mahalakshmi Prasad, M.A.

An Analysis of Class X English Textbook Used in Madhya Pradesh Secondary School Board High Schools

II. Black Aeroplane FREDERICK FORSYTH  
 Followed by two poems:  
 How to Tell Wild Animals CAROLYN WELLS  
 The Ball Poem JOHN BERRYMAN  
 4. From the Diary of Anne Frank ANNE FRANK  
 Followed by a poem: Amanda! ROBIN KLEIN  
 5. The Hundred Dresses–I ELEANOR ESTES  
 6. The Hundred Dresses–II ELEANOR ESTES  
 Followed by a poem:  
 Animals WALT WHITMAN  
 7. Glimpses of India:  
 I. A Baker from Goa LUCIO RODRIGUES  
 II. Coorg LOKESH ABROL  
 III. Tea from Assam ARUP KUMAR DATTA  
 Followed by a poem: The Trees ADRIENNE RICH  
 8. Mijbil the Otter GAVIN MAXWELL  
 Followed by a poem: Fog CARL SANDBURG  
 9. Madam Rides the Bus VALLIKANNAN  
 Followed by a poem: The Tale of Custard the Dragon OGDEN NASH  
 10. The Sermon at Benares  
 Followed by a poem: For Anne Gregory WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS  
 11. The Proposal ANTON CHEKOV

As already pointed out, the contents of the textbook are interspersed with prose and poetry. Out of the 11 lessons only 3 are from Indian authors and the rest are American and European authors such as G.L. Fuentes, Robert Frost, Leslie Norris, Anne Frank, Eleanor Estes, Gavin Maxwell, etc.

The text of the lesson begins with a brief introduction about the lesson and a related activity and introductory questions that the teacher might ask the students while introducing the topic and the lesson. Some of the texts of the lessons are very long, and this could discourage students as well as the teachers!

Difficult words and their meanings have been given at the side of the page for ease of understanding.

At the end of the lesson, questions related to the text that is being read are asked.

Exercise on language learning activity is given, wherein the grammatical concepts such as clauses, phrases are introduced with exercises for practice. Introduction to writing and enrichment of styles such as use of metaphors and similes are given in the textbook. Activities

for the development of primary language skills such as listening and speaking are also enumerated at the end of the lesson.

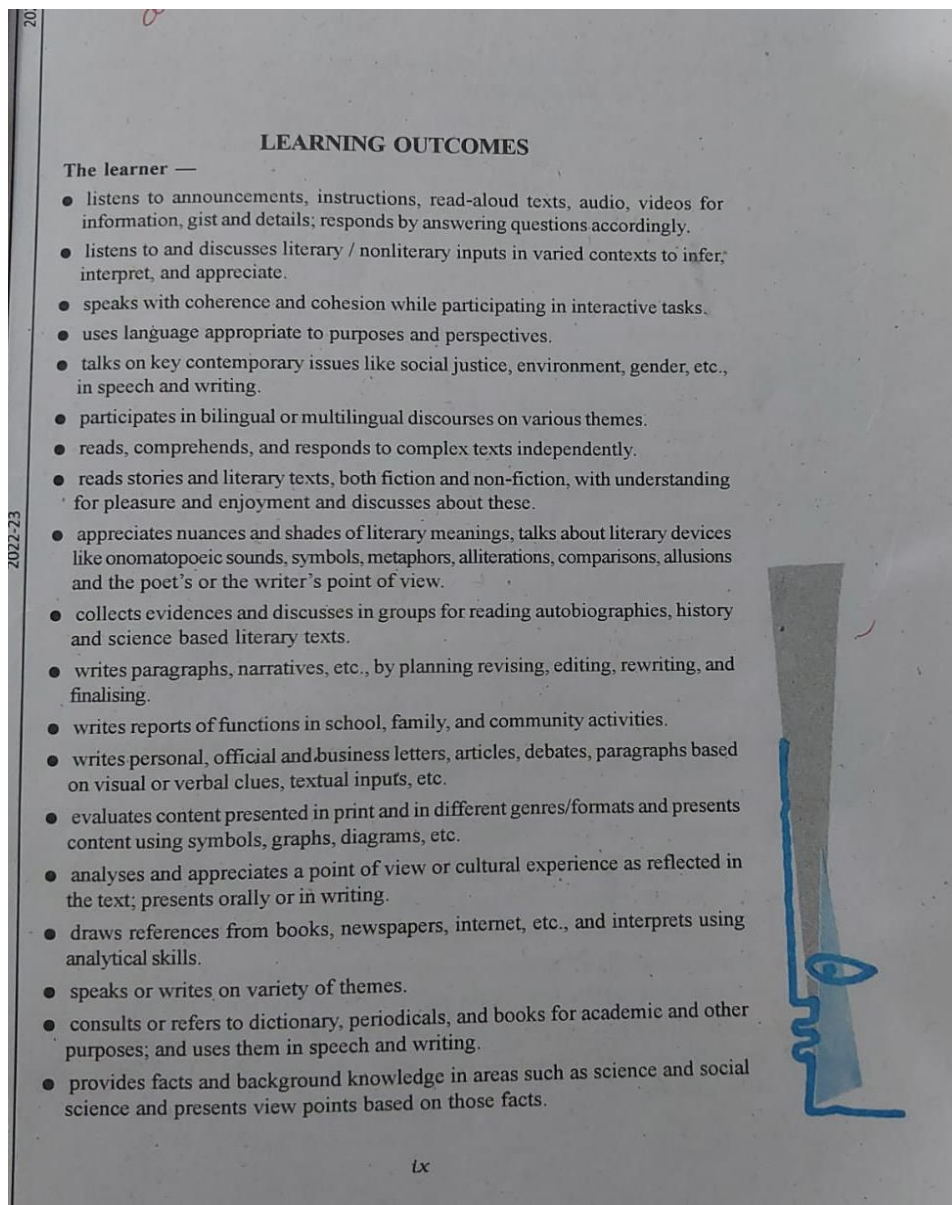
Fortunately, there are two lessons presenting stories in Indian context. So, the students may be at ease to read and enjoy these texts, with minimal support from their teachers. There is also a lesson that presents the narrative of Gautama Buddha's Sermon at Benares. This will certainly attract all students including rural students to read it several times.

However, the question that comes to our mind is whether our students as well as their teachers are able to follow the majority of the texts and poems. These highly standard English materials are written by leading authors. These are intended mostly for those for whom English is the mother tongue/first language. If the learning of the Standard Language is routed through contents that may be familiar and relevant to the context and culture of the learners, students can be motivated to read the texts more readily in my opinion.

The lessons are intermixed with exercises to help students to master all the four language skills. The structures of the English language are presented in a graded fashion to enable students to master their skills. The strength and the usefulness of the textbook lie in these exercises. Once again, how these exercises are presented to the students and how many exercises students are able to complete during the course may also be considered. The time allotted for the course may or may not be adequate enough to cover all the exercises. Then it becomes necessary for the group of teachers to choose most important items for the students to complete their exercises. It would be better and very useful if we also have some model question papers as part of the textbook.

The textbook has a dedicated write up on learning outcomes that highlights the skills that a student of English has to be proficient at the end of the course, like listening and understanding announcements, instructions, read aloud texts, etc.

The textbook has a page dedicated to the learning outcomes at the end of the course.



### Some Additional Observations

The textbook at first glance seems to cater to the holistic development of language skills in students. However, the reality is woefully different. Discussion with students studying in 10<sup>th</sup> standard, in a Govt. aided school (name of the school is withheld by the present author), and a Public School which is a CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) School), Bhopal (again the name of the school is withheld by the present author), and with the teachers who teach English in the schools showed that in almost all the cases, the teacher was unable to complete all the activities given at the end of the lessons. The most neglected part of the activity was vocabulary enhancement, speaking and listening activities, which were almost ignored by the language teacher.

A short test to assess the language skills of the students after having passed 12<sup>th</sup> standard and studying Engineering in the first year, glaringly pointed out the lapses in the teaching-learning outcomes in the students. An illustration of the questions asked during the assessment is as follows.

Choose the correct answer:

A person who can't see is ..... (a. deaf, b. blind, c. dumb)

Students studying in the 10<sup>th</sup> class answered it as deaf while students studying in the engineering courses answered either dumb or blind.

Fill in the blanks with appropriate articles

He is ... honest man (a, an)

Most of the students filled it with **a**.

Introduce yourself. ... Students from urban areas were able to give a rudimentary introduction of themselves. Students from the rural areas were woefully unable to introduce themselves in English.

Describe the given picture (A picture of Taj Mahal was given).

Based on the assessment of the answer scripts and personal discussions with the teachers and students, the students were graded on a 5-point scale, viz., poor, fair, good, very good, and excellent, wherein --

**1. Poor** – The student has difficulty in completing tasks with listening comprehension. The student speaks in syntactic forms that is a direct translation from Hindi. Spellings, grammar and punctuation are erratic.

**2- Fair** -The student can solve easy level listening comprehension passages. Can speak a bit of English. Spellings, grammar and punctuation are erratic, e.g., substitution of *their* for *there*.

**3- Good** – Students can solve listening comprehension. Can speak well. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation rules are followed albeit erratically. The student is able to recognise that she/he has made a mistake in spelling and syntax but does not have the knowledge to correct it.

**4- Very Good** - The student has acquired functional knowledge of language in all the domains and is able to perform satisfactorily. However, a distinct lack of knowledge in vocabulary is observed.

**5- Excellent**- The student has acquired functional knowledge of language in all the domains and is able to perform satisfactorily. There is no observable irregularity in speaking and writing.

An analysis of total students (urban and rural areas) graded according to the 5-point scale is given in the following table.

	<b>Rural and Urban</b>				
<b>Rating Scale</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Language Skill</b>					
<b>Listening</b>	100	49	65	76	10
<b>Speaking</b>	193	94	35	43	35
<b>Reading</b>	140	150	46	29	35
<b>Writing</b>	140	150	46	29	35
<b>Grammar</b>	100	80	38	70	32

Students who are from the urban milieu and are studying in the English Medium school were to a certain extent able to answer the questions. However, students from rural areas were unable to solve the paper due to lack of vocabulary. The lacuna in receptive and expressive vocabulary is so poor that the students were unable to name fruits, vegetables, emotions and other words associated with day-to-day conversation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Textbooks are portals of language learning and use. The students from the urban areas are able to use language in reception and expression. However, students from the Government school were unable to complete the grammatical tasks as well as speak in English.

Students from rural areas performed consistently in the poor and fair sections. Completing tasks related to the lesson was a challenge. Most of the students memorised the answers and reproduced them in the exam without understanding the crux or the meaning of the lesson. Their vocabulary was also inadequate.

My recommendation is that the students should be provided with an exhaustive list of vocabulary that is both general and lesson specific with meanings in the vernacular to help the students understand the lesson. The students should also be provided with a list of everyday dialogues pertaining to different contexts to help the student converse in English.

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## Journey into the Realm of Mathematics and Language

**B. A. Mahalakshmi Prasad, M.A.**

Sagar Institute of Science and Technology, Ratibad  
Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Email: [machiprasad@gmail.com](mailto:machiprasad@gmail.com) Ph: +91 9844808821

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### Abstract

Language is organic, innate and ubiquitous. It is the skill that connects everything. Humans try to explore and express themselves through language. The nature and components of language have been humans' preoccupation for a long time. As a corollary, mathematics is also a medium through which humans try to make sense of their world and also express themselves. Humans have remained fascinated by the shapes in nature, and they constantly try to explore and express the world in mathematics. I think that both language and mathematics are inherent behaviors that humans possess and exhibit.

As I tried to learn mathematics, I was inevitably struck by the features that overlap and run parallel in both the subjects – mathematics and language. This paper is more about my little understanding of both the subjects.

**Keywords:** inherent behaviours, mathematics, language, components of mathematics, features of language, comparison of mathematics and language.

### Introduction

Mathematics is everywhere in nature and so are sounds. Human beings have always tried to define and describe nature in its all complexities and using mathematics and these two realms always have overlapped by giving deeper understanding of the nature of world around us.

A large and undeniable part of the world that we are surrounded by is also made of sound. These sounds can be the babbling of a brook, to the roar of a waterfall, to the chirping of birds or the attempt by human beings to produce and arrange sounds in the form of speech and music.

The more man evolved and tried imitate nature he became aware of the overwhelming presence of mathematics in every filed.

Coming to the field of mathematics – the encyclopedia of mathematics tries to draw a continuum between mathematics and language - “The theory of formal grammars occupies a central position in mathematical linguistic because it allows one to simulate the most essential aspects of the function of language — the processing of meaning into text and conversely — and because of this it serves as a connecting link between the remaining divisions of mathematical linguistics.” However, there is a dearth of literature that tries to draw and understand the field of number theory and phonetics, the rules and laws that govern them correspond and contrast in wonderfully interesting ways. I am exploring both in my limited knowledge and experience.

### **Sounds of Sanskrit**

In the seminal text *Ashtaadhayayi* of Panini, Panini begins the text with the salutations to the “supreme spirit”. In *Ashtaadhayayi*, Panini has organized the sounds of Sanskrit -- there are fourteen verses for the recitation of the Sanskrit alphabet (47 letters: 14 vowels and 33 consonants). It is known as the *Akshara-samamnaya*, “recitation of phonemes”. The Sanskrit alphabet sequence of *akshara* is also known as *Varna-mala*, “garland”. The word *varna* means a “syllable” and all the energies related to that syllable — colour, presiding force, the mouth part used to pronounce each syllable, the related body part, etc. Each of the fourteen verses consists of a group of basic Sanskrit phonemes.

1. a i u N	१. अ इ उ ण्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
2. r   K	२. ऋ लृ क्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
3. e o Ñ	३. ए ओ ङ्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
4. ai au C	४. ऐ औ च्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
5. h y v r T	५. ह य व र ट्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
6. I N	६. ल ण्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
7. ñ m n̄ n̄ n M	७. ञ म ङ ण न म्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
8. jh bh Ñ	८. झ भ ञ्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
9. gh dh dh S	९. घ ढ ध ष्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
10. j b g d d S	१०. ज ब ग ड द श्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
11. kh ph ch th th ca t t V	११. ख फ छ ठ थ च ट त व्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
12. k p Y	१२. क प य्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
13. s s s R	१३. श ष स र्   <sup>ॐ</sup>
14. h L	१४. ह ल्   <sup>ॐ</sup>

Modern phoneticians, in the I.P.A. list 87 symbols of different sounds like including consonants and vowels. The sounds are also mapped according the nature, marked by diacritic symbols.

If one looks at the sounds in I.P.A chart, one becomes aware that human beings are capable of producing only a certain limited amount of sounds due to the constraints of evolution. However, the ingenuity of man is such that he is capable of creating infinite combinations of sounds, with meaning and some without meaning.

### In Mathematics

Keeping this in view, if one looks at the number theory in mathematics, especially infinite series, one can draw a corollary to this important concept.

An infinite sequence is an **endless progression of discrete objects**, especially numbers. A sequence has a clear starting point and is written in a definite order. An infinite sequence may include all the numbers of a particular set, such as all positive integers {1, 2, 3, 4 ...}. Infinite series tells us that a sum of series does not have a limit.

Mathematicians have tried to understand and express the infinite series as

$$\{a_1, a_2, a_3, \dots a_n, a_{(n+1)}, \dots\}$$

In this case,  $\{a_1\}$  would be called the first term,  $\{a_2\}$  would be called the second term, and so on. The variable  $n$  could be any number. The ellipsis  $\{\dots\}$  indicates no end or limit. Using such terminology one expresses a notation for infinity – even if humans do not have a full understanding.

Two types of infinite sequence deserve attention here. An arithmetic infinite sequence is a progression of numbers where the difference between each consecutive term is constant. The interval between the terms is called the “common difference.” For instance, an arithmetic infinite sequence starting with 2 with a common difference of 2 would look like this:

$$\{2, 4, 6, 8, 10 \dots\}$$

### Sounds and Numbers

Just as we have an infinite series, we can have  $n$  number of combinations of sounds. Some of these have been ascribed meaning by different cultures. Some are so difficult to articulate that it is only on paper we see such an articulation.

When sounds converge, they form a phoneme. However, to understand the language, these sounds must be converted into discrete linguistic units such as phoneme/ morphemes just like the infinite series  $1/2 \ 1/4 \ 1/8 \dots \dots \dots 1/32$ . All tend to 1, the complete whole real number that is tangible.

As a corollary, if we try to apply the divergent rule for phonetics where the rule says that  $1+2+3+4+ \dots$

If we keep creating converging phones, we can make any number of phones but the phones becoming phonemes is dependent on the culture and the human ability to apply/ create meaning to words. And this capacity is what means us to be humans, or it becomes the distinguishing character of our species.

In conclusion, I would like to explore in depth the nature and interpretation connections between mathematics and long-phonemes of language. This also is likely to offer us a better understanding between mathematics and language.

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## The Prose System in the Poetry of Pashto: Scales of Pashto Poetry

**Mohammad Nazir Rohani**

**Corresponding Author**

Pashto Department, Takhar University, Afghanistan

Email: [nazir.roohani@gmail.com](mailto:nazir.roohani@gmail.com)

**Seraj Ahmad Habibi**

Pashto Department, Herat University, Afghanistan

Email: [Serajahmadhabibi2023@gmail.com](mailto:Serajahmadhabibi2023@gmail.com)

**Said Ghulam Mohammad Hashmi**

Pashto Department, Parwan University, Afghanistan

Email: [sgmhashmi@ymail.com](mailto:sgmhashmi@ymail.com)

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### Abstract

Prose means the way to the top of the mountain or to offer something. The literal meaning of prose is the scales of poetry, but the scales on which the weight of Pashto poetry is weighed is the syllabotonic scales which consider both the intonation and the syllabic of poetry. It means that, the stressed syllables are regular in all pillars and are positioned at equal distances following the first pillar. The purpose of this research is to make the prose system in Pashto's poetry clear to the readers. The library research method was used in this study. The study found that the prose system in the poetry of Pashto has a diverse characteristic; in all the lyric poems, there is pressure in every third syllable element and on its quatrains, the stress is on its fourth syllable.

**Keywords:** Pashto language, prose system, Pashto poetry, scales of poetry.

### Introduction

Our outline of the topic of this article is that, firstly, we introduced the topics before the main topic, then the light was shed on the syllabotonic system. And with this, the matter has been sufficiently clarified that the poems of Pashto language should be put on the scale.

### Background

Regarding the background, we can say that no work has been done on this topic so far, which is sufficient for serious readers. Some scholars have worked on prosody in general, but in



particular, they have explained the syllabic characteristics of a Pashto poet's poetry to the esteemed readers. It is hoped that the problems of serious readers will be solved.

## **Introduction**

Before we examine the scales of Pashto poetry or the prosody system of poetry, we will first shed light on the prosody:

## **Prosody**

The literal meaning of the words is the mountain road, the supply, the poet's scale and the last pillar of the first verse of the verse.

The subject of this knowledge indicates the correctness and incorrectness of the poem. (Rafiq, 1397, p. 228)

Prosody in the dictionary means the path of the poem, the last pillar of the first pillar and the path on the mountain (Hamkar, 1392, p. 73). The rules used in Arabic prosody using which the poems of the Arabic language are written are not used for the Pashto language.

The type of transition is different in Pashto, that is, the prosody system of these two languages has different types, based on which the poems are moved.

Pashto language poetry is based on selabotonic system.

The number of verses and the regular and equal spacing of the waves of the poems are taken into consideration.

In addition to sound, it also appears in the movements of animals and humans. Musical instruments are also shaped by weight. This weight moves and takes shape according to the movement of the heart.

Some sounds that sound bad are caused by the fact that their movement is not equal to the movement of the heart.

The movement of the eyes creates a melody. Master Rashad has divided the weight into two parts:

### **1- Absolute Weight**

A weight that does not require the existence of meaningful sounds is called absolute weight, such as *Raga*, *Riz*, *Shapilka* etc.

## 2- Restricted Weight

Any weight that is made up of meaningful sounds is called a limited weight, which Sheikh Al-Rais calls it poetic rhythm and the subject of our discussion here is this limited weight or poetic rhythm.

Some words are made from sounds in such a way that they have a real or natural weight, and some are lengthened or shortened for the sake of order. These are virtual words.

Tie me with a weight, so we balance it with a number of meaningless sounds (*nana, wai wai, ooh ooh*) or bring related letters for the sake of weight: *che, khou, uh*, so...) For balance, the basic ingredient is Khajj.

## Two Types of Weight

Pashto rhymes have two types of weights:

**1-Restricted or metric:** It is the weight that provides the number of waves between two meters.

**2- Unrestricted or non-metric:** It is a weight that has a deep difference in the number of waves between two meters.

## Song

The melody is the basic element of the poem that harmonizes the sounds.

In certain cases in the language, speeches, phrases, clauses and sentences are expressed in a specific and special way. For this reason, there can be a special melody for the sentences and phrases, but each word and composition also has its own special melody or, in other languages, a melody, rhythm and presentation.

The meaning of the sounds is to join together in a strong or light way, which conveys different syntactic, mathematical and emotional meanings in the language, and each component of these prosody elements is called **harmony**. These compounds are as follows:

## Melody

Melody is the basic tone of voice movement (lowering and rising) and the speech that is divided into phrases, each phrase has a specific melody.

Of course, the phrases that convey the meaning of the news are said with a low tone, for example, Abdullah came. Those that convey the meaning of the question are said with a high

tone. Similarly, exclamatory, and adverbial sentences and phrases are described with a parallel melody, such as *Abdullah came*.

There are three levels of music in Pashto and Dari languages, and melody is one of the most essential compositional components.

The linguists called the song a type of bomb and that char, the practice is called language

A number of people read the poem in such a way that they do not keep the idea of harmony in the speech, so they make the poem tasteless, colorless and weightless.

In short, a melody is a combination of sounds that gives a jagged, low and low sound, between the words, there is a hidden noise that can be felt.)

Melody is between the syllables in a poem, a sound combination or regular combination that provides weight and music to the poem.

Every sound has its own unique melody. Each word provides music to the melody.

The melody is Odon. Repeating the letters and connecting them to each other creates music. Behind some of the words are moving images.

These pictures have a sound and movement, which is the same movement, has a special melody.

As an example, we mention *Sharashara*; the repetition of (Sh) and (R) in Shar Sharah has a melody and a special music.

Some words have ugly, sad, and heart-wrenching melodies, behind which there are images of hatred and war, such as: *Daz, Dum, Garzari, Darz*, etc.

Use of words, phrases and sentences in the structural and spiritual aspects

Sides of this verse are equal in terms of the number of waves, that is, the sea has eleven waves, but there is no harmonious ratio or ode between the waves.

### **It is not equal to Hajj**

In the first verse of this verse, the khaj falls on the third wave and the fifth wave, and in the second verse, the khaj falls on the first and seventh wave.

There is no regular and coherent relationship between the regular lagi and the words.  
(Azmoun, 2020, p. 79; Akramy, et al., 2022)

**Salab** refers to a certain frame of the weight and volume of the poem.

**Silab** is the amount of sound that comes out of the mouth at once, or when it hits the wall, ie., every vowel in the word forms a syllable.

### **Silaba Tunic Weight**

The term silabo-tunic is derived from two Greek words (flood, tonus), whose weight is based on both the wave and the khaj.

A rough wave comes against a rough wave.

Pashto poetry has been excluded from research, which can only be applied to the syllabotonic system, in which only one syllable is Khajna out of four syllables.

If Hajj has come in every wave of the first verse (first, second, third, fourth), Hajj comes in the same waves in all the verses until the end of the poem. (Associate, 1392)

### **The Beginning**

The first verse of the second chapter of *Dehr Bayt* is called the Beginning.

Zarb or Ujaz: The second and last column of Dhar Bayt is called Zarb.

Hashuh: The middle of the two verses of the verse is called *Hashuh*. This happens in the case that the verse has six or eight verses, each verse has more than three syllables.

Types of houses according to the number of locks:

A verse with four columns: It is one in which each stanza has two columns.

A verse with six verses: It is one in which each stanza has three verses.

Eight Rukneez Bayt: It is the one that has four verses in each stanza.

Types of Rukn according to the bearing: Since the Pashto language has an independent khuj, the khuj sometimes comes on the first wave, sometimes on the second wave, sometimes on the third wave and sometimes on the fourth wave.

The verse that the first stroke of the bow is a treasure: the sword that passes but has a blow but does not have a sword, which may fall but does not have its support.  
(Khattak, 1393 p. 174)

The verse, the second wave of the Rukn is the treasure:

Dear friend, I'm going to buy a kite. There is a secret in this business.  
(Hamkar, 1392, p. 41)

The verse, which is the third wave of the Rukn:

If you bring a messenger to Rome, turn to face it.

The verse, the fourth wave of the Rukn is the treasure:

When will you come back from India, when will you smile at me (Hamkar, 1392, p. 43)

### **Scales of Pashto Poetry**

Now let's examine the scale of Pashto poetry or the prosody system of Pashto poetry, which is also the syllabic aspect, which first divides the twelve syllabic ghazals into pillars and then we see the khujna wave in each pillar.

#### **A: Twelve Floods Ghazal**

In the twelve-syllable ghazal of Kazim Khan Shida, a strong poet of Pashto literature, the emphasis is placed on the third flood of four floods, such as:

What a relief to the heart of Dajhan  
That constantly leaves the heart of the sky  
(Sheeda, 1393, p. 184; Akramy & Aiyaz, 2022)

The above verse is divided into the following parts:

The above ghazal, all of which are complete, has been stressed on the third verse of the poem.

#### **Another example:**

If you know that the flame is like an oven, this burnt chest is mine  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 173)

The above ghazal, all of which are complete, has been stressed on the third verse of the poem.

Sheda's heart is filled with sadness as there is no cure.  
(Sheida, 1393, p. 258)

In the above verse of Shida, which mentions grief absolutely, its purpose is not any other kind of wound, but the wound of love.  
(Nagar, 1395, p. 306)

There are twelve waves on each side, and there is a sound pressure or Khaj on the third wave of each column.

### **B: Yoles Selabiz Ghazal**

Shida's 11 syllabic ghazals also have a prosaic structure like the 12 syllabic ghazals, the first two pillars of which are complete, and the third pillar is incomplete.

Another thing is worth mentioning, that in Shida's 11-syllabic ghazals, sometimes the rhymed verses are eleven syllables and the non-rhymed verses are twelve syllables and do not have incomplete stanzas, such as in the following verses:

Everywhere there is disgrace, the Lord has a veil of love, the Lord of love.  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 135)

In this ghazal, we can see the non-stanzaic verse, the non-rhymed verse is twelve syllables, and the rhymed verse is eleven syllables again: Qaf will be as powerful as dew if it is cast on the head.

In this ghazal, we see another non-rhyming verse, which has 12 stanzas and 11 stanzas.  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 135)

In this ghazal, we are looking at another non-rhyming verse, which has a non-rhyming line of twelve syllables and a rhyming line of eleven syllables: **I can't stop thinking about it.**  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 135)

### **Multiplication**

The rhymed lines of the above ghazal are (11) and the non-rhymed lines are (12). And the sound pressure has been applied to the third and third of all the verses.



### **C: Sixteen Chapters Ghazal**

Kazim Khan Shida has also written 16 chapters of ghazals, but his ghazals are rarely noticed.

The prosodic structure of these ghazals also has the third salab hajj (11, 12).  
For example:

She was constantly lying down and didn't have any other worries.

Show the coast of the ocean, that is, drink the water.  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 279).

My house in the flood is filled like a bubble, so I could never settle down.  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 279)

Each verse of the above ghazal has 16 verses, all its parts are complete.

Another example:

Shine your light, perfect like the sun, do not look at it in the morning.  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 204)

### **Eight Flood Verses**

O industry of the whole world, O innovation of every sky.

The full power of payment is a rare attribute of payment

The Grand Council has arranged that the man has chosen.  
(Sheda, 1393, p. 51)

The sound pressure of this flood has also been imported in the second column of the third flood.

### **Another example**

Arabic in his mouth, and his country was Llama, not Abi.

There was water there that was of no use.

He was addicted to that water, and it was better than clean water.  
(Sheida, 2014; Akramy, 2022a).

In the above two different verses, each of which has eight verses, the second column is the third verse.

### **Characteristic Structure of *Rubaiyat***

Before Arabic Prosody showed its effects in Pashto literature, there was a kind of foursome in Pashto language and literature, which was said in millions (Rashidi, 1397, p. 183; Akramy, 2022b).

Shida Rubaiyat also has one type of characteristics, which are ten syllabic, eleven syllabic and twelve syllabic according to weight. Each musrah is on its back, that is, there is a period between the two musras, and before the third period there is a complete and one incomplete unit, then there is a period, and after the first unit, one unit is complete and the other unit is incomplete, and in the following examples

### **Presenting**

#### **The ten flood verses:**

The upper quatrain has 10 silabahs, five silabahs come before the end, and five silabahs come after the tardama.

#### **Another example:**

The subject of the poem is like a picture, its colorful words, texture and ornament.

It is necessary for him, both of these items make the article interesting.

(Sherzad, 1395 p. 277)

The upper verse is also ten silabahs, five silabahs come before the end and five silabahs come after the tardama. The upper verse is a 10-syllabic verse, five of which come before the end and six of the last stanzas. The fourth stanza of the complete verses is khujn, and the incomplete stanzas are without verse.

The flood is after midnight.

### **Twelve Flood Verses**

The upper verse has twelve verses, in which six verses come before the end and six verses come after the end, and the fourth verse of the complete verses is khujn and the incomplete verses are empty.

The flood is after the third, which is a total of 10 floods.

If we compare the four verses of Khushhal Baba, there is a characteristic like Khushhal Baba who says:

A wise man, wherever he may be, needs advice from him.

The fool will not be fooled by the advice of the wise

The upper stanza, the first stanza of which is rhymed, that is, both stanzas are rhymed, and the second stanza is non-stanzaic because only one stanza rhymes and the first stanza is free. In addition, this quadrilateral also has a period in the middle of it, it is similar to it from the selabotonic aspect, which is the fourth wave of the two complete pillars.  
(Rouhani, 1395, p. 244; Akramy 2020; Akramy 2021)

## Result

In some poems of Pashto language, we came to the conclusion that in the section of ghazals, the sound pressure is imported on the third syllable of the second verse.

The type was analyzed as an example and this pressure has also come in the first, second, third and fourth wave of each stanza in the poems of other Pashto poets.

And the Rubaiyat of Shida have another type of characteristics, which include ten silabas, eleven silabas and twelve silabas according to the weight. After this period, one column is complete and the other column is incomplete, the fourth of the complete columns is khajn and the incomplete columns are not khajn.

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