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# LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 23:1 January 2023  
ISSN 1930-2940

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The next issue (the issue of February 2023) will be uploaded by the fourth week of February 2023 or earlier.

Wish you a Happy New Year!

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## Negation in Jungli (Ao)

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### Abstract

This paper gives a descriptive account of negation in Jungli (Ao), a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by the Aos in Nagaland, Northeast India. Jungli has two negative markers, the negative prefix ‘mā-’ and the prohibitive marker ‘tə-’. I examine the occurrence and restriction of these two prefixes in sentence constructions involving tense and aspect markers, modal markers, copulas, interrogatives and converb constructions. A short description of negative words in Jungli is also presented.

**Keywords:** Jungli, Chungli, Ao, negation

### 1. Introduction

Jungli (ISO 639-3 njo; earlier known as **Chungli**) is a Tibeto-Burman language of North-East India, spoken by the Aos in Nagaland. While they traditionally belong to Mokokchung district, which is the central part of Nagaland, they are found today in almost all urban areas of Nagaland. The Aos are divided into three main groups based on their cultural and linguistic differences: Jungli, Mongsen and Changki, each group with a distinct language/dialect. Of the total population of 260,008 (All India, Census 2011), a rough estimate is that 50% speak Jungli and 40% speak Mongsen. The remaining 10% speak Changki and other minor dialects (Coupe 2003). Though these dialects are spoken by the same tribal group, they are largely considered to be mutually unintelligible, though the standardization of Jungli and the exposure of the dialects to each other have reduced this level of unintelligibility. Mongsen and Changki are also considered to be closer to each other. Today, Jungli is used in the sphere of education, mass media, and all religious and formal activities.

Though it is a language spoken by a major tribe, not many linguistic works are available on the language, and none on negation to my knowledge. Gowda's (1978) grammar of Ao, which is based on Jungli, gives a very brief discussion on negation, identifying two negative prefixes /ta/ and /ma/. A number of phonological processes involving the prefixes are also discussed with examples.

In this paper, I examine the nature of negation in Jungli, giving a descriptive account with respect to its occurrence and restriction in different types of sentences. In section 2, the two negative prefixes are introduced along with a third possible negative suffix which occurs with the negative prefix. In section 3, the occurrence of negation is examined with respect to the tense/aspectual markers (§3.1), various copulas (§3.2), modal suffixes (§3.3), interrogatives (§3.4), and converbs (§3.5). In section 4, I look at the various negative words attested in the language. Section 5 concludes with a brief summary of the paper.

## 2. Negative Prefixes

Jungli is dominantly suffixing in nature and thus allows a number of verbal suffixes marking tense, aspect, mood and other verbal functions to occur in a linear order. Hence, apart from the prefix and the verb, modals, aspectual and tense markers occur in that particular order shown in (1).

- (1) (Prefix)–**Verb**–(Modal)–(Aspect)–(Tense)

In the predicate, the verb is the minimal requirement. While only one tense and one aspectual marker can occur in a verbal predicate (eg: zuuk-ta-ər 'hit-PROG-PRES'), a number of modal suffixes may occur with restrictions on their linear order. For example, the immediate suffix '-li?' can occur only after the chance marker '-fi?' and never before.

- (2) zùk-fi?-li?  
hit-CHA-IMM  
'immediately after hitting by chance'

In addition to the suffixes, a few prefixes are attested which mark adjectives, nominalisation and two types of negation: the normal negation marker 'mā-' and the prohibitive marker 'tə-'.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(3a) pā      kitàŋ    mā-ŋiũŋ<br/>he      home    NEG-eat<br/>'He did not eat at home.'</p> | <p>(3b) kitàŋ    tə-ŋiũŋ<br/>home    PNEG-eat<br/>'Do not eat at home.'</p> |
|--|---|

Such a distinction between normal negation and prohibitive negation can be seen in other Tibeto-Burman languages like Lotha (Acharya 1983), Sema (Sreedhar 1980), Angami (Giridhar 1980) and a number of Kuki-Chin languages. The Proto-Tibeto-Burman form for negation is *\*ma* or *\*maŋ* (Matisoff 2003), and while many of the Tibeto-Burman languages of the Northeastern region have developed post verbal negation (DeLancey 2015), Central Naga languages like Jungli have retained the proto preverbal form. The prohibitive form is also very close to the Proto-Tibeto-Burman form *\*ta* or *\*da*.

Apart from the two negative prefixes discussed above, another form of negation is attested which makes use of a suffix ‘-li’ along with the negative prefix ‘mā-’ and marks the permissive negation.

- (4) (ni) ímtāk-ī mǎ-tū-lī  
 (I) village-NOM NEG-go up-NEG  
 ‘Let me not go up to the village.’

The lone occurrence of the suffix (without the prefix) is not attested in the language. However, this may be a result of certain historical segmental changes in the suffix. In Jungli, the permissive suffix is ‘-ti’ as shown in sentence (5) below.

- (5) (ni) ímtāk-ī tū-tī  
 I village-NOM up-PERM  
 ‘Let me go up to the village’

Our assumption is that ‘ti’ has undergone some phonological change to ‘-li’ when it occurs in the negative. If this assumption is true, then the permissive negation can be explained as the negation of the Verb + Permissive suffix rather than postulate another form of negation.

### 3.1 Negation and tense/aspectual markers

In Jungli, the past tense is marked by a zero morpheme and hence the citation form of the verb is the same as the past tense form. The negative prefix can occur with all the three tense forms. On the other hand, the prohibitive negation ‘tǎ-’ cannot occur with the tense and aspectual suffixes (6b and 6c) as it attaches to non-finite forms of the verb as in (6a).

- (6a) tsúŋsəm tǎ-səm (b) \*tsúŋsəm tǎ-səm-ər (c) \*tsúŋsəm tǎ-səm-tsuì  
 shoe PNEG-wear  
 ‘Don’t wear shoes.’

Jungli also has two aspectual suffixes: -ja/-ta ‘progressive’ and -uku ‘perfective’. However, verbs with aspectual suffixes cannot be negated (see 7b and 8b).

(7a) pā ʃàʃā-tá-ər-à?  
he walk-PROG-PRES-DECL  
‘He is walking/he walks.’

(7b) \*pā mō-ʃàʃā-tá-ər-à?

(8a) pā ʃàʃā-úkū  
He walk-PERF  
‘He has walked.’

(8b) \*pā mō-ʃàʃā-úkū

In other words, the negative prefixes cannot occur with the verb when it is in the progressive or perfective form. To derive a negative semantic equivalent of the sentences in (7) and (8), one has to negate the verb in the present and past tense as shown in (9) and (10) respectively.

(9a) pā ʃàʃā-ər-à?  
he walk- PRES-DECL  
‘He walks.’

(9b) pā mō-ʃàʃā-ər-à?  
he NEG-walk- PRES-DECL  
‘He does not walk.’

(10a) pā ʃàʃā-Ø-à?  
he walk-PST-DECL  
‘He walked.’

(10b) pā mō-ʃàʃā-Ø-à?  
he NEG-walk-PST-DECL  
‘He did not walk/he has not walked.’

On the contrary, for the progressive forms in the past and future tenses, which are constructed by using the copula -li ‘be’ or/and -suu ‘do’, negation is possible since it is the copula which is negated (11 and 12).

(11a) pā ʃàʃā-jā lī-ásu-Ø  
he walk-PROG be-do-PST  
‘He was walking.’

(b) pā ʃàʃā-jā mō-lī-ásu-Ø  
he walk-PROG NEG-be-do-PST  
‘He was not walking.’

(12a) pā ʃàʃā-jā ālī-tsú  
he walk-PROG be-FUT  
‘He will be walking.’

(b) pā ʃàʃā-jā m-ālī-tsú  
he walk-PROG NEG-be-FUT  
‘He will not be walking.’

Hence, while the negative prefixes freely occur with the tense suffixes, verbs in the present progressive and perfective aspect cannot be negated. In (11) and (12), there is the possibility of negating the main verb, which is discussed in section (converbs).

### 3.2 Negation of Copula

Similar to the copula constructions in (11) and (12), the other types of sentences which make use of the copula ‘-li’ include the possessive (13), the locative (14) and the existential constructions (15). The sentences are negated by negating the copula through prefixation.

(13a)	nì	kàrī	lí-ər		(b)	nì	kàrī	m-ālī	
	I	car	have-PRES			I	car	NEg-have	
	‘I have a car.’					‘I do not have a car.’			

(14a)	pā	kùhīmā	nūŋ	lí-ər		(b)	pā	kùhīmā	nūŋ	m-ālī
	He	kohima	LOC	be-PRES			He	kohima	LOC	NEG-be
	‘He is in Kohima.’						‘He is not in Kohima.’			

(15a)	típəl	nūŋ	sən	lí-ər		(b)	típəl	nūŋ	sən	m-ālī
	table	LOC	money	be-PRES			table	LOC	money	NEG-be
	‘There is money on the table.’						‘There is no money on the table.’			

In some languages, existential sentences are negated differently from the norm. For instance, in Mishing (Mishra and Singha 2009), negation is constructed by using the negative copula ‘niya’ or the negative particle ‘ya’. However, the negative word ‘giri’ is used for the negation of existential sentences. In Jungli, we find no such distinction in the construction of negative existential sentences (15), following the norm of negating the verb.

In (13a)-(15a), the copula surfaces with the present tense marker ‘-ər’. However, note that its negative counterparts (13b-15b) do not allow the present tense marker to occur on the copula.

The declarative constructions in (13-15) can be responses to the choice interrogative *li-ər m-ali* ‘there or not there?’, which is discussed in section 3.4. However, this particular choice interrogative involving the copula verb ‘-li’ behaves exceptionally by not allowing the tense marker on the negated verb, perhaps as a result of the lexicalization of *mali* ‘not there’

The occurrence of the present tense marker in the sentence, though grammatical, is not the negative counterpart of the constructions in (14) and (15), but distinctly differs semantically as shown for the locative construction in (16) and existential construction in (17). The reason is that the verb no longer functions as a copula, but a main verb.

- (16) pā kùhīmā nūŋ m-ālí-ór 'He does not live in Kohima'  
 he kohima LOC NEG-live-PRES \*'He is not in Kohima'
- (17) típəl nūŋ sən m-ālí-ór 'Money does not live on tables'  
 table LOC money NEG-live-PRES \*'there is no money on the table'

Similar to the use of copulas in the sentences above, in equative constructions, a negated copula *másù* is used (18b). This copula is derived from the verb *ásù* 'do', which appears to have developed certain grammaticalized functions like the copula and negative.

- (18a) ípá-jā kārī  
 DEM-PROX car  
 'This is a car.'
- (18b) ípá-jā kārī m-ásù  
 DEM-PROX car NEG-do (not)  
 'This is not a car.'

In (18b), 'm-ásù' is equivalent to 'not'. It must be noted that 'm-ásù' can also be used as a negative word, meaning 'no' in response to yes/no questions. (see section 3.4)

Other than the two copulas seen above, in probability constructions, the verb 'akuk' is used which may mean 'win', 'able' or 'might/can', depending on the sentence. We focus only on the probabilistic meaning of the word.

- (19) pā kùhīmā-ī aū-tsú ákúk  
 he kohima-ALLA go-FUT may  
 'He might go to Kohima.'

For (19), there are three possible ways of negating the sentence, each with three distinct meanings.

- (20) pā kùhīmā-ī m-aū-tsú ákúk  
 he kohima-ALLA NEG-go-FUT may  
 'He might not go to Kohima.'



- (21) pā kùhīmā-ī aū-tsú m-ákúk  
 he kohima-ALLA go-FUT NEG-may  
 ‘It is not possible for him to go to Kohima.’

- (22) pā kùhīmā-ī m-aū-tsú m-ákúk  
 he kohima-ALLA NEG-go-FUT NEG-may  
 ‘It is not possible for him not to go to Kohima.’ (He must go to Kohima)

In (20), the first verb is negated which is the negative corresponding to the sentence in (19). In (21), the second verb is negated resulting in the negation of the possibility of going. In (22), both verbs can be negated resulting in a positive meaning.

Such constructions may be considered as pseudo-compounds. For Mongsén, Coupe (2007) considers negation to be a good diagnostic to differentiate between real compound verbs and pseudo-compounds, i.e., depending on the scope of negation. In Jungli, no real compounds are attested to our knowledge. However, as seen in (20-22), pseudo-compounds are attested, where negation can have scope over the first, second or both verbs, resulting in different forms of negation. (Also see section 3.5 on converbs)

### 3.3 Negation and modal suffixes

In the above sections, we have seen how tense and aspectual markers have restricted occurrences with the negative prefixes. In this section, we look at some of the other suffixes which mostly mark the various moods. It is seen that the negative prefixes can freely co-occur with most suffixes as shown below for the word *-zùk* ‘beat’.

- |      |                |                 |                     |
|------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| (23) | mā-zūk-táp     | tà-zūk-táp      | ‘reciprocal suffix’ |
|      | mā-zúk-tàt     | tà-zúk-tàt      | ‘abilitive suffix’  |
|      | mā-zúk-ŋi?     | tà-zúk-ŋi?      | ‘chance suffix’     |
|      | mā-zūk-tsú?    | tà-zúk-tsú?     | ‘causative suffix’  |
|      | mā-zúk-nè      | tà-zúk-nè       | ‘comitative suffix’ |
|      | mā-zūk-tāŋ     | tà-zúk-tāŋ      | ‘conative suffix’   |
|      | NEG-Verb-Modal | PNEG-Verb-Modal |                     |

While we do not examine the various suffixal combinations with the negative prefixes in detail, we see that the immediate suffix ‘-li?’ and the imperative ‘-āŋ’ never occurs with negation. The non-occurrence of these two suffixes has an explanation. The immediate suffix

‘-li?’ occurs only in converb constructions and is discussed in section 3.5. Similar to the immediate suffix, the imperative suffix too does not occur with negation. This is obvious as the language has a prefix ‘tə-’ which marks the negative imperative (prohibitive suffix). Hence, unlike languages like Sema (Sreedhar 1980) which makes use of a negative marker ‘-lo’ along with the imperative marker ‘ke’~‘kewi’ to mark prohibition, Jungli does not make use of the imperative suffix.

- (24a) zūk-āŋ ‘beat’                      (24b) tə-zùk ‘do not beat’  
           beat-IMP                              PNEG-beat

### 3.4 Negation and Interrogatives

In this section we examine three types of interrogatives and how such interrogatives are negated. The negative interrogative constructions slightly differ from the negative constructions we have seen so far. Firstly, in interrogatives which entail a choice as an answer, as in (25), the verb is repeated (including the tense markers) such that the first is positive while the second carries the negative prefix.

- (25) pā      árù-èr              m-árù-èr  
       he      come-PRES      NEG-come-PRES  
       ‘Is he coming or not?’

The second type of interrogatives are the yes/no questions. Consider the following yes/no questions below.

- (26) ípá-jā              nā      kàkét    à-ná  
       DEM-PROX    your    book    Q  
       ‘Is this your book?’

- (27) ípá-jā              nā      kàkét    à-sù    (m-ásù)  
       DEM-PROX    your    book    Q      (NEG-do)  
       ‘Is this your book (or not)?’

Temsunungsang (2009a) treats ‘-sui’ and ‘-na’ as interrogative particles and have no perceptible semantic difference. In (27), the negative word *másù* is optional. As such choice interrogatives are verbless, how can these be negated? To negate constructions such as (26), the negative word *másù* is inserted before the interrogative particle as shown in (28). As noted in (18), *másù* has been lexicalized, meaning ‘no/not’.

- (28) ípá-jā            nā      kàkát   m-ásù nā  
 DEM-PROX    your    book   NEG-do        Q  
 ‘Isn’t this your book?’

Verbless constructions like (27) cannot be negated as the negative particle is already a part of the construction. However, unlike (28) where the negative word comes before the interrogative particle, in (27), the negative word comes after the interrogative particle, repeated in (30).

- (29) \* ípá-jā            nā kàkát *másù* sui  
 (30) ípá-jā            nā      kàkát   à-sù    m-ásù  
 DEM-PROX    your    book   Q        NEG-do  
 ‘Is this your book or not?’

As mentioned in (25), in choice interrogatives, the verb is repeated where the second verb carries the negation. In (30), *à-sù m-ásù* is very similar to the construction seen in (25). *à-sù* could be confused with the positive form of the following verb *m-ásù* ‘neg-do’. However, *à-sù* is undoubtedly the interrogative particle as it has low tones on both syllables. Note that in underived Jungli verbs, LL is not a possible tonal pattern. Hence, in verbless constructions, the negative copula is used to negate the interrogative which is similar to negative constructions of declarative sentences in (31).

- (31) ípá-jā            nā      kàkát   m-ásù  
 DEM-PROX    your    book   NEG-do  
 ‘This is not your book’

The third type of interrogatives is the tag questions. In such constructions, the negative word occurs before the interrogative particle as shown in (33), which is similar to (28).

- (32) ípá-jā            nā      kàkát   sùtí  
 DEM-PROX    your    book   Q  
 ‘This is your book, is it?’  
 (33) ípá-jā            nā      kàkát   m-ásù sùtí  
 DEM-PROX    your    book   NEG-doQ  
 ‘This is not your book, is it?’

### 3.5 Negation and converbs

As noted by Coupe (2006, 2007) a number of converb suffixes are observed in Mongsen where the most common is the sequential ‘-ər’ and simultaneous ‘-kə’ suffixes which “link multiple sequences of clauses expressing both chronologically ordered and simultaneous activities, with the whole of the complex sentence terminating in a finite verb at the end of the matrix clause”. In Jungli too, similar to Mongsen, the occurrence of the simultaneous and sequential suffixes, ‘-ā’ and ‘-əṛ’ respectively, is quite common, linking a number of verbs or dependent clauses.

- (34) pā àrú-əṛ, mən-əṛ, ṭīūṇ-əṛ mǎṭṭǎṇ-Ø  
he come-CV sit-CV eat-CV sleep-PST  
‘He came, sat, ate and slept.’

- (35) pā kən tən-ā árù-Ø  
he song sing-CV come-PST  
‘He came singing a song.’

Interestingly, the negation prefix does not co-occur with the above converb suffixes. In order to negate such sentences as in (34), there are three ways in which negation can have scope over the various clauses.

Firstly, the last verb of the matrix clause which has no converb suffix can be negated in the usual way. In this case, negation has scope only over the last verb or clause.

- (36) pā àrú-əṛ, mən-əṛ, ṭīūṇ-əṛ mǎ-mǎṭṭǎṇ-Ø  
he come-CV sit-CV eat-CV NEG-sleep-PST  
‘He came, sat, ate and did not sleep.’

- (37) pā kən tən-ā m-árù-Ø  
he song sing-CV NEG-come-PST  
‘He did not come singing a song.’

Alternatively, if any other verb, other than the final, is to be negated, the negative prefix must co-occur with another converb suffix ‘-i’ which will have scope over that verb alone. The suffix ‘-i’ can be roughly translated as ‘without’ which never occurs without the negative prefix. The converb suffix ‘-i’ never occurs on the final verb just like the other converb suffixes.

- (38) pā àrú-ēr, mē-mèn-i, ʃĩũŋ-ér mǎʃǎŋ-Ø  
 he come-CV NEG-sit-CV eat-CV sleep-PST  
 ‘He came, without sitting, ate and slept.’

- (39) pā kèn mē-tén-i árù-Ø  
 he song NEG-sing-CV come-PST  
 ‘He came without singing a song.’

Consequently, for a sentence where negation must have scope over the matrix/whole clause, all verbs in the clause must be negated either without (as in (40)) or with (as in (41)) the converb suffix ‘-i’. Also note that there is a listing intonation after the verbs in (40). However, such constructions are not common and can be said to be highly marked.

- (40) pā m-árùú m-ámèn mǎ-ʃĩũŋ āsér mǎ-mǎʃǎŋ  
 he NEG-come NEG-sit NEG-eat and NEG-sleep  
 ‘He did not come, sit, eat and sleep.’

- (41) pā m-árù-i mē-mèn-i mē-ʃĩũŋ-i mǎ-mǎʃǎŋ  
 he NEG-come-CV NEG-sit-CV NEG-eat-CV NEG-sleep  
 ‘He did not come, sit, eat and sleep.’

#### 4. Negative words

While we have looked at the negative prefixes in the above discussion, a number of negative words are also found in Jungli.

- (42) a. ʃĩŋá? ‘no one’  
 b. kǎʃǎ? ‘nothing’  
 c. kútáŋà? ‘never’  
 d. kàtà? ‘none, not even one’  
 e. kúŋà? ‘nowhere’

In all the negative words, we observe that /a?/ is a common occurrence at the end of the word. While this appears to be a marker attributing negation to the word, we do not have enough evidence to take a strong stand in favor of such a viewpoint. For instance, we can assume that the positive forms to the above (42a-e) are as follows.

- (43) a. *ʃipáʔ* 'who'  
 b. *kóʃʃi* 'what'  
 c. *kútánʔ* 'when'  
 d. *kà* 'one'  
 e. *kúnʔ* 'where'

While it is clear that the suffixation of /aʔ/ to the positive forms above results in its negative form for (43c) and (43e), there are certain phonological processes which affect 43(a, b and d).

- (44) a. *ʃipáʔ* + aʔ => *ʃiŋáʔ* 'who - NEG'  
 b. *kóʃʃi* + aʔ => *kóʃʃáʔ* 'what - NEG'  
 c. *kútánʔ* + aʔ => *kútánàʔ* 'when - NEG'  
 d. *kà* + aʔ => *kàtàʔ* 'one - NEG'  
 e. *kúnʔ* + aʔ => *kúnàʔ* 'where -NEG'

To go into the complexities of such phonological changes is beyond the scope of this paper and hence, we will continue to refer to such forms as negative words in our discussion below.

The above listed negative words in (42/44) can occur in a construction only when there is a following verb which is in the negative form as is evident from the sentences below.

- (45) *ítàk-ʃi* ***ʃiŋáʔ*** *m-ámən*  
 there-DEM nobody NEG-sit  
 'Nobody sat there'
- (46) *ítàk-ʃi* ***kóʃʃáʔ*** *m-ālī*  
 there-DEM nothing NEG-be  
 'Nothing is there.'
- (47) *pā* ***kútánàʔ*** *māpāŋ ʃiták nūŋ m-árù-ər*  
 he never time right LOC NEG-come-PRES  
 'He never comes on time.'
- (48) *nīsūŋ* ***kàtàʔ*** *m-árù-Ø*  
 person none NEG-come-PST  
 'Not a single person came.'

However, there may be other positive verb forms (converbs) between the negative word and the negated verb as shown below.

- (49)    *ítàk-ʃĩ*            *ʃĩǵá?*            *àrū-ā*            *m-ámèn- Ø*  
          there-DEM       nobody            come-CV           NEG-sit-PST  
          ‘Nobody came and sat there.’

- (50)    *ítàk-ʃĩ*            *kóʃǵá?*            *jù-ā*            *m-ālĩ*  
          there-DEM       nothing            keep-CV           NEG-be  
          ‘There is nothing kept there.’

Hence, the occurrence of a negative word requires the presence of a negated verb in the final position of the main clause. In addition, the converbs between the negated word and the final verb may be negated, resulting in double negation.

- (51)    *ʃĩǵá?*            *mə-ʃĩúŋ-i*            *m-aũ-tsuú*  
          nobody            NEG-eat-CV       NEG-go-FUT  
          ‘No one goes without eating.’ (lit. No one, without eating, will not go)

In (51), the negation of both verbs results in the positive meaning ‘everyone must eat and go’. Note that we have examined such double negative constructions in section 3.2 (example 22).

In addition to the above negative words, two more words ‘*mà?*’ and ‘*núŋ*’ are attested which translates to ‘don’t want’ and ‘don’t’ respectively. Such words are found in response to questions. Gowda (1978) notes that the negative marker ‘*ma*’ “is also a free form and can be used as a negative reply to a question” while the more polite form of ‘*ma*’ is ‘*noŋ*’. In fact, ‘*mà?*’ appears to be a combination of the prefix ‘*mə-*’ + negative suffix ‘*a?*’ as seen above for the negative words while ‘*nuŋ*’ is a more polite form of the prohibitive negation ‘*tə-*’.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I examine the two negative prefixes: the negative ‘*mə-*’ and the prohibitive ‘*tə-*’. A third type of negation, i.e., the permissive negation is also discussed which however appears to be a case of negating the verb+permissive suffix, where the permissive suffix has undergone certain historical sound changes.

In section 3.1, we see that the ‘*mə-*’ negation co-occurs freely with the tense suffixes but never occurs with the prohibitive ‘*tə-*’. Both the negative prefixes also do not occur in aspectual and perfective sentences unless a copula is used where negation applies to the copula.

In section 3.2, I examine the negation of copulas which follows the norm attested elsewhere. Two verbs, *ālī* ‘be’ and *ásuì* ‘do’ can function as copulas in addition to its verbal function where the negated form of ‘*ásuì*’, can behave as a negative word in response to yes/no questions. It is also seen that Jungli does not make a distinction in negating existential and other types of sentences unlike other languages. I also briefly examine how pseudo compounds can be identified by using negation as a diagnostic.

In section 3.3, the co-occurrence of various suffixes with the negative prefixes is examined. I conclude that only the imperative and the immediate suffix cannot occur with negation.

In section 3.4, I examine negative polarity and tagged questions. In negative polarity sentences, the verb is repeated which is then negated while in tagged questions, the negative word ‘m-asui’ is used.

In section 3.5, the negation of converbs is described. I conclude that there are three ways in which negation can have scope over the various clauses in such converb constructions while a converb can only be negated by using the negation ‘mə-’ and a suffix ‘-i’.

In section 4, I present the negative words which occur in a sentence only when there is a following verb which is in the negative form.

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## Abbreviations

ALL:	Allative marker
CHA:	Chance modal marker
CV:	Converb marker
DECL:	Declarative marker
DEM:	Demonstrative
FUT:	Future tense marker
IMM:	Immediate modal marker
IMP:	Imperative marker
LOC:	Locative marker
NEG:	Negative marker
NOM:	Nominative marker
PERF:	Perfective marker
PERM:	Permissive modal marker
PNEG:	Prohibitive marker
PRES:	Present tense marker



PROG: Progressive Aspect marker

PROX: Proximate

PST: Past tense

Q: Interrogative marker

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## Structural Ambiguity in Hindi

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### Abstract

Structural ambiguity resolution has been always the most important problem in Natural Language Processing (NLP) because parser often fail to handle these types of problems. Structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase or sentence has more than one underlying structure. In this research article I discuss the structural ambiguity and its resolution in Hindi by using hybrid approach. The approach combines both linguistics and probabilistic approach.

**Keywords:** Natural language processing, structural ambiguity, Hindi, phrases, sentences.

### 1. Introduction

We live in the world where we constantly face ambiguous information. A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one meaning. Ambiguity resolution has always been the most important testing ground in linguistics for parsing models. There are some ways of classifying ambiguity. Hurford and Hesley [1] group ambiguity into two, **lexical** and **structural ambiguity**. Structural ambiguity occurs when the meaning of the component words can be combined in more than one way [2]. One of the central issues in natural language analysis is structural ambiguity resolution. Correct phrase attachment determines the quality of structural analysis and as a consequence the semantic analysis of the natural language sentence. Contextual information, linguistics knowledge and world knowledge are the important requirements for successful resolution of structural ambiguity.

Hindi is the third most spoken language of the world. There are many ambiguous expressions found in Hindi at the structural level. For example,

**maine ne gali se aate hue ladke ko dekhaa.**

I ne. Erg street by.postposition coming. IMP.PTCP.M boy.M DAT see.PERF.M.SG  
I saw a boy coming from the street.

This is an ambiguous sentence because it has more than one meaning-

a. I am coming from the street. b. Boy is coming from the street

A human being can easily analyze the ambiguous sentence. This is because they, using contextual information and world knowledge from their lifetime experience. Automatic systems lack such common sense. To make the ambiguous sentences unambiguous and grammatical, it is

necessary to have some sort of linguistics and world knowledge which help the machine recognize the sentence structure.

In this paper I describe different types and structural ambiguity in Hindi. Also, I will discuss about the process of disambiguation. Then, the findings are discussed. Finally, the paper ends with a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

## 2. Related Works

A number of works has been done in this area which are described below

- I. Ratnaparkhi, Reynar and Roukos: PP-attachment ambiguity resolution, Maximum Entropy model for English with 82 % accuracy [3]
- II. Nakov and Hearst: PP-attachment ambiguity resolution, Web as a training set for English with 83.82% accuracy [4]
- III. Zhao and Lin: PP-attachment ambiguity resolution, Nearest Neighbor Method for English with 86.5% accuracy [5]
- IV. Jignashu Parikh, Jagadish Khot, Shachi Dave and Pushpak Bhattacharyya: Predicate preserving parsing UNL for English with 78% accuracy [6]
- V. Patrick Pantel and Dekang Lin, An unsupervised approach to prepositional phrase attachment using contextually similar words unified framework for English with 84% accuracy [7]
- VI. Eric Brill and Philip Resnik: A rule-based approach to prepositional phrase attachment disambiguation, transformation-based error driven learning to learn the transformation rule for English with 81.1 % accuracy. [8]
- VII. Ashish Almeida: Prepositional Phrase Attachment and Generation of Semantic Relations UNL, Knowledge based approach for English with 84% accuracy. [9]
- VIII. Medimi Srinivas and Pushpak Bhattacharyya: Prepositional Phrase Attachment through Semantic Association using Connectionist Approach, UNL and Corpus based approach for English with 79.1% accuracy [10]
- IX. Muhammad Bilal, Mohammad Abid Khan, Rahman Ali and Rashid Ahmed: An adaptive approach of syntactic ambiguity resolution in Pashto, Knowledge based adaptive approach with 90% accuracy.[11]
- X. Niladri Chatterjee, Shailly Goyal, and Anjali Naithani: Resolving Pattern Ambiguity for English to Hindi Machine Translation Using WordNet Rule based approach English-Hindi with 75% accuracy [12].

In these works, the accuracy in ambiguity resolution is one of the major issues due to improper knowledge of linguistics in NLP.

## 3. Structural Ambiguity in Hindi

Structural ambiguities arises when a sequence of words has more than one syntactic interpretation. There are mainly two types of structural ambiguity 1. Coordination ambiguity and 2. Attachment ambiguity.

**3.1. Coordination Ambiguity** Coordination ambiguity arises by coordinate conjunction *aur*. There are three different structures in coordination ambiguity.

**Structure-1:** Noun1 +Conjunction+Noun2+ Noun3

geeta aur sudha ki saheliyeen ja rahin hain.

Geeta.F Conj Sudha.F.Sg GEN Friend.F.PL go.PROG be

Geeta and Sudha's friends are going.

It has two different possible interpretations: a) Geeta and Sudha's friends are going. b) Friends of both Geeta and Sudha are going.

**Structure-2:** Adjective + Noun1 + Conjunction + Noun2

bujurg mahilayen aur purush ja rahe hain.

old women.F.PL Conj men.M.PL go.PROG be

Old women and men are going.

It has two possible interpretations: a. ((Old women and men) are going.) b. ((Old women) and men are going.)

**Structure-3:** Noun1 + Noun2 + Conjunction + Noun3

Steel ki katori aur plate

Noun GEN bowl Conj Plate

steel bowl and plate

Two possible interpretations a) ((steel bowl) and plate.) and b) (steel (bowl and plate))

### 3.2. Attachment Ambiguity

Attachment ambiguity arises from uncertainty of attaching a phrase or clause to a part of sentence. Attachment problems are mostly problems of modifier placement.

#### 3.2.1. Noun Attachment

**Structure-1: Noun1 + Noun2**

haveli prasad kha raha hai.

Haveli.M pro/common noun eat PROG be

Haveli Prasad is eating.

There are two different possible interpretations. a) Haveli Prasad is eating. b) Haveli is eating Prasad ( Prasad is a religious offering in Hinduism. Most often Prasad is vegetarian food especially cooked for devotees after praise and thanks giving to the Lord.).

**Structure-2:** Noun1 + Adjective +Noun2

mohan lal shirt pahana hai.

Mohan.M prop N/Adj Shirt wear be

Mohan is wearing a red shirt.

There are two different possible interpretations: a) Mohan is wearing a red shirt. b) Mohan lal is wearing a shirt.

**Structure-3: Pronoun + Adjective + Noun**

wo pagal ladki ko dekh raha hai.

He.M mad girl. F GEN see PROG be

He is looking at the mad girl.

There are two different possible interpretation a) He is looking at the mad girl. b) That mad boy is looking at the girl.

### 3.2.2. Adjective Attachment

#### Structure-1:

Adjective + Noun + GEN (ka/ki) + Noun

purani kitab ki dukan

old books GEN shop

Old book shop.

There are two different possible interpretation: a) Books are old. b) Shop is old.

#### Structure- 2:

Adjective + Adjective + Noun

atyadhik vaastvik vivaran

Most real data

### 3.2.3. Adverb Attachment

#### Structure-1: Noun + adverb + Noun + VP

seet                  par                  baithe hue                  kutte ko bandhiye.

Seat                  on.Postposition                  sit. IMP.PTCP. dog.M. DAT tie. PRESENT TENSE. M.SG

Tied the dog sitting on the seat.

a. Tied when you are sitting on the seat. b. Tied when dog is sitting on the seat.

## 4. Structural Ambiguity Resolution

Structural ambiguity resolution is based on hybrid approach which is combination of linguistics and probabilistic approach.

### 4.1. Linguistics Approach

Sometimes structures of sentence are same as ambiguous sentences but actually meaning is not ambiguous. Ambiguity occurs in some specific conditions. These conditions are based on semantic: similarity, selectional preference and other linguistic cues.

#### 4.1.1. Semantic Similarity

In coordination ambiguity sentence become ambiguous if and only if semantic features of words are same.

For example,

a) *geeta (noun1) aur sudha (noun2) ki saheliyeen (noun3) ja rahin hain*

Geeta.F                  Conj                  Sudha.F.Sg                  GEN                  Friend.F.PL                  go.PROG be

Geeta and Sudha's friends are going.

This is an ambiguous sentence because noun1, noun2, noun3 have same semantic features.

b) *mujhe chaaval aur chane kee daal pasand hai* (I like rice and chickpeas.)

pronoun                  noun1                  conj                  noun2                  pp                  noun3                  vp

This sentence is not ambiguous because here semantic features of noun1 (-animate,+grain), noun2 (-animate, +type of grain, subset of noun3) and noun3 (-animate, +grain) are different.

In semantic similarity conjoined heads appear to play an important role:

- a) **kachche aam aur papite**  
raw. modifier mango.noun1 and.conj papaya.noun2  
raw mangoes and papayas  
This sentence is ambiguous because modifier modify noun1 and noun2

- b) **Kachche aam aur pudina**  
raw. modifier mango. noun1 and. conj mint.noun2  
raw mango and mint

This sentence is unambiguous because modifier modify noun1 only.( mint leaves does not have the property of being raw/ripe.)

#### 4.1.2. The Appropriateness of Noun-Noun Modification

- c) **aam aur pudine ki chatni**  
Mango.noun1 and. conj mint.noun2 GEN sauce.noun3  
Mango and Mint Chutney  
(ambiguous because noun1, noun2 belongs to noun3)

- d) **haldiraam ki bhujiaa aur mithaai**  
Haldiram.noun1 GEN noun2.fries and.conj sweets. noun3  
Haldiram's Bhujia and Sweets  
(ambiguous because noun1, noun2 belong to noun3)

- e) **thode se रुपये aur chandi ke gahanon se maan jaayegi**  
modifier. little money.noun1 and. conj noun2.silver GEN jewellery.noun3 agree.vp  
Will agree with a little money and silver jewelry  
This sentence is unambiguous because modifier modify noun1 only.

#### 4.1.3. Lexical Preferences

play an important role in disambiguation. For example,

- g) **raam ne daudhate hue ghode ko dekhaa.** (ambiguous)

ram.M erg run.IMP.PTCP.M horse.M DAT see.PERF.M.SG  
Ram saw the running horse.

a. Ram saw the running horse. b. Ram saw the horse while ram is running.

- h) **raam ne daudhate hue ball ko fekaa.** (unambiguous)

ram.M erg run.IMP.PTCP.M ball.M DAT throw.PERF.M.SG  
Ram threw the ball while running.

(unambiguous because the ball does not have the property of running.)

#### 4.1.4. Grammatical Conditions

1. In attachment ambiguity if postposition comes after noun, then sentence is not ambiguous. For example,

- i) **haweli prasad ne khana khaya.** (unambiguous)

Haveli Prasad.M erg food. ate. PERF.M.SG  
Haveli Prasad ate food.

This sentence is not an ambiguous sentence. Here 'ne' postposition comes after 'prasad'

2. If another surname or last name comes after noun, sentence is not ambiguous. For exam-

**Hanuman Prasad Shukla      vishwavidyalaya    ja rhe hain.**

Hanuman Prasad Shukla.M      university      go. PROG be PROG be

Hanuman Prasad Shukla is going to university.

3. In adverbial phrase attachment. if agreement of adverb has masculine gender, then sentence is ambiguous. otherwise not.

**j) raam ne daudhate hue ghode ko dekhaa.**

(ambiguous)

ram.M erg run.IMP.PTCP.M horse.M DAT see.PERF.M.SG

Ram saw the running horse.

a. Ram saw the running horse. b. Ram saw the horse while ram is running

**k) raam ne daudhati hui bachchi ko dekhaa.**

ram.M erg run.IMP.PTCP.M girl.M DAT see.PERF.M.SG

Ram saw the running girl.

(unambiguous because there is agreement between adverb 'daudhati' and 'bachhi')

#### **4.2. Probabilistic Approach**

I have give questionnaire of 100 ambiguous sentences with its two possible interpretation to 45 students of Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha Maharashtra.

On the basis of their selection of meaning I have calculated percentage of probability of most selected meaning. These are the results -

- a) Probability of Noun+VP (56%) is higher than Noun+Noun (36%).
- b) Probability of attachment of adjective + noun (37%) is higher than probability of adjective (Noun + noun) (28.3%).
- c) Probability of attachment of adverb+ noun2 (19%) is higher than noun1+ adverb (16%).

In group of 45 students it has been observed that maximum number of students interpreted the given sentences in only one possible way. The second interpretation was identified by a very few students. A few questions in the handout were left not attempted by some students.

**Results:** Evaluation of linguistics rule on LDC-IL, CIIL, Hindi corpus, overall 42.53 % ambiguous sentence resolved by linguistics knowledge. 57.47% resolved by probabilistic theory.

**Conclusion:** Structural ambiguities resolution is a challenging issue in natural language processing. In Hindi, structural ambiguity is found in noun-noun attachment, noun adjective attachment, adjective-noun attachment, and noun-adverb attachment. On the basis of linguistic approach, learners disambiguate 42.53% ambiguous sentences and 57.47% resolve it by probabilistic theory.

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## **The Challenges of Translating Tai Ahom Copper Plate Inscription of Auniati Satra and its Web Hosting**

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### **Abstract**

Translation of ancient scripts has always been a challenging task. If the language is extinct, it is even more difficult to translate the old manuscripts. Such manuscripts get damaged due to unwanted physical and biological factors. Such damages make it more difficult to understand what is actually written on it. Tai Ahom language is an extinct language once used by the Ahom people of the North East India. In this paper, we are presenting the challenges faced while translating an Ahom language manuscript engraved on copper plate, now preserved in Auniati Satra of Majuli, Assam. The translation effort is the initial part of a bigger goal to place the Tai Ahom Language manuscripts in web based technology platform.

### **Keywords**

Tai Ahom language, Assamese language, extinct language, Copper plate, Manuscript, Natural Language Processing.

### **1. Introduction**

The copper plates and manuscripts are parts of historical evidence of existence of the Ahom language. Copper plate was used by the kings and other ministers as an evidence of their work. The writing materials of Ahom periods were Sachi tree bark, Copper plate, Stone pillar, Cloth, Bamboo stick, Coins, Surface of cannon etc. During the early period of Ahom reign, the mother tongue was naturally Tai Ahom whose evidence is hold by the manuscripts. Most of the copper plates provide a brief information of land donation to the institutions and individuals. The text in ancient copper plates are not easy to decipher. The translation of Tai Ahom copper plate writing is a challenging task which is described in this paper.

### **2. Tai Ahom Language**

The Ahoms are the western most Tai group of North-East India. Ahom people migrated to Assam from Mong Mao, which is now in Yunnan province of China[1]. While migrating from China, the Ahom people brought with them a rich cultural and literary heritage. Ahom language was used as the sole language of the Ahom kingdom until the 15th or 16th century, when it started to be replaced by Assamese. By the early 19th century Ahom was no longer used as a spoken language, although it continued to be used in religious

ceremonies throughout the 19th century, and since 1920 efforts have been made to revive the Ahom language and culture[2]. Since the early 18th century, there have been no native speakers of the language, though extensive manuscripts in the language still exist today. The tonal system of the language is entirely lost. The language was only partially known by a small group of traditional priests of the Ahom religion and it was being used only for ceremonial or ritualistic purposes.

### **3. The copper plate of Aauniati Satra**

One of the historical evidence of Ahom Language is the copper plate which is conserved in Aauniati Satra. The Aauniati Satra was established in Majuli in 1653 A.D. by the Ahom King Sutamla alias Jayaddhaja Singha after he adopted the Hindu Religion from the first Satradhikar of Aauniati Satra Sri Sri Niranjan Deva[3]. This Copper plate is the grant issued by King Gaurinath Singha about the donated land to Aauniati Satra in the year 1789 [3]. In order to rule well the king donated village to the Aauniati Satra Gohains. This copper plate is of sixteen lines, written in Ahom script.

### **4. Our Study and the challenges we faced**

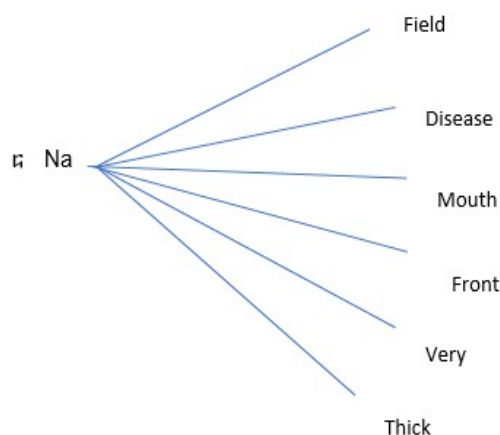
Now we are going to discuss one of the historical evidence of 18<sup>th</sup> century, that is the copper plate which is conserved in Aauniati Satra. This Copper plate is the grant issued by King Gaurinath Singha about the donated land to Aauniati Satra in the year 1789 [4]. In order to rule well the king donated land to the Aauniati Satra Gohains. This copper plate is written in Ahom language and has sixteen lines. The translation of Tai Ahom copper plate is a challenging task, and in this section, we will detail the reasons for that, which are related to the structure of the Tai language.

Ancient copper plates are not easy to decipher the text written on it. Most of the copper plates are deteriorated due to various unwanted physical and biological factors. Some are fragmented, some are unreadable, some are brittle, some are faded; sometimes, some portions (folios) are already lost, or sometimes damaged by rodents, insects, fungus, or acid. Therefore, sometimes it is very difficult to find a complete continued text from an old Ahom copper plate.

Writing system changes in due course of time. For Example, the script of 18th century is different from the script which we are using now. It may be possible for an expert in old Ahom script, but it is very difficult to decipher all old handwritings because the handwriting of each and every scribe is somehow different.

While translating the old Ahom copper plate, sometimes it is felt necessary to have the familiarity ,acquaintance and over all knowledge on the traditions, customs, beliefs, rituals, and history of Tai Ahoms. This kind of traditional knowledge plays a vital role as one of the pre-requisites, because such knowledge will help a translator to understand Ahom text better.


The Ahom language is a tonal language[5]. Translation of the written text of a tonal language is difficult, especially when there is no tone marker. In a tonal language, one word may have many meanings. For example:









The above word 'Na' has six meanings. Hence, sometimes it is very difficult to determine the proper meaning from written texts, if the context is not clearly understood. Translators have to face lot of difficulties while translating.

It is again very difficult to distinguish which is Ahom language and which is native language because of the use of combination of Ahom language with native language. Even though the language is Ahom but all the words are not Ahom. Such words do not fall within the characteristics of Ahom language. In Ahom, to form a word, that is a combination of two letters, can be done only with eight letter of the twenty-four letters of script. These letters are - **𑜀, 𑜢, 𑜤, 𑜰, 𑜫, 𑜪, 𑜩 and 𑜬**.

In the Copper Plate there are some words of native language which cannot be found on any other Ahom documents. For that, we had to search words in Ahom as well as in native language. Here all the native words are the name of places of that time and still being used. These words are:-

Aau ni na ti	-----	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	
Samdhora garh	-----	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	
Kolong	-----	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	
Gandhalijan	-----	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	
Bebejiya	-----	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	
Mitharam	-----	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	

Along with the above mentioned words there are a lot of Assamese words used in the copper plate. Again, it was very hard to signify and map some writing to the actual letter. These letters are given below:

NA	-----	𑜀	-----	
HA	-----	𑜁	-----	
SA	-----	𑜂	-----	
KA	-----	𑜃	-----	
Kha	-----	𑜄	-----	
RA	-----	𑜅	-----	

The above mentioned Ahom letters (clip images) are written differently in the copper plate. If we see the second letter “HA” 𑜁, it has been written differently in the copper plate. On the basis of the complete sentence semantic, we can signify the letter. In this case we also needed to take help of old Ahom sasi bark manuscript.

In the copper plate we saw that combination of two languages is used to form a sentence. It is not easy to say whether the word in this sentence is in Ahom or other language. If we try to translate the sentence using only ahom words then a different and irrelevant meaning is found. This leads to meaningless result. In this case we have included native language to translate these sentences. While translating we depend on the complete meaning of the context. Below is an image of Copper plate sentence:-



𑜀𑜂𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆	𑜀𑜂𑜆
Tun	Rung	Dam	Ru	Pit	Duon	Pet	Po

We have already mentioned that Tai ahom language is a tonal language. In a tonal language, one word may have many meanings. At first, we will try to translate like - ‘Tun Rung Dam’ which means Koliabor (a Place), ‘Ru Pit’ means the knowledge take and ‘Duon Pet’ means eight month and ‘Po’ means people.

And combining these words below sentence is generated: - “Koliabor people with knowledge take eight month”.

When we translate the words of the same sentence into other meanings, we can see that:-

Tun	Rung	Dam	Ru	Pit	Duon	Pet	Po
Family	Bright	Black	Head	take	land	Eight	Blessing

And combining these words below sentence is generated: - “Black bright family head take the eight land as blessing”.

Both translations are not acceptable to us as the previous translation part of the copper plate does not match this translation. So, from the sentence we will take the Assamese or indigenous words along with Ahom language words:-

𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜁𑜪𑜤 𑜉𑜤 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜉𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜉𑜤𑜰𑜫

Koliabor Cultivated eight po land.  
(po is a land measurement unit).

Break up of the decided final meaning of the sentence:-

Ahom Script	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜁𑜪𑜤 𑜉𑜤	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜉𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	𑜉𑜤𑜰𑜫
Pronunciation	Tun Rung Dam	Ru Pit	Duon	Pet	Po	
Meaning decided	Koliabor	cultivated	land	Eight	Po	

This leads to the sentence “Eight Po cultivated land in Koliabor”. This translation is acceptable to us as the copper plate mainly mentions the donation of land by the Ahom king.

## 5. Conclusion

Web presence is of vital importance for easy access of findings and results of research. Translation of the Aauniati plate is uploaded into web. This was again not very easy like other established languages. We designed unicode fonts, virtual keyboards to type and now hosted in www.ahomweb.in . Such historical sources are the massive treasure of tradition, culture, custom , believes and events that took place during the Ahom reign [6]. But, these valuable manuscripts, copper plate which are a treasure of knowledge and wisdom would serve their relevance only when we scientifically interpret, translate and make it easily available for all through modern platform. However, the above study reveals that the task of translating Ahom copper plate is not easy. There are many

aspects that a translator needs to cater to, before jumping into translation. Proper and systematic study is a must. If we do not study such copper plates properly, then we will never be able to extract the correct meaning of these ancient texts.

## 6. Acknowledgment

This work is carried out under the project “Web Technology Development for Heritage Tai Ahom Manuscripts” which is funded by Dept. Of Science and Technology (DST), Govt. of India, under Science and Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI) Scheme (sanction no DST/TDT/SHRI-11/2018).

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## A Critical Study of John Ashbery's Poem *Syringa*

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John Ashbery (1927-2017)

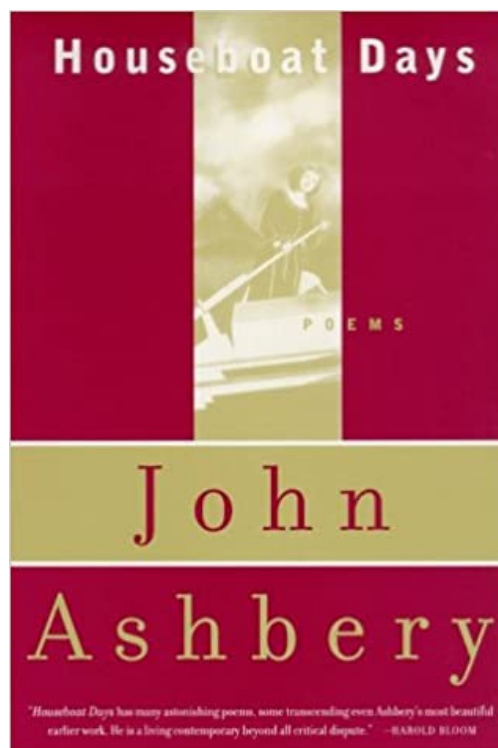
Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Ashbery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ashbery)

### Abstract

John Ashbery is the most distinguished member of the New York School of Poets. His avant-garde and highly innovative poetry make him one of the most unique poetic voices of America. *Houseboat Days* is a significant volume of poems from the oeuvre of Ashbery. It was published in the year 1977. *Syringa* is a remarkable poem from this volume. This poem which is in the form of an elegy narrates a poet's relation to the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus and how he studies it in relation to his personal loss. This poem can be studied as a revaluation of an ancient myth in relation to present times. Essentially the poem is a blend of modernist and traditional elements of English poetry. Although art is emblemized as an abstraction by the poet in this poem, at the same time the ability of art to transcend mutability is affirmed by the poet towards the end of the poem. The strophic structure bestows on the poem a continuity of thought. This poem also expresses the Romantic yearning of a modern poet for transcendence amidst negation and fragmentation. The critical method of close

reading has been employed for the explication of this poem and for arriving at contextual insights.

**Keywords:** Avant-garde, myth, elegy, revaluation, continuity, transcendence.



Courtesy: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

## Introduction

*Syringa* is an important poem from the volume *Houseboat Days*. *Syringa* is an elegy on the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus, a musician who goes to the nether world to bring back his dead wife Eurydice. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is told by Ovid in his celebrated work *Metamorphoses*. The title *Syringa* probably refers to a variety of flowering shrubs belonging to the genus saxifrage which grow besides hard rocks at times and whose roots penetrate through the hard rocks and break them open. The flowers are usually yellow in colour.

Essentially the poem is a series of contemplations on the Orpheus legend. The elaborate structure of a conventional elegy is successfully employed by Ashbery in this poem, even as the poem remains impersonal to a large extent. The speaker of the elegy grieves over a loss that remains undisclosed till the conclusion, he reevaluates the Orpheus myth and without alluding to his personal loss directly establishes a correspondence between his sorrow and that of Orpheus. In the first strophe the myth is recounted.

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 23:1 January 2023

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The poem begins with the poet expressing that Orpheus perceived everything under the sky subjectively.

Orpheus liked the glad personal quality  
Of the things beneath the sky. Of course Eurydice was a part  
Of this. (1 – 3)

Suddenly everything changed for him with the sudden death of his beloved Eurydice. He broke apart stones with his lamentations, even the sky almost lost its wholeness. At that time Apollo the god of music gently advised him to leave his music which is no longer patronized like in the past.

Then Apollo quietly told him: "Leave it all on earth  
Your lute, what point? Why pick at a dull pavan few care to  
Follow, except for a few birds of a dusty feature,  
Not vivid performances of the past". But why not?  
All other things must change too. (10 – 15)

In the following lines the poetic voice seeks to know as to why this has happened. The voice further elucidates that mutability is an inevitable aspect of life, nothing remains static and even the seasons progress and change; and according to the laws of nature everything is seen only once. The flux of life doesn't allow a relook of anything.

And Orpheus made the fatal mistake of looking back at Eurydice when he was bringing her back from the kingdom of death resulting in her disappearance, and the poetic voice furthers says that even if he hadn't looked back, she might have still disappeared. According to the poetic voice it's only love and what the others call as life that defy mutability and remain etched in the mind forever.

No use standing there like a gray stone toga as the whole wheel  
Of recorded history flashes past, struck dumb, unable to utter an intelligent  
Comment on the most thought provoking element in its train.  
Only love stays on the brain, and something these people,  
These other ones, call life. (23 – 27)

The first strophe concludes with the voice expressing that the musical notes of Orpheus which soared high above the depths of a dull noon had such an exactness of melody that they surpassed the bright yellow sparkling flowers that grew round the quarry.

Singing accurately  
So that the notes mount straight up out of the well.  
Dim noon and rival the tiny, sparkling flowers.  
Growing around the brink of the quarry, encapsulates

The different weights of the things. (28 – 32)

The second strophe begins with the line,  
But it isn't enough  
To just go on singing. (33 – 34)

In the following lines the poetic voice says that when Orpheus understood that his music couldn't bring back Eurydice to life, he calmly accepted the punishment meted out to him by the Baccantes who were said to have torn him to pieces after being deprived of their senses by his music, according to another myth this punishment was accorded to him for his treatment of Eurydice. The poet feels that whatever be the reason, music was more or less responsible for the fate of Orpheus. Toward the end of this complex sentence the poet expresses that music is representative of life and likewise we can't evaluate the total effect of music based on a single note. We should wait till the end for a truer summation. He cites a truism and further elaborates that a segment or a sequence can't be a representative or a substitute for the whole. From these lines onwards the impersonal tone is replaced by a more personal one. In the next lines the poetic voice says that though the remembrances of a season can be melded into a single photograph, the said frozen moment can't be preserved to last forever. For time is like a continually moving picture - a living picture which depicts an abstract action in cragged fractured strokes.

For although memories, Of a season, for example,  
Melt into a single snapshot, One cannot guard, treasure  
That stalled moment. It too is flowing, fleeting;  
It is a picture of flowing, scenery, though living, mortal,  
Over which an abstract action is laid out in blunt,  
Harsh strokes. (47 – 50)

In the following lines the poetic voice expresses his helplessness and says that to seek more from life than this is like becoming the swaying reeds of a slow yet powerful stream which gently pulls at them. Here the flow of time is compared to a slow powerful stream and life to the trailing grasses which are gently pulled at by the stream.

And to ask more than this  
Is to become the tossing reeds of that slow,  
Powerful stream, the trailing grasses  
Playfully tugged at, but to participate in the action  
No more than this. (53 – 58)

In these lines the poet also evokes the transformation of Syrinx into a reed. Syrinx was a nymph who was loved by the Pan the Greek god of flocks and shepherds who transformed into a reed when she was pursued by him. He invented the musical pipe of seven

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reeds, which he named Syrinx in her honour. In the succeeding lines the poetic voice says that there are faint flashes of lightening in the violet sky which suddenly erupt into a shower of cream-coloured lights. There is a brief episode of the horses toward the end of this strophe. Each of them thought that they have seen a part of the truth but at the same time feel that they are impervious to it. They delude themselves by thinking it couldn't have happened to them for they understand the language of birds as well as the schedule of the lights in the electric storm. They also feel that the duel of the lights would result in music just like the way,

"I'm a maverick. Nothing of this is happening to me,  
Though I can understand the language of birds, and  
The itinerary of the lights caught in the storm fully  
apparent to me.  
Their jousting ends in music much  
As trees mow more easily in the wind after a summer storm  
And is happening in lacy shadows of shore-trees, now, day  
after day". (63 – 68)

The horses may represent both Orpheus and the poet, there is an oblique reference to Orpheus in the horse's episode, Orpheus was said to have understood the language of birds and make the trees sway to his music, but when it came to comprehending the mortality of existence, he failed.

The concluding strophe begins with the poetic voice expressing dejectedly that's its always late to regret at some happening knowing well that regrets in retrospect are always late and henceforth meaningless, to this Orpheus who has been transformed into a blue cloud says that the pronouncement of grief is not regrets at all but simply a meticulous expostulation of unquestioned facts; and despite the graveness of the subject or the lack of it, isn't fit material for a poem and the source stands there helplessly even as the poem leaps around with its tail on fire like a bad comet spewing hate and disaster lag its meaning will forever remain obscure and elusive. In the following lines the poetic voice says that a singer builds his song in stages, gradually just like the way a skyscraper is built but suddenly the singer turns away from his creation at the climactic moment. Then the song is immersed in darkness in an instant which in turn immediately turns the whole continent into darkness, and the singer must turn away from sight without experiencing some succor from the fact that he has been relieved from the evil burden of the words. The poetic voice suggests that poetry can't give the poet assurance or a grip over his hallucinations.

In the succeeding line the poetic voice says that stellification or the attainment of fame from the depths of relative obscurity can be aspired by only a few and it comes after they are gone, and the record of their existence is confined to libraries and microfilm.

Stellification is for the few, and comes about much later

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When all record of these people and their lives  
Has disappeared into libraries, onto microfilm.  
A few are still interested in them. (90 – 93)

The poet uses here the metaphor of stellification which is the process by which a dwarf star is turned into a luminous star. He is probably speaking of those poets who remain obscure and unknown through their entire lives. Though there are some who still evince interest in them. The queries remain unanswered as the addressees remain in a frozen state far removed from life and living; then all of a sudden, an ordinary chorus recounts a totally varied happening with a very similar title.

"In whose tale are hidden syllables  
Of what happened so long before that  
In some small town, one indifferent summer". (98 – 101)

Toward the conclusion, the poetic voice identifies his loss with that of Orpheus. The poem stops at the "stalled moment", at the memory of his loss which took place a long while ago.

The power of Orpheus's lament is accepted but at the same time, the poetic voice is at loss to affirm the power of song or the stalled moment to transcend the passage of time.

## Conclusion

The personal and the universal come together in this poem, and the poem can be taken as an internal dialectic between the passing of time and the transfixed moment-memory, which may be the memory of some loss of the poet that is co-related to the enigmatic myth of Orpheus. There could be found in this poem a juxtaposing of the past with the present and this juxtaposing could be perceived also in its syntax which is characterized by the frequent alternation of mellifluous phrases with prosaic conversational phrases. The lines spoken by Apollo to Orpheus at the beginning of the first strophe can be taken as an illustration of this juxtaposing.

Then Apollo quietly told him: "Leave it all on earth  
Your lute, what point? Why pick at a dull pavan few care to  
Follow, except for a few birds of a dusty feather,  
Not vivid performances of the past". But why not?  
All other things must change too. (10 – 15)

In these lines unusual phrases like 'pavan' and 'dusty feather' are employed alongside conversational phrases. The phrase pavan denotes a Spanish stately dance of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where the dancers used to wear elaborate costumes. The phrase birds of a dusty feather is an instance of a transferred epithet here in these lines Apollo conveys

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through this phrase that only some artists are still interested in the aesthetics of a bygone era. These words are followed by the words of the poetic voice which are suggestive of a prosaic conversational style. The poetic voice seeks to know as to why changes should not be accepted when everything on earth is subject to the forces of mutability. Here in these words echoes of Heraclitean philosophy which states that everything exists in a state of perpetual flux could be perceived.

In the lines that succeed these lines the poetic voice further elucidates that everything is seen only once and as all the events continually progress they come into contact with other things somehow managing to come not into conflict with each other.

The seasons are no longer what they once were  
But it is the nature of things to be seen only once,  
As they happen along, bumping into other things, getting along  
Somehow. (16 – 19)

In these lines also conversational phrases are employed to convey complex philosophical insights.

The merging of the past and the present is manifested in the imagery of the poem also. Throughout the poem images from the mythical world are juxtaposed with images of recent times.

A controlled subjectivity runs throughout the poem. The elegy is in three strophes and has a structural unity with few disruptions and the long line with few line breaks is successfully employed in this poem. There are two voices in the text—an elegiac voice and a meditative voice that are counterbalanced in the first strophe; in the concluding strophe both of the voices converge into one.

And as Lawrence Kramer has put it with great insight in David Lehman's important collection of essays on John Ashbery's poetry, *Beyond Amazement*. (1980):

The poem is, in effect, polyvocal. It has a meditative voice that engages in tranquil, resigned consideration of the problem of loss as presented by Orpheus, and it has an elegiac voice, full of lament and desire that uses the Orpheus myth to utter hidden syllables of personal sorrow. (257)

The poet accepts that the fleetingness of time is absolute as he expresses in the second strophe that one can't keep the frozen moment forever in the mind for it transforms into a picture of flowing scenery on which a nonfigurative action is depicted in 'blunt, harsh strokes'. He implies that over time any experience be it tragic or otherwise gets transformed into an abstraction and art can depict only its transformation but never the moment. He also accepts that equivocalness is an intrinsic element of art. As Lawrence Kramer has observed,

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"the flowing and fleeting of time is absolute, and the work of art is so formed that it submits to that flow without trying to wrench it into shape". (266)

The poet remains uncertain of the capability of the imaginative perception to transcend the experience of sorrow and loss or provide a true interpretation of the world. The poet attempts to explore the tensions inherent in the ancient myth of Orpheus in relation to his loss and sorrow and by establishing a correspondence between an ancient myth and his personal sorrow he proposes at the continuity of art and also at its power to transcend time and mutability. He also suggests that artists may never find fame in their lifetime but the possibility of a renewal of interest in their art, post existence always remains.

Toward the conclusion of the poem all the ambivalences and fragmentations are subordinated to a closure of serene acceptance. The speaker of the poem who identifies himself with the meditative voice finally acknowledges that his sorrow is similar to that of Orpheus's but declines to elaborate it any further and refrains from being intensely personal. He also alludes to the parallels between Orpheus an ancient Greek poet and prophet and himself - a poet of recent times. The poet also expresses in the poem that only an artist can locate the resonances and echoes of the past in the present and by doing so can bring together the past and present and that the complex reenactment of the past can take place only through poetry. This poem can also be read as an elegy within an elegy. For the speaker of the poem laments not only of his personal loss but also for a poet of a bygone age. Finally, Ashbery conveys through this poem that despite the limitations art has the capability of rescuing the past from total obliteration by emblemizing memory.

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## Pedagogy and Teaching

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### Abstract

This paper tries to emphasise the importance of pedagogy in higher education. The impact of teachers and facilitators being trained and aware of the pedagogical methodologies to effectively facilitate the teaching and learning outcomes in students.

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, higher education, teachers, facilitators, learning outcomes.

### Introduction

Pedagogy can be defined as the study of the most effective frameworks for teaching and learning with innovative methodologies and successful execution of these frameworks. It can be defined as an environment wherein teaching and learning are happening in real time. Learning is innate and we as a species are constantly learning from our environment and by observing others. Csibra and Gergely (2006) remark that "Humans are adapted to spontaneously transfer relevant cultural knowledge to conspecifics and to fast-learn the contents of such teaching through a human-specific social learning system called 'pedagogy.'"

Teaching in classroom is highly systemised with set protocols that are followed. In today's settings, it has become the norm that everyone is undergoing some sort of structural learning from one source or the other.

### What is Teaching Pedagogy?

Reference to pedagogy often is misconstrued as teaching method. However, this does not only encompass techniques and tools but also concepts being used to frame goals, applications, and even the total education picture. "In contemporary pedagogy practice, there are two general considerations: **the focus and the approach**" – Research .com

However, the view that we need to focus on is the optimal and tandem use of methods and frameworks that facilitate both **instructivist** and **constructivist** methodologies. Instructivist methodology is the teacher-centred method, and the best example is our day-to-day routine wherein students are expected to learn through the instructions given by the teacher in the form of lectures and demonstrations. "Teachers become facilitators of information that



students should recognize, comprehend and retain. consequently, students must give their exclusive focus to their teachers” (Scholarify, 2021). As such, assessments are also centred on whether a student has done well by the teacher.

Though this looks like an ideal framework where the expert is passing on his accumulated knowledge and wisdom to the seekers. However, it is not without shortcomings- traditional education at some point suppresses students’ creativity, expression, and self-directedness. It eventually results in the truncation of students' thinking and communication skills, it limits the knowledge that the student acquires during the process of learning. Eg. Despite having studied English for 15 years, the students are not able to express themselves clearly.

Constructivist framework or the student-centred framework encourages the students and teachers to interact equally and create such an environment that the student questions as well as has the freedom to explore alternatives.

Husbands and Pearce (2012) point out that there "is robust evidence that giving serious consideration to pupil's voice can generate highly effective pedagogy." Niemi (2012) elucidates that expert’s call attention to the importance of involving students in the process of learning – “this process involves the active participation of the students about the methods used in facilitating the learning outcomes of the student and is a more preferred stand as this encourages a syncretic premise that at its core fosters a deep motivation to learn more about the subject.” (Research.com) However, this idealistic scenario is far from reality that exists in the student-centred classrooms.

The day-to-day working of the student-centred classroom comes through the restrained management of teaching-learning outcomes in the classroom achieved through a manoeuvring of class discussions to move into pre-conceived directions thus creating a confidence in the students that they arrived at a particular conclusion themselves. Here, the teacher’s role is more of that of a moderator. An example is the successful amalgamation of both high-tech tools like computers and traditional methods to teach the subject.

On the ground, classroom pedagogy denotes that the teacher is in the process of real-time implementation of methods and techniques like: discussions about teaching and learning; soliciting advice from students about new initiatives; inviting comments on ways to solve problems suitable in the classroom that facilitates learning by the students. Husbands and Pearce (2012) put it, “it is about talking with students about things that matter in school.”

### **Framework for Learners**

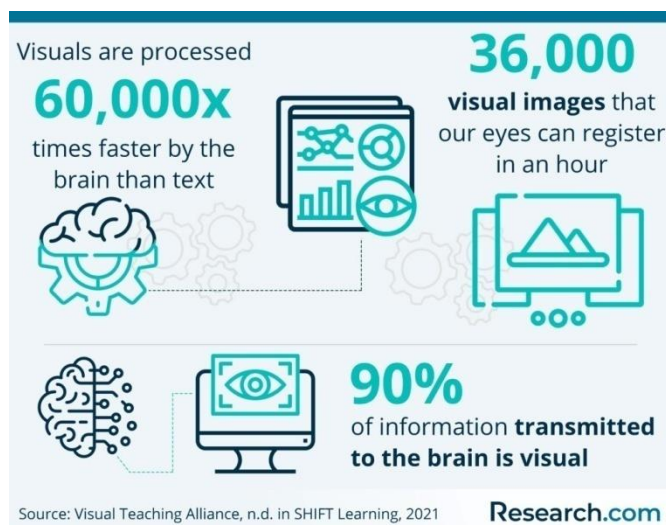
The pedagogical methods for learners refer to the use and implementation of tools that leads to effective learning of concepts by the learners. The ubiquitous frameworks for this are Fleming and Mills - VARK and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. VARK (Visual,



Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetics) by Neil Fleming and Colleen Mills - the VARK technique was developed by Fleming and Mills (1992) to help students focus their attention on ways they address information. VARK elucidates the four perceptual modes of learning modes preferred by students, viz - Visual (V) – preference for graphical and symbolic ways of representing information. Read/Write (R) – Preferences for information printed as words. Aural (A) – Preference for "heard" information. Kinesthetic (K) – Preference related to the use of experience and practice (simulated or real).

“Fleming and Mills (1992) divided visual preference into two perceptual modes, which are (V) Visual and (R) Read/Write, which is often interpreted as overlapping modes as both involve the visual mode of acquisition of knowledge. The (K) Kinesthetic perceptual mode is a multi-modal learning model as it uses a blend of senses from visual to aural in acquiring knowledge that requires a coordination of fine motor skills (e.g., learning to play the piano).”  
(*Research.com*)

Students inherently and instinctively use the VRAK in gaining expertise in a particular domain in the classroom. Teachers too exploit a blend of VARK techniques: (V) Use graphs, (R) Grade papers/notes, (A) Do group discussions, and (K) Make students perform real/simulated physical tasks (e.g., first aid on a dummy, using a microscope, creating a program, etc.).



### **Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)**

Gardner (2013) does not promote the theory of multiple intelligences as learning styles and that when Gardner refers to MI simply in the context of "modalities of intelligence", the glaring emphasis on the plasticity of the brain or lack of it as observed in the existence of a distinct developmental progression as well as the observation of existence of idiot-savants, prodigies, and other extraordinary people.

The study threw light on Gardner's argument that "the narrow definition of intelligence as equal to scholastic performance is simply too constrictive" as it simply ignores the fantastic intellectual and cognitive capabilities exhibited by the learner.

Gardner categorizes intelligence into modalities as listed by Reserach.com, namely - Verbal-linguistic intelligence (well-developed verbal skills and sensitivity to the sounds, meanings, and rhythms of words), Logical-mathematical intelligence (ability to think conceptually and abstractly, and capacity to discern logical and numerical patterns), Spatial-visual intelligence (capacity to think in images and pictures, to visualize accurately and abstractly), Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (ability to control one's body movements and to handle objects skilfully), Musical intelligence (ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch, and timber), Interpersonal intelligence (capacity to detect and respond appropriately to the moods, motivations, and desires of others), Intrapersonal (capacity to be self-aware and in tune with inner feelings, values, beliefs, and thinking processes), Naturalist intelligence (ability to recognize and categorize plants, animals, and other objects in nature), Existential intelligence (sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence, such as, "What is the meaning of life? Why do we die? How did we get here?"( Research.com)

Gardner (2013) argues that irrespective of the subject that is being explored, an effective teaching-learning setup would consider the myriad modalities of MI.

A criticism of MI and VRAK, throws light on the fact that these modes/ methods lack empirical data about the effective learning outcomes (Peariso 2008). However, studies in classroom pedagogy have enabled teachers pick and choose the optimal method for a successful classroom outcome.

### **Pedagogy in the Classrooms**

Classroom pedagogy holds under it multiple approaches:

**Constructivism** wherein students take an active part in their education and teachers are assigned the role of a guide. E.g. Montessori Method of education.

**Social Constructivism:** Students have a decisive role in their educational endeavour and teachers are seen as facilitators who provide direction. Learning becomes a tandem and tacit effort.

**Behaviourism:** Envisions the teachers as the sole expert authority and subjects are taught directly as lectures or demonstrations

**Liberationism:** Paulo Freire, the father of liberationism, makes the student the centre of the learning outcome and proposes a collaborative approach to learning.

## The Nine Teaching Methods

Based on the above, classroom context may be assigned into nine teaching methods and learning styles as exemplified by Doherty and Singh, 2005 (taken from Research.com).

Style A (Command) – The teacher makes all decisions.

Style B (Practice) – Students carry out teacher-prescribed tasks.

Style C (Reciprocal) – Students work in pairs: one performs, and the other provides feedback.

Style D (Self-check) – Students assess their performance against criteria.

Style E (Inclusion) – Teacher planned. Students monitor their work.

Style G (Divergent) – Students solve problems without assistance from the teacher

Style H (Individual) – Teacher determines content. Student plans the program.

Style I (Learner Initiated) – Student plans own program. A teacher is an advisor.

Style J (Self-Teaching) – The student takes full responsibility for the learning process.

*(Reference: Pedagogy in Education: Guide To Frameworks & Teaching Methods Research.com)*

Consequently, assessment of the classroom outcomes as elucidated by Allen 2003 in Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education

Concept	Teacher-Centred	Learner Centred
Teaching goals	Cover the discipline	Students learn: How to use the discipline How to integrate disciplines to solve complex problems. An array of core learning objectives such as communication and information literacy skills.
Organisation of the curriculum	Course in catalogue	Cohesive program with systematically created opportunities to synthesise, practice , and develop

		increasingly complex ideas, skills and values.
Course Structure	Faculty cover topics	Students master learning objectives
How students learn	Listening Reading Independent learning, often in competition for grades	Students construct knowledge by integrating new learning into what they already know. Learning is viewed as a cognitive and social act
Pedagogy	Based on delivery of information	Based on engagement of students.
Course delivery	Lecture Assignments and exams for summative purposes	Active learning Assignments for informative purposes Collaborative learning Community service learning Cooperative learning Online asynchronous, self-directed learning Problem -based learning
Course grading	Faculty as gatekeepers Normal distribution expected	Grades indicate mastery of learning objectives . In higher technical education, it indicates the successful placement of the student in coveted companies during placement drives
Faculty role	Sage on the stage	Designer of learning environments

Effective teaching	Teach (present information) well and those who can and will learn	Engage students in their learning Help all students master learning objectives Use classroom assessment to improve courses Use program assessment to improve programs
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*(Allen 2003 in Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education)*

## Conclusion

Some approaches seek to eliminate barriers and focus on creating a utopian model wherein each and everyone benefits from an equal opportunity for learning. Certain methods are best suited for a particular phase of learning like behaviourism is best suited for early learners who need guidance and instructions to start making sense of the world around them. However, it is an undeniable fact that each classroom is unique, and each learner comes with a unique set of talents. The educator is more often than not compelled to pick and choose the best method keeping in mind the outcomes and learning styles of the course that the student has enrolled into. Every which way one sees it the truth is that college students are the essential stakeholders of their education. Educators pick and choose the best practice for teaching based on the needs of the students. The outcome lays in the symbiotic and respectful collaborative atmosphere wherein the outcomes clearly lie in the direction of the students becoming independent and gainfully employed.

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## Revisiting the Theory of Appearing

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According to William Alston, the first prominent exposition of the **Theory of Appearing** (TA) is in H. A. Prichard's 1909 work *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*. The latter argues for a specific interpretation of Immanuel Kant's account of perception to place it in line with TA. Prichard uses the theory as a way to save Kant from falling into the same skepticism he so rigorously attempting to disprove. The Theory of Appearing, therefore, is developed in specific opposition to the theories of sense datum which conceptualize perception as a subject's apprehension of sensory 'data' presumably caused by the object it is meant to represent.

Whether TA is successful in avoiding the skepticism which has so long plagued theories of sense datum, however, is still unclear. Critics of TA (and different interpreters of Kant) range from claiming the theory falls just as easily into skepticism as (to use John Searle's term) the 'Way of Ideas' to seeing the theory as a successful avoidance of that pitfall. This paper aims to evaluate the TA, and critiques against it, to determine whether the Theory of Appearing offers a plausible alternative to skepticism.

Although TA has never enjoyed prolonged popularity, its currency peaked among philosophers in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Philosophers such as H. A. Prichard, G. E. Moore, and Wilfred Sellars adopted TA in opposition to the Way of Ideas, which was the most prominent theoretical strand of their contemporaries. As support of TA rose, so did criticism: H. H. Price and Roderick M. Chisholm were among those criticizing the Theory of Appearing. Due to wounds inflicted by critics as well as a dwindling support base, the theory's recognition dwindled. Recently, the theory has once again been taken up as a viable epistemic system. Notable champions of TA in the last few decades include William Alston and Harold Langsam. This paper will investigate the contemporary relevance of the Theory of Appearances by bringing together its proponents and detractors in a critical confrontation.

H. A. Prichard introduced the **Theory of Appearance** in *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, where Prichard promotes an interpretation of Kant where appearances allow knowledge of a mind-independent world. To do this, Prichard uses Kant's explanation of time and space in relation to things and appearances. The commonly accepted conclusion during Kant's career was that, while things appear to be spatial in themselves, they are not in reality spatial. This denial of spatial inherence in objects was exactly what Kant wants to avoid, as Prichard shows with a number of



quotes in which Kant denounces the conception of space as illusion. According to Prichard, Kant likewise argues that appearances are not illusions, but relationships between a perceiver and an object or state of affairs.

An important distinction to note here is that while Kant claims time and space are empirically real, they are not a part of things in themselves. As Prichard puts it: “Time and space are real relations of something, though not of things in themselves.”<sup>1</sup> The common assumption might be that space is an intrinsic property of objects in the world, but without relationships to other objects, this space becomes meaningless. This is seen clearly in measuring with a ruler, with is using one object to gain knowledge about the size of another. References for size, although now possible to discover sizes of things in an image on a computer, are all based on standards set in the world and represented by objects, creating a discernible relationship which allows us to grasp the size of objects.

Similarly, appearance is not an illusion but a relationship between an object or state of affairs. Appearance cannot be a part of the object, as appearances can never fully represent an object. If a coin is viewed from the side, it appears elliptical; if a coin is viewed from above, it appears circular. Both appearances of the coin are real relations between the perceiver and the coin (as I will explain in more detail in the following paragraph), but neither can give a complete compilation of all of the appearances of the coin or give the perceiver direct access to the essence of the coin. The essence of the coin must be inferred from the appearance. Therefore, the coin does not have in itself a bundle of appearances which perceivers access by viewing the coin from a certain angle or holding it in certain conditions. The coin only has in itself its essence. The appearances of a coin (elliptical when viewed from an angle, cold after spending the night in the snow, etc.) are relations between the coin, which in itself is only its essence, and the perceiver. A predicate of this appearance relation is space and time, which affect the appearance of the coin but not the coin itself.

Another qualification Kant, as presented by Prichard, makes about appearance is that it first appears to be illusory, but through experience perceivers come to understand how it relates to the real world. A toddler, for example, may see the moon from the earth and believe it to be the same size as a coin. She may later learn in school that the moon’s diameter is roughly a fourth of the earth’s and be confused. How could something which appears so small be in fact so large? While it may be explained to her that the moon only *appears* to be small, this phenomenon will likely still be a source of interesting mystery for years to come. It is in incidents like these in which she begins to grasp how appearances relate to the real world, how appearances of objects relate to their essences.

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<sup>1</sup> Prichard, H A., *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, 73.



Prichard critiques Kant for his failure to distinguish between ‘things as appearing’ and ‘appearances.’ In his equivocation of the two, Kant begins an argument with one and ends with the other: starting with distinction between things as they are in themselves and things as they appear to perceivers, he concludes with the distinction between 2 new realities: things-in-themselves (independent of the mind) and phenomena/appearances within it.

Prichard argues that Kant should have stuck with the former (‘things as appearing’). In interpreting Kant using the latter, there is space for an argument to be made that ‘appearances within it’ refers to phenomena appearing in the perceiver’s mind. This interpretation leaves no space for certainty of an outside world and falls into the hole of skepticism which captured the Way of Ideas.

Although the lack of distinction between the two gives room for two different interpretations, Prichard claims that throughout the rest of Kant’s work it is clear he intends to be understood in the former: things as they are in themselves and things as they appear perceivers.

Next, Kant moves to debunk the theory which holds that objects are non-spatial, but the appearances which they produce in perceivers are spatial. A helpful analogy he notes here is the straight stick which appears bent in water scenario. It is nonsense to say that while the stick in water is not bent, the appearance of the stick as bent has a spatial existence in the mind of the perceiver. This is the same as saying while objects are non-spatial, the appearances which they produce in us are spatial. Kant may agree that the stick in the water is not actually bent but sees no reason to assume there must be a spatial existence of a stick which is bent somewhere in the process. On the contrary, Kant claims that appearance is necessarily something mental, and cannot be extending into the realm of the physical. There need not be a physical existence of a bent stick for it to appear bent, a mental existence will suffice.

Prichard then goes on to mention Kant’s note that in describing appearances as *produced* by things, there is an implied “false severance” between appearances and the objects which appear. If object produce appearances, it may seem as if, once produced, there is no longer any relation between appearances and objects. Kant makes clear his view that appearances are continuously related to objects in the process of perception. In making this move, he is intentionally separating himself from the causal theory of perception, which I will mention again later. ‘Produced by’ things implies the object of perception is merely something mental, the object itself is never perceived directly. This results in the solipsism which Kant is trying so hard to avoid. He claims that if there are appearances at all, they must be appearances *of* things rather than appearances *produced by* things. This ‘appearance of’ leaves the relation between appearances and objects intact.

Prichard adds to this subject by acknowledging that the phrase ‘appearances of things’,

whatever its faults, does imply a non-mental reality which is appearing, and that there is a direct relation to it in perception. This distinguishes Kant from the Way of Ideas, in which there is no direct relation to objects or states of affairs. As Kant is able to avoid getting lumped in with the theories he is fighting against, it seems as if the Theory of Appearing, as presented by Prichard, is a successful alternative to the sense data theories of his opponents.

Finally, Prichard anticipates a possible objection to his interpretation of Kant thus far. An objector may rightfully remind that Kant says it is possible to distinguish between the illusory and the real in phenomena, which seems to imply that space is illusory. Prichard responds by saying that while appearance is illusory in some sense, it is still a necessary relationship which allows us to infer the real. As discussed earlier, it is through investigation and experience that we are able to distinguish between the illusion in appearance and the real. This does not necessarily mean that appearances are worthless: after learning how they relate to reality they act as a helpful representation which directs to reality.

Now that the groundwork has been laid by Prichard's interpretation of Kant, the following promoters of the Theory of Appearing fall into line with only slight and largely inconsequential differences. Both G.E. Moore and Wilfred Sellars are writing in wake to Prichard's book which elucidated the theory in 1909, which will allow for manageable comparison and contrast. These philosophers worked to continue Prichard's promotion of TA as well as expand on the theory, responding to criticism as it arose in other minds or their own. As Moore's *Philosophical Studies* (1922) was written just over 4 decades before Sellars' *Science, Perception and Reality* (1963), we will begin with Moore.

Moore begins his discussion of the Theory Appearing by mentioning a similar distinction made by philosophers of the sense-datum theory which separates an object experienced from a certain angle under certain conditions and the whole object. An object experienced from a certain angle is only part of the surface of the object, while the 'whole object' is a compilation of all of the surfaces of the object. When these two are combined, it can lead to an apparent contradiction (e.g. a circle coin looking elliptical when viewed from an angle). Moore says that all this depends on the assumption that the later presented object is actually perceptually different than the first appearance of the object.

One important point Moore makes which restates Prichard is that perceiving an appearance does not necessarily result in belief in the appearance. For example, an appearance of a distant tree does not necessarily result in a belief that the tree is actually the size it appears. In this way the appearance of the experience is not granted the same epistemic status as what the perceiver actually perceives the object or state of affairs to be or judges the object or state of affairs to be. A perceiver may see a distant tree, which appears small to them, but still be successful in judging its

approximate size.

Finally, Moore continues the explanation of the difference between perceiving things as they *are* and perceiving things as they *seem*. The example he uses here is the differences in perceiving a blown up balloon and a deflated balloon: *perceiving* a blown up balloon and *perceiving* a deflated balloon is different from perceiving them to *seem* blown up or to *seem* deflated. A better analogy may be that of seeing a white piece of paper under white light. In this case, it *seems* that the paper is red, but it is not *perceived* or *judged* to be so. In this way, using experience as a guide, the perceiver distinguishes between the illusory and the real.

For our final promoter of the Theory of Appearing, we will appeal to a much later work: Wilfred Sellars' *Science, Perception and Reality*. Sellars begins by making similar arguments to Prichard and Moore as to how perceivers understand appearances and their apparently contradictory nature in relation to the real world. His approach to this, however is slightly different.

Sellars begins his exposition of TA by providing a common notation representing perception: 'x looks y to S'. His claim is that 'looks' is essentially a report which does not necessarily endorse what 'looks' to be so. Construed this way, 'x looks y to S' does not imply that S is y, by simply that S appears to x as y. Sellars contrasts this with 'seeing as', which he describes (like Ryle does) as an achievement phrase, meaning 'x *sees* S as y' implies endorsement that S is actually y. In his own words, "to say that a certain experience is a *seeing that* something is the case, is to do more than describe the experience. It is to characterize it as, so to speak, making an assertion or claim, and--which is the point I wish to stress--to *endorse* that claim."

Now that we have covered the baseline laid by some of the original champions of TA, we will turn our focus to its critics to understand some of the stronger arguments against the theory. As with the section before it, we will proceed chronologically, starting with H. H. Price's *Perception* which was originally published in 1932, and then continuing into Roderick M. Chisholm's *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*, published in 1957.

Price begins his critique of TA by saying that even if we assume 'x appears y to S', it still runs into problems. His claim is that it's in *dissociated* sense-datum, whether of refraction or of reflection, where the theory begins to fail. The example he uses to bring this about is the case of a glove appearing to Jones to be right-handed and over there when it is actually a left-handed glove that is here. Jones' real meaning when he says 'it appears to me a right-handed glove is over there' is 'there appears *to be* a glove over there'. In the case of dissociated sense-datum, the phrase 'x appears y to S' implies endorsement that S judges x *to be* y. He continues by using the case of appearing to be two candles when there is actually only one. It is clear, according to Price, that the perceiver believes there are two actual candles. In both cases, the perceiver has no way to

distinguish between the illusory and the actual.

Next, Price pulls the view further out to analyse the original statement ‘x appears y to S’, which he originally allowed as an assumption. His example here is in the statement ‘the table appears brown to me’. He says that the actual existence of something brown “cannot indeed be proved, but it is absolutely evident and indubitable.”<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, says Price, we have no way of proving the actual existence of a table (although there may, in fact, be an actual table). Therefore, the statement ‘the table appears brown to me’ contains both knowledge (of brownness) and belief (in the table), or, as Price puts it, a relation of acquaintance and a relation of belief. If sense-datum is represented by ‘x’ in the statement ‘x appears y to S’, then there cannot be any acquaintance in the genuine sense. There is acquaintance with only the sense-datum which represents (rather than presents) brownness; there is never any acquaintance with brownness itself. Once again, we are unable to ascertain the validity of our experiences.

Chisholm begins, like others we have investigated, by arguing against those who believe ‘x appears y to S’ necessarily implies the existence of y. The statement ‘that animal appears centaurian’ does not necessarily imply there is anything centaurian. He takes this a step further to say that ‘looks centaurian’ is simply a specific example of ‘looks.’ This is the same, according to Chisholm as the relationship between ‘green’ and ‘color’: the relationship between ‘looks green’ and ‘looks’ is that it is a specific example of it, just as ‘green’ is a specific example of ‘color’.

Next, Chisholm argues that Kant’s theory of time ultimately leads to a contradiction. He does this by laying out Kant’s argument in the following manner: (a) nothing whatever exists in time, (b) there are things which *appear* to exist in time, therefore (c) *appearances* of things do exist in time. Kant did not realize that propositions A and C are contradictory “for if appearances really and necessarily are in time, then it is false to say that nothing whatever exists in time.”<sup>3</sup> Chisholm says this is the same mistake made by the philosophers who believe that, in the bent stick scenario, the appearance of a bent stick actually contains a bent stick; if the appearance of a bent stick actually contains something bent, then it is false to say that nothing whatever exists in appearance.

At this point Chisholm pauses to note that Moore had suggested, albeit with some hesitation, that objects may *appear* to have attributes which they do not actually have. Sense datum of seeing a penny obliquely as opposed to seeing it from above does not mean we really judge the penny to *be* a different shape than what it was when judged from above; the penny only *seems* different: in one case it *seems* elliptical and in the other it *seems* circular. Chisholm argues that,

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<sup>2</sup> Price, H H., *Perception*, 64.

<sup>3</sup> Chisholm, Roderick M., *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*, 118.

while this does avoid the question of whether the *appearance* of an object has surface, it nevertheless fails in some cases to adequately describe what is and what is not part of the appearance. To prove this point, he says if we define ‘the appearance of a piece of coal’ as ‘something which has just those attributes which the coal appears to have’, then we are unsure if the ‘blue’ in ‘the coal appears blue’ is actually an appearance.

In response to these criticisms, we now turn to recent champions of TA William Alston and Harold Langsam. Both argue that TA has been unjustly left in the past as a result of criticisms like those presented by Price and Chisholm. In order to answer their qualms, both go at lengths to further distinguish the theory from the Way of Ideas, letting it live in the idea that perception is a direct, unmediated relation between the perceiver and the objects or states of affairs perceived. After observing their methods of doing this, we will finally be able to question whether their revival is justified.

William Alston’s promotion of TA in his article “Back to the Theory of Appearing”, is centered around his claim that it answers what he calls the three main philosophical questions of perception: (i) What is the nature of perceptual consciousness (experience)?; (ii) What is it to perceive a physical object?; (iii) How, if at all, is perception a source of justification of beliefs about (or a source of knowledge of) the physical environment? His answer to question (i) is quite straightforward: perceptual consciousness *is* a direct, unmediated awareness of physical objects in an environment. For (ii), Alston says that seeing an object is simply for that object to look a certain way to the perceiver. Finally, TA’s answer to (iii) is that we are justified in believing in TA simply by the lack of strong opposing evidence. The amalgamation of these answers moves Alston to claim TA is a worthy theory of perception.

Next, Alston addresses how TA handles hallucination in comparison to sense-datum theories. While sense-datum theories easily account for hallucination, Alston argues “There is no sufficient reason to suppose that introspective indistinguishability entails sameness of ontological structure.”<sup>4</sup> According to Alston, ‘x appears y to S’ implies ‘x’ exists. This pushes against Price’s argument that there is no way to prove ‘x’ exists as well as Chisholm’s view that the locution only implies the existence of ‘y’. With this said, TA is still able to use mental images to account for hallucinations, as mental images need not be ontologically ultimate in order to be regarded as objects of direct awareness in some cases. Therefore, in hallucination mental images may be what we perceive while in veridical perception we are directly acquainted with the independently existing objects and states of affairs.

Finally, the focus is shifted to address a few more objections to TA. A critic might ask: if

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<sup>4</sup> Alston, William, "Back to the Theory of Appearing," 190.

an object looking a certain way to a subject is an irreducible concept, how can that connect with neural transactions which cause the perception? Alston says that TA does not deny the physical cause of perception. What it *does* deny is that investigating neural transactions can bring about what appearance to a subject in a certain manner is. To which the critic might reply: There is a long causal chain between chain between the object and the subject; how can we have direct perception? The problem with this question is that it conflates causal mediation and cognitive mediation. A chain of causal mediation can be allowed without forfeiting cognitive mediation.

The final piece we will investigate is Harold Langsam's article "The Theory of Appearing Defended", which was published in a book of articles on Disjunctivism in 2009. After making a claim on the nature of perception, Langsam argues TA has a strong explanation for hallucination as well as addresses a few objections often brought against TA in its account of hallucination. Finally, he points a way through the Time-Gap Argument.

Langsam begins with the claim that "experiences are *relations* between material objects and minds,"<sup>5</sup> a claim he believes is a commonsense view. He takes his claim to a more specific one: phenomenal features relate objects of perception with the subjects that are perceiving them. The example he gives is 'the apple is appearing red to me'. However, it is important to note that phenomenal features are sometimes present when there is no material object being perceived. This would be cases of minor or more complete hallucination. In this case, phenomenal features cannot be relations between minds and material things as there is no material thing for the mind to relate to. Therefore, Langsam's thesis is that it is only in the case of *perceptual* experience that phenomenal features are instances of this relation, phenomenal features do not play this role in the case of hallucinatory experiences.

With his case for TA's accommodation of hallucination made, Langsam addresses the issue of indistinguishability (AKA Argument from Hallucination), which could be brought against the theory just proposed. The problem is that in Langsam's view of TA, there is no way to differentiate between veridical perception and hallucination. How does Joe know that the apple in his hand is real? Langsam replies with a question of his own: Why does indistinguishability between perceptual experiences and hallucinations result in the demise of phenomenal features of perceptual experience being relations between material objects and minds? The Argument from Hallucination assumes, to use Alston's phrase, "sameness of ontological structure." Langsam sees no reason why hallucinations should be granted the same ontological weight as actual perception. There is no reason that indistinguishability between hallucination and actual perception should be a defeater for TA.

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<sup>5</sup> Langsam, Harold, "The Theory of Appearing Defended," 181.



Finally, Langsam confronts the Time-Gap Argument. In its claim that phenomenal features of perceptual experiences instantiate relations between material objects and minds at some particular time, TA appears to be caught in a trap. Between an event, say a lightning flash, and Jim's perception of the event, there is a "time-gap". Jim's perception of the lightning flash happens at time  $t$ , and the lightning strike occurred at time  $t-a$ , with "a" standing for the amount of time it took for the light to travel from the lightning strike to Jim's eyes. The Time-Gap Argument says TA claims that there is a relation between the lightning at time  $t$  and Jim and time  $t$ , which cannot be the case as the lightning is gone at time  $t$ . TA rejects the idea that if a relation occurs at some time, it must necessarily be relating the two as they are at that particular time. The "appearing to" relation happens at time  $t$ , which is the time the light hits Jim's eyes but not necessarily the time of the event.

Now that we have journeyed through the history the Theory of Appearing, we may consider its viability as a theory. In order to do this, we will reflect on whether the criticisms of Price and Chisholm can be fully accounted for by the champions of the theory, new and old. It should be noted that this study uses only select sources, possibly leaving defecters or answers to unanswered questions within the pages of hidden books.

First, we will consider Alston and Langsam's responses to Price's argument through which he claimed that TA could not account for hallucination. To see a right-handed glove over there when there is a left-handed glove over here is different from a white page appearing red. In the former there is no physical basis for the experience the perceiver is having, and in the latter there is. As for being unable to distinguish between the real and the illusory, I think it is clear in both Alston and Langsam's writings that we need not grant the same ontological status to mental images as we do veridical perception. This response can be applied to Price's second critique as well.

Chisholm's critique of Kant's theory of time went unmentioned by champions of TA after Chisholm, but it still does not pose a problem for the theory. We see that Langsam discusses time as a relation, but never goes so far as to make the claim that 'nothing whatsoever exists in time'. The contradiction is made clear by Chisholm, but TA does not seem to be tied to Kant's claim. The simple way out is to admit that things (appearances) do exist in time.

Finally, Chisholm's argument that TA cannot adequately describe what is and what is not part of an appearance. Chisholm's claim is that, by redefining 'the appearance of a piece of coal' as 'something which has just those attributes which the coal appears to have', then we are unsure if the 'blue' in 'the coal appears blue' is actually an appearance. This seems to be correct at first but is actually just misleading. Surely 'blue' is among the 'attributes which the coal appears to have' in the case of a piece of coal which appears blue. It is not part of the typical *concept* of a piece of coal, but this does not mean it cannot be a part of the appearance of coal under the right

circumstances.

The criticisms brought on by Price and Chisholm are now adequately answered, meaning that TA is a sufficient alternative to the Way of Ideas. The language of TA ('appears', 'seems', etc.) may still have its ambiguities, but on the whole, it has been proven to withstand rigorous testing from different types of hallucination and veridical perception. As a result, it seems appropriate to say that, despite its fall and critiques brought against it, TA both was a viable theory or perception both in the early 20th century and continues to be a viable option today.

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