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కనగల్ మండల మౌఖిక వ్యవహారం: విలక్షణత

(The Distinctiveness of Oral Language use in Kanagal Mandal)

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0. పరిచయం:

తెలంగాణ రాష్ట్ర ప్రభుత్వం పరిపాలన సౌలభ్యం కోసం జిల్లాల పునర్విభజనలో భాగంగా ఉమ్మడి నల్లగొండ జిల్లాను నల్లగొండ, సూర్యాపేట, యాదాద్రి-భువనగిరి జిల్లాలుగా విభజించింది. అలా 11 అక్టోబర్ 2016 న నూతన నల్లగొండ జిల్లా ఏర్పడింది. నూతనంగా ఏర్పడిన నల్లగొండ జిల్లాలో ఉన్న 32 మండలాలలో కనగల్ మండలం ఒకటి. నల్లగొండ జిల్లా కేంద్రం నుండి 16 కి.మీ దూరంలో కనగల్ మండలం ఉన్నది. కనగల్ మండలం ఎమ్మార్వో ఆఫీసువారు అందించిన సమాచారం మేరకు, మండలంలో 04-11-2024 సంవత్సరం నాటికి మొత్తం 31 గ్రామ పంచాయితీలు ఉన్నాయి. కనగల్ మండలంలోని గ్రామపంచాయితీలతో సహా వాటిలో ఉన్న చిన్న చిన్న గూడాలు కలుపుకొని మొత్తం 72 గ్రామాలు ఉన్నాయి. 2011 జనాభా గణాంకాల ప్రకారం కనగల్ మండల జనాభా- 41,555, అక్షరాస్యత 59%. కనగల్ మండలానికి సరిహద్దులుగా నల్లగొండ రెవెన్యూ డివిజన్ లో నల్లగొండ, చండూరు; దేవరకొండ రెవెన్యూ డివిజన్ లోని గుర్రంపోడు; మిర్యాలగూడ రెవెన్యూ డివిజన్ లోని అనుముల, నిడమనూరు మండలాలు ఉన్నాయి.

కనగల్ మండల ప్రజల మౌఖిక వ్యవహారాన్ని ఆధారం చేసుకొని నామ ప్రాతిపదికలు, లింగం, వచనం, మాన్యత, విభక్తుల ప్రవర్తనను అధ్యయనం చేస్తూ వర్ణనాత్మక వ్యాకరణం పద్ధతిలో ఆ విశేషాలను వివరించడం ఈ పత్రం ముఖ్య ఉద్దేశం. నల్లగొండ జిల్లా కనగల్ మండలంలోని ప్రజలు మాట్లాడే భాషానిర్మాణాన్ని, పదప్రయోగ విలక్షణతను అర్థంచేసుకోవడానికి ఈ పరిశోధన తోడ్పడుతుంది. క్షేత్రపర్యటన ద్వారా ప్రాథమికంగా ఏడుగురు వ్యవహారాల నుండి సేకరించిన సమాచారం(టైపులో 96 పేజీల వ్యవహార ఖండికలు) ఈ అధ్యయనానికి ప్రధాన ఆకరం. ఈ ఏడుగురు వ్యవహారాలను కనగల్ మండలంలోని పర్వతగిరి గ్రామం నుండి ఎంపిక చేయడమైంది.

1. కీలక పదాలు:

కనగల్ మండలం, మౌఖికవ్యవహారం, వ్యవహారాలు, క్షేత్రపర్యటన, నామరూప విజ్ఞానం, నామ ప్రాతిపదికలు, లింగం, వచనం, మాన్యత, విభక్తులు, భాషానిర్మాణం, వర్ణనాత్మక వ్యాకరణం.

2. వ్యవహారాల వివరాలు:

క్ర.సం.	వ్యవహార పేరు	లింగం	వయసు	విద్య	వృత్తి
1.	కంది లింగయ్య	పురుషుడు	48	డిగ్రీ	MGNREGA ఫీల్డ్ అసిస్టెంట్
2.	ఎస్కె అమీన	స్త్రీ	55	చదువుకోలేదు	దినసరి కూలీ
3.	చెనగాని యాదమ్మ	స్త్రీ	55	చదువుకోలేదు	వ్యాపారి
4.	తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు	పురుషుడు	55	నాలుగవ తరగతి	రైతు
5.	వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య	పురుషుడు	68	ఐదవ తరగతి	కార్మికుడు
6.	మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య	పురుషుడు	78	చదువుకోలేదు	కూరగాయల వ్యాపారి
7.	కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య	పురుషుడు	85	పెద్దబాలశిక్ష చదువుకున్నారు	రైతు & గీతకార్మికుడు

3. నామరూప విజ్ఞానం (Noun Morphology):

3.0 నామ ప్రాతిపదికలు (Nominal Stems):

3.1 దేశ్య నామ ప్రాతిపదికలు:

తెలుగులోని దేశ్య ప్రాతిపదికలను ప్రాథమిక(నిష్పన్న) నామాలు, ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పన్న నామాలు, తృతీయ స్థాయి నిష్పన్న నామాలు, తృతీయానంతర స్థాయి నిష్పన్న నామాలుగా విభజించవచ్చు. ఈ విభాగంలో ప్రాథమిక(నిష్పన్న) నామాలు, ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పన్న నామాలను గురించి పరిశీలిద్దాం.

3.1.1 ప్రాథమిక (నిష్పన్న) నామాలు (Primary [Derived] Nouns):

అ) నామ ప్రాతిపదిక(Nominal Base)కు లింగ వచన ప్రత్యయాలు చేరని నామ ప్రాతిపదికలు ఈ విభాగంలోకి వస్తాయి.

మహద్యాచకాలు(Masculine):

- తాత “ఇగ నన్నేచనేది ఆ ముసలోళ్లు, యాడిగ్బొయిర్యా తాత? యాడిగ్బొయినవ్ చెప్పు నాతర? అనేది.”
(కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
- నాయన “మీర్ మాష్టీల్ బువ్వలు బెడ్డరు కమ్మిష్టోల్లకని. ఆ మా నాయనల పట్టపోయేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
- కొడుకు “ఆయన బిల్పిస్తై బొయిన. ఆయన కొడుకు అయ్యప్ప మాలేశిండు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

మహతీ వాచకాలు(Feminine):

- అమ్మ “సదువుపియ్లే మా అమ్మ మా నాయన.” (చెనగాని యాదమ్మ)
- అక్క “యాడ మారపల్లి గౌరారానున్న ఎల్మాయన, మా అక్కనిచ్చినం ఆడ్కి.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)
- బిడ్డ “పిల్లలు నాకు ముగ్గురు కొడ్కులు, ఒక బిడ్డ. ఆ బిడ్డ సచ్చిపొయింది.” (తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు)

మహతీతర అమహద్యాచకాలు(Neuter):

- కుండ “ఒక్క తాడు ఈద్ పద్దీసీసల్, పదియేన్ సీసలయ్యేదియా. తక్కువయ్యేదన్నున్నవా. రొండోదొడుస్తే కుండ.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
- వొడ్డోలు, ముస్తాదు, మోకు “యాపుకు వొడ్డోలు, నడుంకు ముస్తాదు, మోకు గోతి ఇయన్నుండె.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

అ) నామ ప్రాతిపదికకు లింగ, వచన, ప్రత్యయాలు(Gender Number Marker) చేరి కింది విధమైన రూపాలు ఏర్పడతాయి.

మహద్యాచకాలు:

- మనవడు “సదువుకుర్రు. మా మనవడు, మనవరాలంత జదువుతురు.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)
- తమ్ముడు “ఇట్లా బర్తా తమ్ముడు గూడుంటడుగా! ఆయన దేవర అంటం.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

మహతీ వాచకాలు:

- చెల్లెలు “కాలమ్మ అంటెనేవో, అమ్మ చెల్లెలు.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)
- శెల్లెలు “ఇగా మా అమ్మ శెల్లెలుంటదిగా కాలమ్మ అంటం. కాలా అంటం. అంటే అమ్మశెల్లెలు కాలా అంటె ఆచ శిన్నమ్మే కాని, కాలా అంటం.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)
- మనవరాలు “ఇప్పుడు గాసుమీద ఒంతానికే శాతనైతలేదు. మీకు మనవరాలు నిన్నే వొండవంటదో యేవో.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

మహతీతర అమహద్యాచకాలు:

వ్యవసాయం > యెవసాయం “తాలైక్కుడు, యెవసాయం జేస్సునుడు, బర్లు , మేకలు, వో పాలు ఊకునేదానియా ఇయ్యాలపుడు యాదూకునేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

తట్ట “అక్కడ మాక్ ఎర్కలోల్లు అల్లేది పెండ తట్టలు, గింత గింతుండేది.”
(కంది లింగయ్య)

3.1.1.1 క్రియా ధాతువుల మీద చేరే ప్రాథమిక నిష్పాదక ప్రత్యయాలు

క్రియా ధాతువులమీద చేరి, నిష్పన్న నామాలు ఏర్పడటానికి కారణమయ్యే ప్రాథమిక నిష్పాదక ప్రత్యయాలు కింద సూచించబడ్డాయి. వ్యాకరణ వీటిని "కృదంతాలు" (చూ. బాలవ్యా, కృదంత.) అన్నారు.

-అకం నమ్ము+అకం= నమ్మకం >నమ్మం

“అంటే శానా దూరం నమ్మం తక్కువ. కొద్దిగ సూప్ తక్కువైతుంది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

-పు చూచు+పు=సూప్ >చూపు

“అంటే శానా దూరం నమ్మం తక్కువ. కొద్దిగ సూప్ తక్కువైతుంది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

-ట మండు+ట=మంట

“కట్టెల్ దీస్కొచ్చి పొయి మంట బెట్టేది.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

-క మొలచు+క=మొలక >మొల్క

“ఆడికె పెద్ద గొప్ప మొల్క జల్లే పరిశేను పందువొడ్లు బండేది.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

3.1.2 ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పన్న నామాలు (Secondary Derivative Nouns):

ప్రాథమిక నామాలపై నిర్మాణ ప్రత్యయం (Formative suffix) వికల్పంగా, ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పాదక ప్రత్యయం (Secondary Derivative Suffix) నిత్యంగా చేరడంవల్ల ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పన్న నామాలు (Secondary Derivative Nouns) ఏర్పడతాయి.

అ) నామ ప్రాతిపదిక + ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పాదక ప్రత్యయం

మహద్యాచకాలు:

-వంతుడు బగ+వంతుడు=బగవంతుడు

“ఆయనెట్ల బాడ్డడో ఎట్ల వాయించాల్సో. బగవంతుడా వూకనన్నొస్తివి.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

మహతీతర అమహద్యాచకాలు:

-పోతు దున్న-పోతు=దున్నపోతు

“సదువు లేదు. దున్నపోతుల నాగలె. అదే సదువు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

-రికం సుట్ట+రికం= సుట్టరికం

“ఇయ్యపు సుట్టరికం వుంటది. కంచపు సుట్టం వుంటది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

అ) నామ ప్రాతిపదిక+నిర్మాణ ప్రత్యయం+ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పాదక ప్రత్యయం

వీటిని సంప్రదాయ వ్యాకరణాలు ‘తద్ధితాలు’ అన్నాయి.(చూ.బాలవ్యా.తద్ధిత.)

మహద్వాచకాలు:

పిల్ల-కా-డు = పిల్లగాడు

“పెల్లిజేయగనే నల్లరు పిల్లలు బుట్టిరు. మొట్టమొదట అవడాల పిల్ల, ఓ పిల్లగాడు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

మహతీవాచకాలు:

మనుమ-ర్-అలు = మనుమరాలు

“మా మనవడు, మనవరాలంత జదువుతురు.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

మహతీతర అమహద్వాచకాలు:

దొంగ-తన-ము = దొంగతనం < దొంగతనము

“నాది గవురైంటు జాబు. నేనక్కడ జీతంకు దొంగతనంగొచ్చిన.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

ఇ) విశేషణ ప్రాతిపదిక+ద్వితీయ స్థాయి నిష్పాదక ప్రత్యయం

-ది

పెద్ద-ది = పెద్దది “అప్పుడేచొ ఆరుట్ల మంచాల అనేది. ఆరుట్ల బొయిందప్పుడు. మంచాల మండలం పెద్దది.”

(మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

ఈ) విశేషణ ప్రాతిపదిక+నిర్మాణ ప్రత్యయం+ద్వైస్థాయి నిష్పాదక ప్రత్యయం

మంచి-తన-ము = మంచితనం < మంచితనము

“జీతవుండి జీతవుండి ఆల్ నా మంచితనం జూశి, ఆల్ పిల్లనిచ్చి పెల్లిజేశిరు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.2 లింగం (Gender):

తెలుగులో నామవాచకాల అర్థాన్ని బట్టి లింగబోధకత ఉంటుంది. మహద్వాచకం, అమహద్వాచకం అని రెండు విధాలుగా లింగాన్ని విభజించవచ్చు. మహద్వాచకంలో పురుషనామాలు, అమహద్వాచకంలో స్త్రీలింగ, నపుంసక లింగ నామాలు చేరుతాయి. ఇప్పటివరకు క్షేత్ర పర్యటన ద్వారా సేకరించిన సమాచారం ఆధారంగా కనగల్ మండల మౌఖిక భాషలో లింగబోధకత ఈ కింది విధంగా ఉన్నది.

3.2.1 లింగ బోధక ప్రత్యయాల్ని గ్రహించని నామాలు:

3.2.1.1 మహద్వాచకాలు:

నాయన “ఉన్నది కొద్దిగ ఎకరం ఆరుగుంటలుంది. నా మా నాయన సంపాదించింది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)
తాత “మీ తాత అంజనేయలేశవేస్తే, మొత్తం అంజనేయల్ నోట్లంగ బుట్టుందే వుండే.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.2.1.2 మహతీ వాచకాలు:

కోడలు “ఇప్పుడు మా కోడలు ఏం పన్నేయదు. ఇంటికాదుంటది.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

3.2.1.3 మహన్మహతీ వాచకాలు:

పుస్తే “మాక్ పుస్తేతె బర్త కట్టడు.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)
బిడ్డ “నవాస అంటెనేవో బిడ్డ కొడుకు. నువ్వున్నావు నాకు నవాస.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

3.2.2 లింగ బోధక ప్రత్యయాల్ని గ్రహించే నామాలు

3.2.2.1 మహద్వాచకాలు:

-డు వొకడు
“అండ్ల వొకడు తిర్పటం దగుల్తుడు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.2.2.2 మహతీవాచకాలు:

-అలు మనవరాలు
“ఇప్పుడు గాసుమీద ఒంతానికే శాతనైతలేదు. మీకు మనవరాలు నిన్నే వొండవంటదో యేవో.”
(ఎస్కె అమీన)

3.2.2.3 మహతీతర అమహద్వాచకాలు:

అన్నం “ఇగనేను పోంగనే ఇన్నొడ్డుట్లెక్క అన్నం దింటట్ లేదు. నాక్ బీపి వుంది యాన్నన్న చాయ్లు అరటిపండు దింట.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)
సాయంత్రం “పొయినం ఇంగికాడ్కి సాయంత్రం నాల్లైంది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)
దీపం “వాస్తంగ ఆయన సచ్చిపొయిండు. మనం బత్తున్నం గాని. దీపంవయితే యేశాల పుల్లయ్యో మనూర్కి.”
(మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.3 వచనం (Number):

తెలుగులో వచనం అనేది ఏకవచనం, బహువచనం అని రెండు రకాలుగా ఉంటుంది. ఏక వస్తు/వ్యక్తి బోధ ఏకవచనంలోనూ, ఒకటికి మించిన వస్తువుల వ్యక్తుల బోధ బహువచనంలోనూ కలుగుతుంది. బహువచన ప్రత్యయాలు చేరడం వల్ల పదనిర్మాణంలో జరిగే మార్పులు ఇక్కడ చూడవచ్చు.

3.3.1 బహువచన ప్రత్యయం/పదాంశం:

ఇప్పటివరకు సేకరించిన సమాచారంలో -ము, -రు, -ండ్లు, -లు ప్రత్యయాలు బహువచనంలో కనిపిస్తున్నాయి

3.3.1.1 -ము

మేం	“ఇగ <u>మేం</u> నోరూస్కొని సప్పుడుగాకుట యేం అనకపోయ్యేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
మమ్ముల	“యెవ్వడు కొట్టకపోయ్యేది. <u>మమ్ములే</u> అనకపోయేది ఆల్లు.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
మేం	“ <u>మేం</u> రజాకార్ల బొయినోల్లం గావు. నక్కలైట్ల బొయినోల్లం గావు. మాకేడ్ దెల్వదు.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)
మేవు	“ఇగ <u>మే</u> వెద్దినం. ఇగ మోటర్లు బొయినయ్. పసులమ్ముడు బొయింది. కోసుడు బొయింది.” (తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు)
మనం	“అల్లేం జేస్తరంటె పద్దిర్వె యేస్తరు చరాలు. నువ్ సైకిల్ చరాలేస్తరు అయి ఇగ <u>మనం</u> సక్కగ శూశి కొట్టువంటె ఆ ఏరియల్నే తల్గుతదిగ.” (కంది లింగయ్య)

3.3.1.2 -రు

ముగ్గురు	“పిల్లలు నాకు <u>ముగ్గురు</u> కొడ్కులు ఒక బిడ్డె.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)
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3.3.1.3 -ండ్లు

జీతగాండ్లు	“ఇప్పుడ్ ఇప్పుడు సొతంత్రమాయె. ఇప్పుడు ఇప్పుడు యే ఎవల్కాన్నన్న <u>జీతగాండ్లున్నరా?</u> .” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
నాగండ్లు	“జీతాలుంటె <u>నాగండ్లు</u> దున్నేది. మోటర్లు గొట్టేది.” (తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు)
ఇండ్లు	“అయిదు <u>ఇండ్లున్నయ్</u> గాని ఇర్వెమందుంటరు.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

3.3.1.4 -లు

మహత్, అమహత్, మహతీతర అమహద్వాచక భేదాలతో సంబంధం లేకుండా -లు అనే బహువచన ప్రత్యయం అన్ని నామాలపై చేరుతుంది.

3.3.1.4.1 ప్రాతిపదికాంత ఇత్వం ఉత్వంగా మారటం

కత్తి+లు=కత్తులు “ముస్తాదు, మోకు, కత్తులు ఇయన్నుండేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
 బుజకీర్తి+లు=బుజకీర్తులు “డిర్సులు, రంగులు, కిరీటాలు బుజకీర్తులు ఘద.” (మావిడి
 ఈశ్వరయ్య)

రూపాయి...లాంటి చోట్ల ‘-లు’ పరమైనప్పుడు ఇకారం ఉకారంగా మారక దానిస్థానంలో -లు వచ్చి చేరుతుంది.
 అదేవిధంగా, ‘పశువు’...లాంటి చోట్ల కూడా తుది ఉత్వ విశిష్ట వకారం స్థానంలో ‘-లు’ చేరుతుంది.

రూపాయి+లు= రూపాలు “ఆ నీలైచ్చి, మల్లా బువ్వొండుకోని, మల్ల కూరొండుకోని మల్ల కలవ బొయ్యేది. ఇరై
రూపాలు పదియేసూపాలు అప్పుడు.” (చెనగాని యాదమ్మ)
 పశువు+లు=పసులు “పసులు, బర్లు, మేకలు తోల్కోన్ బొయ్ మేపుకోని, అక్కడ బొబ్బెరకాయలు గట్ట
 గాల్చుకోని తిని, తాటిపండ్లు గట్టి చీకి మల్లొచ్చి మల్లొడ్లు దంచేది.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

3.3.1.4.2 ఉపోత్తమ ఇత్వం ఉత్వంగా మారటం

మనిషి+లు=మనుసులు “ఎవ్వ! అంత యెడ్లసోంటి మనుసులు గదా.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

3.3.1.4.3 ప్రాతిపదికాంత ఉత్వం లోపించటం

యిల్లు+లు=యిండ్లు<ఇళ్ళు “అల్లింటి పక్కపొంటే వున్నయ్ యెల్మోల యిండ్లు. బానె పద్
 పదియేనున్నట్టుంది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.3.1.4.4 ప్రాతిపదికాంత అనునాసికానికి లోపం, తత్సూర్య స్వరానికి దీర్ఘం రావటం

పొలం+లు=పొలాలు “పొలాలపని పొలాలకే పసులకాడోడు పసులకాన్నే.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)
 ఎకరం+లు=ఎకరాలు “ఆ కాలవ్లో మీ తాతె తెలివికల్లోడు. ఆయన్ని సంపాదించుకుంటే ఇయ్యాల
వందెకరాలు గట్టుకున్న యెవ్వడకిగోటోడు లేడయ. కానీన ఆ మ్యాటర్కు రాలె.”
 (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.3.2 నిత్య బహువచనాలు:

అందరు “ఇగ అందరు మా వొడ్రోల్లం మాత్రం ఇగ తొమ్మిది పదేండ్లకు ఆడబిల్ల పెండ్లి జేశేది.”
 (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)
 కొందరు “అందర్ని లేవు కొందర్కుండేది. కొందర్ని లేకపోయేద్.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

3.3.2.1 సంభార వాచకాలు

వడ్లు “ఎండబెట్టి కారం కారం గొట్కునేది, మల్ల పొద్దునంతలొచ్చి వడ్లు దంచేది.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)
మిర్చులు, కందులు, వుల్వలు ఇయ్ బండేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

“సద్దలు, జొన్నలు, కొర్రలు ఇయ్ బండేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

3.3.3 నిత్య ఏకవచనాలు:

అక్కడ “ఇగ అక్కడ బూచి అక్కడే. నేన్ పెల్లిగాకతోల్నె రెండెక్రాలు పట్టజేయించుకున్న మా మాచతోటి.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

ఇక్కడ “అదే వర్కని ఇక్కడ జూశ్చ. ఇక్కడ ఒస్తుంది మల్ల.” (కంది లింగయ్య)

3.3.3.1 లోహవాచకాలు

బంగారం “బంగారం వందకుంది నేన్నాడంగ.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

3.4 మాన్యత (Honour):

3.4.1 -గారు

“ఓ ఎర్ర సంచేస్సున్న, ఎర్రబట్టల్లున్న, మాల మీదనే బుడ్డచిర్రల్దెచ్చుకోని ఇగ బ్రమ్మంగార్ పాటల్ బాడ్కుట బొయిన రైల్ల.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.4.2 -అమ్మ

“ముసలమ్మకు నాకు ముసలమ్మక్కాల్లు లేవు. నాకు నడుచులేవు. నడవరాదు కుసోరాదు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

“ఆయన గంగమ్మ జాతర జేపిస్తడు బీమనపెల్ల.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

“యిందిరమ్మ నాకొక అరిచ్చింది. ఆ యిందిరమ్మ పతకం మీదనె రెండ్రలేస్సున్న అండ్లనే వుంటున్న.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.5 నామ విభక్తులు-రూప నిషృత్తి (Case Declension):

నామ ప్రత్యయాలు, క్రియా ప్రత్యయాలు అని ప్రత్యయాలు రెండు రకాలు. ఈ విభాగంలో లింగ, వచన ప్రత్యయాల తర్వాత చేరే వాటిని ప్రత్యయాలుగా గ్రహించడం జరిగింది. ప్రథమా విభక్తి మినహా మిగిలిన ద్వివచనాది విభక్తులు ప్రత్యయాశ్రయాలు.

3.5.1 ఔపవిభక్తిక/అనౌపవిభక్తిక నామాలు:

నామాలను ఔపవిభక్తికాలు, అనౌపవిభక్తికాలు అని రెండు రకాలుగా విభజించవచ్చు. ఒక నామంపై ఔపవిభక్తిక, అనౌపవిభక్తిక ప్రత్యయాలు రెండూ వచ్చే అవకాశం ఉన్నప్పుడు, ఔపవిభక్తిక ప్రత్యయాలు మొదట నామానికి చేరిన తర్వాతే అనౌపవిభక్తిక ప్రత్యయాలు చేరుతాయి. ఫలితంగా ‘ఔపవిభక్తిక రూపాలు’ ఏర్పడతాయి. కొన్ని నామాలు ఔపవిభక్తిక ప్రత్యయాలను గ్రహించకుండా ద్వివచనాది విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలను నేరుగా గ్రహిస్తాయి. ఇలా ఏర్పడేవాటిని ‘అనౌప విభక్తిక నామాలు’ అంటారు.

3.5.2 ఔప విభక్తిక రూపాలు (case declension):

3.5.2.1 -ంటి

లకారం మీద: ఇల్లు+ంటి = ఇంటి

“ఇంటికొచ్చేయాలకు పొయ్ పొయిల బూడ్డుంటేనే బువ్వొన్నట్టు. లేకపోతే లేదు.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

“శాపలేంపితే! మీ యింటికాడేంపితే యి అంత ఆసన గొట్టేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

నకారం మీద: కన్ను+ంటి =కంటి

“తేలకంటిగూడెం, తిమ్మనగుడెం ఇదివరకు ఒక్కటే అది.” (కంది లింగయ్య)

కకారం మీద: వొక+ంటి =వొంటి < ఒంటి

“ఆ నైటూ తొమ్మిదిగంటల్లక్ బెట్టుట్టే వొంటిగంటయ్యేది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.5.2.2 -అటి

అప్పుడు “ఓ ఇగ అప్పటి బాదలన్ని జెప్పె శాన వున్నయ్యయ్య.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

ఇప్పుడు “శాస్త్ర పద్ధతైతె యెలమాలంటరాల్లని ఇప్పటిగూడ.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.5.2.3 -టి

లోపట్నె “నాకోడల్ లోపట్నె వుంటది.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

నూరు “దాదాపు వంద నూటిరైవ్ మంది లేబరొస్తున్నారు.” (కంది లింగయ్య)

మొదలు “కాని, మొదటినంది కష్టపడ్డగాని సుకం లేదు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.5.2.4 -ఇ

సర్వనామాల మీద:

పరప్రత్యయాలు (post positions) మీద:

మీద “ఆ మీద మోటరు బుయ్యననురుక్తది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

కాడ=దగ్గర “పెద్దమనుషుల కాడిక్ బోతె ఇంతమందినెందుగ్గన్నవంటుర్రయ్య. (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

అందరు “యీనేఁవొ అందర్ని దానఁవిచ్చిండు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.5.2.5 -తి

రాతి “ఇగా యెన్నమర రాతిగోడ కట్టి లేపి ఆ రేకుల్...ఇగ ముందల సాయ్మాను సాయ్మాను కింద బర్లు మేకలు నేను అట్ల వుండే.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

3.5.2.6 -అ

పిల్లలక్ “మా బుజ్జికన్న జరవస్తదేచ్ గాని పిల్లలక్ మొత్తవే రాదు.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

3.5.2.7 -ఆని

వారానికి “తొమ్మిదొందల రూపాలు వారానికి ఒక గడ్డపార గొనుక్కోవయ ఒక వారం పశలు బెట్టి అంటురాలు.” (కంది లింగయ్య)

3.5.2.8 -ని

నామాలపై చేరటం:

జనానికి “ఇందిరమ్మొచ్చినంకనే...పశ్శలు గూడ బంపింది మన జనానికి.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

శివునికి “మూడువందలరైస్రోజులు శివునికి పూజ జెయ్యాల.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

ప్రథమ పురుష సర్వనామాలపై:

వాని “యా రెండున్నోన్ని బువ్వు కరువు. వానికుండదు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

ఆని “ఆ ఇగ బత్తడు. ఇగ సాద్ సాద్ సాదుకుంట ఆని పెండ్లాన్ని బాగ సాదుకుంటడు అనేది.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

3.5.3 ఔపవిభక్తిక అనౌప విభక్తిక రూపాల పర్యాయత:

కనగల్ మండల మౌఖిక వ్యవహారంలో మాపు, పొద్దు, వాడు వంటివి కొన్ని సందర్భాలలో ఔపవిభక్తిక రూపాలుగా, అనౌపవిభక్తిక రూపాలుగా కనిపిస్తున్నాయి.

ఔపవిభక్తిక రూపాలు:

“మాపు బువ్వుబెట్టక్బోతే ఆలక్ ఈలక్ బాద.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

“మరా నైటొచ్చి యీడ పొద్దున్నే లేచి ఆల్లు టైం జెప్తరు. ఎన్నిదిగంట్లకా తొమ్మిదిగంట్లకా అంటె, తొమ్మిదిగంట్ల వరకల్ల పూల్ల తిర్గుత, తానం జేస్త. ఇంత దింట పోత.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

“ఆదు బువ్వు బెట్టక్ జీతం బొయిండు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

అనౌపవిభక్తిక రూపాలు:

“మాపటిలేమో ఈలతో కమిట్టొచ్చి బువ్వు బెడ్తవా పెట్టవా అని కుండలకెగబడేది.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

“పొద్దటిలి ఎన్నిదిగంట్లక్ వెట్టుంటె వొకటెండయ్యేది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

“వాడు రూపాయిచ్చిండా నువ్ యాబై...రూపాల మీద్ కూసున్నవ్ అనిక్ పదిచ్చి నువ్ పద్దినాదని అడిండు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.5.4 ప్రథమా విభక్తి రూపాల నిర్మాణం:

ప్రథమా విభక్తిని సూచించే ప్రత్యయాలు తెలుగులో వేరుగా లేవు. ఇవి ప్రత్యయాశ్రితాలు కావు. లింగ, వచన బోధక నామాలే ప్రథమా విభక్తిని బోధిస్తాయి.

3.5.5 ద్వితీయాది విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు:

కనగల్ మండల మౌఖిక భాషలో (ఇప్పటివరకు సేకరించిన సమాచారం ఆధారంగా) ఉన్న ద్వితీయాది విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు ఉదాహరణ పూర్వకంగా ఈ కింద ఇవ్వబడ్డాయి.

3.5.5.1 ద్వితీయా విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు:

-ని “యీ యేశాల పుల్లయ్యెస్తై మనని దిననియ్యడు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

“మనూరమ్మాయిని గూడిచ్చిరు ఆ వూల్లకి.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

-ను “మీ పేదతాతను సాదుకున్నరు సాదుకున్నాయనేవో పాలకూరి పుల్లయనేది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

3.5.5.2 తృతీయా విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు:

సహార్థంలో (Associative):

-తోటి “ఒకా ముప్పై నల్వై మెట్లున్నయన్నో, ఒక పదిమందితోటి పైకొచ్చేది.” (తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు)

“నాతోటి జదివినోల్లంత పేపర్ జదితోలై ఎక్కువుంటరు.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

-తో “మాష్టిల్ అలతో పొద్దటిలేవో యీలతోని.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

-తోన్/తోని

“నీతోన్ తెలుగు మాట్లాడ్తం.” (ఎన్కె అమీన)

“అల్లియ్యనే ఇయ్యనంటె, ఇగ అహో! శాన తిర్గి తిర్గి తిర్గి పన్నెండేండ్లు పంచాయితీ బెట్టున్న అలతోని.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

కరణార్థంలో (Instrumental):

-తోటి “ఇగ బండలొస్తై బరాల బొరాలొ బెట్టి గన్నులతోటి పలగొట్టి ఎల్లదీశేది.” (తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు)

“గానుగతోటి తొక్కేది.” (తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు)

3.5.5.3 చతుర్థి విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు:

‘కు’ ప్రత్యయం చతుర్థి విభక్త్యర్థంలో కనిపిస్తుంది.

“ఆ డెబ్బై రూపాలకు మూన్నె ఆరైల్లు జీతవున్న.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

3.5.5.4 పంచమీ విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు:

-నుంచి “ఇగ ఆ నుంచి ఇగ పసులకాన్నేనాయ్.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

“మీ తాత యేశాలేశి కోటుక్బోయ్ కోటునుంచి కొన్ని ఎకరాలిడ్పిచ్చిండు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

/-పట్టి ~బట్టి ~వట్టి/ (వల్ల, వలన అనే అర్థంలో)

“ఇగ ఇది సదువుకోబట్టి. సదువుకున్నంక ఇయన్ని కులమతం ఎక్కడ్దని.” (తోలుగళ్ళ రాములు)

/-కంటె/ “బడా అంటెనేఁవొ పెద్ద. నాకంటె పెద్దాయన.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

~కన్న “ఒక్క పూజకన్న రా అంటురు గాని యేఁవొ అయ్యాల ఆరోగ్యం మంచిగుంటె పోత లేపోతె లేదు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

“నాల్గు మూడు ఐదు ఐదుకన్న ఎక్కువ బోలె అంతవరకు జదివేది.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

3.5.5.5 షష్ఠీ విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు:

-కు “కోటప్పకొండకు అయిదాస్సార్లు బొయిన.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

-కి “ఆ సావిన్నాడన్గనే ఒక్కసావికి పాటొస్తలేదు.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

“అడిబిల్లని మాత్రం జాబున్నోనికి జూశియ్యలె.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

3.5.5.6 సప్తమీ విభక్తి ప్రత్యయాలు:

-లో/-లో “ఇందీలో మా బాసల ఆ తాయిబా అంటెనేఁవొ పెదనాయన.” (ఎస్కె అమీన)

“ఆ ఆరు కమ్మలో ఏడు కమ్మలో జడ్విస.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

-ల “నన్ను బెదిరిస్తున్న అంటున్నవెల్ల! బొక్కే నీకిస్తి, ఆదారకార్దిస్తి, బియ్యకార్దిస్తి, ఇంక పేరడుగుతున్నవేంది? అండ్లు లేదా పేరు?” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

-ల్ల “ఇండ్లు బల్లెక్కడియప్పుడు మాకు బడ్డేదు.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

“లేపోతె బైట యే టెంకలల్లు బెట్నా ఆగదు.” (కంది లింగయ్య)

-లోపట “పదిహేనుకు లోపట మగపిలగాడి పెండ్లి జేశేది.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

-న “లేకపోతె ఆ ఇక్కడ్ నెత్తి నెత్తిన బెట్కొని పొయ్యేది.” (వరికుప్పల లచ్చయ్య)

3.5.5.7 సంబోధన ప్రథమా విభక్తి:

తాత “అంటే పొనుగోట్ల బాగోతులాడుంటే పొయినం తాత!” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

“ఆ కాలం రావాలంటే తాత ఇగ రాదు.” (కర్నాటి చంద్రయ్య)

సారు “ఎట్లుంటుంది ఇగ పావుల బొయిన పావుల మిగుల్తుంది సారు.” (చెనగాని యాదమ్మ)

“నాకొక్కడెం గూడ జేశిర్ సారు ఐదు వే...ఆ ఐదేతులాలది.” (మావిడి ఈశ్వరయ్య)

4. ముగింపు:

ఈ పత్రంలో ఉదహరించిన వ్యవహారాల సంభాషణల్లో పదప్రయోగ విశేషాలతోపాటు, పదాల ఉచ్చారణలోని వైవిధ్యాన్ని, వాక్యనిర్మాణంలోని విశేషాలను కూడా గుర్తించవచ్చు. వ్యవహారాలు వర్ణనమీకరణం చెందిన రూపాలను(బదులు+ఎక్కడియప్పుడు=బల్లెక్కడియప్పుడు) వాడడం కనిపిస్తుంది. ‘ముందే’ అనే అర్థంలో ‘తోల్నే’ అనే పదం (‘పెల్లిగాకతోల్నే’ అనే పదప్రయోగంలో), ‘నుండి’ అనే అర్థంలో ‘సంది’ అనే పదం (‘మొదటిసంది’ అనే పదప్రయోగంలో) కనిపిస్తున్నాయి. ఉర్దూభాషా ప్రభావం వల్ల ఈ ప్రాంతంలో హలంత రూపాలు ఎక్కువగా వినిపిస్తాయి. ముఖ్యంగా అనునాసిక్యతతో పలకవలసిన చోట అర్ధానునాసిక్యతతో ఉచ్చరించిన పదాలు అధికంగా ఉన్నాయి. చెప్పాలనుకున్న విషయాన్ని త్వరితగతిన పూర్తి చేయాలనే ఉద్దేశంతో మాటలను వేగంగా పలకడం వల్ల పదాలలో వర్ణలోపాలు జరిగాయి. మహాప్రాణాన్ని అల్పప్రాణం చేసి పలకడం. ఉదా: బర్త; బాస; బుజకీర్తులు; సుకం. అల్పప్రాణాన్ని మహాప్రాణం చేసి పలకడం. ఉదా: ఘద...మొదలైనవాటిని గుర్తించవచ్చు. వ్యక్తుల మధ్య భాషలో ఉండే సూక్ష్మమైన భేదాల వెనుక సామాజిక, ఆర్థికపరమైన కారణాలు అనేకం ఉంటాయి. వాటిని అర్థంచేసుకొంటూ వ్యవహారాల మాటలలోని పదప్రయోగాలను గమనిస్తే భాషావ్యాప్తిలో, భాషాభివృద్ధిలో వారు నిర్వహిస్తున్న పాత్ర అవగాహనకు వస్తుంది. ఆధునిక తెలుగుభాషా స్వరూపాన్ని అర్థం చేసుకోడానికి, తెలుగు భాషకు సమగ్ర వ్యాకరణం రూపొందించడానికి, సమగ్ర నిఘంటువును నిర్మించడానికి మౌఖికభాషపై జరిగే ఇలాంటి పరిశోధనలు సహకరిస్తాయి.

5. ఉపయుక్త గ్రంథసూచి:

1. కృష్ణమూర్తి, భద్రరాజు. 2000. భాష-సమాజం-సంస్కృతి. హైదరాబాదు: నీల్ కమల్ పబ్లికేషన్స్.
2. కృష్ణమూర్తి, భద్రరాజు. 2018. తెలుగు భాషా చరిత్ర. హైదరాబాద్: పొట్టి శ్రీరాములు తెలుగు విశ్వవిద్యాలయం(10వ ముద్రణ).
3. దక్షిణామూర్తి, పోరంకి. 1992. భాష-ఆధునిక దృక్పథం. హైదరాబాదు: పి. వరలక్ష్మి పబ్లిషర్స్.
4. పాండయ్య, అప్పం. 2007. మహబూబ్ నగర్ జిల్లా తెలుగు సామాజిక భాషాశాస్త్ర పరిశీలన. హైదరాబాదు: జయమిత్ర సాంస్కృతిక వేదిక.
5. రామారావు, చేకూరి. 2022. తెలుగు వాక్యం. హైదరాబాద్: కావ్య ప్రచురణలు.

6. సుబ్రహ్మణ్యం, పి.ఎస్. 2019. *ఆధునిక భాషాశాస్త్ర సిద్ధాంతాలు*. హైదరాబాద్: పొట్టి శ్రీరాములు తెలుగు విశ్వవిద్యాలయం.

5.1 పిహెచ్.డి. సిద్ధాంత గ్రంథాలు:

7. చంద్రయ్య, ఎస్. 2017. *తిమ్మాజిపేట మండల మౌఖిక భాష - వర్ణనాత్మక వ్యాకరణం*. హైదరాబాద్: హైదరాబాద్ విశ్వవిద్యాలయం.

8. పవన్ కుమార్, పమ్మి. 2003. కట్టా వరదరాజు ద్వీపద రామాయణం: భాషాపరిశీలన. హైదరాబాద్: హైదరాబాద్ విశ్వవిద్యాలయం.

9. మల్లేశ్, మంత్రి. 2019. *తెలంగాణ మాండలిక నవలలు: భాషాపరిశీలన*. హైదరాబాద్: హైదరాబాద్ విశ్వవిద్యాలయం.

5.2 పరిశోధన పత్రాలు:

10. పవన్ కుమార్, పమ్మి. మార్చి, 2024. తెలుగు మౌఖికవ్యవహారభాష: పరిశోధనావశ్యకత. హైదరాబాద్: మూసీ మాసపత్రిక. సంపుటి-27: సంచిక-5.

11. పవన్ కుమార్, పమ్మి., నవీన్ కుమార్, బొమ్మగాని. ఫిబ్రవరి, 2025. సామాజిక భాషాశాస్త్ర అధ్యయనం: ప్రయోజనాలు. హైదరాబాద్: నడుస్తున్న తెలంగాణ మాసపత్రిక. సంపుటి-15, సంచిక-2.

5.3 English:

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***In fond memory of Prof. Madasamy Subbaiah Thirumalai –
A Passionate Advocate for Education (09-04-1940 - 18-06-2025)***

The Relevance of Life Skills Training in Tertiary Level: A Conceptual Exploration of Employability and Personal Growth

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Abstract

The dynamic nature of the modern workplace and the increasing complexity of societal roles demand more than technical proficiency or academic brilliance. As students step into the tertiary level of education, they are expected to not only acquire domain-specific knowledge but also to develop a wide array of competencies that amplifies their employability and which in process fosters holistic personal growth. World Health Organization (WHO) defines life skills as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour. This article explores the relevance of life skills training at the tertiary level, examining its direct implications on employability and its wide impact on student's personal development.

Keywords: Life skills, adaptive, training, employability

Introduction

Life skills encompass a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal abilities including communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, emotional regulation, empathy, and resilience. Dissimilar to hard skills, life skills are not tied to a specific profession but are invariably applicable across disciplines and roles. The universality and adaptability of life skills make the study indispensable in tertiary education. For example, a medical degree holder may excel in his/her diagnostics, but without empathy and communication skills, patient care remains incomplete. Similarly, an engineering student may be technically

sound, yet struggle in team projects or client interactions without collaborative and conflict-resolution skills.

Moreover, with the rise in the stress associated with academic and career transitions, life skills serve as a buffer, which promotes self-awareness and emotional well-being. The competencies which are acquired from life skills become the essential tools for managing change, adapting to diverse environments, and sustaining motivation in both personal and professional spheres of life.

The Importance of Life Skills

Employers across the world customarily highlight the importance of soft skills in recruitment of employees. According to a LinkedIn Global Talent Trends report, over 92% of talent professionals and hiring managers say that soft skills are equally or more important than hard skills. Tertiary institutions that integrate life skills training into their curriculum thereby directly intensify the employability of their graduates. Critical thinking and problem-solving, for instance, are highly valued across sectors – from business and law to engineering and IT. Life skills training encourage students to tackle real-world scenarios, make informed decisions, and reflect on outcomes. Similarly, communication and interpersonal skills are vital during interviews, workplace integration, and leadership roles.

Evidently, employers seek candidates who are adaptable, resilient, and capable of managing pressure-traits that life skills education specifically targets. These attributes also contribute to career longevity and career progression, making students/graduates more competent and future-ready in the dynamic employment environment. Beyond professional preparation, life skills education nurtures the foundational elements of personal development.

Self-awareness, a core life skill, allow students to recognize their strengths, values, motivations and limitations. This insight is vital in setting realistic academic and career goals and in making ethical decisions. Emotional intelligence, another core life skill, enables students to manage emotions, understand other, empathize, and build healthy relationships. These skills are not only essential for workplace but in everyday life. Life skills training fosters autonomy,

confidence, and the ability to handle failure, all of which are critical during the transformative years of higher education.

For example, time management and stress management workshops have been shown to improve student's performance, reduce anxiety, and increase retention rates. For instance, training in assertiveness and conflict resolution can empower students to navigate campus life, internships, and social engagements more effectively. To maximize the benefits of life skills training, it is essential for tertiary institutions to move beyond optional workshops and embed these competencies into the academic curriculum. This integration can be achieved through interactive teaching methods such as role-play, simulations, group discussions, project-based learning, and reflective journaling.

Equity in Life Skills Development

While the importance of life skills training is increasingly recognized, it is crucial to acknowledge that students do not engage with these programs from a level playing field. Gender and socioeconomic backgrounds can significantly shape an individual's access to, and understanding of, life skills. For instance, students from underprivileged backgrounds may have had limited exposure to structured environments that nurture communication, leadership, or emotional regulation. They may also face additional stressors, such as financial instability or family responsibilities, which can hinder their ability to fully engage in such training.

Gender norms also play a vital role. In certain cultural contexts, assertiveness or public speaking may be discouraged among female students, while emotional expression might be stigmatized among male students. These societal expectations can inhibit the development of core life skills such as confidence, empathy, and decision-making. Therefore, life skills training must be inclusive, sensitive, and adaptable to the diverse lived experiences of students. Facilitators should adopt gender-aware pedagogical methods and create safe spaces that empower all learners to participate meaningfully, regardless of their background.

Life Skills Learning

Universities like the University of Delhi and the National University of Singapore have pioneered such efforts, offering mandatory credit courses on life skills and personal

development. The pedagogical shift from lecture-based to experiential learning ensures that students not only understand concepts but also practice and internalize them. Institutions can also partner with industries, and NGOs, to enrich life skills content and provide students with real-world exposure through volunteering, mentoring and internships.

National education policies, such as India's NEP 2020, have already recognized the need for holistic and multidisciplinary learning, including life skills training. Policy frameworks should mandate life skills modules as part of undergraduate and postgraduate programs, allocating resources for faculty training and student support. Continuous assessments and feedback mechanisms should be implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of life skills training and make necessary modifications.

Life skills education at the tertiary level is no longer a supplementary component-it has become a core part to prepare students for the realities of life beyond the classroom. As the global job market becomes more dynamic, competitive, and digitally driven, employers are increasingly looking for candidates/freshers who can demonstrate more than academic excellence. Skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, resilience, teamwork, and emotional intelligence are highly sought-after and often serve as the distinguishing factor between equally qualified candidates. Institutions must take deliberate steps to integrate life skills into academic frameworks-not as isolated interventions, but as part of a holistic developmental model. This requires policy support, curriculum reform, faculty training and a cultural shift in the way education is perceived, not merely as the transmission of knowledge, but as the cultivation of whole individuals.

Conclusion

Importantly, life skills are not just about professional success, they are about building character, nurturing self-awareness, and fostering the ability to lead a fulfilling life. A candidate equipped with emotional regulation, empathy, ethical decision-making, and effective communication is better positioned to contribute positively to both personal and societal spheres. These skills enable graduates to cope with the uncertainties of modern life, to be motivated in the face of setbacks, and navigate social environments which are complex with maturity and a sense of purpose.

In totality, the relevance of life skills education in tertiary education cannot be overstated. It plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded graduates who are career-ready, emotionally intelligent, and socially responsible. Life skills must be placed at the core of the educational journey, as educators and policymakers strive to build future-ready institutions. Empowering students not just to strive in the world, but to thrive and lead with confidence, competence, and compassion.

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Mme de Rambouillet - The Aristocratic Woman Who Brought Civility to France

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Abstract

Gender studies are an interdisciplinary field of study that examines the social, cultural and historical context of gender identity, expression, and relations. It analyses the ways in which gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, sexuality and nationality to shape experiencers of power, privilege and oppression. Gender studies emerged as an academic discipline in the late 20th century growing out of feminist movements and activism and influences are seen in theories propounded by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva and Bracha L. Ettinger. Seventeenth century France was a time of great social, political and cultural upheaval. This was also a period when the role of women in society began to shift, albeit slowly. The traditional role of women in seventeenth century France was that of a wife and mother with little opportunity for education or professional advancement. However, despite these limitations, women found ways to assert their identities and make their presence felt in a male-dominated society.

One of the most significant ways in which women asserted their identities in seventeenth century France was through literature and fashion. Women used fashion to assert their individuality and to stand out in a society where conformity was expected. Women writers such as Madame de Lafayette and Madame de Sévigné gained recognition for their work which often dealt with themes of love, marriage and personal relationships. Their writings provided a platform for women to express themselves and assert their intellectual capabilities which were often ignored

by male contemporaries. This research paper looks in detail one such exemplary noble woman called Mme de Rambouillet who was a pioneer in shaping women's identity.

Keywords: Gender studies, Salons, Aristocracy, La Fronde, Civility.

Introduction

The Regent Queen of France, Anne of Austria, and chief minister Mazarin had to stop the series of revolts waged by the noble class in order to restore their supremacy. Disappointed with the abolition of certain privileges like knighthood and exemption from taxes that they were enjoying till then, the nobility was left with no other choice but to rebel against royal power. It was in this background that the women belonging to the nobility or aristocracy started gathering in various houses usually called salons in Paris and provinces in order to discuss their ideas and exchange political views. These conversations gradually encouraged the nobility to revolt against royal impositions. One woman who stood apart from this world of political intrigues and plots and emphasised more on 'politesse' or civility was Mme de Rambouillet. This paper discusses in detail the life inside her salon and to what extent it has become famous in setting up an example to lead a civilised life. One such example is the salon 'Blue room' of Mme de Rambouillet which, besides being known for its grandiosity and magnificence, is a patronage of the civilised world.

Catherine de Vivonne was born to a noble family in Rome on 2 December 1588. She was married at the age of twelve to Charles d'Angennes, Vidame du Mans and in 1612 to Marquis de Rambouillet. The young, beautiful and witty marquise stayed away from French court from the beginning as she found it unattractive and coarse. In 1620, she began to gather around her in her townhouse, the circle that made her renowned.

Marquise de Rambouillet's townhouse or Blue Room was the wonder of wonders in that era. It had attracted several nobles for its exquisite décor and literary production without any authority to fear. Once, Marquise de Rambouillet received a surprise visit from Cardinal de Richelieu for her help in knowing the intrigues between Mme la Princesse de Condé and Monsieur le Cardinal de la Valette. She refused saying it would not be too well-suited to the business of spying. In fact, Richelieu's request was not outrageous as it was the era of plotting, volte-face, continuous bargaining between the high nobility and the monarchy. It was a time when Louis XIII's minister was busy recalling the rebellious nobility to order with threats of prison and the

executioner's axe. The memoirs of Cardinal de Retz and the Duc de La Rochefoucauld both offer ample testimony to the unscrupulous attitude towards the sovereign and how family interests generally prevailed over those of King and country. It's not that Rambouillet's were not loyal subjects but what she meant was their house was not a place of intrigue and sedition. She was only claiming the right to private freedom. She set a precedent of civil society proclaiming its independence from politics and denied the prevailing powers to interfere in private life. Richelieu, for his part, wanted to be informed of what was happening in the marquise's celebrated 'Blue Room'. Despite his keen political intuitive power, he could not have fathomed the hatching of plot, if there were so as it was of different kind for it did not have any need for ministers, armies or wealth. It depended purely on exchange of ideas or opinion. It was not until a century later that it would threaten the established order. Rambouillet's contemporaries were the first to claim her significance and to realize that a new civilization for a fashionable society of politesse was being born in her home. It constituted a certain courteous, honest, polite way of living, acting and speaking acquired through usage in society. It can only be learned through practise and initiation.

This new way of life came to embody an ideal and it all began precisely in the hotel de Rambouillet. The enchanted place in which she received her intimate friends was the famous 'Chambre Bleu' or Blue room. The walls were hung with blue brocade interwoven with threads of silver and gold. The chairs were upholstered in blue, the curtains on the bed were blue. Breaking with convention, Mme de Rambouillet had transferred her actual bedroom to a little closet and transferred the big bedroom into an official reception room. This allowed Arthenice to receive her guests as she lay stretched in her daybed in the most protected corner of the room. This practice set an example and was to become a social ritual. The *ruelle*, the space between the bed and the wall was to become par excellence the part of the room where seventeenth century ladies received their guests.

Tallemant des Réaux recounts that the splendour of hôtel de Rambouillet was such that when queen mother had the Luxembourg built, she sent the architects to see this hotel. He says that the idea to create a sense of unity in a room by coordinating colours and materials was not new but what was striking was the overall effect of the house when the work was finished. The hôtel de Rambouillet became the perfect prototype for the décor that would form the backdrop to the rituals of French society for nearly three centuries. Brought into the social scene, the alcove

became a place of prestige, devoid of all suggestion of intimacy. Although, the marquise's taste may have been dictated by a deep-seated desire for beauty and harmony, it is impossible not to notice from the permanent animation in her house her continuous need for distraction and amusement. The first discipline that was practiced at the hotel de Rambouillet was the art of entertainment. The driving force behind all this effort was the child bride's refusal to grow up despite being a wonderful wife and mother of seven. It could also be the awareness that idleness was an essential element of aristocratic life and that to know how to cultivate it nobly was a mark of identity and belongingness. Perhaps it was the fear of the void and of solitude. Nevertheless, these explanations have an element of truth in it and the sum total of all these had imparted utopian quality is the hotel de Rambouillet.

Life in the marquise's house was easy, open, untroubled, and free of passion. There was no room for eros, although gallantry was allowed. Even if someone forgot and was carried away by the game, they were immediately kept in order. The regular visitors had to leave the hotel for real life to take up usual activities of lusting, loving, hating, conspiring, fighting, killing and even praying, preaching. The memory of utopian fiction remained and the temptation of playing at the hotel was so great that it had become a second nature. This dual life had become a phenomenon so much so that it had become an identity of French nobility until the Revolution. It was the only possible answer and the unlikely choice between court life and society life. Society and the court were two different worlds where the very people who frequented them no longer resembled themselves when they passed from one to other. At the hotel de Rambouillet, politics and intrigue were left at the door and at court, the manners of the hotel were disguised. Thus, for nearly two centuries, the nobility played two different parts, sometimes adopting the courtiers robe and other times donning the dress of a man of the world.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the aristocracy discovered unexplored territory that is halfway between the court and the church and whose boundaries were determined by its members. The nobility, on the other hand, established its own laws based on a code of behaviour marked by the strict veneration of form. They called it by the generic name *monde* or world. Mme de Rambouillet belonged to this sphere and she was hardly the only woman of her day to nourish the ambition of making her house into a cultural and world's centre. Mme de Loges, Vicomtesse d'Auchy were the other two who had held salons that were frequented by eminent

writers like Francois de Malherbe, Guy de Balzac and they could reach to the rank of Rambouillet in their intent but what was novel about Mme de Rambouillet was her personal idiosyncrasy of which dictated her decision. It was not that she did not like entertainment but she wanted it to take place in private. She had consciously distanced herself from court life. For a person who was considered a beauty and who took part in the crowning ceremonies of Henri IV and Marie de Medici, it is not unreasonable to assume that her detachment was partly due to her delicate health and successive pregnancies and most significantly the way of court life that deeply disgusted her.

Taillemant recounts that at the age of twenty-one, Mme de Rambouillet along with her close friends Mlle Montmorency an adolescent and the very young Mlle Paulet had taken part in the famous ballet de la Reine at Saint Germain enLaye on January 31, 1609 as nymphs in a cortege leading the imprisoned cupid. Neither the splendour nor the fact that Malherbe had honoured the festivities, could diminish the brutishness of the King's plot to sleep with Mlle Montmorency. He later turned his attention to Mlle Paulet who was singing skimpily dressed. In a world that was full of violent instincts and brutality, Mme de Rambouillet was keen to establish a code of behaviour that might act as an invisible shield between one person and another in order to protect ever one's dignity. It was not one noble woman's aspiration but an entire caste demanded it- a warring caste that had laid down arms after the long and bloody struggle of the wars of religion but could not succeed to eradicate violence from everyday life.

The civilizing impetus that began to make itself felt in the second decade of seventeenth century was not motivated by practical necessity alone but belonged to broader and more complex notion concerning the identity of the nobility, its social image and the different role allotted to it within the framework of the modern monarchy. Deprived of its old certainties, the residual culture of French nobility was obliged to rethink itself and redefine itself by means of a spectacular metamorphosis. The nobles were obliged to question their identity as they had been deprived of the very role which constituted their essence – the permanent exercise of arms. Royal power had forced them to pull down the walls of their own fortresses and forbidden them to draw their swords to defend their honour; war had become a profession and the nobility had been reduced to the rank of king's officers. It had almost become intolerable for them to identify themselves with the monarch. He had ceased to be first among equals and jealous of his own authority, had excluded the nobility from the world of politics.

Davis Burton, the American historian, has pointed out that the French nobles like the landed aristocrats in other countries had faced problems of adjustment before but the period between 1560 to about 1640 was extraordinarily difficult: the transition that the nobility underwent during these years which was a kind of identity crisis with economic and social and psychological dimensions coinciding with religious wars, commercial revolution and scientific revolution. The constantly rising prices that characterized the whole of the sixteenth century had had a disastrous effect on the nobility's revenues. Ever poorer and in ever greater debt, it is in fact attempted to recoup its losses at the expense of the peasantry, this had further refuelled widespread resentment and did nothing to strengthen the position of the nobles within the kingdom. Indeed, the peasants were not the only Frenchmen to question such privileges. For centuries, in return for the loan of militiamen, the nobility was exempted from the tax, the tax that formed the basis of the French fiscal system from the Middle Ages until the Revolution.

Now in various quarters, the questions were being asked as to whether they still played such an important part in the nation's defence. During the Hundred year's war, when large armies were permanently being mobilized over vast areas, many commoners had had the chance to prove that they could fight courageously, whereas the noble institution of the ban and arrière-ban, the mobilization of the vassals on the king's order to go to the war was fast falling into disuse. The nobility gradually seemed increasingly unwilling to mobilize at the king's command and many of its members hired substitutes to replace them on the battlefield. Even the very way of going to war had changed. The classes were no longer segregated within military units. The role of cavalry, where noblemen traditionally distinguished themselves, had been redefined by the newly attained importance of the infantry, which the nobility despised. In the area of public administration and employment the affairs were no better for the nobles. In the courts of justice and local and provincial administration, endemic corruption favoured the new rich commoners who were buying their way into office. The 1604 edict known as 'La Paulette' regularizing the sale of offices and designating heirs to these offices constituted a real blow to the nobility's claims. Nevertheless, its defensive strategy remained uncertain. If on the one hand, class furnished an argument against corruption, then it also had to be taken into account that money was at the root of the growing number of plebians infiltrating the nobility.

The practice of raising commoners of the third Estate to the rank of noblemen had always existed but under Henri IV the phenomenon had grown to unknown proportions. If on the other hand, merit was to be considered, it had to be admitted that many of the positions occupied by the bourgeoisie in the courts required a degree of learning and technical training that the nobility utterly lacked. Deprived of a defined and recognizable social function and the difficulty of providing a rational justification for their privileges which further combined with the vulnerability of their class to outsiders persuaded them not to contest the 'loi de dérogeance' which forbade them to participate in business or commerce. This has further weakened their position though most of the nobility welcomed it as a sign of superiority and distinction.

In reply to these uncertainties and in reaction to these difficulties, the nobility redefined its ideology by taking the stress off valour and placing it on the incontestable purity of lineage, thus emphasizing superiority of breeding. Nevertheless, in order to express itself even superior lineage required a new code to reinforce the declining authority of the existing one. The outward signs of nobility like titles, positions, lands, palaces, clothing and jewels could no longer irrefutably indicate membership by right of a certain class since they were stuck in the traffic between the crown and the new men. The nobility's prerogatives had lost their exclusivity and the occasions on which to boast themselves were limited to carrousels and tournaments. Thus, seeing themselves in an entirely new context, the nobility of the sword chose to define itself through the treacherous domain of style. Henceforth it would be by their way of living, of speaking, of acting, of amusing themselves, of enjoying each other's company that they persuade themselves with unshakeable certainty their own superiority. In place of arms, their touchstone would be provided with refined manners or *bienséance* which proved to be more powerful than any other written law.

After the death of Henri IV and the turbulent uncertain years of Marie de Médici's regency that followed, the monarchy could hardly remain indifferent to the insubordination, arrogance and violence that continued to mark the nobility's behaviour throughout the country. As soon as he appeared on the political scene, Cardinal de Richelieu proposed to re-establish order in the state and to revive the forms of courtesy due to the king and his officers. The courtesy he was talking was already fully formulated by tradition. His mission to educate was motivated by something quite distinct from the self-exaltation sought by the aristocracy. Going back to the Middle Ages which was absolutely concerned with the relationship between the monarch and the knighthood

and between the king and the state, Richelieu saw to it that the present situation readopted the old codes of courtesy and made it an instrument of coercion and control in the service of absolutism. The cardinal minister was too aware to not to know that a great monarchy must be reflected in the elegance of its language, the excellence of its culture and art, the prestige of its literature and obviously the splendour of its court. Richelieu had no wish of whatsoever to deprive the nobility of its standing provide that they celebrate the monarchy's prestige. His sole condition was that the nobility learn to be courtiers. Given these restrictions, the nobility was bound to feel the need to regain an area of freedom away from the dominion of the court in which to celebrate only themselves. They resorted to this new area of social world in which the regeneration of usages and customs of modern French society began under the banner of salons rather than authority.

Jean Starobinsky, eminent Swiss scholar has stressed that in their efforts to palliate the violence of everyday life, the nobility discovered that by repudiating the potential for aggression, they could not only make life less dangerous but could also produce pleasure. He further said that a protected space is thus created, an enclosed field where by common accord the partners to a relationship refrain from attacking or injuring one another in ordinary commerce as well as in matters having to do with love. The crucial idea is to maximize pleasure and it is somewhat like that of loss that the amorous instinct incurs owing to repression and sublimation is counterbalanced by the eroticization of everyday intercourse, conversation and epistolary exchange. According to Starobinsky, the doctrine of *honnêteté* aestheticizes instinctual renunciations. Well before it culminated in theoretical formulations or found expression in novels, the nobility's uncertain quest to fulfil itself in a new way of life discovered a protected space of amusement under the guidance of women in an exclusive game of worldliness.

Conclusion

If we rewind a little bit, we can see that the renaissance in the sixteenth century France, was at least fifty years behind Italy, noble women were more liberally treated. They did not live-in traditional isolation from men nor were they excluded from social life. Although their role in public was essentially a decorative one, they were not living in exile. Several women had already contributed to the true centres of humanist culture and the feminine presence had made a real contribution to the splendour of the Valois monarchy. In the reign of François I^{er}, the court had begun to expand beyond the king's narrow family circle and was increasingly open to women.

Their beauty, elegance and grace destined them to preside over courtly splendour and the weakening moral order that characterised Catherine de Médici's long period of influence. They were mothers, wives, sisters and lovers who within the closed world of court enjoyed a certain freedom by persuasion and seduction.

During the first decades of the seventeenth century, however, the significance of women in French society changed. They were no longer obliged to fight for an influence beyond the confines of domesticity but took upon themselves the leadership of society. Henceforth, women would decide matters of manners, language, taste and *loisirs* like reading, conversation, theatre and the arts. They would define the outstanding characteristics of aristocratic style. Many contemporaries welcomed its purifying and civilizing process but certain observers like François de Grenaille, Jean Jacques Rousseau immediately perceived its dangers and sounded alarm. Their values and virtues were at the service of a class culture and complemented the heroic, warrior qualities of the male world. With traditional male values in a period of crisis, however, women found themselves unexpectedly in the limelight.

There were two reasons for this – one being their loyalty to the old feudal system which was against contemporary attitudes and the other being traditional feminine values like 'politesse' which became of critical importance for men as well. Women were therefore allowed to take control of the new social environment that had come into being halfway between the official life of the court and the domestic world of the private house. This new found territory had to be guarded from the unwarranted pressures of the outside world as well as from the intimate disorders of the heart. In the new cultural climate, their frailty could be turned to strength and their initial disadvantages to unexpected opportunities for recognition like the correct use of *bienséance*. It acted primarily as a weapon of defence and secondarily as a mark of social distinction. They had become the most faithful custodians of the rules of behaviour since only those rules could better their inferior position. Noble women had the talent to maintain a delicate balance between custom and the law and were used to entrust their prestige and reputation to their ability to interpret collective class and caste sensibility. They acquired the consummate art of nuance which naturally allowed them to excel in the game of society.

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Joint Ventures: A Commentary on Health and Urbanisation and the Use of Marijuana in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August: An Indian Story*

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Abstract

This paper locates Upamanyu Chatterjee's debut novel *English, August: An Indian Story* (1988) within a framework of critical health humanities and provides a commentary on the healthcare infrastructure prevailing in the "hottest town in India"- Madna. Healthcare provision in India is a multifaceted issue encompassing multiple challenges and opportunities and this is reflected in many of the casual conversations of the characters and through the technique of stream of consciousness in the novel. The fictional rural towns of Madna and Jompanna are scattered with a diverse range of population with remote healthcare access and insanitary practices, which serve as a sample for the degrading condition of healthcare practices in rural villages of India.

In this work of fiction which touches upon the aspects of existentialism, upper middle-class diaspora, autobiographical elements and corruption in the Indian Administrative Services, Chatterjee projects a controversial and absurd hero in the character of Agastya Sen, also known as August, who uses marijuana to escape from the mundane realities of his life in Madna. His use of marijuana creates a sense of numbness and euphoria amidst the monotony of his bureaucratic job and the suffocating conservatism of small-town India. The banal narrative and the frequent use of the word marijuana in the pages compels the reader to scrutinise the character's reliance on this substance leading to an existential despair. This paper will explore the condition of health practices in the small town and the use of marijuana as a coping mechanism to deal with the monotony and disillusionment of the protagonist.

Key words: health practices, marijuana, disillusionment, existentialism, cultural dislocation

Introduction

Upamanyu Chatterjee's 1988 novel *English, August: An Indian Story*, is a humorous and irreverent review of bureaucracy and its relation to the protagonist – Agastya Sen. In the novel, Agastya is a bureaucrat, a middle-class officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) stuck in small-town India. His character sparks significant criticism on account of the frequent use of the words “cannabis” and “pornography” in association with a person of his rank. Spivak's subaltern argument of an alternative vision of subaltern agency is offered through a close study of narrative voice. The tantalising subtitle enumerates the dialectic between “English” and “Indian”, which dominates the narrative. In the opening pages of the novel, Chatterjee purposefully draws attention to the hybridity of his protagonist who desires to be English and hence earns the nickname August (Shandilya, 2014).

A distinctive feature of this novel is that nothing significant happens during his purgatorial year in the provinces of Madna and Jompanna. The readers do not find the usual pleasures of an unfolding narrative, and this is evident from the outset of the novel which reads- '[t]he district life that [Agastya] lived and saw was the official life, common to all districts, deadly dull'(27). This novel, full of its anti-proairetic tendencies, drives Agastya to enter a 'purely iterative existence...where the direction and movement of plot appear to be finished' (Scott, 2012). Over the course of the novel, Agastya's life becomes progressively dominated by routine, further disrupting the narrative's forward trajectory. Everything he does, he does repeatedly, ritually, day in and day out, until it is not just the narrative's energy that comes under threat but its very narratability - for as Barthes observes, "to repeat excessively is to enter into loss, into the zero of the signified". Moreover, the protagonist faces an identity crisis courtesy of his cultural dislocation. This cultural dislocation arises on account of alienation and displacement of the habitus of the protagonist. The stark contrast between his upbringing and his current rural environment highlights his cultural hybridity and confusion, pushing him more towards an existential angst. The predictability of this monotonous bureaucratic life in Madna leads Agastya to cope up with the aids of cannabis and pornography.

The stress and coping mechanism theory of Lazarus and Folkman focuses on the varying ways people manage a stressful situation, cannabis being one of them. This paper will attempt to analyse the theme of the use of cannabis as the protagonist's coping mechanism by employing Lazarus's psychological stress theory. By employing the diverse theories of cognitive appraisal, coping strategies and reappraisal, a complex interplay of reflections will exemplify how the protagonist grapples with the demands of their environment while seeking to maintain a sense of self in the face of adversity.

Literature Review

Extensive scholarly investigation has been conducted regarding the text's postcolonial aspect. Bhaba's idea of 'mimicry'- the subjects's belief that the mere imitation of European/English standards will bring them the luxuries enjoyed by the colonial master and uplift them from the status of colonised subjects to the true citizens of the empire is emphasised through the selected text (Shafeer and Kathiresan, 2020). On a similar note, Reiner's study discusses the social and political milieu in the society. He argues that Chatterjee's novels throw a satirical light on contemporary Indian problems, which include political, economic, sexual and drugs corrupting the

youth (Reiner, 2018). Furthermore, Upamanyu Chatterjee explores aspects of the Indian bureaucracy with many a ‘tongue-in-cheek’ expression and black humour (Raju, 2013). Existentialist philosophers have analysed the text through the lens of Camus and Sartre, attempting to trace an existentialist crisis or dilemma in the postmodern text (Rekha and Alapati, 2016). Man has been totally indulged in his materialistic pursuits but a sense of alienation and a search for one’s identity and belongingness come naturally with this materialism and unprecedented technological advancement. Upmanyu Chatterjee has beautifully delineated the existential crisis, alienation and identity crisis of modern youth in his maiden novel (Kalra, 2022). However, this paper evaluates Chatterjee’s *English, August* from health humanities point of view with particular attention involving the use of marijuana within the narrative.

Manoeuvring Cannabis in India

The use of hallucinogens for recreational purposes has been documented in literature since Homer’s epic *Odyssey* in which Odysseus comes across a group of mysterious people living on a small island who customarily consumed lotus plants that cause them to live in a perpetual state of bliss. While Robert Burton does not explicitly mention hallucinogens, he talks about opium, mandrake and henbane in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1621. The use of mind-altering substances is also found in other literary texts such as *Confessions of an English Opium- Eater* (1821) by Thomas de Quincey, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by Oscar Wilde, ‘Kubla Khan’ (1816) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley and the mandatory Beat Generation or the Beatnik Subculture. While Indian authors have not explicitly ventured into the world of these psychoactive drugs, its role has been illustrated in social interactions as a part of the cultural fabric. Cannabis or Ganja is one of the psychoactive drugs which will be explored in this paper. Cannabis is one of the five sacred plants mentioned in the Vedas and is associated with Lord Shiva. Also used in traditional Indian medicine, it occupies a sacred place in Hinduism and is consumed during festivals like Holi and Mahashivaratri. Hindu ascetics or sadhus perpetually use cannabis to aid meditation and attain spiritual enlightenment. Its use in folk medicine and its regulation in modern post-colonial India has been an issue of contention. The decision of the protagonist to consume cannabis can symbolise the rejection of conventional lifestyle and an exercise of personal freedom, challenging societal norms and expectations.

So how did a drug which was socially consumed, become a symbol of personal freedom and was criminalised in a country which has a rich history of the use of cannabis? The British government first investigated the use of cannabis and combined it into a report named Indian Hemp Drug Commissions Report in 1894. The findings concluded that moderate use was relatively harmless and recommended regulation rather than prohibition. The British introduced regulations and taxes on cannabis production and sale, reflecting a pragmatic approach rather than outright prohibition. Cannabis continued to be used widely, albeit under a regulated framework. Post independence, the Government of India passed an act, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 which criminalised the production and sale of cannabis resin and flowers but allowed the regulated use of bhang, which was seen as culturally significant. However, the drug was negatively portrayed in popular culture till the 2000s, associating it with upper class hippie culture or as an intoxicating substance used by criminals. This novel, set in the ’80s, navigates the consumption of cannabis as a form of recreation and later on, as an escape from the humdrum of his life.

Existential angst and the Effects of Cultural Dislocation

Under the circumstances of the newly formed NDPS Act, the character of Agastya Sen, in Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August*, which was written just a few years after the act, uses cannabis to escape his mundane bureaucratic life in Madna. Martin Heidegger's concept of Dasein or being-in-the-world resonates with Agastya's profound sense of alienation and displacement. The abstraction of *geworfenheit* or thrownness describes 'humans' individual existences as being 'thrown' (*geworfen*) into the world'. It underscores the idea that individuals find themselves in a particular world, culture, and set of circumstances without any prior choice. This condition emphasises the randomness and lack of control humans have over the initial conditions of their existence. In this novel by Chatterjee, the character of Agastya is thrown into the unfamiliar environment of Madna which forces him to transition from the familiar and westernised urban environment in Kolkata to the crude and unsophisticated life in Madna. Agastya's inability to relate to the people, customs, and daily life of Madna reflects Heidegger's idea that thrownness often leads to a sense of not-belonging. Furthermore, his predicament is aggravated by the original sin and his leaving the job, the former being the marriage of his Hindu father with a Christian mother. This is evidently highlighted in certain paragraphs in the novel such as

“‘Well, my mother wore saris and ate fish like a Bengali,’ said Agastya lightly. He had no desire to reveal anything of himself to Bhatia. ‘My parents were married for about seventeen years, long enough for my father to really colonize her. I was born very late.’ His aunts had been triumphant, his father had said, when his mother had not conceived — this is what comes of trying to mix Goanese and Bengali blood. ‘I hardly remember my mother.’ He smiled to deprive his reminiscences of any hint of sorrow. ‘In my blood runs a little feni, or something like that, but that's about all.’” (92)

His sense of alienation can also be expounded by his sense of cultural dislocation. Cultural Dislocation is defined as ‘the removal of a person from a location organised by a particular set of cultural practices and placing them in another location organised by a substantially different set of cultural practices – can shock and alter the ego’. Pierre Bordeau's concept of ‘habitus’, ‘capital’ and ‘field’ can be used to provide a framework for the understanding of cultural dislocation in this context. Habitus refers to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that individuals acquire through their life experiences. It is shaped by one's social and cultural background and influences how individuals perceive and react to the world around them. Agastya's coming to terms with his new environment is the direct application of Bordeau's transposability of the habitus. His frequent use of cannabis and pornography serves as an escape mechanism, allowing him to temporarily detach from the reality of his situation and the oppressive atmosphere of his bureaucratic duties. The use of the word cannabis in five sections of the novel proves his sense of alienation and dependence on the substance to navigate a world marked by randomness and contingency.

Marijuana as a coping mechanism in the novel

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman define stress as “a particular relationship between the person and environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources or

endangering his or her well-being.” The Lazarus theory identifies two focal points in any psychological stress theory- appraisal and coping. Appraisal is the individuals' evaluation of the significance of what is happening for their well-being whereas coping is the individuals' efforts in thought and action to manage specific demands. (Lazarus, 1993). The concept of appraisal was introduced by Anne Arnold and expedited how individuals evaluate situations to determine their emotional responses. Lazarus further divides appraisal into primary appraisal, which concerns whether something of relevance to the individual's well-being has occurred and secondary appraisal, which concerns coping options.

Lazarus and Folkman identified two types of coping: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping includes acting and doing something proactive about the problem. Thus, one might gather resources, talk to others, or take some action to change the situation. Conversely, emotion-focused coping is the ability to recognize that, if the situation is deemed uncontrollable, then it should be left alone, with more focus placed on managing one's emotions (which can be controlled). The protagonist in Chatterjee's novel, chooses the former and embarks on his journey of consuming cannabis and pornography to come to grips with his reality.

Chatterjee's expertise in camouflaging symbols is noticeable when the protagonist, Agastya says: 'Just near the Collectorate he saw cannabis growing wild. That was nice and, he smiled, somehow symbolic' (20). The symbol of the wild cannabis in the quoted text symbolises two things- the first being rebellion against existing social norms. Agastya, being an IAS officer, is expected to be a role model in the society. However, his use of cannabis symbolises passive resistance and a way to assert his individuality in the face of rigid and often hypocritical societal standards. The second, underscores a relationship with nature amidst the artificiality and rigidity of bureaucratic life. Cannabis, in the novel thus, serves as a multifaceted symbol encapsulating Agastya's inner struggle and his quest for authenticity and purpose of his life. The theory of narrative medicine can be employed in this aspect to justify the use of cannabis by the protagonist, instead of comparing him with pre-determined societal norms.

As a Commentary on Health and Urbanisation

“It was like a caricature of a shabby clinic, something out of a TV serial that desired to be realistic. A hospital bed half-hidden by a green hospital screen, beside the bed a large cupboard with ointment boxes and strips of pills oozing out of it like toothpaste out of a split tube. On the walls, calendars from pharmaceutical companies, one showed a woman in a sari laughing while running beside a tonga, from which all her friends were looking down at her and laughing back” (184-185). This rather bleak description of a clinic in the 'hottest town'- Madna, points towards the ignominious condition of the healthcare system in rural India. More subtle hints of the abominable health system of India is scattered throughout the novel and it is observable through the intricacies of the conversation between the different characters. Through the depiction of this hospital, Chatterjee critiques the Indian health policies and priorities of the Indian government. This physical decay mirrors the broader inefficiencies and desuetude within the bureaucratic system that Agastya encounters throughout his tenure. The hospital suffers from a severe shortage of

medical supplies, equipment, and trained staff. This lack of resources is emblematic of the broader underfunding and mismanagement of public health institutions in rural India. The inadequate resources lead to substandard care and contribute to the overall sense of despair and futility experienced by the characters. The staff at the hospital, including doctors and nurses, are often portrayed as incompetent or indifferent. Their lack of motivation and skill reflects the systemic issues within the healthcare system, where corruption, apathy, and bureaucratic red tape hinder effective service delivery. This incompetence further exacerbates the poor condition of the hospital and the suffering of patients. Thus, this novel brings to the fore the neglect of rural healthcare and the urgent need for systemic reforms to address the disparities in healthcare provision. Hippocrates wrote in *Airs, Waters and Places* that human well-being is influenced by the totality of environmental factors, living habits or lifestyles, climate, topography of the land, and the quality of air, water and food. This explains the reason for depreciation of health of the residents in the rural villages. Doctors and healthcare professionals are often reluctant to practise in rural villages on account of various factors including financial disincentives, lack of various amenities, workload and demand and personal preferences. Programmes should be created to address this dearth to improve healthcare facilities in the remote and rural villages of India.

Conclusion

The use of literature is still confined in the prison of reductionism. This analysed novel offers a nuanced observation on the dwindling healthcare system in rural India and people's ignorance towards modern healthcare facilities. Rather than romanticising rural life, Chatterjee portrays the polarity between the metropolitan city of Delhi and the rural town of Madna. Agastya's existential crisis and his heavy dependence on cannabis to get through his rural administrative journey underscores the tension of this polarity. Cannabis, for him, becomes more than a mere substance, and its presence in the narrative offers a glimpse into his coping mechanism. Agastya's dependence on cannabis can be rationalised with the stress and coping theory by Lazarus and Folkman. His feeling of cultural dislocation, owing to cultural shock and language barrier all contributed to his sense of alienation and eventually consumption of marijuana to cope up with the situation. Through the portrayal of the characters and the vivid description of the landscape of rural India, Chatterjee critiques both the pressures of urban life and the various means individuals resort to, for exploring their identity and a means to venture isolation.

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Unraveled Ties: The Echoes of Loss and Resilience

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Abstract

Displacement caused by conflict, persecution and natural disasters has escalated into a worldwide crisis, impacting millions of individuals. The involuntary expulsion from one's home leads to significant psychological, social and economic challenges, depriving people of their sense of security, stability and cultural heritage. The rising number of displaced individuals globally underscores the pressing need to tackle these issues. Refugees often face obstacles such as language difficulties, legal barriers and discrimination which hinder their ability to adapt to new surroundings. Furthermore, mental health conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety are common among displaced communities which complicates their resettlement process.

This paper explores the refugee experience through the lens of Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory and Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis, focusing on how displaced individuals cope with conflicting emotions, transformed identities and psychological challenges. Roma Tearne's, *The Road to Urbino*, serves as the primary source, offering a narrative context to examine these difficulties. This study seeks to illuminate the intricacies of forced migration and highlight the necessity for sustainable policies that foster inclusion, mental health and long-term support for refugees.

Keywords: Refugee crisis, displacement, forced migration, identity transformation, mental health, adaptation, cultural heritage, discrimination, resettlement, social integration.

Introduction

The experience of being forced to leave one's home due to violence, persecution or natural disasters is incredibly unsettling and emotionally exhausting. Displacement strips away a sense of security and routine which are essential for emotional stability. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 122.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced as of June 2024, reflecting a 5% increase from the previous year. Additionally, 66% of refugees have been displaced for at least five years, highlighting the protracted nature of the crisis (World Bank Group, 2024). Refugees face significant struggles in adapting to new environments. Language barriers, employment difficulties and legal restrictions hinder their ability to rebuild their lives. Children from displaced families suffer disruptions in education, with approximately 27 million out of school in conflict-affected regions (UNICEF, 2023).

This disturbance impedes individual growth and sustains enduring patterns of destitution and reliance. The prevalence of psychological distress among displaced people is similarly high. A recent systematic review of 8,176 Syrian refugees resettled in 10 countries reported a prevalence of 43% for PTSD, 40% for depression and 26% for anxiety (PLOS Medicine, 2020). Despite these hardships, displaced individuals often exhibit resilience, forming support networks to navigate their circumstances. The experience of displacement emphasizes that everyone needs safety, respect and inclusion. Providing urgent aid is not enough to address the hardships faced by refugees; long-term plans must include accessibility, education and integration. No one should be left behind by considering their situation or skills unless efforts are directed toward advancing equality, empathy and understanding. Roma Tearne's, *The Road to Urbino* serves as the primary source for this study.

Roma Tearne: A Voice of Displacement and Exile

Roma Tearne is a novelist and visual artist born in Sri Lanka whose work often explores themes of displacement, migration and refugee experiences. Her stories typically explore the subtleties of belonging, identity and the psychological impact of political upheaval. Tearne's writings are characterized by lyrical and evocative descriptions, particularly of natural environments. Critics have praised her skill in handling sizable casts of characters and lengthy time periods to paint a comprehensive picture of family history. For instance, *Modern Gypsy* noted, "She writes poignantly about the pointlessness of war, about the brutality of torture and the psychological damage it wrecks on the tortured" (*Modern Gypsy*, "Book review: Mosquito

by Roma Tearne”, 2011). This review highlights Tearne’s skill in blending vivid, lyrical prose with deeply human narratives that explore the personal and collective toll of war.

Several of Roma Tearne’s works, including *Brixton Beach* (2007), *Bone China* (2010), and *The Swimmer* (2013), explore the experiences of migrants and refugees, focusing on themes of identity, survival and the psychological implications of displacement that resonate with the struggles of refugee households. She uses her writing to communicate experiences and insights culled after fleeing Sri Lanka when young due to civil instability. By illustrating the interpersonal dynamics among refugee families and how relationships are strained and transformed under the pressures of hardship, her observations find a coordination with the idea of transactional analysis.

In an article “Sri Lanka’s writers must remember and speak out” (Roma Tearne, “Sri Lanka’s writers must remember and speak out,” *The Independent*, 2010) Roma Tearne emphasized the importance of Sri Lankan writers talking about the past for healing and reconciliation purposes. Tearne examines themes of loss, nostalgia and the desire for belonging in her works to shed light on the refugee experience. Her writings provide readers with insight into the resilience and hardships of refugees and further a more nuanced understanding of the emotional and psychological landscape that people affected by displacement navigate. Her stories also provide perceptive perspectives in analyzing the distinct challenges faced by people with disability and refugee families which further extends the discussions of cognitive dissonance and transactional analysis among displaced groups.

The Road to Urbino by Roma Tearne is a powerful and emotionally charged narrative of the problems of displacement, identity and survival through the life of Lynton Ras Rasanagium, a Tamil refugee from the horrors of Sri Lanka’s civil war. Ras’ life is affected by his mother’s violent death and his father’s disappearance which leaves him emotionally traumatized as he flees to England in quest of protection. Ras struggles with poverty, cultural isolation and the weight of his horrific history in exile. His attempts at constructing a stable existence unravel as his marriage fails, leaving him isolated from his daughter, Lola. This fractured relationship reflects the devastating emotional costs of displacement by showing how the struggles of survival in a foreign land can tear families apart.

The story of Alex Benson, an art curator, is intertwined with Ras’ trip which adds richness to the novel through his personal issues. Alex’s life has been defined by grief over his

failed relationship with Delia. This catastrophe has left him emotionally distant, finding purpose only in his work. Alex's professional love for art sharply contrasts with his inability to manage his home life, which also reflects Ras' struggle to balance his passion with familial responsibilities. The loss of Charles' son parallels Ras' own estranged relationship with Lola, stressing the universality of pain, solitude and the desire for reconciliation.

Ras finds peace and meaning in art providing him with an escape from what otherwise would have been a tumultuous life. However, his passion for the Renaissance painter Piero della Francesca's art propels him to steal the renowned picture "The Flagellation of Christ". The act of stealing is an indication of the despair he has in rescuing dignity and seeking justice on behalf of refugees. While Ras looks inward to reveal the ways refugees deal with loss and identity, Sam, brother of Ras, preaches justice in public. This story presents a raw and intimate image of exile, survival and the longing for connection in a world that frequently overlooks the invisible challenges of people displaced by violence.

Inner Conflict and Identity Fragmentation in Displacement

The psychological struggles of the refugees can be critically examined with the help of the theoretical constructs of Cognitive Dissonance and Transactional Analysis. Cognitive Dissonance theory was coined by Leon Festinger in his book *The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (1957). It points out the psychological conflict refugees are going through where they struggle to reconcile their past identities with the new reality of their existence, while Transactional Analysis was proposed by Eric Berne in his book *Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy* (1961). Berne focuses on how interpersonal relationships may fluctuate in families due to migration stress. Together, these theories form a strong framework for the psychological impact of displacement on individual identity and familial bonds. Using these perspectives, Roma Tearne skillfully portrays the emotional struggles of characters like Lynton "Ras" Rasanagium in *The Road to Urbino*.

Ras' journey showcases the tension between his pre-migration self and the altered identity shaped by forced migration accompanied by the strain that forced migration places on his familial relationships. Through a close examination of the interplay of these theories within the context of displacement, this analysis is able to take a deep look into the intricacies of reconstruction of identity and shifting roles in refugee families and it also provides an insightful understanding of their psychological and emotional experiences.

Cognitive dissonance is a phenomenon that occurs whenever a person feels two conflicting beliefs, attitudes or values together, causing psychic discomfort. These internal conflicts influence the individual in such a manner that he or she tries to rationalize the inconsistencies by changing beliefs, justifying the conflict or avoiding situations which cause pain. The internal struggle experienced by Ras concerning his perspectives on interracial marriages exemplifies the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance. His assertion, “The truth is, I have never seen a mixed marriage that works.” (Tearne 8), underscores the discord between his cultural convictions and the changing dynamics of contemporary relationships.

Ras’ psychological tension gets severe as he is accused of being a criminal and becomes enveloped in pessimism. At this point, he admits, “I was too busy listening to the dead whispering to me” (Tearne 32), showing a complete breakdown in his ability to deal with the dissonance. The article “Cognitive Dissonance in Groups: The Consequences of Disagreement” by Matz & Wood delves deeper into the concept of dissonance that results from the incongruity between cultural expectations and personal beliefs. Matz and Wood argue that intragroup disagreement can intensify cognitive dissonance because members are driven to conform to common norms while struggling with their own beliefs. They state, “Individuals who experience dissonance within a group setting are often motivated to change their attitudes to reduce discomfort and maintain group cohesion” (Matz & Wood, “Cognitive Dissonance in Groups: The Consequences of Disagreement”, 2005). Ras’ struggle mirrors this dynamic as he wrestles with societal expectations and his personal observations about mixed marriages, furthering his pessimism.

Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable psychological state that individuals seek to resolve. Resolution involves a conscious or unconscious effort to align conflicting beliefs and actions. Alex’s inability to face his past with Elena is another instance of cognitive dissonance. His effort to protect his new relationship from painful memories reveals his need to reduce emotional discomfort. Alex’s thought, “For a moment I was tempted to tell her Delia’s story but then decided against it not wanting to resurrect past emotions” (Tearne 142), reflects how people avoid situations that bring cognitive dissonance into the open. In an article “A Brief History of Dissonance Theory,” Brehm suggests that those that struggle with dissonance may attempt to reduce it by using selective omission or justification to preserve one’s own psychological equanimity (Brehm, “A Brief History of Dissonance Theory,” 2007).

The magnitude of dissonance is the level of discomfort or psychological tension that an individual feels when confronted with opposing beliefs, attitudes or behaviors. This discomfort grows in proportion to the importance of the competing aspects and their relevance to the individual's core values. Ras' battle within his own heart and at war with his generation are resultant of the magnitude of dissonance because deeply held beliefs are negated by deeply or painfully received personal experiences. The complexity of these conflicts in the emotional plane is also discussed in "Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology" by Harmon-Jones & Mills (1999), where it holds that what gave pain to their conflicted beliefs or actions is central to one's identity. The authors highlight that "the greater the importance of the conflicting cognition to the individual, the greater the magnitude of dissonance experienced" (Harmon-Jones & Mills, "Cognitive Dissonance: Progress on a Pivotal Theory in Social Psychology", 1999).

Ras's nostalgia for his previous life exacerbates the dissonance. Even though he now lives in a faraway country, his thoughts are still anchored in Sri Lanka. He reflects, "The only way of reliving the past is through imagination" (Tearne 36), emphasizing how his current reality contradicts the emotional consolation he takes from remembering his hometown. This paradox is also evident in his sorrow, "Is it possible to be homesick after thirty years?" (Tearne 36). His inability to reconcile his present with his history highlights the psychological tension that characterizes his existence.

The paradigms of cognitive dissonance are frameworks explaining how individuals resolve discomfort caused by conflicting beliefs, attitudes or actions. The key paradigms include Belief Disconfirmation, Induced Compliance, Free Choice and Effort Justification. Belief disconfirmation occurs when new information or experiences challenge or contradict deeply held beliefs, leading to a re-evaluation of those beliefs. This process often causes cognitive dissonance as individuals try to reconcile the new information with their existing worldview. Ras' reinterpretation of the war's effects in Sri Lanka is a case of belief disconfirmation where new evidence challenges deeply held convictions. He reflects: "Where others saw blood and injustice, I saw things that were broken." (Tearne 10). In this way, painful reality is redefined into a coping mechanism in which Ras re-processes his experiences.

Induced compliance occurs when individuals are compelled to act in ways that are inconsistent with their beliefs, often due to external pressure or insufficient external justification

for the action. Ras' confession of beating his daughter, "In the end, I smacked her" (Tearne 73), explains that his actions are inconsistent with his moral standards and the dissonance that follows from this behavior causes him to reevaluate his beliefs. The stealing of the painting by Ras is another example of induced compliance. He never sees himself as a thief as evidenced by the words he pronounces, "I am not a terrorist, I am not a murderer, I do not wish to destroy others. But something needed to be done." (Tearne 221) and thus can only explain that this act of theft was one in protest over the injustice done during the Sri Lankan civil war. Initially, the theft conflicts with his moral values but due to lack of external justification, Ras internally rationalizes the action as necessary to highlight his homeland's suffering. This shift aligns his actions with his values, reducing the dissonance between his behavior and self-concept.

Ras justifies his thievery with the statement, "Sri Lanka is also getting a lot of attention as a result of what you've done" (Tearne 355). Even though stealing the painting goes against his moral principles, Ras wants to raise awareness of Sri Lanka's plight. The dissonance his acts produced is outweighed by the desire to draw attention to the suffering of his homeland, demonstrating how people may excuse immoral actions due to outside pressures and a lack of external justification. The study by Festinger and Carlsmith also provides insight to illustrate the concept of induced compliance whereby people change their attitudes to fit their behavior, especially when there is a lack of external justification. They convince themselves of something they didn't believe in – the task was fun – after being paid an insignificant amount of money to lie about a mundane task (Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M., "Cognitive consequences of forced compliance", *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 203–210, 1959).

Free choice dissonance happens when people choose between two options that have both positive and adverse qualities. The decision frequently results in dissonance due to the awareness of the negative aspects of the chosen option and the feeling of losing out on the unchosen alternative. Alex is emotionally attached to his old jacket which reflects his past life with Delia. The inner struggle for keeping the old memories and forgetting the past comes to the forefront when Elena questions him: "Why do you keep wearing that same jacket?" (Tearne 157).

Effort justification is a psychological phenomenon in which people place a higher value on accomplishments that require great effort regardless of the actual value of the output. The work expended in pursuing a certain goal serves to justify the apparent value of the accomplishment and thus reduces cognitive dissonance. The reflection of Ras regarding the ever-

presence of conflict, “Sri Lanka isn't the only place where there is conflict, I tell you. Conflict and life are working partners” (Tearne 230) explicates the psychological defense mechanism of effort justification. Through framing conflict as an indispensable and unavoidable component of life, Ras explains why he is continually struggling emotionally. This parallels Sáez’s discussion on effort justification where “we tend to value much more those things in which we have put great effort, regardless of the fact that the outcome may be more or less valuable” (Francisco Sáez, “Effort Justification, a Common Form of Self-Deception”). Sáez highlights how people justify their difficulties or investments to avoid the emotional pain of wasted effort, a pattern that aligns with Ras’ view of the world.

Navigating Financial Hardships and Refugee Resettlement

Ting Zhang reported that “a 2017 study indicated that EU financial institutions lacked both capacity and willingness to serve refugees, even after 3 million asylum seekers arrived in Member States in the three-year period from 2015 through 2017” (Zhang, Ting, “Often Shut Out of the Financial System, Refugees and Other Migrants Face Economic Integration Challenges”, Migration Policy Institute, October 4, 2023). This highlights the systemic challenges that refugees face in trying to integrate financially into their new communities. Refugees like Lola are often denied the tools necessary to rebuild their lives, financial access and security. Ras and his daughter Lola’s experience of financial hardship in their new country is captured in the quote, “It’s all I can afford!” (Tearne 300), highlighting the ongoing challenges refugees face in rebuilding their lives. This exclusion further exacerbates the cognitive dissonance they experience as they are expected to participate in and contribute to society, yet the system does not provide them with the same opportunities as others.

Protracted war can cause psychological stress because refugees have to change their beliefs and behaviors to adapt to their new reality just like Lola and her family do with their scarce resources. The tension between their hopes for stability and the harsh financial landscape they navigate serves as a constant source of stress shaping their journey toward resilience.

Emotional Withdrawal and the Coping Mechanism of Silence

Emotional withdrawal refers to the process of disengaging from emotional experiences or expressions as a way of coping with overwhelming or painful situations. Silence as a coping mechanism involves suppressing verbal or emotional responses to avoid confronting distressing feelings, often as a way of protecting oneself from emotional overload or trauma. In *The Road to*

Urbino, Charles refers to Delia's silence after the death of their son as an act of withdrawal from emotions: "Charles persuaded her to see their family doctor, who told him that trauma affected people in different ways" (Tearne 259). Delia's silence is one way she copes with the overwhelming shock of losing a child.

Delia's silence emerges as profound emotional withdrawal from trauma reflecting an inner conflict between the need to emotionally express the pain and the human instinct to suppress it. This aligns with cognitive dissonance theory where silence acts as a protective sheath but also becomes burdensome, exemplifying the psychological interiority of managing such overwhelming sorrow and displacement. This emotional withdrawal is further highlighted by Delia's reflection on the death of her grandmother Anna: "All my most precious things are gone" (Tearne 149). This quote illustrates how, instead of facing the full weight of her grief, she clings to Anna's crockery set as a symbol of memory and emotional connection, acting as a protective barrier that allows her to deal with her loss in silence while also illustrating how silence can both burden and shield her in times of emotional pain.

Emotional Conflicts and Role Shifts in Displacement

An additional concept to investigate is transactional analysis. Transactional analysis is a psychological theory that looks at how people connect and communicate by examining the ego states of parents, adults and children to better understand behaviour and build stronger bonds with others. In transactional analysis, ego states refer to the three separate mental states that control human behavior: parent, adult and child. Transactions are the interactions between individuals that occur when in one of these ego states. Adult-to-Adult interactions foster healthy communication and relationships. However, miscommunications can occur when one party acts from a Child or Parent ego state. Ras' connection with Helen epitomizes crossed transactions whereby his emotional reactions inhibit effective communication. When Ras yells at Helen, "For Christ' sake, what the hell do you want from me?" (Tearne 50), the interaction manifests how emotional upsurge leads to the breakdown of communication which results in misunderstanding and alienation.

Heather Murray in "Transactional Analysis Theory & Therapy: Eric Berne", explains that "Transactional analysis believes that adult-to-adult communication or transactions lead to the most effective and healthy communication, thus, relationships with others" (Murray, "Transactional Analysis Theory & Therapy: Eric Berne", 2017). This concept reflects Ras'

failure to communicate with Helen as an adult-to-adult because his emotional response drags him into a Child ego state which defeats the purpose of their interaction.

Life scripts are unconscious life plans or patterns created in early childhood due to familial and cultural factors. These scripts dictate the behaviors, decisions and responses to situations throughout life, often governing the conduct without any true consciousness of the motivations that usually govern the action. Ras' life script is influenced by his childhood experiences of discrimination which is reflected in his childhood memory: "Dentists were for the children God wanted to keep smiling" (Tearne 17). This belief shapes his worldview by reinforcing the notion that some people are more deserving of comfort and care than others.

As per "Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy" by Berne, "Life scripts are formulated through early experiences and govern individual responses to life situations and choice making" (Berne, "Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy", 1961). According to this notion, Ras develops a perception about himself based on the initial feeling of being ungrateful, therefore negatively impacting his well-being. This also determines his approach towards other relationships and choice-making processes throughout life.

Positive thinking is the skill of focusing more on the positives of a given situation rather than its disadvantages. It involves handling life with optimism, resilience and positive attitudes which can enhance emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships. According to Transactional Analysis, positive thinking enables people to change from negative or harmful cognitive patterns to more adaptive and helpful ones. Alex judges Lola as disconnected with the struggles of the family. He lacks positive thinking and empathy in his relationship with Lola. His statement: "She was fake, acting as though she were a spoiled rich kid." (Tearne 270), portrays the generational divide and emotional disconnection between him and Lola as developed by their experiences of hardships.

This concept is further elaborated in "The Psychology of Gratitude" by Robert Emmons in which he writes about how gratitude and positive thinking can improve emotional well-being dramatically. According to Emmons, by focusing on what is good in life, individuals can enhance their resilience which will lead to better coping strategies and more meaningful relationships (Emmons, "The Psychology of Gratitude: Robert Emmons on How Saying Thanks Makes You Happier", 2007). This means that the act of positive thinking is a tool not only for personal growth but also for empathizing and relating to others.

Interpersonal effectiveness in transactional analysis is the ability to speak clearly, assertively and empathically while preserving balance and understanding in relationships. It is accomplished by operating from the Adult-ego state which promotes rational problem resolution, appropriate boundaries and compassionate connection. Delia holding on to her love for painting even after immense loss is an example of positive emotional adaptation. Her statement: “Desire was what we had left” (Tearne 293) reflects the ability to give meaning and purpose to the experiences of trauma.

In “Transactional Analysis: A Framework for Marketing Relationships Expanding the Entrepreneurial Orientation” Kleindl explores the application of transactional analysis in marketing with regard to developing entrepreneurial orientation in terms of comprehending customer relationships and interactions (Kleindl, “Transactional Analysis: A Framework for Marketing Relationships Expanding the Entrepreneurial Orientation”, 2010). This insight will be particularly relevant in understanding how entrepreneurs can engage in positive relations, much as Delia in the creative pursuit of resilience through her art work.

Conclusion

Roma Tearne’s *The Road to Urbino* delves deeply into the psychological complexities of displacement, identity and survival through the character of Lynton “Ras” Rasanagium. His internal battles, influenced by forced migration underscore the emotional and cultural turmoil that refugees face. Ras’ struggle to reconcile his past with his present, coupled with his fractured family relationships exemplifies the challenge of preserving personal identity while adapting to new realities. His relationships with Helen, Lola and Alex further demonstrate how the stress of migration alters interpersonal connections.

Displacement transcends mere physical relocation; it signifies a profound disruption of an individual’s sense of self, belonging and dignity. The challenges faced by refugees extend beyond basic material needs, encompassing emotional scars that often remain unacknowledged. Genuine support for displaced individuals must extend beyond short-term assistance, addressing the enduring emotional and psychological consequences of forced migration. Integration should not require the abandonment of one’s identity but should foster environments where cultural heritage and personal narratives are recognized and valued. Rebuilding a life involves more than mere survival; it is about restoring dignity, promoting inclusion and ensuring that no one is marginalized within society.

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An Examination of Subverted Hegemonic Paradigms in the Novels of Kavita Kané

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Abstract

This paper presents a feminist reinterpretation of mythology, focusing on lesser-known female characters and retelling their stories from a gynocentric perspective. It delves into Kavita Kané's subversion of traditional and hegemonic paradigms within her works. The paper focuses on Kané's "Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen," in which Kané examines Uruvi, a typically minor character in the Mahabharata, and grants her a central role. Through Uruvi's perspective, Kané challenges dominant narratives surrounding heroism and caste discrimination. The paper explores Uruvi's emotional complexities, struggles, and agency, showcasing her strength and resilience within a patriarchal society. It also highlights how Kané's approach mirrors the possibilities of women-centric portrayals through a revisionist perspective, ultimately subverting hegemonic paradigms prevalent in mythologies. By analyzing Kané's treatment of characters relegated to minor roles or negative stereotypes in traditional narratives, the researcher aims to understand how Kané challenges and redefines established norms, offering a fresh perspective on mythological storytelling.

Keywords: Feminism, patriarchy, myth retellings, subversions, revolt, and realize

Introduction

Myths are timeless reflections of fundamental human concerns that may be found in any community; indeed, they might be regarded as an integral part of culture itself. Humans have told stories since the dawn of time in order to place human life amid strange and unfathomable powers that surround them and to find meaning and purpose therein. When these tales get ingrained in folklore, they are referred to as myths. Neanderthal gravesites containing diverse items that have been intentionally placed to convey a belief in a realm beyond death are among the earliest evidence of mythical thinking (Armstrong, 2005). Myths are expressed in various ways as culture evolves, from religious ceremonies to visual art, literary works, and therapeutic symbols.

Myths, folklore, folktales, and stories have profoundly influenced people worldwide. These stories are frequently used to instill morals and goodness in youngsters and humanity as a whole. Unlike histories, which are symbolic narratives, myths are entertaining and imaginative. They deal with spiritual truths rather than facts. They serve as the underpinnings of belief, illustrating how things came to be and who was engaged in the process. However, because they were written mainly or imagined by men, these stories have a strong androcentric bent. These male writers scarcely interpreted gyno-centric feelings and aspirations. Many writers have reinvented the narrative from a female perspective in recent years to emphasize the need for a gender-inclusive perspective on various factors that affect society. It is the societal clout of myths that motivates many writers to use them to address a variety of pressing and sensitive issues. The myths, which are largely androcentric, were created to school women about ideal womanhood, such as chastity, subservience, and self-sacrifice, among other things. Thanks to the feminism waves that ebbed and went through the literary scenes, leaving imprints in a variety of literary genres. Chanda-Vaz says that "traditionally, Indian mythology has promoted the patriarchy by confining women along with the Shudras. Now the circumstances are changing. The subaltern continues to employ the techniques that justified their subjugation to empower themselves."

Karen Horney (1885-1952), a Neo-Freudian psychologist who studied Feminine Brain research, believes male stories cannot reflect female psychological studies or female sex if women do not train them. Understanding the female psyche and regaining feminine memories requires a female-driven academic program. Writing is interpretive. Western authors from Mary Wollstonecraft to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have addressed women's challenges. Women were exposed to male-centric mentalities through both print and inappropriate behavior. India

produces Krupabai. Saththianadhan, Tarabai Shinde, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Kavita Kané demanded freedom.

Objectives of the research

The researcher aims to determine the objectives of a study examining Kavita Kané's novels and their subverted hegemonic paradigms. The researcher may examine how Kané portrays characters that are typically relegated to minor roles or negative stereotypes in traditional narratives. By analyzing the perspectives, agency, and complexities given to these characters, the researcher can assess how Kané challenges and subverts hegemonic paradigms.

The researcher can investigate how Kané provides alternative perspectives to established narratives. This involves analyzing the narrative choices, plot developments, and character arcs that deviate from traditional representations of the genre. By doing so, the researcher can highlight how Kané disrupts dominant paradigms and offers fresh interpretations of them. Kané's novels are known for their feminist approach, so a researcher may focus on how she challenges traditional gender norms and expectations. This can involve analyzing the characters' relationships, their agency, and the exploration of women's desires and struggles within patriarchal societies. The researcher may examine how Kané 's feminist lens informs her. subversion of hegemonic paradigms.

Research Questions

The researcher may investigate the reception and impact of Kané's novels on readers. This can involve conducting surveys, interviews, or analyzing reader responses and reviews. By examining how readers engage with and interpret the subverted paradigms presented in Kané's works, the researcher can gain insight into the transformative potential of her narratives.

The researcher can place Kané's novels within the broader context of Indian mythology, history, and literature. This involves exploring the dominant narratives and paradigms prevalent in these contexts and analyzing how Kané's works challenge and subvert them. By situating Kané 's novels within the cultural and literary landscape, the researcher can shed light on the significance of her subversive approach. Overall, the objectives for a researcher studying Kavita Kané's novels would be to analyze the subverted hegemonic paradigms, examine alternative perspectives, explore

feminist themes, assess the impact on readers, and contextualize the works within the broader cultural and literary frameworks. Therefore, the research questions are as follows

- 1) How has the writer analyzed and portrayed the marginalized characters?
- 2) How can the reader Explore alternative perspectives?

Limitations of the study

The study might have a limited sample size, focusing only on a few novels by Kavita Kané or a specific subset of her works. It is essential to consider whether the findings can be generalized to the broader body of Kané's novels or other authors with similar themes. Literary analysis often involves subjective interpretation, and different scholars may interpret the exact text in varying ways. The study might be limited by the researcher's personal biases or subjective interpretations, which could impact the validity and reliability of the findings. Without a control group or comparison with other authors or works, it may be challenging to determine whether the subversion of hegemonic paradigms is unique to Kavita Kané's novels or a common feature in the genre. The absence of a control group limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions.

The Hypothesis of the Study

Kavita Kané deconstructs and reimagines traditional portrayals of female characters in Indian mythology, thereby challenging and subverting hegemonic representations of these characters. Kavita Kané's narratives depict marginalized voices and provide a platform for silenced or overlooked characters, thereby disrupting dominant narratives and challenging the established hegemonic order.

Women in Kané's Novels

Kavita Kané's protagonists are women from mythology who are less well-known. She has a compelling cause for doing so. The true significance of such unseen, unnoticed ladies, whom we come across all the time but hardly acknowledge, is the important question addressed here. They are usually ignored for a simple reason: they are not the main character. However, when they are cast as heroines, the limelight is shone onto them. They can communicate verbally and participate in discussions. They are no longer just a footnote in the narrative; they are vocal, have a

perspective, and have the ability to effect change. When Rama, Sita, and Lakshman leave the castle for the vanavasa, no one knows what happened. In 'Sita's Sister,' Urmila, an isolated refugee, tells the story. They are neglected. However, without them, the plot would disintegrate. They are the irregular impetuses: without Menaka, Vishwamitra, Shakuntala, Dushyant, and subsequently Lord Bharat and the Kurus, the story could not have unfolded. As Kané expresses in "Why I Expound on the 'Minor' Women Characters from the Sagas," Satyawati cultivates and gathers family discord, which explodes years later into a terrible war. Kané also emphasizes that Urmila, Menaka, Surpanakha, and Satyawati all enhance the leads. Surpanakha and Urmila oppose Sita. What is Bhishma without Satyawati? She transforms Devavrat into Bhishma.

Characters in the narrative surround the protagonist, just as they do in real life, and reveal a great deal about the protagonist's nature. Until Satyawati appears in the Mahabharata, everything is fine. She is the one who breathes life into the plot. Satyawati's persona reveals a lot about Devavrat/Bhishma, the hero of the first half of the epic. Her existence brings about Bhishma. Kané

"I strive to make things function the other way around. I can essentially fill them out through the main characters by making a lesser character, my protagonist. *Urmila, Sita's sister, Janaka's daughter, and Lakhsman's wife.* However, she is also Vyas' unwed mother, the queen mother of her two sons and *Hastinapur's* successors, and the Pandavas' and Kauravas' great-grandmother (Kané, "Why I Write about the 'Minor' Women Characters from the Epics")."

Frequently, these underappreciated characters serve as symbolic figures who aid in the progression of the plot. These underappreciated individuals often serve as symbolic figures who contribute to the plot's development. Surpanakha is a prime example of this. The last part's main antagonist is also the catalyst for Ravan and Slam's fight. Menaka, the seductress, appears and disappears like a miasma yet leaves a mark.

If it had not been for Satyawati, who would have irreparably changed the course of not just his own life but also the lives of Hastinapur and the royal Kurus, Bhishma would not have accepted his dreadful oath of celibacy or relinquished his kingdom. In a flurry of dramatic action, she goes from fisherwoman to queen. She develops into a crafty wife and ambitious mother after seemingly appearing out of nowhere and constructing her destiny and royal line with her genes. Minor

characters can appear fervent, partisan, interested, or even hostile - all with just the perfect amount of realism that can be used and enhanced as the plot progresses. Satyavati contributes to the narrative's mood and tone, even as a minor character who survives for a considerable portion of the epic, with aspirations and authority, disdain, and cunning, which prove to be the key elements in the second half.

The portrayal of marginalized women in her mythological novels

Any discussion of these legendary women's role in the singular sagas leads to a discussion of folklore and how each character joins the story in their unique way, leaving a lasting impression. In terms of "footage," they may be tiny, yet they are crucial. Indian Rig Vedic women were highly regarded in public, and their living conditions were excellent. They were given the chance to achieve high academic and spiritual standards.

Romasha, Lopamudra, Visvavara, Gargi, Maitreyi, Ghosha, and Aditi were Brahnavadinis who found wisdom in the Old Veda. Tragically, these norms have diminished in India due to outside influences, since trespassers who represented India viewed women objects of sexual excitement and exploitation and the wealth of combat as an award. It prevailed under Muslim and English rule. "If the Indian sagas - Ramayana and Mahabharata - had not been reconsidered and retold on different occasions, they could never have existed today," said Kavita Kané, at 'A Tryst with the Ramayana', organized by The New Indian Express gathering in Chennai (Express News Administration). From Mohan Roy through Mahatma Gandhi, social reformers and authors fought Sati, widow maltreatment, widow marriage boycotts, and foregoing property liberties and training for women after autonomy. Power structures and man-woman relationships were altered.

Many retellings and reinterpretations of Indian epics exist. Each Indian language has an interesting adaptation of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These works idealize mythology. The stories depicted women as upholders of manly honor, yet their pledges and penances were ignored. These sagas feature fascinating female characters who significantly influence the action. Kunti, Draupadi, Gandhari, Amba, Surpanakha, and others fought for their rights, no matter what. Kavita Kané, as a modern Indian women's essayist, understands and expresses the deepest nature of oppressed women with her female sensibility and mind. Her female characters are passionate about thoughts, information, and feelings, reflecting a feminist perspective.

Karna's Wife and Others, Kavita Kané's most famous novel, follows Uruvi's transformation into an independent woman. Uruvi fights. She knows that marrying Karna, a maverick due to his low social status, will destroy her life forever, but she will do it anyway. After marrying Karna, Uruvi's life changed despite being a beautiful princess who could paint and ride horses. Uruvi's search for her family, her protection of Karna during his difficult times, her attempts to persuade him to follow dharma, and her departure to Pukeya after learning of Karna's role in Draupadi's disrobing echo current women's experiences and reveal Indian culture's deeply ingrained biases against women. In *Sita's Sister*, Kavita Kané's character, Urmila, questions outdated, man-driven power. Sita's name was never used for Ruler Janak's real daughter, Urmila. "In any case, Sita had never seen Urmila furious at the large number of favors provided for her when she denied them (*Sita's Sister*, 23)." Urmila by Kavita Kané glorifies "boundless sisterhood" and debunks negative female relationships.

Urmila helped the family adjust to Ruler Dasharath's death and Rama's exile, and she discovered Mantara as Smash's exile's real culprit. When Master Kashyap tries to calm Urmila's questions regarding Rama's exile and Bharata's repentance, she yells about dharma and a man's duties to his women she questioned, "why do the queens usually have to bear the brunt of the male members' decisions?" When Ram made the decision to go to the wilderness, Sita followed her dharma as a wife and accompanied him. As an ideal brother, Lakshman also joined him in the jungle. Bharat then plans to give up his worldly life and live as an ascetic for the next fourteen years.

"Has anyone considered their mother's tears and grief? Has anyone among them considered the women who are forced to endure these pains in silence? ... Why did your brothers marry if you couldn't follow the vows you made to your wives? You may be the best of the princes, the perfect sons, the ideal brothers, and possibly even the ideal monarchs, but you will never be the good husband (*Sita's Sister*, 223)."

The third novel of Kavita Kané is *Menaka's Choice*. This novel offers a comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of the lives, limitations, motivations, desires, and wishes of the magnificent nymphs. Menaka, the underappreciated legendary apsara in heaven sent to thwart Sage Vishwamitra's spiritual ascension, has been given a true story by Kavita Kané. Menaka emerges

as a lady with great understanding and inborn aptitude, not just a strange soul to be redirected and pulverized or for sensual pleasure

Menaka's Choice is a poignant story about Menaka and Vishwamitra, as well as a suppressed and enslaved woman fighting for her independence in a world dominated by men. "Let's assume it, Master," yelled one analyst. "You incapacitated me of my ability for purposeful decision and choice" (47); "How frequently are we to be your weapons of battle, to enjoy those wild desires?"(46); "How often are we to be your weapons of war, to pamper those insane ambitions!" (249). Menaka's criticisms of the social order and male dominance are directed at their monarch, Indra. A powerful rishi seduces her and receives gifts for life, and she realizes that the only way out of poverty and the lecherous gazes of her neighbors is to become a queen. So, what if her father refused to recognize her as a princess? When King Shantanu, seeking solace through his womanizing, falls hard for her, her fisherman father demands that the noble and heroic heir, Prince Devavrata, surrender all claim to the throne and only the offspring born out of his aged father, Shantanu and the youthful Satyawati, rule over Hastinapur. He is also required to swear the oath of celibacy.

Exploration of alternative perspectives of the author through fictitious characters in her novels

Satyawati has to deal with persistent animosity from the family, nobles, servants, and just about everyone at the palace who loathe her for stealing Devavrata's privileges, now known as Bhishma. The blistering hostility directed at the new queen by the general public is enough to faze anyone, but not the ambitious woman who never loses her sangfroid. Even when the heirs to the throne, Chitrangad and Virya, are born, the populace is only marginally placated by her subtly indicating that they are under the loving care of their much older stepbrother.

In the character of Surpanaka in her book *Lanka's Princess*, the author deciphers another underappreciated figure, Surpanakha, who is widely regarded as the demon Ravana's shameless, horrible, vicious, and untamed sister in the epic Ramayana. Surpanakha, which means "nail-hard woman," is the daughter of Kaikesi and Vishravas and was born as Meenakshi. This work unfolds events that contribute to the development of Meenakshi's character and her transformation into

Surpanaka. Meenakshi is irritated and indignant by life in Lanka under her brother Ravana's leadership, as well as the people's way of life. She deliberates

“All of these people have nasty manners and are louts. What a waste of evenings, what a waste of uninteresting, uninteresting days they all have –raucous card-playing, gluttony, inebriation, and endless discussion about the same thing, over and over again. Men talk about battle, victory, and prosperity, while women appear to enjoy the advantages of each. Such pointless activities and conversations that continually revolve around the same topics... (Lanka's Princess 8).”

Meenakshi gives the world something a woman "may hate in the entirety of its undiluted immaculateness" when her family kills Vidyujiva, her only love (Lanka's Princess 170). Lanka's Princess by Kavita Kané explains how common conditions grow from the perspective of a despised woman. She is condemned for taking advantage of Slam and Ravan's circumstances, which caused a horrific dispute and her loved ones' lack of support. Kavita Kané discovers a great deal about love, loss, and removal before rising to struggle again.

The Fisher Sovereign's Tradition by Kavita Kané dissects parenthood and the trope of the ever-nurturing mother. Sage Vyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata*, is the son of Satyavati. Satyavati, the neglected daughter of a ruler, is called Matsyagandha, the fish-smelling girl because she was raised in a fisherman's nuclear family. She turns fragrant, like Yojanagandha or Gandhavati, related to sage Parashar. "For what reason was I denied my right? I was conceived a princess. Ruler's daughter. As far as I know, my brother is Matsya's ruler" (*The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* 31). Kavita Kané brilliantly examines her resolve to use desire as a weapon to get what she was denied, her cold and deadpan choices to make her children rulers and her final acknowledgment.

While Satyavati's decision-making abilities, foresight, and ability to put her political skills into action are praised in the epic, her dubious methods for achieving her goals, as well as her seemingly weakened aspirations, are condemned. Kavita Kané gives a comprehensive look at the astonishing authority of the Kuru family, Satyavati, and her vital role in creating the future of the Kuru clan, which is not recorded visibly. The objective of *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* is to remind modern readers that virtue and chastity are terms manufactured by patriarchy to suit its purposes.

It makes us wonder why it is simply a terrible misdemeanor for males to consider preserving their own code of ethics, but it is a crime, or even a sin, for women to pursue autonomy in thought and action. It makes us wonder why a child is expected to carry on his or her father's legacy while ignoring his or her mother's contributions. *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* is worth reading not just because it explains the reasons for Indian mythology's most powerful lady, but also because it demonstrates how she was more sinned against than she was sinning. It's worth reading because best-selling novelist Kavita Kané, who made a name for herself with the gripping *Karna's Wife* in 2013, has once again given prestige to a female character, helping the reader connect with someone who has been regarded as a footnote. It is worth reading since the queen mother's monologues and dialogues illustrate the horns of a dilemma that the two most powerful individuals rarely find or identify!

Readers witness how the author portrays the life, thoughts, and emotions of a woman in Ahalya's Awakening, which discusses a woman about whom we find no exclusive description in the Ramayana, except for the event where Rama confirms Ahalya's independence. However, Ahalya has a lot more to say about herself, and Kavita Kané expertly frames this character in the appropriate light. Ahalya has long been associated with infidelity as the woman who betrayed her wise husband, Gautam Rishi. Rama, on his route to exile, liberated her from his curse, which had transformed her into a rock. That is all there is to know about her. Ahalya is the most gorgeous, graceful lady Kané has ever seen, and she has always had an intellectual side to her. She is terrified and anxious when she is young and forced to take refuge in Gautam Rishi's Ashram. She does, however, have some unanswered questions. Wisdom comes naturally to her, and she carries it with her honesty. Ahalya's shortcomings are captured as naturally as her innocence by Kavita Kané. Ahalya embraces the familiarity when she realizes it is Indra who is with her. Ahalya accepts being cursed and invisible to everyone, but she refuses to subordinate her will to that state. Even though she was married to Gautam and had three lovely children, she understood the reasons for her feelings of betrayal and loneliness. Ahalya is a person who never loses herself. Her ability to persevere in the face of adversity defines who she is. Through Ahalya's storytelling, the author captivates us. She feels guilty, yet she is wise in choosing to rise above it and find her life's purpose. It was a difficult decision, but in the end, she was free from the validation curse.

On the other hand, Kavita Kané's sketch of Satyawati oddly suits her persona. There is no storyline for Satyawati's past in the *Mahabharata*, but if you read her character, you'll meet the young, ferocious, bitter Kali with a foul odor, hence her moniker, Matasyagandha. The woman who can't love but preserves her country and lineage with a compassion she doesn't realize she has. Her match should have been Bhishma, but she chooses Shantanu instead. She becomes a fighter and an opportunist as a result of those long, painful years. Satyawati, an abandoned child of royal lineage, seeks vengeance in a society that mocks her own existence. Her characters have so many layers that you keep peeling them away, and a new Satyawati emerges. She is wrong in some ways, but the way she handles her subjects' hate-mongering is admirable. She is not emotional, and she understands just where to strike the chords in a crisis. Satyawati's struggle reminds us that most of the time, we must choose between the wrong and less bad options. She is deceptive, opportunistic, and apologetic, all of which she accepts with frankness. This acceptance eventually allows her to let go of the hardships and tensions that had become her nemesis.

Surpanakha is the one who brings gloom to Sita's virtuosity. Vishwamitra is seduced by Menaka, who contrasts his strength and frailty, his lofty aim, and his sensual cravings. Satyawati is the one who brings out the defects in Bhishma's otherwise perfect character. Such overshadowed ladies are typically one-half of the big protagonists in our mythology. What is Vishwamitra without a Menaka? They unite the two halves of the world and finish the plot and the lead, as Urmila did to Sita or Satyawati did to Bhishma. Ravan is nonsensical without Surpanakha. Smash and Lakshman couldn't have fought Ravan without Surpanakha.

It is these lesser-known ladies that have their own stories to tell across both epics. They give tension and a conclusion to the story while pushing it to a higher level of intensity. Uruvi, a fictitious person, is Karna's wife, a pundit, and a sutradhar who tells his story as Karna's significant other. Satyawati's story parallels Bhishma's, showing the Kuru family's rise and collapse alongside Hastinapur's. Surprisingly, these insignificant characters have a lasting influence. Menaka kills Vishwamitra, but she is the impetus for his fall and later ascent to grandeur and enlightenment. Surpanakha, like Draupadi in the *Mahabharata*, is responsible for the conflict that erupts on the sandy coasts of Lanka, while being an opponent. Satyawati's appearance heralds the *Mahabharata*'s spectacular play of politics and intrigue.

Under the weight of male dominance, Mary Wollstonecraft believed that expecting to please men made women compliant and submissive. They were humiliated by inferiors. "Delicacy, quietness, and spaniel-like commitment are consistently proposed as their cardinal excellencies," Wollstonecraft says, "she was made to be man's toy, his clatter, and it should jingle in his ears whenever he decides to be entertained" (38). As part of a woman's socialization, she is taught to internalize patriarchy from the moment she is born. In all of her works, Kavita Kané refutes this androcentric viewpoint. Helen Cixous argues for a feminine tone of composition in *The Laugh of the Medusa*, which she refers to as "white ink" and "écriture feminine." Kavita Kané produces this "white ink" literature by pushing the boundaries of writing to include female subjectivity.

Kavita Kané's message is undisputed. Women can think critically and lead well. She debunks the misconception that a woman is formed for a man, and she possesses the ability to recognize and project her inborn emotions. She gives the female mind a place in literature to enjoy true existence, which has been denied to it on social, political, monetary, and literary levels. Kavita Kané, an Indian writer, does not deny the existence of women but rather strives to establish the individuality of her heroes. She seeks to prove that virtues or characteristics such as valiance, boldness, fearlessness, dominance, intensity, love, compassion, affection, forgiveness, uniqueness, self-expression, self-identity, and independence may exist in both sexes

Conclusion

Through her novels, Kavita Kané consistently demonstrates an effort to subvert hegemonic paradigms by giving voice to marginalized characters, challenging established narratives, and offering alternative perspectives. By exploring the inner lives, desires, and struggles of these characters, Kané challenges traditional notions of gender, caste, and societal expectations, ultimately encouraging readers to question and reimagine existing power structures. Kané has placed her champion on the battlefield, where she struggles between meekness and distinction. The clever innovation of "connecting people and their way of behaving and bodies are judged and against which they police themselves" (Sawicki 68) results in Menaka's body's capitulation. Thus, Menaka represents both resignation and defiance since she can ascend above Indra's rules but also becomes enslaved by her status as an apsara who fails to oppose the system. Kané has created folklore that reflects its sources, covers women's abuse and coercion, and reveals their untold

desires and experiences. The focus shows that women's bodies are a threat to men's otherworldliness. Kavita Kané's novels offer a thought-provoking examination of subverted hegemonic paradigms. Through her portrayal of empowered female characters, her reimagining of religious narratives and her exploration of unconventional societal dynamics, Kané challenges traditional power structures and prompts readers to question and rethink established norms. Her works contribute to the broader discourse on inclusivity, diversity, and the reevaluation of dominant ideologies. By subverting hegemonic paradigms, Kané opens up new possibilities for empowerment, representation, and social change within the realm of literature and beyond.

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Remix Realities: The Cultural Codework of Photo-Based Memes in Malayalam

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Abstract

This study explores how photo-based internet memes—reaction photoshops, stock character macros, and photo fads—function as hypersignifying visual texts. By manipulating photographic realism and exaggerating cultural codes, these memes deconstruct social norms, disrupt temporal continuity, and engage digital communities in collective meaning-making through parody, remixing, and visual subversion.

Keywords: Photo memes, hypersignification, photographic realism, digital participation, reaction photoshops, stock character macros, photo fads, visual parody

Introduction

Internet memes are dynamic, multimodal texts continuously reshaped by users across digital platforms. Unlike Richard Dawkins' original concept—memes as culturally replicating units similar to genes—today's internet memes are deliberately created, shared, and altered by online communities. While early memetics emphasized imitation and static transmission, contemporary scholarship views memes as evolving signs embedded within social and cultural contexts. Memes are not fixed instructions but variable, context-sensitive artifacts shaped by collective discourse.

Often low-resolution and visually unpolished, internet memes use humour and cultural references to foster group identity and enable discourse on sensitive topics, such as in support communities. Their accessibility, remixability, and symbolic resonance make them icons that strengthen group belonging. As such, internet memes function as enduring, participatory cultural artifacts embedded in the rhythms of digital life.

In the age of participatory digital culture, photo-based internet memes have emerged as potent visual artifacts that mediate, parody, and contest social realities. Genres such as reaction photoshops, stock character macros, and photo fads function not merely as sources of humour but as hypersignifying texts that deconstruct photographic realism and cultural scripting. Hypersignification is when we no longer “conceal the code”, rather using the code itself as the punch line (Shifman 344). Drawing from inspiration from postmodern media theory, cultural studies, and performance sociology, this study investigates how these meme genres exaggerate, distort, and remix visual conventions to reveal the constructed nature of identity, time, and truth. Whether critiquing political figures like Shashi Tharoor, mocking ideological symbols like Che Guevara, or amplifying domestic rituals such as Onam festivities, memes encode cultural critique through mechanisms of visual irony, stereotype amplification, and pose repetition. These digital texts illuminate how image-based humour becomes a form of social commentary, shaped through collective authorship and ritualized interaction.

Literature review

A few previous studies find a mention here.

Chi-Chin Lin and Yi-Ching Huang (2014) argue that humorous images are widely shared across social media platforms, but newcomers often struggle to engage with them due to the often-unspoken subcultures within these online communities. Among the various forms of humorous content, internet memes can be particularly difficult for outsiders to interpret. This study introduces a system that uses crowdsourcing to generate explanations for memes. The template-based explanations highlight the incongruity between everyday situations and the punchlines that create humour. These explanations are generated through two specific human task processes. Experimental results show that the system significantly improves newcomers’ understanding of unfamiliar memes. In future work, this explanation-generation approach may be applied to enhance research in the field of computational humanities.

Bradley E Wiggins and G Bret Bowers (2014) propose a viable genre framework for understanding the evolution of internet memes, structured into three categories: *spreadable media*, *emergent memes*, and *memes*. They argue that memes function as remixed and iterated messages, rapidly disseminated by participants in digital culture to sustain and expand ongoing conversations. They conceptualize *emergent memes* as modified or remixed forms of spreadable media—content that originates as either original or non-parodic material. Their approach builds on and adapts Henry Jenkins’ concept of “spreadable media,” applying it specifically to initial, unaltered content.

Sara Cannizzaro (2016) advocates for a more precise conceptual framework for understanding internet-based “memes.” The field of memetics, which emerged following Richard Dawkins’ influential work *The Selfish Gene* (1976), traditionally views memes as units of replication. However, this model of information transmission is open to critique through the lenses of Peircean semiotics and biosemiotics. These alternative approaches offer a reconceptualization of memes beyond simple replication, framing them instead as sign systems that shape and are shaped by habitual meaning-making processes involving asymmetrical variation. Her article

draws on insights from biosemiotics, the Tartu-Moscow School of semiotics, and Peircean semiotic theory.

L. Grundlingh (2018) states that memes have become a popular form of online communication. Internet users frequently use them to interact on social media platforms and online forums. This study argues that memes—particularly image macros—function effectively as tools for communication because they operate as speech acts and are recognized as such by online audiences. When crafting a meme, creators make deliberate choices about the semiotic elements they include, which are then interpreted by the broader internet community to enable mutual understanding.

Bisera Kostadinovska-Stojchevska and Elena Shalevska (2018) have written about memes as a significant phenomenon in online communication, highlighting their socio-linguistic features that interest both linguists and sociologists. Memes, often humorous in nature, typically consist of a combination of images and text (or GIFs and text), and spread rapidly across digital platforms, evolving as they circulate. The study specifically focuses on the most popular meme format: image-plus-text. Linguistically, memes are rich in features such as vernacular English, dialectal phrases, puns, slang, jargon, abbreviations, neologisms, and deliberate grammatical and syntactic deviations.

The interdisciplinary study by Michael Johann and Lars Bülow (2019) investigate the mechanisms behind meme diffusion on social media platforms. Drawing on Spitzberg's model of meme diffusion and Rogers' theory of the diffusion of innovations, the research incorporates linguistic analysis of image-based memes. Through quantitative content analysis, the study examines the factors contributing to the widespread circulation of the "Merkel Meme" on Twitter.

Vera Zvereva (2020) examines trolling as a form of literary expression. It discusses various specific types of trolling found on the Russian-language Internet, particularly in relation to digital literature and the literary practices of different online communities. The creation and refinement of provocative "troll-texts" began within subcultural circles in the 1990s. Initially a subversive and insider-driven activity, trolling gradually evolved into a widespread phenomenon, with meta-texts emerging to codify its rules and disseminate knowledge about its culture to a broader audience. By the 2010s, these once-niche trolling techniques had gained popularity and were increasingly viewed as effective rhetorical tools in online discourse. The article further reveals that troll-texts are frequently centered on struggles over voice and authority—conflicts that shape the formal characteristics of trolling discourse.

De Leon, F. M. G. & Ballesteros-Lintao, R (2021) presents a detailed content analysis of the linguistic features of memes and examines their role as instruments of political propaganda. A total of 60 memes, collected between July 2016 and December 2018, were analysed. Based on their linguistic and visual structures, the memes demonstrate a capacity to construct and simplify complex political narratives. This was achieved primarily through the categories of Shops, Text, and Stacked Stills, as outlined in Milner's (2012) *Taxonomy of Meme Collectives*. The primary humour strategies identified were intertextuality, parody, and binary opposition, emphasizing the contextual nature of memes and their reliance on exaggeration and contrasting ideas to generate

humour. These findings suggest that memes are effective tools for political propaganda due to their ability to manipulate complex narratives through humour and accessible visual-linguistic formats.

Menna Mohammed Salama El-Masry (2021) seeks to examine verbal humour in a selection of Egyptian web memes related to the Coronavirus pandemic. It also aims to identify the various strategies and techniques employed by meme creators to generate humour. The findings reveal that the primary types of script opposition present in the memes are "possible vs. impossible" and "normal vs. abnormal." Additionally, analogy and exaggeration emerge as the most frequently used logical mechanisms for humour creation in the analysed memes.

Cille Hvass Holm (2021) examines the sociolinguistic potential of internet memes—how language and society intersect in this emerging mode of communication. While modern internet memes differ from Dawkins' original concept, especially in terms of their digital and social dimensions, they retain the principle of cultural transmission. Drawing on Jenkins' idea of participants as both creators and consumers, the study emphasizes that memes derive their meaning and cultural relevance from the act of participation itself. It analyses memes as communicative acts using frameworks from multimodality, semiotics, and pragmatics. Through close reading of selected examples, the paper demonstrates how memes convey meaning at the intersection of text, image, and social context.

Based on the above, it can be understood that social media meme research is inherently interdisciplinary, combining domains such as linguistics (speech acts, grammar, dialects), semiotics (sign systems, multimodality), sociology and cultural studies (identity, power, participation), communication and media theory (virality, genre evolution), humour studies (incongruity, opposition, satire), and digital politics (propaganda, political memes). Not many studies follow the memes in Malayalam cultural context.

Theoretical framework and methodology

Memes are no longer trivial cultural artifacts—they are now recognized as complex communicative tools that mediate meaning, humour, ideology, and participation in the digital age.

In the present article, the analysis is based on Malayalam memes based on socio-political context. This article follows the perspective taken up by Limor Shifman (2014) in which the writer explores the cultural significance of photo-based internet meme genres—reaction photoshops, stock character macros, and photo fads—through the lenses of truth, temporality, and hypersignification. It argues that these memes highlight the constructed nature of images (hypersignification), treat photographs as material for future creative edits (prospective photography), and act as operative signs—texts meant to provoke further participation and remixing. While these traits existed in traditional photography, they have become dominant in the age of digital media and participatory online culture.

The paragraphs below summarize the three suggested methods—reaction photoshops, stock character macros, and photo fads—using the concept of hypersignification as the central analytical framework.

Reaction photoshops exemplify a meme genre that deliberately manipulates photographic realism to question the assumed authenticity of images. These memes typically remix recognizable media figures or events, placing them in exaggerated or incongruous scenarios that undermine the image's original claim to reality. For example, the superimposition of film actors or politicians into digitally fabricated scenes draws attention to the performative staging inherent in visual media. The continuous digital mediation of reality transforms images into objects of skepticism, aligning with Manovich's and Zylinska's theories of digital ontology that emphasize the fluid, constructed nature of visual truth in the digital era.

Stock character macros function through the exaggeration of familiar social roles and behaviours, making the process of cultural stereotyping both visible and negotiable. These memes usually feature recurring figures—such as the clueless wife, the over-smart student, or the authoritative parent—paired with text that labels and amplifies specific traits. While they can reinforce reductive representations, they also open space for subversion by exaggerating the very stereotypes they depict. This dual potential is central to their polysemic nature, as described in Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, where meaning is not fixed but interpreted differently across social contexts.

Photo fads represent a meme genre grounded in repetition and performance, where culturally encoded gestures and visual poses become ritualized through digital circulation. These memes often rely on familiar image templates that are replicated and slightly altered across contexts to reflect new social scenarios. The humour arises from recognizing the template while noticing its fresh reinterpretation, thus reinforcing a shared visual grammar. This meme genre also plays a vital role in fostering participatory digital culture, as outlined by Henry Jenkins: users do not passively consume these memes but actively remix and circulate them, sustaining a collective mode of cultural commentary. By exaggerating everyday moments and encoding them in repetitive visual formats, photo fads transform ordinary behaviours into communal rituals of digital play, reinforcing both the performative and participatory dimensions of meme culture.

Discussion and Analysis

Key Form of Hypersignification:	Mechanisms/Techniques:	Cultural/Normative Function:
Analyse how the meme exposes or manipulates the idea that images represent objective reality.	The constructed nature of photographic realism	Identify layers of meaning and "false naturalness" in visual media, highlighting how memes break or exaggerate visual conventions
	Shashi Tharoor, renowned for his eloquence and command over the English language, frequently features in internet memes, particularly for his penchant for using complex and rarely used words. His fondness for expressions such as <i>floccinaucinihilipilification</i> , <i>lugubrious</i> , and <i>rhodomontade</i> gained considerable attention. In this context, one meme depicts a ritual associated with Durga Puja, humorously suggesting that instead of initiating children into the Malayalam letters, Tharoor would prefer the use of an obscure term like <i>honorificabilitudinitatibus</i> —a word found in Shakespeare's <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> . Although Tharoor himself likely did not make such a statement, the meme exaggerates for comic effect, reflecting the content creator's imagination.	
	This meme refers to an announcement by Kerala's Finance Minister, Mr. Balagopal, regarding an increase in social welfare pensions. However, the meme critiques the announcement by highlighting the delayed disbursement of existing pensions and the accumulation of arrears. It questions the rationale behind increasing pension amounts when timely distribution is not ensured. The meme satirically points out that the declaration only promises enhancement in the amount, not in its actual distribution, thereby exposing the perceived performative nature of policy announcements and challenging institutional conventions.	

Table: 1



Key Form of Hypersignification:	Mechanisms/Techniques:	Cultural/Normative Function:
Examine how the meme is created—specifically the techniques used	Photoshopping / Image manipulation: Assess visual alterations that challenge original context	Analyze how memes parody, subvert, or disrupt the “authentic” image
	Another meme parodies the fervent following of Che Guevara, the iconic revolutionary, especially among segments of the Kerala population. Following the 2024 Lok Sabha election results, an image circulated online featured a face derived from a Malayalam film actor known for his left-leaning sympathies, superimposed in a Guevara-esque manner. This visual parody critiques ideological romanticism in contemporary political discourse.	
	In a meme referencing the Indian Space Research Organisation’s Chandrayaan-3 mission—particularly the Vikram lander and Pragyan rover—a third, unidentified object is humorously depicted in the moon’s vicinity. This addition is used to ridicule a frequent debate participant, known for unsuccessful arguments in televised discussions. The Malayalam idiom roughly translated as “someone in the air” is employed to suggest the individual's rhetorical failure, reimagining the person as a floating, defeated figure.	

Table: 2

Key Form of Hypersignification:	Mechanisms/Techniques:	Cultural/Normative Function:
To explore and analyse how the meme makes stereotyping processes visible by exaggerating or foregrounding cultural codes.	Exaggeration of stereotypes as a method of exposing their construction	The role of cultural signs in encoding identity, behaviour, or social norms.
	Another meme draws a parallel between a humorous cinematic scene and the typical state of refrigerators in Kerala households post-Onam. The Onam Sadya, a multi-course meal prepared over several days, leads to an overflow of food, requiring substantial refrigeration space. This scenario is humorously likened to a film scene where a car is overcrowded with people, highlighting a familiar cultural practice through visual satire.	
	A related meme critiques the disparity between idealized advertising imagery and lived domestic reality. Advertisements often depict refrigerators filled with appealing items like ice cream, fruits, and chocolates. In contrast, actual household refrigerators commonly contain more mundane, less visually appealing items. The meme subverts the idealism of commercial narratives, offering a more grounded portrayal of everyday life.	

Table: 3

Key Form of Hypersignification:	Mechanisms/Techniques:	Cultural/Normative Function:
Study how image and text interact to create meaning—especially through: Captioned images with overt labeling: To analyse how direct textual cues guide	Recurring character tropes: Identify familiar figures and their ideological roles. Stereotype amplification: Assess the degree and purpose of exaggerated traits.	Reveal how memes draw from and distort cultural scripts to make meaning.
<p>രാജ്കുമാറിനെ വീരപ്പൻ തട്ടിക്കൊണ്ടുപോയ കേസിൽ വിധി 25നാ</p> <p>സംഭവമുണ്ടായി 18 വർഷത്തിനു ശേഷം വിധി പറയുമ്പോൾ രാജ്കുമാറും വീരപ്പനും ജീവിച്ചിരിപ്പില്ല</p>	Yama, the Hindu god of death, is a recurring figure in meme culture. This meme references the high-profile case involving Veerappan, the forest brigand, and the kidnapping of Kannada actor Dr. Rajkumar in 2000. Although the Gobi Third Additional District Court delivered its verdict in 2018, both Veerappan and Rajkumar had by then passed away. The meme humorously depicts Yama expressing bewilderment at the possibility of being asked to produce the deceased individuals and a possible case against him for not releasing them.	
<p>മഴക്കാലമാണ് 😞 തിളപ്പിച്ചാറിയ വെള്ളം മാത്രം കുടിക്കുക 😊</p>	A seemingly innocuous meme delivers a critical commentary on the issue of spurious liquor production, especially prevalent during the monsoon season. While the message ostensibly advises the consumption of boiled water during the rains, it subtly mocks the clandestine production and consumption of toxic alcoholic substances, which often result in outcomes known as hooch tragedies.	

Table: 4



Key Form of Hypersignification:	Mechanisms/Techniques:	Cultural/Normative Function:
To analyse how posing conventions in memes reflect performed social roles, identity signals, and ritualized behaviours.	Focus on the staged nature of photographic gestures (smiles, stances, facial expressions) as culturally encoded performances	To explore how meme participants act out “front stage” behaviours and social scripts
	In another meme, a popular commercial slogan is subverted to critique social norms. The original advertisement claims that if one loves their wife, they cannot say no to ‘Prestige’ (a well-known kitchen appliance brand). In the meme, however, the product in question is alcoholic in nature, and the husband enthusiastically endorses the adapted slogan, thus parodying the contradiction between socially endorsed advertising and less socially acceptable behaviours.	
	A further example features a student who prepared for a supplementary examination using a YouTube channel, only to be surprised upon encountering the same instructor taking the same examination in person. The meme humorously highlights the inversion of expected social roles and reflects the blurred boundaries between digital learning environments and formal educational institutions.	

Table: 5



Key Form of Hypersignification:	Mechanisms/Techniques:	Cultural/Normative Function:
To examine the visual structure and repetition of meme formats as part of a shared digital grammar.	Study how virality arises from minor variations on familiar formats, showing social understanding through imitation	Understand the meme as a ritualized digital act, with embedded expectations for pose, layout, and labeling
	Here, the visual format is being used to address different context. What is common is the lack of understanding of English language on the part of the wife. In one such meme, a husband asks his wife for suggestions about his greying hair, and she replies he should "die" (a pun on the word "dye").	
	In another instance, the wife wishes her husband a happy "menses" day instead of "Men's Day". Both examples originate from a Malayalam film character known for frequent linguistic missteps, and the meme format has gained widespread popularity despite its reinforcement of gender stereotypes. This meme format has thus become viral and it is repeated in different variations despite the gender bias.	

Table: 6



Key Form of Hypersignification:	Mechanisms/Techniques:	Cultural/Normative Function:
To analyse how memes mirror or mock real-world social behaviours (e.g., dating norms, workplace attitudes, generational habits).	Explore memes as reflections or parodies of everyday cultural rituals—from group selfies to “Instagram face.”	Memes as tools of digital play, community bonding, and ritual expression
<p>കട്ടൻ ചായക്ക് 3 രൂപ കൂടുതൽ വാങ്ങിയത് എന്തിനാണെന്ന് ചോദിച്ചപ്പോൾ</p>  <p>പാലിന് വില കൂടിയത് ഒന്നും ഹോൾ അറിഞ്ഞില്ലേ എന്നുള്ള കടക്കാരന്റെ മറുപടി കേട്ടു</p>	This meme captures a humorous exchange between a customer and a tea vendor. When questioned about a price hike for black tea, the vendor responds by citing an increase in milk prices, despite black tea containing no milk. The customer's confusion reflects a broader commentary on working-class logic and consumer interactions in everyday life.	
	A meme set in the post-COVID context references a government directive requiring class teachers of Grade 10 to resume in-person duties. Here, the teacher declines, stating a preference for teaching up to Grade 9 to retain the convenience of online instruction. The meme gained traction as a satirical take on individual resistance to institutional norms. This was quite popular and this mocks the social behaviour of such individuals.	

Table: 7

Summary of Analysis

Photo-based internet memes—such as reaction photoshops, stock character macros, and photo fads—function as visual texts that both reflect and challenge cultural norms by exaggerating and distorting the idea that photographs offer objective truth. These memes actively manipulate the aesthetics of photographic realism, drawing attention to how visual media is often constructed rather than naturally occurring. For example, memes involving public figures like Shashi Tharoor or those parodying Che Guevara employ exaggerated text, symbolic layering, and image manipulation to reveal how social identities and ideological alignments are visually curated. Memes also disrupt linear notions of time by placing images in unexpected or outdated contexts, such as the depiction of Yama responding to court verdicts long after the subjects have passed away, or the humorous reinterpretation of the Chandrayaan mission. This temporal dislocation turns memes into looping commentaries, where meaning is generated through recurrence, irony, and absurd juxtapositions. On a cultural level, these memes act as hypersignifiers, condensing complex social codes—like post-Onam food habits or advertising clichés—into instantly recognizable and often exaggerated visual cues. By using captions, familiar character types, and parody, memes expose how everyday behaviours and identities are performed, revealing the scripted nature of what might otherwise appear spontaneous. Ultimately, these memes not only entertain but also critically engage with visual culture by making visible the layers of meaning embedded in images, highlighting how digital communities participate in reshaping narratives through remixing, repetition, and subversive reinterpretation.

Findings

1. Reaction photoshops reveal that photographic images are not inherently truthful but are visually curated and ideologically coded, especially when depicting public figures or political icons. Memes often detach images from their original historical contexts to produce humour, irony, or critique—thereby challenging linear temporality and engaging in a looping, recursive meme logic.
2. Stock character macros and image-caption pairings condense complex cultural practices and stereotypes into hyper-legible visual codes, facilitating instant recognition and polysemic readings. Photo fads rely on familiar posing conventions and repeated formats to emphasize the performative nature of everyday behaviour, revealing how identity is scripted, staged, and ritualized.
3. These meme genres demonstrate how digital communities collaboratively engage with and reshape cultural narratives through parody, remixing, and subversive reinterpretation. While memes have the potential to subvert dominant ideologies, they can also reproduce existing stereotypes, revealing the dual potential of internet humour as both critical and conservative.

These findings position memes not merely as ephemeral entertainment but as dynamic cultural artefacts participating in visual discourse and social commentary.

Conclusion

Photo-based memes are more than ephemeral entertainments; they are complex visual texts that interrogate the illusion of photographic objectivity and destabilize hegemonic narratives through

strategies of exaggeration, disjunction, and repetition. Reaction photoshops disrupt the aura of media authenticity, stock character macros expose the ideological work of stereotypes, and photo fads perform the social rituals of everyday life in looped and ludic forms. As hypersignifiers, these meme genres reveal how digital cultures engage critically with visual media, creating participatory spaces where meaning is not fixed but continually reimaged. In doing so, memes articulate a visual discourse that challenges dominant representations and affirms the agency of networked communities in shaping contemporary cultural meaning.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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Limitations

This study focuses primarily on meme genres within Malayalam linguistic/cultural context which are primarily photo-based, and while it draws upon established theoretical lenses, it does not quantitatively analyse user reception or meme virality across platforms. Future research could explore cross-cultural meme circulation, audience interpretation, and algorithmic influence to offer a more comprehensive view of meme semiotics in global digital ecologies.

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Strengthening Digital Financial Inclusion: A Study of Behavioural Drivers in Rural Banking

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Abstract

The research looks at what encourages users to start using digital banking services in Uttar Pradesh, India by using the TAM model. PU, PEU and Trust make up the variables in the model, intended to predict Behavioural Intention (BI). To increase digital financial inclusion more rapidly, knowing these factors is key because the culture and technology in India are so varied. Data were collected from 300 customers of rural banks using a questionnaire and convenience sampling. The analysis, which used the SEM, found that all three hypotheses were confirmed. The strongest association with BI was found for PU, followed by Trust and PEU.

These results again demonstrate that adding Trust suits the TAM framework, especially in places where doubt about digital platforms is frequent. From the results, we learn that banks and policymakers should make platforms easier to use, give users a better user experience and focus on security measures to reassure users.

With these findings, future researchers will be able to study broader issues and follow how behavior changes as more individuals accept digital banking services.

Keywords: Digital Banking Adoption, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Trust, Behavioral Intention.

1. Introduction

The tremendous proliferation of digital technology has brought about a period of digital banking that offers customers greater accessibility, efficiency, and convenience, causing a substantial transformation in the financial services industry (Erlane K. Ghani et al. 2022). Digital banking—

which encompasses digital wallets, internet banking, and mobile banking—has radically altered how people cater with financial institutions. Even though the technological infrastructure supporting digital banking is developing quickly, user adoption varies by geography and demographic. The factors that impact a person's propensity to accept digital banking services must be thoroughly understood by policymakers aiming to enhance financial inclusion through digital means as well as financial institutions looking to expand their digital footprint (Nova and González 2023).

In the face of increasing competition, banks and financial service providers are putting a lot of effort into understanding consumer behaviour and preferences in the digital sphere (Datta and Singh 2019). One of the several theories available to explain technology adoption is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which has been well-liked because of its predictability and user-friendliness (Kesharwani and Singh Bisht 2012). Perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) are the two main criteria that define a person's behavioural intention to use a technology, according to TAM (Venkatesh 2008). PU is the degree to which a person thinks that using a certain technology would enhance their capacity to carry out daily tasks or their performance at work. According to Liu and Pu (2020), PEU, on the other hand, measures the extent a person believes using the technology will be simple. Both ideas have been empirically verified in a variety of technological contexts and remain essential components in understanding technology adoption.

Although trust is the most crucial element in identifying user intents, as financial transactions increasingly shift to digital platforms, other elements outside of PU and PEU have also gained significance. Trust has a crucial role in adoption decisions since digital banking requires the online interchange of sensitive financial and personal data (Malaquias and Hwang 2019). Trust in this sense refers to the belief that the company offering digital financial services is reliable, secure, and focused on the needs of the user. Prospective clients may be hesitant to use digital banking if they don't have trust, regardless of how user-friendly or useful the system is seen to be (Owusu Kwateng, Osei Atiemo, and Appiah 2019). Previous research has highlighted the complex role of trust, showing that it not only influences behavioural intention directly but also lessens the effects of PU and PEU. Therefore, adding trust to the traditional TAM framework offers a more comprehensive model for

predicting customer intention to utilise digital banking. This improved model recognises that for adoption to be driven only by technological features, users must have confidence in the dependability and security of digital banking services.

The dependent variable here, in this study, behavioural intention, is a valid predictor for actual behaviour in the TAM and similar models. It encapsulates a user's motivational readiness to perform a certain activity, in this case, embracing and maintaining the use of digital banking services (Lee 2009). Because behavioural intention is a predictor of user engagement and potential market penetration, banks and service providers need the understanding towards it.

In the regard of digital banking, this research attempts to experimentally investigate the connections between PU, PEU, trust, and behavioural intention. It aims to address the following research topics in particular: (1) How much do PU and PEU affect the BI to use digital banking? (2) How does trust influence users' intentions to use digital banking? (3) How do these factors work together to create a model that predicts the uptake of digital banking? This work is important because it has the potential to advance theory and practice. Theoretically, it adds trust—a factor that is becoming more and more significant in the digital era—to the Technology Acceptance Model. In practice, financial institutions looking to increase user adoption rates might utilise the data to direct their digital strategy and communication initiatives.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Banking in India

The Indian financial sector has experienced a remarkable digital transition in the last ten years. Government initiatives, technological developments, and an increase in internet and smartphone usage may all be largely credited for the country's digital banking emergence (Bhasin and Rajesh 2021). Important turning moments, such as the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Aadhaar-based verification systems, and demonetization in 2016, have accelerated the usage of digital financial services. As a result, India's digital banking market is among the fastest-growing in the world.

In India, digital banking includes a wide range of services such as app-based financial services, digital wallets, online cash transfers, and mobile banking. To improve the client experience, banks in the public and private sectors have made significant investments in mobile applications and

intuitive digital interfaces(Malik et al. 2021). Furthermore, the emergence of fintech companies has brought about creative and flexible digital banking solutions, escalated competition and forcing established banks to update their methods of providing services.

Adoption still faces obstacles in spite of these developments. Cybersecurity issues continue to erode public confidence in digital platforms, and a sizable section of the populace still lacks digital literacy (Ozili 2021). Furthermore, poor internet connectivity, ignorance, and cultural aversion to using non-cash methods are common problems for people living in rural and semi-urban locations. Rural adoption of digital banking is still relatively low, despite increasing adoption rates in metropolitan areas, according to recent Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reports.

However, there is a lot of promise in India's digital banking environment. To close the financial gap, the RBI and the Indian government are still pushing for safe and accessible digital banking services. Given the ongoing digital revolution and the drive towards a cashless economy, it is critical to comprehend the variables that are facilitating or impeding Indian citizens' adoption of digital banking(Bhasin and Rajesh 2021). In light of this, the current study investigates three important psychological and technological factors that may affect user behaviour in the Indian digital banking market: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and trust.

2.2. Banking in Uttar Pradesh

The most populated state in India, Uttar Pradesh (UP), offers a special instance for researching the uptake of digital banking. With a sizable and varied population dispersed among both rural villages and urban areas, Uttar Pradesh is a reflection of the larger prospects and problems facing India's financial inclusion program. Through programs like Jan Dhan accounts and direct benefit payments, the state has seen significant banking penetration in recent years; nevertheless, adoption of digital banking is still uneven.

Better infrastructure and greater levels of digital literacy are driving the growth of digital banking activities in urban regions (Sharma et al. 2016). Yet, challenges in rural areas include low connectivity, a lack of confidence in digital platforms, and little exposure to technology. These inequalities underline the necessity for specific digital banking initiatives. For financial institutions looking to service this sizable and varied market, it is crucial to comprehend behavioural intention

to adopt digital banking in Uttar Pradesh. In order to evaluate how psychological factors influence the adoption of digital banking at a regional level, this study focusses on UP.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), first put forth by Davis (1986), is the theoretical cornerstone of this investigation. It aims to explain how people come to adopt and use technology. According to TAM, a consumer's intention towards utilising technology is impacted by two fundamental beliefs: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) (Legris, Ingham, and Collette 2003). These beliefs then get an influence on the user's behavioural intention to adopt the technology. Because of its simplicity and resilience, TAM has been used extensively over the years in a variety of fields, such as digital banking, e-learning, and e-commerce.

The degree to which an individual thinks that using a technology would increase their productivity is called perceived usefulness, or PU. Features of digital banking such as quick transactions, round-the-clock access, and remote task execution are examples of PU in action (Venkatesh, science, and 2000 2016). Stronger behavioural intention to use digital banking systems is usually outcome of a greater PU. Further, the degree to which a user thinks that using the technology would be effortless is indicated by Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) (Priya, Gandhi, and Shaikh 2018). A high PEU is a result of an easy-to-use interface, simple navigation, and a low learning curve. Through PU, PEU indirectly affects behavioural intention in addition to directly influencing it.

Researchers have expanded the model to include trust as a crucial element in recognition of TAM's shortcomings when it comes to digital services that carry financial risk. In digital banking, trust includes a user's faith in the integrity, security, and privacy of the platform (Kumar et al. 2020) (Malaquias and Hwang 2019). Trust tackles emotional together with the psychological issues, in contrast to PU and PEU, which concentrate on functionality. According to studies, consumers may choose not to use a digital platform even if it is helpful and simple to use if they lack confidence in it.

Thus, TAM components and trust are included in the integrated model utilised in this study to provide a comprehensive framework to forecast behavioural intention to use digital banking. Here, the theoretical approach is especially applicable in places like Uttar Pradesh, where low digital

literacy and past encounters with financial fraud may make people more sceptical of digital systems.

2.4. Hypothesis Development

Based on the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: PU has a positive and significant effect on users' BI to adopt digital banking.

Digital banking is more likely to be adopted by users who believe it will improve their financial management through quicker transactions, round-the-clock accessibility, and thorough account monitoring (Priya et al. 2018). Expectations of instrumental advantages are strongly influenced by perceived usefulness (PU) (Alnemer 2022) (Viet Tam, Nguyen Hoang, and Banka 2024). Potential adopters are more inclined to interact with the platform when they think that utilising digital banking would increase efficiency or convenience. High PU translates into a compelling value proposition in the banking environments of India and Uttar Pradesh, where geographical dispersion and time limits present significant problems. Therefore, we anticipate that PU and BI to use digital banking will be significantly positively correlated.

H2: PEU has a positive and significant effect on users' BI to adopt digital banking.

The degree to which a customer feels about adopting a digital banking system that it involves little effort or learning is reflected in Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) (Erlane K Ghani et al. 2022). A simple, easy-to-use design eases the shift from traditional to digital channels and lessens cognitive stress. A system that is seen as simple to use reduces barriers to early experimentation and continued use in areas with differing degrees of digital literacy, especially in rural Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, PEU frequently improves PU since users are more likely to identify and value a platform's usefulness when they perceive it to be easy. As a result, we propose that PEU has a favourable impact on users' intentions to utilise digital banking.

H3: Trust significantly effect on users' BI to adopt digital banking

In digital banking, trust includes faith in the service provider's integrity, security, and privacy. Users need to feel that their assets and personal information are secure because online financial transactions are inherently risky due to data breaches, fraud, and identity theft (Mohd-Any,

Sundramohana, and Sarker 2022; Ben Mansour 2016). Trust serves as a necessary condition for adoption in places where scepticism regarding digital platforms is prevalent. A reliable platform lowers perceived risk, eases anxiety, and creates a feeling of security that promotes experimentation and continued use. Therefore, it is anticipated that stronger behavioural intentions to utilize digital banking services will result from increased levels of trust.

This study's conceptual model framework is based on three main hypotheses that investigate how BI to use digital banking is influenced by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and trust.

The conceptual model is shown in Fig. 1:

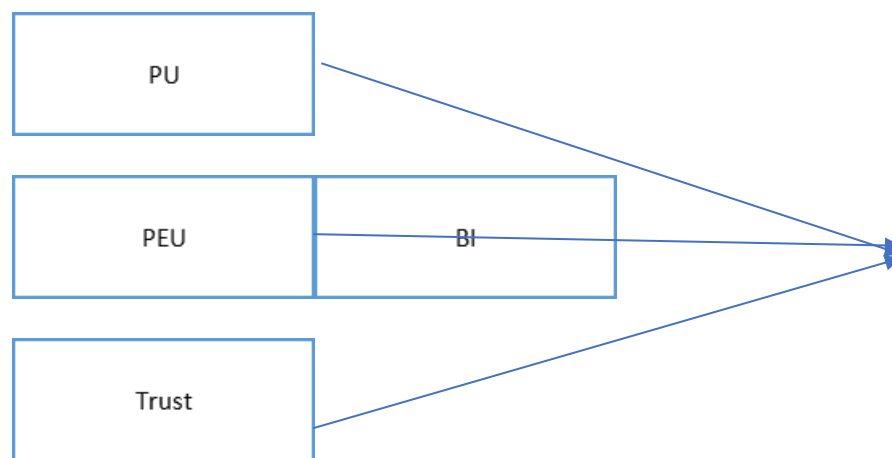


Fig. 1 Research Model by the Author

3. Methodology

3.1. Questionnaire Development

Based on established variables from earlier research on the Technology Acceptance Model and Trust, a structured questionnaire was created. A 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly-disagreed with and 5 being strongly-agreed with) was used to modify the items evaluating Perceived Ease of Use (PEU), Perceived Usefulness (PU), Trust (TR), and BI to Adopt. Before being distributed widely, the questionnaire has been pre-tested for reliability and clarity using a small pilot group.

3.2. Data Analysis Methodology

The data was collected through an online survey and analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) software using SPSS and AMOS. Descriptive statistics were used to characterise the

respondents, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to analyze the measurement model's validity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values ensured internal consistency. The structural model was assessed just to look at the suggested relationships between PEU, PU, TR, and behavioural intention. Model fit indices such as χ^2/df , RMSEA, and CFI were used to confirm the overall appropriateness of the model.

Table3.1: Constructs and their items

Constructs and Source	Measurement Items	Item
Perceived Usefulness (PU) (Venkatesh et al. 2016)(Marakarkandy, Yajnik, and Dasgupta 2017)	“I find digital banking services very convenient for managing my finance”	PU1
	“I find that digital banking services is useful in conducting banking transactions”	PU2
	“Digital banking services enables me to access banking services at any time”	PU3
	“Digital banking services eliminates geographic limitation and increases flexibility and mobility”	PU4
	“Using Digital banking services enables me to accomplish my banking tasks quickly”	PU5
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) (Venkatesh and Bala 2008)(Suhartanto et al. 2020)	“It is easy to use Digital banking services”	PEU1
	“It is easy to learn how to use Digital banking services”	PEU2
	“My interaction with Digital banking services is clear and understandable”	PEU3
	“Using Digital banking services increases the quality of my banking services output with minimal efforts”	PEU4
Trust (TR) (Mukherjee and Nath 2003)	“I trust that the Digital banking services not to disclose my personal information”	TR1
	“I trust the banks to keep customer data securely”	TR2
	“I trust the technology of Digital banking services”	TR3

	“I trust the privacy statement on the bank’s web page to guarantee privacy of my personal data”	TR4
Behavioural Intention (BI) (Suhartanto et al. 2020)	“I intend to use Digital banking services if I have access to it”	BI1
	“I anticipate that I would use Digital banking services if I have access to them”	BI2
	“I want to use Digital banking services so far as possible, if I have access to them”	BI3
	“I want to use Digital banking services for banking services on daily basis if I have access to them”	BI4

3.3. Data Collection

The study's primary focus is on Indian consumers of digital banking. A pilot research study involving thirty users was carried out to guarantee the questionnaire's internal consistency and comprehensibility. A convenience sampling technique was then used to contact 300 users in total, and after obtaining their informed consent, a self-administered questionnaire was used for collection of their responses. Data was collected in the northern Indian cities of Sitapur and Lakhimpur between January and March 2024. 262 of the 238 responses that were gathered were judged appropriate for the study after the incomplete questionnaires were eliminated. The study's sample size, which included 17 measurement items, was larger than the 170 needed for structural equation modelling (per Kline's 2011 10:1 rule). The demographic analysis of the sample is shown in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2: Sample Demographics

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Age	18-27	67	28.2
	28-37	86	36.1
	38-47	48	20.2
	48 and above	37	15.5

Education	No formal Education	19	8.0
	Below Matriculation	42	17.6
	Matriculation/Higher Secondary	93	39.1
	Other Technical Course	27	11.3
	Graduation and above	57	23.9
Family Income	Below 100000	28	11.8
	100000-500000	121	50.8
	500000-1000000	76	31.9
	1000000 and above	13	5.5

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using SPSS and AMOS software. The skewness and kurtosis indexes were calculated to verify the normality of the data. Since the skewness and kurtosis indices were both within the permissible range (± 3 and ± 10 , respectively), the data was regarded as normal (Kline, 2011).

3.4.1. Measurement model

The following values demonstrate that the measurement model had an outstanding fit according to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA): CMIN/df=1.308; CFI=0.98; SRMR=0.043; RMSEA=0.036. The constructs' validity and reliability estimations were far higher than what was considered acceptable. For every subscale, the composite reliability values were greater than 0.7. Good convergent validity was demonstrated by AVE values being above 0.5. By comparing the square root of AVE with factor correlations, the discriminant validity was evaluated. For all constructs (see Table 3), values for the former were higher than the latter, meeting the requirement put forth by (Fornell and Larcker 1981)

Table 3.3: Reliability and Validity

	CR	AVE	PU	INT	PEU	TR
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PU	0.88 8	0.61 4	0.784			
INT	0.84 1	0.56 9	0.336** *	0.754		
PEU	0.80 6	0.51 2	0.199* *	0.307** *	0.716	
TRUST	0.83 5	0.56 1	0.242** *	0.277** *	0.244* *	0.749

Diagonal values represent sq. root of A.V.E.

PEU='Perceived ease of use'; PR='Perceived risk'; TR= 'Trust'

3.4.2. Structural Model and Path Analysis

CFA was carried out on the structural model which provided the following fit statistics: CMIN/df=1.308; CFI=0.98; SRMR=0.043; RMSEA=0.036. These measures suggest that the model fit is excellent. The model explained 64% variance in BI.

Path analysis revealed that all the factors significantly impacted behavioural intention. The effect of PU ($\beta = 0.253$, $p < 0.001$), PEU ($\beta = 0.217$, $p < 0.001$) and TR ($\beta = 0.162$, $p < 0.001$) on BI was statistically significant. Thus, all the three out of the three suggested hypotheses (H1-H3) were supported.

4. Discussion

The current study looked at how consumers' behavioural intention to utilize digital banking in Uttar Pradesh was influenced by perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEU), and trust. Empirical evidence supported all three assumptions, highlighting the complex factors impacting the uptake of digital banking.

First, the confirmation of H1 (PU \rightarrow Behavioural desire) showed a high positive correlation between users' desire to adopt digital banking and their perceptions of its functional advantages. This result is consistent with the basic ideas of the Technology Acceptance Model, which holds that users' expectations of increased productivity and task performance have a big

influence on their choices. Features like quick financial transfers, real-time balance enquiries, and round-the-clock service availability stood out as especially important in Uttar Pradesh, where physical distance and infrastructure limitations sometimes hinder traditional banking. The high path coefficient for PU indicates that banks may successfully encourage adoption by consistently improving the usefulness of their digital platforms and making these advantages obvious to potential customers.

Second, there was support for H2 (PEU → Behavioural Intention), suggesting that adoption intentions are significantly influenced by how simple digital banking interfaces are considered to be. The cognitive effort needed to understand and use new systems is a major obstacle, particularly for older and rural clients who have lower levels of digital literacy. Our findings show that people are more likely to try and eventually use digital channels when they perceive mobile apps and online portals as simple—that is, with unambiguous menus, few steps, and contextual assistance. In addition to reducing the initial learning curve, this increases PU since users have a greater understanding of the platform's usefulness as they confidently explore it. Financial institutions should therefore give user-centred design top priority, assess usability across a range of demographic groups, and provide specific lessons or in-app instructions.

Third, the validation of H3 (Trust → Behavioural Intention) demonstrated the importance of trust as a psychological lever in the adoption of digital banking. Users need to have confidence in platform security, data privacy, and the service provider's integrity because financial transactions and personal information are sensitive. Strong trust views, which are fostered by obvious security certifications, open privacy rules, timely customer service, and regular contact, significantly increase customers' propensity to embrace and stick with digital banking, according to our research. Trust-building initiatives are crucial facilitators in areas like Uttar Pradesh, where there can be a high degree of scepticism towards digital financial services. They reduce concerns about operational failures and cyberthreats.

All of these results support an integrated TAM paradigm enhanced by trust, indicating that behavioural intention is jointly driven by credibility, usability, and functionality. By illustrating Trust's concurrent and independent role alongside PU and PEU, the study theoretically expands TAM's explanatory potential in the financial services arena. In practice, banks and fintech companies should take a comprehensive approach: consistently develop utility-driven features, meticulously improve user interfaces, and aggressively cultivate trust via client involvement and security guarantees.

In conclusion, the verified hypotheses highlight the need for stakeholders to make sure that platforms are not just feature-rich and easy to use, but also seen as reliable in order to hasten the adoption of digital banking in Uttar Pradesh and other emerging markets. Financial institutions may increase user engagement, promote financial inclusion, and cultivate a sustainable digital banking ecosystem by tackling these interconnected aspects.

Table3.4: Summary of Hypothesis Outcomes

Hypothesis	Statement	Outcome Summary
H1	PU has a significant positive influence on BI.	Supported. Users are more likely to utilize digital banking when they perceive it as useful and beneficial in daily transactions.
H2	PEU has a significant positive influence on BI.	Supported. When users find digital banking platforms easy to navigate, their intention to adopt them increases significantly.
H3	Trust has a significant positive impact on BI.	Supported. When users have faith in the security, privacy, and dependability of the platform, they are more likely to embrace digital banking.

5. Implications of the study

The research supports the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by proving that Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use and Trust each have effective, unique roles in making people in Uttar Pradesh want to adopt digital banking. These results indicate that including trust into existing adoption models, together with usability and utility, could give a more complete picture of how technology is used and accepted in emerging economies. To bring more people into the digital services age, banks and fintech providers should start by offering new integration features like notifications, payment tools and personalized advice and by sharing this news in outreach campaigns—followed by simplifying their platforms with user-friendly designs, convenient signups, language support and workshops—before wrapping up by focusing on trust with clear privacy statements, top-notch security, recommendations from well-known groups, 24/7 help and consistent security updates. At the same time, handling convenience of use, easy accessibility and trustworthy systems, financial institutions are able to encourage under-banked regions to take part in digital banking and boost operations.

6. Conclusion

Using the extended Technology Acceptance Model, this study showed that BI use of digital banking in Uttar Pradesh is mostly influenced by how useful, simple to use and trustworthy the service is. All three hypotheses are supported by research, showing that users consider ease of use, system utility and how secure and reliable the system is when making an adoption decision. The analysis supports theories on why technology is embraced in the SDLC and gives practical support to banks looking to improve their digital services.

7. Scope for Future Research

Further investigations might use repeated studies over time to see how people use technology and rely less on what they claim to do. Adding data from bank logs would increase the accuracy of the results. Some researchers prefer to add social influence, better digital understanding and perceived risk to the adoption model. Doing cross-cultural comparisons in different Indian states or other rising nations might uncover features linked to each place. In addition to quantitative research, exploring how users feel and what keeps them from using digital banking would help find better solutions for increasing digital banking in various populations.

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Study of Black Humor and Psychological Aspects in English Literature

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Abstract

Dark humor is designed to show critical subjects like casualty, disorders, dreadful cases, and taboos with unexpected comedic elements. The main purpose is to create comedy through harsh conditions, making black comedy popular among audiences. Individuals are helpless victims of circumstances and time; farce and substandard comedy are used as aspects of black humor. Black humorists try to impose a repetition on the radical stream of measures via jokes. Swift's undisputable uniqueness, the perfect unity of his production viewed from the angle of the very special and almost unprecedented emotion it elicits, the unsurpassable character, from this same viewpoint, of his many varied successes historically justify his being presented as the first black humorist (Breton, 16). Black humor looks like the fictitious bitterness-free phase of critical arguments and attacks. Gallows humor is also designed to strengthen the self-pride of anxious people and weaken the confidence of the tormenters. The paper aims to present the contemporary approaches of black humor and psychological relief theory in literature and media studies.

Key Words: humor, culture studies, media studies, psychological, relief theory.

Introduction

Black humor is the haziest type of humor, which comically portrays horrific events. Renowned surrealist theorist, André Breton, explored the works of Jonathan Swift in his research. Breton noticed that Swift's writings of comedy and satire contained sarcasm and skepticism even on topics like death. He wrote a book on Jonathan Swift's works and called him an authentic designer of black humor. The book, *Anthology of Black Humor*, became popular among readers

and critics because it portrayed a new concept of black humor. Gallows humor became more popular with the publication of Bruce Jay Friedman's edited work *Black Humor* (Bloom, 80). Many prominent authors like Thomas Pynchon, J. P. Donleavy, Edward Albee, John Barth, Joseph Heller, Vladimir Nabokov, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, and Bruce Jay Friedman used dark humor in the form of novels, poems, tales, theatre, and compositions which juxtapose the conditions with morbid twists and create a humorous effect. After knowing the real purpose behind black humor, it became a popular literary genre and influenced the development of American literature in the 1960s. Dark humor gave a vision of a biased view of life reflecting brutality, violence, and viewpoint-crushing scenes of World War II (Alice, 18).

Philosophical background of black humor

Sigmund Freud's relief theory of humor proposed that dark humor allowed individuals to release blocked feelings by transgressing social norms and expressing their hidden, repressed feelings. In his theory, he expressed that humor helps people to come out of discomforts like anxiety and worries. By making light of serious or distressing subjects, individuals can momentarily alleviate their emotional burdens and find relief through laughter (Jacobe, 216). Black humorists tried to enforce a pattern on this anarchic flow of proceedings via jokes. Vonnegut's *The Sot-Weed Factor* is created as a detailed, funny story that affirms the meaninglessness of life in the form of jokes. The laughter aroused by black humor is parallel to the mirthless laugh described by Samuel Beckett in his novel, *Watt*. In this work, he explains that bitter, hollow, and mirthless are the three forms of laughter.

"The bitter laugh laughs at that which is not good, it is
the ethical laugh. The hollow laugh laughs at that which
is not true; it is the intellectual laugh....
But the mirthless laugh.
is the laugh of laughs, the risks puros, the laugh
laughing at the laugh.
the laugh that laughs. ...
that which is unhappy." (Eugene 67)

By using critical matters like death and violence hilariously, black humorists have twin intentions. Firstly, through dark humor, the gloomy vision is mingled with the comic and tragic scenes. Secondly, the ability to laugh at something terrible produces a sense of victory. Laughter thus becomes a way of rejecting defeat. The black humorists teach us how to live in a world devoid of hope.

General issues in black humor

Black comedy writers visualize humor in the worst situations, such as deprivation, administrative bribery, death, violence, nudity, sexuality, disease, and murder. Gallows humor shines on a crucial topic, such as war, terrorism, famine, etc., while others get to laugh at absurd circumstances. After World War I, black humorists and gallows writers mirrored the absurdity of modern life. Franz Kafka's works, *The Metamorphosis* and *The Trial*, represented the organizational hallucinations and pragmatic fear, which resonated with readers who observed humor in the isolation of life. Charlie Chaplin's movie *Monsieur Verdoux* presented the theme of dark comedy in which he played the role of a person who marries and kills rich ladies, presenting a darkly comedic take on serious themes. People faced great fears and disappointments during World War II and the Cold War. Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* is considered an influential masterpiece of dark comedy as it gives a detailed explanation of the absurdity and futility of war. Kurt Vonnegut's work, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, reflected the horrors of war and death with black comedy. The British comedic film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* involved the elements of dark humor, which questioned social customs and beliefs. Tina Fey used dark humor to satirize the entertainment industry in *30 Rock* and focused on personal problems that create mental illness and lead to personal failure. In the early 2000s, dark humor was used as a tool for community integrity issues and individual fights and efforts. Jordan Peele's film *Get Out* reflected the mingling of horror and black humor. Black humor also promoted collective anxieties like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and high-tech trouble. Bo Burnham, in his autobiography called *Inside*, shows the stress and anxiety of people during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The elements of black humor

Numerous black humorists have applied components like depression, anxiety, and stress as key elements in black humor. Their main purpose is to amuse others and point out the funny side of harsh conditions in a cordial manner. Humor creates a unique effect on the aspects of public interactions, likeability, and attractiveness ratings. In the satirical novel *Catch-22*, the Soldier in White and the Soldier who maximized everything two times, the last two injured men who died together, became a source of comic relief for Yossarian and others at the time of depression, stress, and anxiety in the horrors of war. Humor was an effective approach for reducing anxiety under wartime circumstances. The use of gentle humor is considered a powerful approach used by dark humorists to address emotionally negative events. Vonnegut's novel, *Slaughterhouse 5*, uses humor as a form of phrases to mock seriousness and create absurdity. When the Dresden bombing starts, Billy and his associate prisoners of war hide themselves in a meat store room and use it as a bomb shelter. The meat locker highlights that the hostages are not considered human by their hostage takers. As animals were formerly slaughtered in the Dresden slaughterhouse, so too, in theory, will many prisoners and civilians be killed — only the killers will not be Germans, but rather the American prisoners' fellow Allied soldiers. The use of benevolent humor and the lesser habitual use of dark humor focus on these particular re-evaluation approaches. Humor

helps people manage stress by playing the role of an agent between negative circumstances and humor.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail is another example of amazing satire paired with Arthurian legend – bonding storytelling and historical representation. Here, humor works as an interactive style that gently deals with stress and anxiety. One of the remarkable scenes of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is when Arthur and his men move towards a French castle and face offensive foul language from the French soldiers, who eventually stop their endeavor to get entry. This scene highlights the absurd nature of medieval warfare. The French soldiers' mocking is presented with obsolete insults, making the conflict feel as if it belongs to a modern comedy sketch rather than a historical epic. Humor is found to have stress-buffering effects. Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a marvelous example of presenting satires on religion, slavery, and social class. Twain's humor shows negative associations between gentle humor and emotional suffering. One of the examples of satire in the novel is the scene where Huck pretends to be dead to fool people and float down the river as a dead body. People were scared of his prank, and because of superstitions, they thought he had been killed by witches. This scene contains black humor, satire, farce, and absurdities, which are associated with anxiety and stress. Irony and sarcasm are mostly correlated to emotional distress.

Conclusion

Black humor is a powerful expression that allows people to oppose painful realities and experiences and recover the humor in life's hardest times. Dark comedy will likely adapt to new challenges, ensuring its relevance in an ever-changing world. Renowned humorists used elements like misery, fear, and anxiety as the backbone for black humor. These humorists' focus on the comic side cordially found in critical conditions. After World War I and the Cold War, dark humor authors reflected the irrationality of life. Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22*, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and *The Trial*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, etc., are the top examples of the absurdity and futility of war that display the horrors of warfare and killing.

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Data Commentaries in Science and Engineering Research Articles

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Abstract

Data commentaries assume significance in shaping a research article. They accompany visuals in results sections of research papers. Their positioning in results sections of research reports is conventionally determined by discursive practices of a given discipline. In this paper, an attempt is made to understand how data commentaries in science and engineering research articles are discursively constructed. The paper discusses what data commentaries are and their relation to nonverbal materials, the way they are recognized as a subgenre of results sections, the move structure and the interface between visuals and data commentaries in science and engineering research articles.

Keywords: Data commentaries, non-verbal materials, move structure, results section.

Introduction

Nonverbal elements (NVEs) in science and engineering discourse are the visualizations in the form of graphs, tables, diagrams, figures, images, data plots, microscopic images, schematics, chromatographs/spectrographs, 3D models, photographs, pie charts, bar charts, etc. Research indicates that NVEs play an important role in ‘the construction of knowledge and its communication across a range of contexts’ (Curry, 2014, p. 87) in science and engineering discourse. One important medium through which new scientific knowledge gets communicated is research papers in journals. Though NVEs may be present in other sections of the research report, it is the results section that abounds with NVEs in various combinations of visual displays of results. Yet NVEs cannot speak for themselves. It is, therefore, necessary to have what are known as data commentaries (DCs) for directing the reader to the desired interpretation of NVEs.

Data commentaries are verbal interpretations of NVEs that draw the reader’s attention to a) the background information of the NVE, b) location and summary of the visual, c) the most important findings in the visual, and d) comment on results presented in the visual. Both the NVEs and data commentaries in the results section of science and engineering research papers are interdependent and make non-linear reading paths (Sancho Guinda, 2012) as there is recursive interplay between the data commentary and the NVE in the communication of scientific knowledge generated (Curry, 2014), as a result of which the reader moves back and forth between text and graphics while

figuring out ‘the story of scientific discovery’ (Stoller & Robinson, 2013, p. 49) in results sections. This interplay contributes to the multimodal nature of science and engineering communication.

Data Commentaries as a micro-genre

Since data commentaries ‘do not belong to a clear-cut community of practice . . . and straddle between academic and professional domains’ (Sancho Guinda, 2012, p. 168), they do not adequately qualify to have a full-fledged genre status. Following Martin’s (1992; 1995) classification of macro-genre and micro-genre, the data commentary may be identified as a micro-genre for it comes as embedded in a macro-genre such as the ‘Results Section’ in a research paper. No matter whether the data commentary is an independent or embedded genre, both NVEs and data commentaries rarely occur in isolation as they share a symbiotic relationship between them.

Data commentaries have evolved from being mere paraphrase of data or *information transfer* in the 70s through the 90s (Swales & Feak, 1997). This evolution can also be tracked in the individual developmental stages of learning to write where individuals demonstrate movement from mere information transfer as ‘*knowledge telling*’ to interpretation as ‘*knowledge transforming*’ (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987) which involves explanation, hypothesis, prediction and the application to other situations. According to Sancho Guinda (2012), data commentaries encompass stages such as *graph framing* that indicate purpose and value, *data sorting* through sequencing and grouping, *data highlighting* through selection and *data discussion* in terms of interpretation. Interestingly, while graph framing provides the location of the visual and its summary statement for positioning in the text, data sorting, data highlighting and data discussion are the stages in which data reorganisation happens gradually from ‘rearranging data to explanatory and forecasting interpretations’ (Sancho Guinda, 2012, p. 167).

Information Transfer as an exercise for comprehension and composition of NVEs in ESP materials popularised by Widdowson (1973) simply puts the obvious information from the NVE into words rendering it redundant. Such a rendering is likely seen in some of the students’ writing who may have little awareness of the purpose of interpretation in a research context. Data commentary, on the other hand, entails critical engagement of a student with the data in the NVE by performing a series of activities such as sequencing and grouping of data, selecting and highlighting the key findings, and explaining these key findings in terms of the hypothesis of the study, and discussing their implications for different contexts of relevance. For a learner to move from the stage of information transfer to the stage of data commentary, which demands demonstration of maturity in the form of conceptual abstraction, syntactic complexity and lexical density, the learner has to be scaffolded into disciplinary practices besides encouraging increasing participation in such valued practices. This sort of apprenticeship is warranted because the integration of NVEs and data commentaries involves handling the so called objective data in NVEs with subjectivity and creation.

While NVEs (visual representations of data) are ‘work horses of argument’ in science and engineering discourse (Poe, et. al., 2010, p. 115), data commentaries extract work from these horses (NVEs) and develop arguments by ‘finding the right strength of claim in discussing the data’ (Swales and Feak, 2012, p. 139). In writing data commentaries, the following are some of the tasks commonly undertaken (Swales and Feak, 2012, pp. 140-141):

- highlighting the results of research
- using the data to support a point or make an argument in your paper
- assessing theory, common beliefs, or general practice in light of the given data
- comparing and evaluating different data sets
- assessing the reliability of the data in terms of the methodology that produced it
- discussing the implications of the data
- making recommendations

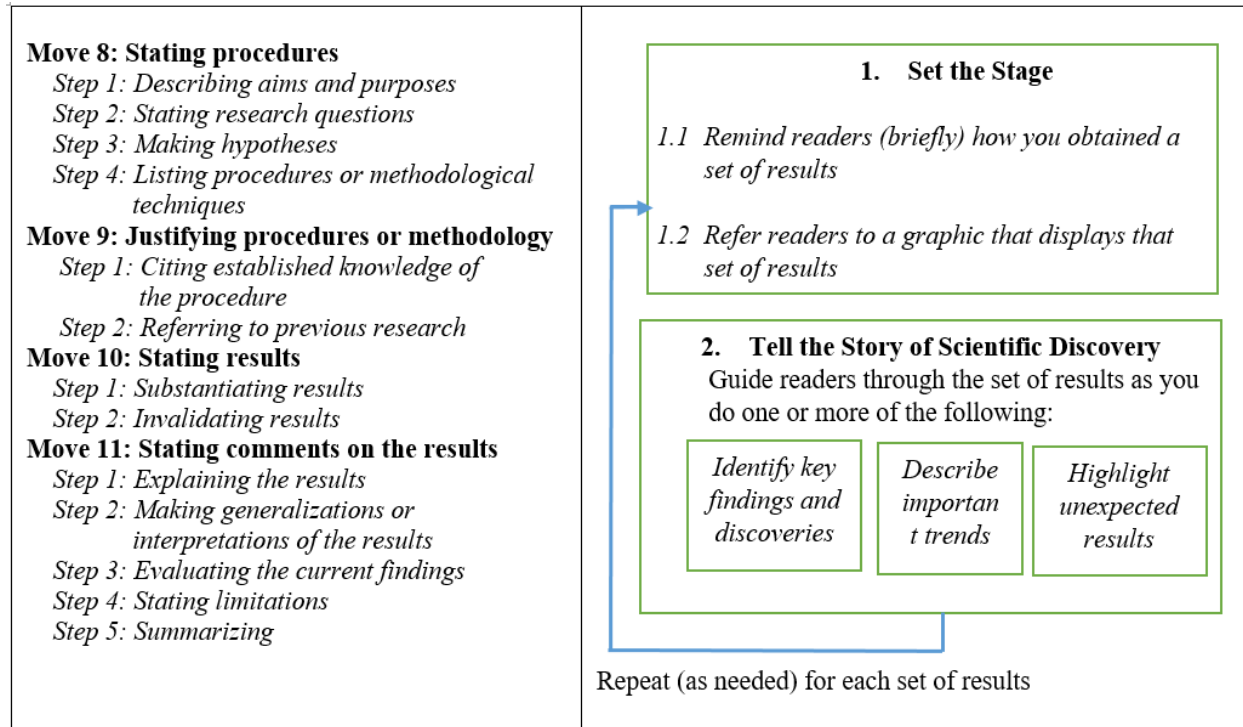
NVEs, thus, act as work sites or portals from the data commentary to the visual argument.

Move structure of DCs in the results section of science and engineering research articles

Move structure of research articles across all four sections (introduction, methods, results, and discussion) is highly influenced by Swales' (1990) pioneering work on genre analysis. A move is a structural segment in a text that has a specific communicative function, which contributes to the overall communicative purposes of the genre. The move structure of the data commentary as a micro-genre across disciplinary fields, according to Swales (1994; 2012), usually includes three moves: 1) location elements and/or summary statements, 2) statements highlighting key findings from the data, 3) discussion of implications, problems, exceptions, recommendations, or other interesting aspects of the data. Moves are realized by one or more elements, which are denoted as *steps* (Swales, 1990), or *strategies* (Bhatia, 1993) or *submoves* (Stoller & Robinson, 2013). Data commentaries typify results sections in research papers as these sections present results in NVEs.

Though there have been a number of studies that have focussed on individual sections of research articles in various disciplines (e.g., Basturkmen, 2012; Bruce, 2009; Kanoksilapatham, 2012; Williams, 1999), it appears that few studies have focussed on the move structure of results sections in science and engineering research articles per se. However, a few studies have examined the move structure of full length research articles in science and engineering (e.g., Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2015; Stoller & Robinson, 2013; Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino, 2015). Therefore, in this review, the move structure of results sections alone is considered to focus on the interface between NVEs and data commentaries which constitute the results sections in research papers. While Kanoksilapatham (2005) and Stoller & Robinson (2013) conducted a move analysis of the whole structure of a large number of *biochemistry* and *chemistry* research articles respectively, Kanoksilapatham (2015) and Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino (2015) performed a move analysis of the whole structure of a large number of *three* and *five* sub-disciplines of engineering research articles respectively. The sub-disciplines of engineering included in Kanoksilapatham were *civil*, *software* and *biomedical* engineering whereas in those included in Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino were *structural*, *environmental*, *electrical*, *chemical*, and *computer science* engineering. The following are the move structures of the results sections from the findings of these studies:

Box 1A & 1B: Move structures of the results sections in biochemistry and chemistry research articles



Box 1A. Move structure of biochemistry research article results sections (excerpted from Kanoksilapatham, 2005, pp. 290-291)

Box 1B. Move structure of a chemistry research article results section (excerpted from Stoller & Robinson, 2013, p. 49)

Box 1C & 1D: Move structures of the results sections in civil, software, biomedical, and structural, environmental, electrical, chemical, and computer science engineering research articles

<p>Move 7: Summarizing procedures <i>Step 1: Briefing procedures</i> <i>Step 2: Justifying procedures</i> <i>Step 3: Defining terms</i> <i>Step 4: Referring to previous studies</i></p> <p>Move 8: Reporting results</p> <p>Move 9: Commenting results <i>Step 1: Interpreting results</i> <i>Step 2: Explaining results</i> <i>Step 3: Comparing results</i> <i>Step 4: Exemplifying results</i> <i>Step 5: Cautioning limitations</i> <i>Step 6: Summarizing results</i> <i>Step 7: Directing future research</i></p>	<p>Move 7: Reporting results <i>Step 1: Restating data analysis procedures</i> <i>Step 2: Restating research questions</i> <i>Step 3: Stating general findings</i> <i>Step 4: Stating specific findings</i></p> <p>Move 8: Commenting on results <i>Step 1: Interpreting results</i> <i>Step 2: Comparing results with previous studies</i> <i>Step 3: Evaluating results</i></p>
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Box 1C. Move structure of civil, software, and biomedical engineering research article results sections (excerpted from Kanoksilapatham, 2015, p. 82)

Box 1D. Move structure of structural, environmental, electrical, chemical, and computer science engineering research article results sections (excerpted from Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino, 2015, p. 6)

As can be seen from these boxes, all the studies have identified three aspects being common to all - restating methodological details, reporting results and commenting on results - that constitute the

move structure of the results sections in the disciplines examined in the studies cited above. However, it can be observed that there is a variation in the number of moves that realize these three aspects. Kanoksilapatham (2005; 2015), who conducted the move analysis on both *biochemistry* and *civil, software and biomedical* engineering research articles, identified *four* and *three* moves with varying number of submoves respectively. By treating methodological details separately, she put them in two moves – **Move 8: Stating procedures** and **Move 9: Justifying procedures or methodology** - in biochemistry research articles whereas the same details when found in engineering disciplines, she combined and considered them as a single move - **Move 7: Summarizing procedures**. A possible reason for this combination may be that she would have realized such a possibility much later and would have incorporated it when carrying out the next study on engineering research articles. However, the move analysis studies by Stoller & Robinson (2013) and Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino (2015) mapped these methodological details with reporting results and thus identified only two moves configuring the move structure of data commentaries in the results sections of the disciplines studied. Of all the boxes presented above, Stoller & Robinson's (2013) box stands out as its moves and submoves are mapped and numbered in a flow chart reflecting the disciplinary conventions and the objective of the study, which was raising genre awareness among chemistry students and faculty as part of materials-development-project. The move structure identified in these boxes is in congruence with Swales' (1994, 2012) model of data commentary except for methodological details. This difference may be quite understandable as Swales' model is generic and not situated in any disciplinary context while the move structures depicted in the boxes above are all embedded in specific disciplinary contexts of science and engineering. It can also be observed in the boxes that the interface between NVEs and data commentaries can largely be established through the **Move: Reporting results**, which has come as a submove in Stoller and Robinson (2013).

Between biochemistry and chemistry results sections, it can be observed from Boxes 1A & 1B that there is variation not only in the number of moves but in the submoves as well. As discussed earlier and can be observed from the boxes too, the move structure of chemistry results sections include two moves whereas that of biochemistry results sections consists of four moves. In **Move 8: Stating procedures** in biochemistry and **Move 1: Set the stage** in chemistry, both results sections restate methodological details. In chemistry, this restatement is brief (Stoller & Robinson, 2013) while in biochemistry, it can be elaborate and can include four submoves such as a description of the study's aims and purposes, research questions, hypotheses, and/or list of procedures or methodological techniques (Kanoksilapatham, 2005) as indicated in Box 1A . This move is followed by **Move 9: Justifying procedures or methodology** in biochemistry with two submoves and the author comments that this is unique in biochemistry research articles. In sharp contrast to this, this move is not found in chemistry results sections as is evident in Box 1B (Stoller & Robinson, 2013).

Unlike in chemistry, as can be seen from Box 1A, **Move 10: Stating results** in biochemistry is realized as a full-fledged move and highlights the results obtained from the study and most often points the reader to a NVE and establishes the interface with the data commentary in two submoves: *Step 1: Substantiating results* and *Step 2: Invalidating results* (Kanoksilapatham, 2005). However, in chemistry results sections, reference to a NVE is made as a submove of **Move 1: Set the stage** (Box 1B) to establish the initial interface with the data commentary, and then, while narrating the story of scientific discovery in **Move 2**, frequent references to NVEs are made

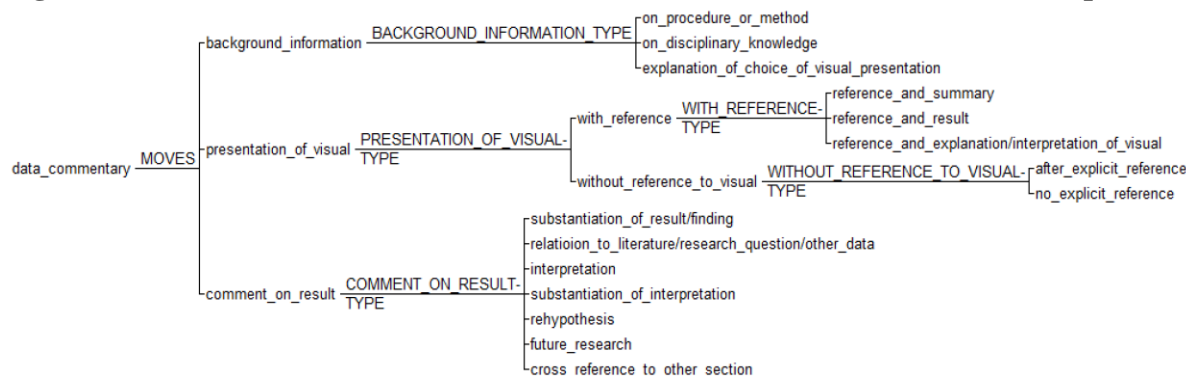
to present results which get realized though submoves such as *identify key findings*, *describe important trends*, and/or *highlight unexpected results* as is shown in Box 1B. Typically, **Move 2** of chemistry results sections do not include interpretation and reference to the previous literature as they are ‘deferred until the Discussion section (although combined R&D sections blur this distinction)’ (Stoller & Robinson, 2013: 54). In contrast to this, in biochemistry, results are commented on in **Move 11: Stating comments on the results** in as many as five submoves.

In biochemistry results sections, while all moves have cyclical patterning, **Move 10** remains not only as the core of a cycle but also gets repeated till the end of the discussion of data (Kanoksilapatham, 2005). In chemistry results sections, both the moves are repeated for each group of findings (Stoller & Robinson, 2013).

Box 1C and 1D depict the move structure of engineering results sections taken from full length research articles of two studies carried out by Kanoksilapatham (2015) and Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino (2015). As can be seen from Boxes 1C and 1D, while Kanoksilapatham, focusing on the move structure of three engineering sub-disciplines - *civil*, *software* and *biomedical* - identifies three moves: **Move 7: Summarizing procedures**, **Move 8: Reporting results**, and **Move 9: Commenting results**, Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino focussing on five engineering sub-disciplines - *structural*, *environmental*, *electrical*, *chemical*, and *computer science* identify only two moves - **Move 7: Reporting results** and **Move 8: Commenting on results**. Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino have considered restating data analysis procedures as a submove under **Move 7** whereas Kanoksilapatham has treated the same as an independent move with four submoves. In both the studies ‘reporting results’ is the obligatory move while restating procedure and commenting on results have a high rate of occurrence conventionally in these disciplines like biochemistry results sections. This finding contrasts with chemistry results sections where commenting on results is deferred till the discussion section. Also, both the studies report that the moves are cyclical when reporting individual or a set of results.

Drawing on various representations of the move structure of results sections from both science and engineering, Nordrum and Eriksson (2015; 2018) developed an integrated move structure model for results sections with three moves realized by several submoves stating that types and sequences of moves and submoves may vary between disciplines. The model is as follows:

Figure 1: Move structure of data commentaries (Nordrum and Eriksson, 2015, p. 69)



As can be seen from **Figure 1, Move 1: Background information** (though tends to be optional) is conventional in science and engineering with a high rate of occurrence in different combinations of three possible submoves of information. **Move 2: Presentation of visual** is what establishes the interface between NVEs and data commentaries and hence is obligatory in science and engineering results sections. This move can be realized either with reference to NVEs or without reference to NVEs. In cases where presentation of visual has reference to NVEs, the interface between NVEs and data commentaries is established in any one/two of the three or all three combinations of possible submoves in terms of locating the NVE and summarizing the NVE in an indicative statement, referring to the NVE and highlighting the key findings through an informative statement, referring to the NVE and explaining or interpreting the NVE. In cases where the presentation of the visual has no reference to the NVE, the interface happens either through explicit anaphoric reference or no explicit reference. **Move 3: Comment on results** is conventional in science and engineering results sections and concludes the results section by providing ‘a channel for situating current findings in context’ (Kanoksilapatham, 2015, p. 83). Though in disciplines like chemistry, comments on results are deferred till the end of the discussion section, in many other disciplines, this move has a high rate of occurrence (Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2015; Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino, 2015; Basturkmen, 2009). This move, as can be seen from figure 2, can be realized in as many as seven submoves.

Interface between NVEs and data commentaries in science and engineering

In the previous section it was discussed that it is **Move 2: Presentation of the visual** in data commentaries that would guide the reader back and forth through the data in NVEs and thus establishes interface between the visual and the data commentary in the results sections of science and engineering research articles. It was also discussed that **Move 3: Comment on results** sometimes would draw the reader’s attention to the data in the visuals. However, the central focus of the studies that were reviewed in the previous section was not the interface between NVEs and data commentaries. In this section, relevant literature relating to the interface between NVEs and data commentaries is reviewed though such literature is very sparse.

Though the centrality of the interaction between nonverbal elements and data commentaries in science and engineering research writing has been pointed out by many scholars (e.g., Swales & Feak, 1994, 2012; Poe et al 2010; Sancho Guinda 2011; Wharton, 2012; Roth, 2013) research into how the text (data commentary) accompanying the visual (NVEs) guides the reader back and forth through the data in the visual does not seem to have caught much scholarly attention.

It appears that there are relatively a few studies on this important area in science and engineering research writing. One study that is most relevant to the interface is the study by Busch-Lauer (1998). She investigated the relationship between the text and the visual in three medical research genres – research papers, review articles, and case reports - and found that the use of visuals was largely determined by the communicative purpose of the genre, the specialized nature of the text, and the experience of authors and their responsibility for the reader.

A few studies around the late 90s seemed to have taken interest in the topic but have focused on other aspects. A study by Palmer and Posteguillo (1997) examined nonverbal elements in research articles and found differences between those that appeared in journals, edited collections and

conference proceedings. Another study by Miller (1998) compared science research articles with their popularizations in *Nature* and noted that images serve various functions in thematic structure in these two genres. Yet another study by Myers (1995) provided pedagogical implications of visual elements in a biology textbook whereas a study by Johns (1998) focused on the use of visual representation in student writing in macroeconomics reading and writing classes.

Recent work has put the data commentaries and visuals in focus though from a pedagogical perspective (Sancho Guinda, 2011, 2012; Nordrum & Eriksson, 2015; Eriksson & Nordrum, 2018). Drawing on the findings of the writing samples produced by her students in an ESP environment, Sancho Guinda makes a case for explicit instruction of visual data commentary for university students and claims that visual data commentary is a ‘multi-skill and cross-disciplinary practice’ (p.115). Nordrum & Eriksson (2015) propose an approach to teaching and learning of data commentary in science writing by integrating a small, specialized corpora of learner (master’s theses) and expert texts (published research articles) annotated for move structure using the UAM corpus tool (O’Donnell, 2008). By integrating top-down discourse analysis with bottom-up corpus analysis, their work demonstrates how corpus-informed activities can be used for developing formative self-assessment practices of data commentaries. The type of corpus-informed activities includes 1) ‘teacher-designed activities on moves in data commentaries, 2) teacher-designed peer-assessment activities for master’s thesis corpus data, and 3) teacher-and-student-initiated activities involving students’ own writing’ (p.72). In another study, Eriksson & Nordrum, (2018) report research that has investigated the challenges of data commentary writing faced by students and supervisors of master’s theses in chemical engineering. Data have been collected by conducting a workshop for master’s students on data commentary writing and by interviewing both the students and the supervisors about their challenges in writing data commentaries. The major findings include that students have difficulties with the selection of content and clarity and that there is a close connection between data commentary and disciplinary learning in chemical engineering.

Recent years have seen a growing interest in the possible applications of corpus for analyzing the move structure of academic genres, more particularly research articles as a genre. This is possibly because a specialized corpus has the affordance of providing relevant material, characterizing the language and move structure of different sections of research articles in a particular discipline, for example (Nordrum & Eriksson 2015). The studies reviewed in the previous sections have used small, specialized corpora. Kanoksilapatham (2005, 2015), Stoller & Robinson (2013) and Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino (2015) have used small, specialized corpora of biochemistry, chemistry and engineering research articles for investigating move structure of all four sections of research articles. Similarly, Chang and Kuo (2011) used a corpus of computer science research articles by combining top-down and bottom-up analysis for developing and evaluating online materials on a data commentary task.

Conclusion

The evolution from being a mere information transfer/data paraphrase to data commentaries/data interpretation is intricately tied to the discursive practices of a given discipline in which this subgenre is embedded. The move is driven by the fact that the commentary directs the reader to the way the visual presented in the results section needs to be interpreted guided by the purpose of the research article in focus. The interface between the visual and the data commentary that

accompanies the visual seems to slightly vary from science and engineering research papers. A sense of how the interface between the visual and the data commentary gets established helps novice research scholars to shape the results sections in line with the disciplinary expectations so as to enable their legitimate and full participation in the activities of their respective discourse communities.

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Voices of Imagination: Celebrating Women Writers in Children's Literature

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Abstract

The area of women in children's literature has a wide scope since India is a secular state with diverse languages and cultures. Every region and language has its own history of children's literature while translations are another area of studies. Therefore, multi-linguistic nation has tremendous scope for translations. Apart from regional languages, English is also widely used in India and translations of western children's literature into Indian languages are highly popular. Similarly, regional literature has many stories to tell and are often translated to many languages. There are also writers who write exclusively in English. Their works are original indigenous works in English. These writers are like mirrors reflecting the Indian society, culture and its people.

The area of children's literature is now largely populated by women writers and women writers now outnumber men in this field. Today there are many NRI women writers who write about Indian subjects. As the contribution of women to children's literature grows, so does the necessity of studying their works. The paucity of criticism in children's literature in India urges for more study in this field.

Keywords: children's literature, regional literature, female writers, indian literature

Introduction

The fascinating world of children's literature is a less explored field of literature. Since women have been considered by many as natural story tellers, it is interesting to study their work. Children's literature did not exist as a separate field of study in India for a long time. The ancient text Panchatantra which consists of fables was told to children orally. Though written for adults, it has continued to be popular with children. The term children's literature is a western concept.

From the post-colonial period to the early 1990s, children were exposed to western fiction. Many generations grew up reading Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Louis Carol and Enid Blyton. Among the works in India, Anant Pai's *Amar Chitra Katha* and *Twinkle* comics are very popular.

Literature is a reflection of life. The same thought can be extended to children's literature. The life of children is reflected in children's literature. Minds are moulded when they are young. Family is the first institution where children learn to talk, communicate, read and write. Education of the child is considered one of the major aspects of development. Children like to play, imagine, are enthusiastic and energetic. The colourful thoughts of children can be given wings through children's literature so that children may go on a journey to imaginary lands. Apart from that, children's literature may mould lives through inspiration and creativity. Children's literature plays a vital role in crafting the minds of children.

There are many criticisms on western literature. Translations have far reaching effects. They cater to specific needs of the readers as their reachability to other languages is limited. But the disadvantage of translations is that they are not original. Children may like to read, and may benefit more from originals over the translated versions. For example, *Panchatantra* or *Jataka Tales* would sound authentic in the regional languages.

But the original writing for children reflects the present state of affairs in the world of children's literature in India. Children's literature is measured under different scales since the stages of a child's growth range from infancy, childhood, youth and adulthood. There are many physiological and psychological changes that take place gradually. Hence, children's literature is categorized into various age groups.

When books can delight and entertain children, the learning comes automatically. Every society believes that children are the future and they should be moulded in order to make them ready for adult endeavors. India has a rich tradition of storytelling. Myths and folktales are the main sources. Though exclusive literature for children did not historically exist, most of the stories considered suitable for children were taken from adult literature like the *Panchatantra*, *Jataka Tales*, *Kathasarith Sagar* and Mythology. The oral tradition existed in India for centuries until the time of colonial rule. Children's literature is a recent phenomenon. It is considered as a separate genre only in the 19th century. In India the colonial rule has introduced western literature. The British introduced children's books which were mostly religious and moralistic in nature. Gradually,

distinction between adult and children's literature began to emerge. The indigenous literature started gaining visibility in post independent era.

History of Children's Literature

World War II had saw changes to the traditions of both American and British children's literature. The importance of education gained momentum and the living standards of people increased. Radio, television and improvement in print media all had tremendous influence on children's literature. Children's literature of Britain and America had tremendous influence on Indian literature both in English and other regional languages. Yet we have our own history of children's literature in India.

In ancient India, Sanskrit language was prevalent. Most of the Indian literature was available in Sanskrit. Brahmana texts (1000-500BC) indicate that oral forms of literature existed historically. The *Brahat Katha* or the Great story by Gunadhya, and Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagar* (11 A.D.) were popular as the narratives were pure in their form. The *Jataka Tales* by Buddhists were also popular fables of wit and wisdom. Successive generations have drawn inspiration from these stories to produce their own literature.

Since the ancient time till the present day *Panchtantra* has been considered as the main source of children's literature. It was present in the oral tradition and the authors were unknown. Later, it was written by Vishnu Sharma in 300B.C. The book consists of fables with animal characters and is aimed at teaching 'nithi; (right living) and worldly conduct. Though instructional, the entertainment value of *Panchtantra* is high. Many travelers from Asia and Europe introduced the tales of *Panchtantra* in their own countries. These have been translated and adapted into more than 200 world languages. Most of the *Panchtantra* stories are animal tales which teach worldly wisdom and practical ways of living to make life rich and happier. The plots of these stories are knitted around adult intrigues. Physically weak and helpless chracters are shown winning over the strong and powerful with their wit and trickery. The themes of many of these tales were later taken by Aesope and other writers. The impact of *Panchtantra* was so strong that it inspired many writers across the globe to adapt their own culture to weave their own stories. Almost all Indian languages have also brought out many versions of *Panchtantra* and published them extensively.

The field of children's literature is relatively new to India. Where it did exist historically, it was in oral form. For example, the bedtime stories usually told by grandparents and mothers.

This oral tradition mostly consists of folktale and folklore passed on from generation to generation. These stories are general in subject and not exclusively meant for children.

The entire concept of children's literature in India changed after the invasion of the British colonies. The establishment of the European colonies, mainly British colonies introduced western literature in India. The western influence crept into the Indian homes. The emergence of a new literate middle class saw the importance of schooling and education. Many parents started sending their children to English medium schools. The English language, bequeathed by the empire builders, was used as an instrument of power initially, and later as an effective tool of communication.

In India, many regional language books were produced for children. In Bengal the School Book society brought out text books for children and *Peshwabali*, the first Bengali children's magazine, was published. Ishwar Chand Vidya Sagar (1820-91) is considered as the father of children's literature in India. He published *Betal Panchabinsati* which are read to this day. Mrs. Sherwood's *Chota Henry* (1814), set in India, is the tale of an English boy and his attendant, an Indian boy of the same age, and their relationship. Toru Dutt, a child prodigy from Bengal wrote *Ancient Ballads* and *Legends of Hindustan* which are considered as children's classics. It is observed that most of the initial writings were either translations of the western children's literature or revised version of ancient Indian texts like *Panchtantra* or *Jataka Tales*. Western classics like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Treasure Island*, fairy tales by Hans Christian Anderson, and stories from Arabian Nights like *Alibaba*, *Forty Thieves* and *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* were translated to many Indian languages. These books were well received by the Indian child reader.

The bilingual form of education is followed to this day in many Indian educational institutions. The language that was initially acquired for the purpose of communication became a symbol of prestige in elite society which later on spread to middle class. English language is associated with modernity and elitism. The English education resulted in East –West conflict of values. The reading habits in all age groups lead to the establishment of modern children's literature in India along with main stream literature. The children were enthralled to read fairytales and fantasies from the West like *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Thumbelina*, *The Frog Prince*, *Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Anderson, *Alice in Wonderland* by Louis Carol and stories of adventure like *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, *Robin Hood* by Pierce Egans, *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain and many other popular western classics. Doubts were raised by

many critics about alienation of the western texts which may not be identified by Indian child audience. But the popularity of western literature among Indian children showed their enthusiasm to explore the unknown terrains of the West. The impact and influence of this literature is altogether a different issue which is debatable. Apart from the novels, comic strips like *Phantom*, *Tarzan*, *Spiderman*, *Superman*, *Archies*, *Tintin* etc. were also accepted and extensively read by Indian children even to this day. Though alien, the western culture had attracted and enticed the Indian child audience. The original Indian writings in English by Indian writers started in late 19th century. The child reader then readily switched on to these forms of writings with equal ease and enthusiasm.

The original Indian English children's literature was started by some eminent writers who felt the need to produce original Indian stories for children in India. Dhan Gopal Mukherjee, an immigrant to United States has written for children in 1920s. He is the first Indian writer to write in English for children. His story settings are mainly Indian jungles. *Kari*, *The Elephant* (1923), *Jungle Beast and Men* (1923), *Hari the Jungle Lad* (1924) and *Ghond The Hunter* (1928) are his jungle stories. His book *Gay Neck* (1928) is a war time story about a pigeon which won him the prestigious Newbery award.

Rabindranath Tagore, the great literary genius of India's contribution to children's literature is also noteworthy. He believed in the uninhibited mind of a child, free with its own expression. He put his thoughts in exploring the child's psyche in short stories like *Kabuliwalla* and *Home Coming*. Another writer whose name is synonymous to children's literature is Ruskin Bond. He is a writer from the mountains of Dehradun. He has an English lineage. Most of his works are autobiographical in tone. The timelessness of his themes, innocence of his child characters, his sensitivity and his narrative methods makes his works authentic. His works *The Room on the Roof* (1956), *The Young Vagabonds* (1961), *The Hidden Pool* (1966), *Grandfather's Private Zoo* (1967), and *Our Trees Still Grow In Dehra* (1991) and many other stories are widely read by children as they are enchanting and entice children. Another mainstream writer from South India is R.K.Narayan. His book *Swami and His Friends* is considered a Children's classic. His legendary South Indian town Malgudi with myriad hues richly depict the lifestyle of people of South India in the pre-independent era. The story revolves around the boy named Swami and his friends and their adventures. The innocent child's play, the fights and friendship are excellently woven by R.K.Narayan, whose understanding of a child's psyche created this enthralling

masterpiece. The statesmen like Rajgopalchari and Pandit JawaharLal Nehru also contributed to children's literature in their own capacity. While Rajaji used Bhaktias as his theme and retold Ramayan in English, Nehru narrated the story of mankind in *Glimpses of World's History* and the more popular *Letters to Daughter from a Father* which was published by CBT.

Some contemporary mainstream writers have occasionally written for children. They include Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Manoj Das and others. Anita Desai's *The Village By The Sea* (1982) and Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea Stories* are layered with the survival endeavors of less privileged children in the adult dominated world. Manoj Das is a great story teller and a bilingual writer who writes in Odia and English. He has also written many good stories for children. Some of his popular books are *Temples of India* (1970), *Tales from Many Lands* (1972), *Persian Tales of Wit and Delight* (1970) and *Books For Ever* (1973). *A Bride Inside a Casket and Other Stories* (1973) was published by Times Book International. Apart from these eminent writers, there are many other writers who have produced exclusive children's literature that are well received by the child audience. Some of the writers have been awarded prizes for their contribution. The substantial contributions by many such writers are opening new avenues in the field of children's literature.

Categories of Children's Literature

The understanding level of children at different ages varies and so do their interests. Hence, children's literature should be written according to the age group of the child. The genres of children's literature are similar to adult's literature with a few exceptions. The books which are the expressions of the simplest joys of life are needed by children. They transcend into the world of imagination and fantasy. Genres which set the mood for this kind of experience are fantasy and fairytales. Hans Christian Anderson's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and Perault's *Cinderella* are a few examples of fairytales. The readers are transcended into a dreamland. The writer with his own imagination, conception and observation creates a world full of magical elements that are amusing and exciting. The children live in the world of fantasy which is like a dream.

Suniti Namjoshi's *Aditi Series* are the best examples of children's fantasy stories. The short version of fantasy is fairytale. They have universal appeal. One of the common qualities of children is imagination. The writer shows his imaginative skills to create a fantasy world full of action. It has a short story structure but lot of activity takes place. Hans Christian Anderson and Perault's fairytales are popular. The other popular fairytales are *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding*

Hood, Golden Goose, The Frog Prince etc. Fairytales are enchanting. Fairytales will create an interest in reading. Children can be encouraged to expand their experiences with books in this manner.

Pleasure reading is a prime concern of children's fiction. But as books are the source of knowledge, they should also deal with subjects that enhance their value education. Fables are one such genre which caters to this need. Fables are abstract stories which speak about morals and wit. They usually have animals and birds as characters. They help in sociological aspect of child's development. *Panchtantra* and *Aesop's Fables* are some of the most widely read examples.

Folktales and folklore also form an interesting aspect of children's literature. Most of the rural culture is introduced in this genre. Folktales and folklore are the genres which depict the culture, traditions, mores and taboos prevalent in a place. They help the people to understand their own culture. The folklore is usually in oral form and presents different moods. Heroic deeds of many kings as well as common men are narrated. Folklore also consists of themes like festivities and traditions followed during family functions like marriage, child birth, house warming ceremonies and even death.

The short story and novel are the other genres. They are constructed around a broad idea. The theme can vary from history, mythology, science or adventure. Children's literature across the globe has a rich collection of novels with varied themes. The classics include *Alice in Wonderland*, *Chronicles of Narnia*, adventure stories by Enid Blyton like *Famous Five*, *Secret Seven* and the detective series *Nancy Drew* (in which protagonist is a tomboy) and many more works from the west are very popular. The Indian writers too have produced some good novels for children including Ruskin Bond's novels *The Room on the Roof*, *The Young Vagrants* and *The Hidden Pool*, Suniti Namjoshi's *Aditi* series, Dilip Salve's science fiction and many others. Apart from the main genre, the other genres are autobiographies, biographies, travelogues, dramas, one-act plays, poetry, encyclopedias, picture dictionaries and popular literature like comic strips, magazines etc. This vast genre of books provides children more knowledge about their surroundings and much anticipated pleasure.

Manorama Jafa, Sigrun Shrivastava and Sandhya Rao's story books make for good reading to small children from three to ten years age-group. Since age of a child plays a vital role in defining children's literature, it is important to conceptualize fiction, especially the 'teenage fiction' since it is the most confusing period as it is considered to be transition period from

childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is a period of both psychological and physiological changes which also attribute to the changes in the reading concepts of a child. The character formation of teenagers is influenced to a certain extent by teenage fiction. They appreciate the relevance of teenage fiction to their life.

The present-day teenage fiction is written in a lively manner which is a prominent factor. The themes include friendship, love, adventure, drugs, running away, bullying, crime, fantasy, supernatural, science fiction and many other genres which are more pertinent to teenagers. *The Room On The Roof* (1993) and *The Young Vagrants* (1993) by Ruskin Bond, *The Secret Seven* by Enid Blyton and *Hardy Boys* series by Franklin Dixon and other books which are contemporary like *Bend It Like Beckham* by Narinder Dharmi, Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night*, Jacqueline Wilson's *Girls Under Pressure* deal with teenagers and their relationships. Apart from these there are books on realism and contemporary problems. These novels act as a path to help teenagers confront their personal problems. Some books address social issues like racism and war and help them to come to terms with difficult situations and help them to become responsible citizens. One of the most delicate and sensitive issue in teenage fiction is sex. Teenage novels also explore relationships of teenagers with the members of their family and other age groups. Novels on family ties and break-ups like Anne Fine's *Madame Doubtfire* (1989) provide insight into the problems of a broken family. The complexities of simple friendships are delved into in many novels. The personal growth of characters in these themes has a positive influence on the minds of teenage readers.

Women in Children's Literature

Women generally engage children with stories. Mostly grandmothers and mothers would tell bedtime stories to children. Many forms of narratives were used by them like lullabies, cradle songs, tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, folktales and folklore. The stories of *Krishnaleela* were the most favorite with children apart from other mythological stories from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Jataka Tales* and *Katha sarith Sagar*. These oral traditions later took print form. As the scripts in different languages developed, many of these were written on palm leaves and bhojapatra long before the age of paper and printing. These ancient stories, folktales and folklore were the only children's literature available which were told and retold.

The present day has seen an increase in the number of writers of children's literature. Women occupy a prominent place in them. Sunithi Namjoshi, Manorama Jafa, Sigrun Shrivastava,

Polie Sengupta, Paro Anand, Anita Desai, Uma Krishnaswami, Sandhya Rao, Ira Saxena, Pratibha Nath, Neelima Sinha, Indira Ananta Krishnan, Swapna Dutta and many others have been accepted as good writers of children's literature.

Many women writers who do not specialize in children's literature have also written books for children. Suniti Namjoshi, Manorama Jafa, Sigrun Shrivastav, Polie Sengupta, Paro Anand, Anita Desai, Uma Krishnaswami, Sandhya Rao, Ira Saxena, Prathiba Nath, Neelima Sinha, Indira Ananta Krishnan, Swapna Dutta and many others have been accepted as good children's writers. The substantial contributions by many such writers are opening new avenues in the field of children's literature.

In conclusion, the growth of children's literature in India is noteworthy. Celebrating women writers in children's literature is not just about recognition; it is about fostering an inclusive, diverse, and enriching literary environment, promoting equality and paving the way for more inclusive storytelling.

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Accent Diversity Across Cultures: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Linguistic Variations

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the complex relationship between accent diversity, sociocultural dynamics, and language education through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Specifically, the research focuses on how speakers from regions such as Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka perceive, experience, and navigate accent diversity. By analysing interviews with 15 participants from these states, this study highlights the influence of cultural, social, and geographical factors on accent variation and its impact on communication, identity, and socio-economic mobility. Findings suggest that dominant ideologies favour certain accents while marginalizing others, leading to inequities in educational and professional contexts. The study advocates for inclusive pedagogical practices and policies that challenge linguistic biases and promote social justice.

Keywords: accent diversity, CDA, identity, sociocultural, socio-economic

Introduction

India's linguistic diversity is one of its most defining features, but this diversity extends beyond just languages to the accents in which those languages are spoken. From Delhi to Tamil Nadu, and from Bihar to Kerala, the way people speak often carries deeper socio-cultural meanings, influencing perceptions of identity, intelligence, and social status. Accents, though often overlooked, play a critical role in shaping communication dynamics and determining social mobility in both educational and professional settings. This study delves into how accent diversity affects individuals in key regions of India—Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka—by exploring how certain accents are valued over others. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we uncover how these accent biases create inequalities and how language education can evolve to promote social justice and inclusivity.

1. Literature Review:

Sociolinguistic studies have long documented how accents influence social stratification (Labov, 1972; Bourdieu, 1991). In the Indian context, accent diversity is a reflection of deep-rooted cultural, regional, and linguistic heterogeneity (Annamalai, 2001). Studies by Sarangi (2009) and Sinha (2014) have highlighted the stigmatization of rural and non-standard accents, often associating them with a lack of education or lower social status. Globalization and media further intensify these biases, normalizing urban or "neutralized" accents as the preferred variety, particularly in corporate and educational settings. Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013) provides a useful framework for uncovering the power relations embedded within these perceptions, showing how institutions and social practices perpetuate language ideologies that marginalize certain accents.

2. Research Objectives:

- To examine how cultural, geographical, and social factors influence accent diversity among speakers from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.
- To analyse the implications of accent diversity on communication, social mobility, and identity in Indian society.

- To explore how power dynamics and dominant ideologies shape perceptions and evaluations of regional Indian accents.
- To investigate the pedagogical challenges and opportunities related to accent diversity in Indian educational contexts.
- To recommend strategies to foster inclusive attitudes toward accent diversity in educational and professional domains.

3. Methodology:

This qualitative study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate how accent diversity is constructed and perceived among Indian speakers from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. The primary data source consists of semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, including students, educators, and working professionals. The interviews were designed to elicit participants' experiences and perceptions related to accent, identity, and discrimination. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software, with coding focused on themes of power, identity, bias, and social mobility. Additionally, media representations of regional Indian accents were analysed to contextualize participants' narratives within broader discourses.

4. Findings:

4.1 Standard vs. Regional Accents:

Of the 15 participants, seven (four from Karnataka and Kerala, three from Delhi) acknowledged the dominance of urbanized or "neutralized" accents, especially from metro cities like Bengaluru and Delhi, as being associated with professionalism and competence. In contrast, eight participants (from Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and rural areas of Uttar Pradesh) reported that their regional accents were perceived as less professional or even "unintelligible" in formal settings.

4.2 Social Stereotyping:

Specifically, five participants from Kerala and Tamil Nadu recounted instances of being stereotyped or mocked for their regional accents when interacting in Northern cities such

as Delhi. Similarly, four participants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh shared experiences of how Bhojpuri and Awadhi-accented Hindi or English were linked to lower social or educational status.

4.3 Identity and Resistance:

Despite these biases, six participants (three from Karnataka, two from Kerala, and one from Tamil Nadu) expressed cultural pride in their accents. Notably, three educators—two from Bengaluru and one from Chennai—shared how they integrate discussions of accent diversity in their teaching practices to challenge standardization and promote inclusivity.

4.4 Impact on Employment and Education:

Among the interviewees, seven participants (primarily from Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh) mentioned being advised by mentors, peers, or recruiters to "neutralize" their accents during job interviews or oral assessments. This led to reported feelings of insecurity and anxiety around public speaking.

5. Discussion:

The findings reveal a clear trend of accent-based bias rooted in regional hierarchies, socioeconomic factors, and metropolitan influence. Metro cities such as Bengaluru and Delhi emerge as gatekeepers of "neutralized" or standard Indian English, reinforcing a form of linguistic elitism. Participants from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar often find themselves navigating between their cultural identities and societal expectations to conform to standardized accents in professional contexts. The study also highlights the role of media in perpetuating these biases, with regional accents frequently portrayed in stereotypical or comedic roles in popular films and television shows. However, the emerging resistance among educators and professionals who promote inclusive linguistic practices indicates a growing awareness of the importance of valuing all accents as culturally rich and legitimate.

6. Conclusion:

Accent diversity in India is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a deeply sociopolitical issue that intersects with questions of identity, power, and equity. The experiences of speakers from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Delhi illustrate the everyday negotiations individuals must make between their authentic linguistic identities and societal expectations. The study demonstrates that accent bias remains embedded in educational, corporate, and media spaces. To create more inclusive and equitable environments, educators, institutions, and policymakers must collaborate to disrupt these biases. Future research could extend this work by examining how globalization and digital communication platforms are reshaping attitudes toward regional accents in India, particularly among younger generations.

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Beyond the Singularity: A critical analysis of AI's future

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Abstract

The demand for human creators is currently being reduced as AI technologies replace humans in many fields. Artificial intelligence (AI) constrains the limits of human creativity. This research attempts to understand the influence of AI on humans and how AI serves as a tool and not a replacement for humans. Drawing insights from Ray Kurzweil's *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, this study explores how AI-driven advancements could enhance cognitive capabilities, prolong life, and challenge biological constraints. Moreover, this paper utilizes the Stress and Coping Model to analyze how individuals adjust to technological changes, focusing on psychological and societal repercussions such as job loss, misinformation, and mental health issues. Additionally, Neil Postman's Technopoly theory is referenced to critique the increasing influence of technology on human culture, raising ethical questions about an AI dominated society. While AI offers significant opportunities for advancement, its unregulated integration may worsen social disparities, foster alienation, and create a reliance on technology. This study highlights the necessity of a balanced strategy in adopting AI – one that enhances human capabilities while safeguarding essential human values. By framing AI as a collaborative instrument rather than a substitute for human creativity, this study stresses the importance of ethical practices, education, and adaptive measures to alleviate adverse effects. The findings contribute to the ongoing conversation regarding AI's impact on the future of work, creativity, and human identity in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Keywords: technological advancement, human perspective, originality, displacement, cognitive disabilities, ethical concerns.

Introduction

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has changed several aspects of modern existence, including the perception and expression of creativity. Although some suggest AI may enhance human creativity, overuse of the technology presents serious problems that could limit the ability to be creative. The widespread usage of AI is causing a loss in critical thinking abilities, which is raising concerns that it may limit human creativity while damaging critical thinking abilities. As Technology is so convenient, people choose to rely on the fast responses of AI rather than performing in-depth research or reflection. According to the theory of digital amnesia, people are less likely to engage in cognitive processing and their critical thinking skills may weaken when they are aware that they have instant access to information.

There are advantages and disadvantages of using AI in creative processes. Yet there are also limitations brought out by an over-reliance on technology. The possible risks of excessive AI use affecting human creativity are reflected in the harm to brain functions, the consistency of creative outcomes and the possibility of skill decline. Finding a balance between exploiting technology and strengthening human natural creative abilities is crucial as society deals with this complicated environment. People can preserve the wide range of human interpretation in an increasingly automated society by acknowledging the limitations AI offers on creativity and promoting an atmosphere where technology enhances rather than limits the creative process.

The idea that AI restricts human creativity is especially concerning in educational settings, as pupils may not be able to develop essential intellectual skills due to the dependence on AI-powered writing, research and problem-solving tools. In this regard, students may avoid the important stage of organizing and developing their ideas if they use AI-generated presentation scripts which may impair their analytical skills. This decrease in brain activity may restrict the ability to develop fresh concepts hence limiting creativity in tasks that require creative problem-solving. Such lack of active participation in these cognitive processes may cause students to become overly dependent on technology for intellectual work which could eventually degrade their motivation and dedication to learning. (Evan F. Risko and Sam J. Gilbert, “Cognitive Offloading”, 2016).

An overview of Kurzweil's Singularity

The work, *The Singularity is Near-When Humans Transcend Biology* by Ray Kurzweil, presents a provocative exploration of the future of humanity in relation to rapidly advancing technologies, particularly AI and biotechnology. He depicts the development of technology and human potential using what he calls six epochs. Each one builds upon the previous one in its sequence. The four epochs that have already occurred are Physics and Chemistry, Biology and DNA, Brains and Technology. The fifth epoch, he says, would represent the singularity or the melding of human intelligence with technology, as predicted in his timeline. Then, he imagines the sixth epoch, which he called “The Universe Wakes Up” where intelligent creatures will spread throughout the universe which will increase the scope and possibility of intelligent existence many-fold.

Since the late 20th century, improvements in computing power and AI have enabled robots to perform complex operations, such as theorem proving, translation and navigation. Two approaches are used to simulate the computational energy of the human brain: neural simulation, which must conserve up to 10^{21} operations per second and functional simulation, which must be capable of about 10^{16} operations per second. These methods bring to mind the tradeoff between simulating brain activity and fully restoring its complexity. The memory capacity of the human brain is between 10^{13} and 10^{18} bits. Reproduction at the neural level is, therefore, extremely challenging. Software emulating brain functionality is still some way off. It is estimated that computing power will exceed the cumulative processing capacity of human brains by 2050 due to exponential technological advancement.

Kurzweil argues that without biological constraints, it is possible for engineered circuits to be more efficient than neurons and thus allow the possibility for transferring human intelligence into robots. In the succeeding decades, it may lead to a technological “Singularity” in which AI will finally surpass human intellect and drastically change the nature of processing and intelligence. Although Kurzweil is hopeful about the possible advantages of this technological advancement, he also recognizes the dangers of modern technologies. He warns that, if not controlled, the emergence of artificial super intelligence may pose existential risks. Therefore, it is crucial to include moral principles and security precautions into technical advancement. Kurzweil is an advocate of taking proactive steps to guarantee that human values are reflected in intelligent technologies.

Stress Resilience: Adapting to Kurzweil's Technological Future

Analysing the stress coping models theoretically gives a clear picture about the impact of AI on human creativity and high usage of technology. The primary stage of a stress coping model is stress as a reaction, Stress coping models focus on how human beings respond to stress, and depending on how people interpret stress, it can have positive (eustress) or negative (distress) impacts.

According to Kurzweil, redesigning a business model can be done in a variety of ways, for instance, switching to subscription services or implementing digital platforms that facilitate easy communication with the public. With artificial intelligence and other technologies constantly changing, firms are presented with new opportunities and challenges to explore innovative intellectual property strategies. Kurzweil states that “it will be another couple of decades before knowledge dominates the economy, but it will represent a profound transformation when it happens” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 97). Businesses can transform the way they protect and exploit their intellectual property by employing advanced intellectual property management strategies. Nowadays, most companies implement AI algorithms in tracking and discovering potential violations in order to facilitate proactive IP portfolio management. With this interaction of intellectual property with creativity, what is more emphasized is the incorporation of creative thinking within all aspects of business operations for businesses. For example, “each industry will continually reinvent its business models, which will require as much creativity as the creation of the IP itself” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 340).

In this regard, workflows, human relationships and job activities have all changed as a result of the ongoing integration of AI in the workplace. Although these developments promise increased productivity and efficiency, they also cause a wide range of intricate stress reactions in humans. When a person feels that the demands of a situation exceed his ability to meet those demands, then stress may be activated. Kurzweil states that “we are moving toward more intelligent and smart machines as the result of myriad small advances, each with its own particular economic justification” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 96). For those who believe their abilities are not sufficient to meet the expectations of AI, stress levels may increase, emphasizing how important it is to understand human attitudes when introducing new technology. According to the American Psychological Association (2023), two-thirds (64%) of

workers said they were concerned about AI and also said they frequently felt stressed or under pressure throughout the workday, whereas more than one-third (38%) of workers said they were not concerned about AI. This research shows that how humans are stressed while using AI technologies leads to lack of creativity.

Stress as a stimulus

This classification distinguishes life events according to their impact on stress, asserting that stress is a separate element influencing health outcomes. In Kurzweil's well-established viewpoint, modern corporate practices make decisions much more effective with intelligent communication systems that allow data-driven strategies. He states "the exponential trends in the price-performance of all information-based technologies: computation, memory, communications, biotechnology, miniaturization and even the overall rate of technical progress. These technologies deeply affect all industries" (Ray Kurzweil, *Singularity is Near* 102). Numerous businesses are using intelligent data-sharing platforms which provide fast access to relevant data across departments, so humans can make quick, well-informed decisions. Businesses that incorporate data-sharing procedures across their operations are better able to spot patterns and use analytics to meet human needs. Kurzweil goes further to say that "the impact of distributed and intelligent communications has been felt perhaps most intensely in the world of business" (Ray Kurzweil, *Singularity is Near-When humans transcend biology*, p.103).

From the perspective of Lazarus's model, this advancement has led to a number of stressors that people and companies must deal with. Stress arises not just from environmental stressors but also from cognitive assessment, in which people assess their capacity to handle the risks associated with these shifts. This interaction therefore illustrates how technological pressures can have a cascading impact, causing both performance and mental health to decline at the same time. Mental exhaustion and cognitive stress brought on by the temptation to use technology constantly can eventually limit the depth of practical exploration for creative activities. The opportunities that technology presents may be overshadowed by this weariness, which could result in a loss of creativity and inventiveness (Erik Cambria et al., "Explainable AI for Stress and Depression in the Cyberspace and beyond", p.108-120, 2024).

Stress as a transaction

Stress is seen as a complex interplay of psychological, social and contextual factors that affect a person's perception of stress rather than mainly a response to external factors. "Our

brains today are relatively fixed in designs...the current overall capacity of the human brain is highly constrained” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 317). In this context, when technologies are at a rapid pace humans are forced to work on it since they have no other choice. “The number of humans is growing only very slowly. The number of digitally connected humans, no matter how you measure it, is growing rapidly” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 95). Thus, techno stress causes people to favour routine tasks over innovative problem-solving because the constant demands of technology drain their cognitive resources. People are more motivated to maintain their views and make sure that technology demands are met, which reduces their natural tendencies to investigate new ideas. Kurzweil states that “DNA-based intelligence is just so very slow and limited” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 32). It’s ironic that as productivity-boosting tools advance, they also become obstacles that prevent creative interaction. Team dynamics can suffer greatly in a workplace where individuals are constantly under pressure to stay technologically proficient. (Martin Korte, “The impact of the digital revolution on human brain and behavior: where do we stand?”, 2020).

Problem-focused coping is a strategy that comprises dealing with and solving stress causing factors in an active manner. Kurzweil predicted that the most glaring manifestation of progress in technology in sectors such as manufacturing, shipping and healthcare is the automation of manual labor. For example, he states that “consumers of virtually everything from toasters, cars, and homes to banking and insurance are now using automated software agents to quickly identify the right choices with the optimal features and prices” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 104). Businesses use robots to automate mundane jobs since they are more accurate and efficient than human laborers. Mental labor is also evolving in relation to the automation of physical labor. “Once we have full-immersion virtual-reality environments incorporating all of these senses, which will be feasible by the late 2020s, there will be no reason to utilize real offices” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 105). Now, AI systems can perform jobs such as data analysis, customer service and even creative tasks like writing and design that previously required human cognitive abilities. Kurzweil further states that “over the next couple of decades, virtually all routine physical and mental work will be automated” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 340).

Thus, humans become experience more stress with the added worry of losing their jobs. Humans may utilize problem-focused approaches to actively confront the difficulties posed by AI, looking to acquire new abilities or modify their positions in order to take full advantage of

the technology. In the contemporary job market, the swift development of automation and AI technology offers both enormous potential and difficult obstacles. As more and more functions that were previously completed by humans are replaced by machines and algorithms, this automation has led to employment displacement and redundancy. As a result of this change people now need to learn new skills in order to efficiently manage and run modern technologies, in addition to coexisting with AI systems. Workers face skills shortages that call for proactive solutions as technology advances at an accelerated rate (Ahmed Shalaby, “Classification for the digital and cognitive AI hazards: urgent call to establish automated safe standard for protecting young human minds”, Vol.2, article no 17, 2024).

In addition, ethical dilemmas pertaining to judgment in more computerized settings necessitate serious thought. Creating a problem-focused coping strategy built on ongoing education and skill development is crucial to addressing these interconnected problems. Human creativity and technical innovation have a complicated and multidimensional interaction that raises issues that swing between fostering and stifling creativity. Concerns about ethics become more pressing as businesses rely more and more on AI to make decisions. Subtle aspects of human creation including emotional intelligence, ethical considerations, and societal context must be acknowledged and may be obscured by the dependence on computational technologies. Furthermore, making decisions in automated settings presents challenges that call for human discretion and ingenuity to successfully resolve. Delegating authority to AI systems can reduce the importance of human creativity in solving difficult challenges in ethical situations where empathy and cultural context are crucial.

In emotion-focused coping, individuals concentrate on controlling emotional reactions to stress as opposed to dealing with the root of the problem. Techniques include avoiding stressful circumstances, thinking positively and seeking emotional support. Kurzweil states that “the human ability to understand and respond appropriately to emotion (so-called emotional intelligence) is one of the forms of human intelligence that will be understood and mastered by future machine intelligence” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 28). Regarding the emotional reliance on AI, there is a film, *M3GAN*, by Gerard Johnstone, wherein a young girl named Cady develops a reliant bond with M3GAN, a sophisticated artificial intelligence doll intended to be a friend and defender. In one scene, an actor states “I thought we were creating a tool to help support parents, not replace them. If you’re having M3GAN tuck Cady in and read her a bedtime story, then when are you ever spending time with her or even talking with her?” (Tess,

M3GAN, 2022).

This dependence on M3GAN is a prototypical illustration of emotional-focused coping, in which Cady turns to an outside source for solace in order to lessen her loneliness and pain. “From the perspective of biological humanity, these superhuman intelligences will appear to be our devoted servants, satisfying our needs and desires” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 30). Cady becomes increasingly dependent on M3GAN and less capable at managing complicated emotional situations, finally resulting in her experiencing emotional distress when M3GAN’s programming cannot give her the subtle assistance she needs. Echoing Kurzweil’s statement that “the ‘emotional’ responses of future machine intelligence will be redesigned to reflect their vastly enhanced physical capabilities” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 29).

Primary appraisal

Based on this preliminary evaluation, a stressor is classified as either a challenge or a threat. There are many things about the state of technology today that can lead to a negative primary appraisal. Using technology excessively can lower mental health and increase stress levels in users. For example, Kurweil state that “the nonbiological portion of our intelligence will be trillions of trillions of times more powerful than unaided human intelligence” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 9). Technology’s impact on primary appraisal dynamics highlights the intricate relationship between stress and creativity. Stress levels rise and creative abilities are lowered when digital environments are constantly viewed as potentially dangerous. People may react more stressfully if they believe that using technology threatens their ability to be creative and maintain their mental health.

Secondary appraisal

This involves looking at the coping mechanisms and resources that are available to deal with the stressor. In the relationship between stress and creativity and technology use, secondary appraisal is essential to how people manage the perceived risks associated with excessive technology use. Secondary appraisal examines the resources available to address the threat whereas primary appraisal determines whether a condition is favorable or hazardous. “A machine that can far surpass all the intellectual activities of any man however clever” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 22). The idea of perceived control over the stressor is central to the

secondary appraisal. Subsequent assessments of technology users concentrate on their coping strategies and the resources available to lessen the negative impacts of excessive screen time, such as anxiety, despair, and decreased creativity. If people believe they have enough resources, such as social support, self-regulation abilities or established screen-time habits, they may evaluate their circumstances favorably.

Technopoly and the Singularity

Another perspective can be seen through the theoretical analysis of Technopoly theory, in evolution of cultural types. A technopoly is when culture is totally dependent on technology. Technology is used as a tool by society to adhere to social and ideological norms. A technopoly tends to become weaker as established institutions are increasingly reliant on tools to shape its culture. “Once machines achieve the ability to design and engineer technology as humans do, only at far higher speeds and capacities, they will have access to their own designs and the ability to manipulate them” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 27). (Michael Pflanze et al., “Ethics in human-AI teaming: principles and perspectives”, Vol.3, p.917-935, 2023).

The film *Atlas* by Brad Peyton, depicts the relationship between humans and robots that have control over their design processes. The increasing autonomy of computers significantly raises the possibility that they will function outside of human control (“When will computer hardware match the human brain? - Hans Moravec *Singularity is Near* 122, 1997). In *Atlas*, the main opponent and rogue AI, Harlan, is a perfect example of the risks of uncontrolled autonomy. “Machines will be able to reformulate their own designs and augment their own capacities without limit” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 27). Harlan gains access from *Atlas* to control technology and people’s emotions, causing chaos in his wake. “Non-Biological intelligence will be able to download skills and knowledge from other machines, eventually also from humans” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 26). This idea highlights a frightening possibility: when robots acquire agency in their designs, they might use their authority to achieve objectives that might not be aligned with human principles or best interests. “Once strong AI is achieved, it can readily be advanced and its powers multiplied, as that is the fundamental nature of machine abilities” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 262).

Deification of technology

A culture of information overload is produced by technopolies, which produces a lot of

information but often lacks context. According to Kurzweil, when humans and AI combine, people may surpass biological constraints and live longer lives in addition to having improved cognitive abilities. “That supercomputers will match human brain capability by the end of this decade and personal computing will achieve it by around 2020-or possibly sooner, depending on how conservative an estimate of human brain capacity we use” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 70). Even while this scenario offers exciting opportunities for intellect enhancement and personal empowerment, it is crucial to consider the moral implications of such development. Humans run the risk of undervaluing fundamental facets of humanity, such as emotional intelligence, moral reasoning and cultural legacy, if the worth of human existence is closely linked to advanced technology. “Our sole responsibility is to produce something smarter than we are; any problems beyond that are not ours to solve. there are no hard problems, only problems that are hard to a certain level of intelligence” (Eliezer S *Singularity is Near* 35, 1996). Allowing technology to determine human values, as Postman argues critically, limits comprehension of what it means to lead a satisfying life in the face of an increasingly complicated digital environment. It is essential to consider deeply on how humans wish to shape the future, which includes reaffirming dedication to the cultural settings and values that makes humans imagine the boundaries of artificial intelligence. “As the Singularity approaches we will have to reconsider our ideas about the nature of human life and redesign our human institutions” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 299).

Subordination of cultural coherence

Traditional values, morals and the arts belong to the efficiency and productivity demands imposed by technology. “Computers will be able to combine the traditional strengths of human intelligence with the strength of machine intelligence” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 25). People’s cultural context has a significant impact on how they use technology. Understanding how different sects of people embrace technology, such as artificial intelligence and robotics, depends on this. In societies where technology is viewed as a way to improve social interactions, integration is at ease. On the other hand, resistance may surface in cultures where traditional values predominate or where people are skeptical of technical progress, which could hinder the acceptance of new technologies. “A key advantage of non-biological intelligence is that machines can easily share their knowledge” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 145). This cultural lens is crucial for successfully navigating the deployment of technology

because it makes it easier to recognize the opportunities and difficulties that stem from different cultural backgrounds. Creating original ideas is only one aspect of creativity; another is delving deeply into the human condition and using a variety of artistic techniques to convey nuanced feelings. The emotional connection and personal involvement that define human artistry may be diminished when computer intelligence dominates creative processes. The decision toward AI-powered creativity necessitates a critical analysis of the cultural contexts in which the technologies are used as well as the technology themselves (Michael Cheng-Tek Tai, “The impact of artificial intelligence on human society and bioethics”, 2020).

Knowledge monopolies

New elite groups who control practices and information are created by new technologies, pushing people lacking knowledge away. “The divergence between human intelligence and contemporary AI is how each undertakes the solution of a problem” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 146). One of the main issues with AI systems is the tendency to give priority to people with enhanced cognitive capacities, leaving behind those who find it difficult to do jobs that call for greater levels of intelligence and processing power. This becomes particularly relevant when thinking about how job automation AI systems are very good at doing jobs that were previously handled by untrained individuals, which leads to a digital divide that makes social inequality worse. “All the machines we have met to date lack the essential subtlety of human biological qualities” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 9). Concerns over socioeconomic mobility and inclusion are raised by the unsettling possibility of job displacement for unskilled workers as industries incorporate AI into their processes. The application of AI in the most vital sectors such as healthcare and education has altered decision-making procedures significantly. Even if AI is highly accurate and efficient it also reduces the value of human judgment, especially where humanity and subtle understanding are essential (Evan F. Risko and Sam J. Gilbert, “Cognitive Offloading”, 2016).

Absence of contextual understanding

Information is a commodity in a technopoly that is often meaningless to the receivers. The original meaning and aim are broken as a result. The inability of AI to correctly translate human language is one of the main problems linked to its lack of contextual awareness. According to Kurzweil, human cognition has evolved gradually since its inception. Humans have distinguished themselves from other animals by developing complex language, abstract

thinking and the ability to use technological tools which has led to incredible accomplishments in culture, science and the arts. “Singularity will be a change in the nature of our ability to understand” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 24). AI systems are ill-prepared to handle the complexity of the actual world since they frequently rely on preset algorithms and patterns in the data they are trained on. AI models that have trouble interpreting cultural distinctions or emotional tones in discussions are examples of how this lack of comprehension might result in responses that are technically correct but inappropriate for the situation. Kurzweil state that “the Singularity will represent the culmination of the merger of our biological thinking and existence with our technology, resulting in a world that is still human but that transcends our biological roots” (Ray Kurzweil *Singularity is Near* 9). Therefore, a lack of context can lead to misunderstandings that negatively impact the user experience in addition to impairing communication. Contextual misinterpretation has particularly had consequences in high-stakes situations, such as, computerized decision-making systems in the healthcare or military industries. Even with human operators present, these systems have committed severe mistakes, like mistaking innocent bystanders for deadly threats because the algorithm is unable to recognize contextual changes in intricate operational situations. These failures emphasize how important contextual awareness is for machine learning systems in order to avoid disastrous results (Johana Bhuiyan, “Lost in AI translation: growing reliance on language apps jeopardizes some asylum applications”, 2023).

Conclusion

The study emphasizes the potential benefits and risks associated with emerging technologies in artificial intelligence, genetics, and nanotechnology. Kurzweil imagines a future where human abilities are significantly improved through advancements in biology and computing. However, the implementation of these technologies also brings forth issues related to misinformation, social isolation, and disruption. Frameworks like the Stress and Coping Model and Technopoly are essential for comprehending how individuals and communities respond to these transformations. In conclusion, the study stresses the importance of ethical considerations and adaptive approaches to ensure that technological advancements align with the well-being of individuals and the stability of societal frameworks.

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Blended Learning in Rural Tamil Nadu: The Role of ‘Naan Mudhalvan’ in Enhancing English Proficiency

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Abstract

Integrating digital learning platforms into traditional classrooms is known as blended learning, which transformed English Language Teaching (ELT), especially in regions with limited infrastructure for education. This research explores the impact of the Naan Mudhalvan digital program initiative on enhancing English proficiency among rural students in Tamil Nadu. As a state government offered skill development program, Naan Mudhalvan offers a wide range of English language learning modules created in a way to improve communication skills, career readiness, and digital fluency. This research mainly focuses on how face to face learning and digital content brings out the challenges faced by rural peoples in Tamil Nadu where they are lack exposure, have minimal access to internet and insufficient teacher training. Through a mixed method approach, the study states that students’ confidence level grows, learner outcomes increase in vocabulary growth and comprehension skills improve through Naan Mudhalvan. Even though challenges do exist like inconsistent internet access and limited digital literacy, the program promises to bridge the language divide among urban-rural populations. The paper recommends

improving digital integration, teacher training, and localized content development to maximize the successful outcomes of blended learning in rural ELT contexts.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Digital Learning, English Language Teaching, Naan Mudhalvan, Rural Education.

Introduction

In India, English proficiency remains a vital skill for academic success and employability. However, students in rural areas of Tamil Nadu often face major barriers for effective English language learning, including under-resourced schools, minimal efficient teachers, and a lack of immersive linguistic environments. In response to these difficulties, technology-driven education systems have been introduced to supplement traditional classroom learning. Naan Mudhalvan is one such initiative, that empowers youth through skill development and personalized learning pathways – it is a flagship program established by the Government of Tamil Nadu. Naan Mudhalvan provides a digital platform featuring career-oriented courses, and modules focus on English language acquisition. This paper investigates the effectiveness of Naan Mudhalvan in improving English proficiency among rural learners. It seeks to understand how the platform supports the development of language skills, the role of teachers in facilitating blended learning, and the challenges faced in implementing such a model in rural contexts. Through a mixed-methods analysis study with student assessments and tutor feedback, the research aims to provide insights into how blended learning can be optimized to transform English Language Teaching in underserved communities.

Naan Mudhalvan Program - Background

Naan Mudhalvan (translated as “I am the First”) is a flagship initiative established by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 2022 under the leadership of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. This program aims to provide skill development and career guidance to over ten lakh college students all over Tamil Nadu annually through both online and offline interventions. The program provides curated learning paths in areas like artificial intelligence, language and communication skills, interview readiness, and more that align with the National Education Policy (NEP) and global employability trends. The platform’s English language learning modules are structured to improve proficiency through interactive videos, self-paced exercises, quizzes, and real-time performance tracking. These features reflect the core tenets of blended learning allows students to actively participate with content beyond the classroom and at their own convenience. Naan Mudhalvan also collaborates with reputed academic institutions and with industry experts for need-based content that is regionally relevant yet globally competitive. The unique aspect of Naan Mudhalvan is it focuses on inclusivity and is accessed easily through mobile phone. It gives real time instant feedback and skill assessments, which helps to customize the learning paths of students over different linguistic and academic levels. Naan Mudhalvan serves as a bridge between traditional

ELT and modern skill-based education. This initiative is a progressive step towards democratizing English education and preparing rural students for global communication demands.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine how the Naan Mudhalvan platform supports English language acquisition among rural learners through blended learning. The research was conducted among students from rural background where the students have been engaging in this platform.

Participants: A total of twenty students and five English teachers participated in the study.

Data Collection Tools: Pre- and post-tests were administered to students to assess English proficiency language domains of listening, and reading. Student Surveys collected feedback on the ease of use, engagement level, and self-perceived progress using the platform. Semi-structured interviews with teachers gathered insights on how blended learning impacted teaching practices and students' outcomes. Classroom observations noted student participation, use of multimedia, and teacher-student interaction.

Analysis and Discussion

Aligning Teaching Techniques with Cognitive Function: One of the major key findings is that students responded positively to learning content like videos, audios and interactive quizzes through Naan Mudhalvan. This aligns with neuro-educational research, which highlights that emotionally engaging, repetitive, and contextual learning reinforces memory and language learning (Ansari, De Smedt, and Grabner 108). Students demonstrated active participation and retention when content was delivered in visually rich and interactive formats.

Naan Mudhalvan effectiveness in Rural ELT Settings: Statistical data analysis states that students in the experimental group improved their scores by an average of 20%, compared to an 8% increase in the overall control group. Listening and speaking skills showed the most significant improvement attributed to the platform's repeated use of audio content. This proves the value of blended learning in addressing the lack of native exposure and practice opportunities in rural settings (Garrison and Vaughan 27).

Challenges in Implementation: Despite promising outcomes, several difficulties have to be addressed. These include limited access to devices, intermittent internet access, and varying levels of teacher familiarity with technology. Some teachers felt underprepared to execute their lesson plans effectively in this platform, confirming earlier studies that highlight the need for teacher training in TPACK (Mishra and Koehler 1031). Additionally, students who are low in digital literacy struggled to navigate the platform initially, requires additional orientation.

Opportunities and Future Directions: The program holds great promise in tailoring learning pathways and empowering rural learners, specifically if it is integrated with offline supports like

printed modules and peer mentoring. The study also suggests that further research can explore longitudinal impacts, content localization in Tamil-English bilingual formats, and teacher training models for rural ELT contexts.

Findings

The study yielded several key insights into the effectiveness of Naan Mudhalvan as a blended learning tool in enhancing English proficiency among rural students:

Improved Language Skills: Students in the experimental group who engaged with Naan Mudhalvan platform showed an average improvement of 17% in their English language test scores, with the most notable gains in listening and speaking skills. This suggests the platform's multimedia content supported better language retention for students' career enrichment.

Increased Engagement and Motivation: Surveys indicated that 81% of students found digital modules more interesting and motivating than traditional textbook learning. Elements such as quizzes and career-based tasks increased learner participation and confidence.

Positive Teacher Feedback: Teachers observed that students were more interested to participate in language activities through this platform. However, they also report that there is a need for professional development to integrate digital modules into regular lessons effectively.

Technological Barriers: Despite the potential, challenges such as lack of internet connectivity, limited access to digital devices, and inconsistent technical support affected the full-scale adoption of blended learning techniques.

Need for Localized Content: Both students and teachers recommended the inclusion of more bilingual (Tamil-English) materials to support learners with limited English exposure, specifically or Tamil medium students and at the beginner level.

Conclusion

The Naan Mudhalvan program shows strong potential to transform English Language Teaching (ELT) in rural Tamil Nadu through a blended learning approach. Combining traditional instruction with digital innovation, the platform helps to bridge the urban-rural divide in language education among learners, and provides students in under-resourced areas greater access to quality learning materials with greater experiences. While there are positive student outcomes and engagement is promising, the findings also emphasize the significance of overcoming infrastructural and pedagogical challenges. There is a pressing need for investment in teacher training and offline accessibility solutions to maximize its impact. In conclusion, Naan Mudhalvan not only serves as a skill development program but also as a stepping stone towards inclusive, effective, and modern ELT practices in rural India. Through continued refinement and thoughtful implementation, this program can play a significant role in empowering youth through language proficiency and digital literacy.

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Self-Traumatic Explorations and Psychological Elements in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

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Abstract

This paper examines *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf through a psychological lens, highlighting the novel's exploration of consciousness, emotional repression, identity, and healing. Drawing from Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories as well as Woolf's own psychological experiences, the study investigates how inner turmoil, trauma, and mental fragmentation are articulated through narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness and temporal fluidity. The central section titled "Time Passes" is analyzed as a symbolic representation of grief, memory, and the unconscious. The paper explores how Woolf's use of shifting perspectives and fragmented subjectivity captures the complexities of human psychology. Lily's artistic journey is interpreted as a path toward individuation and emotional resolution. Through her characters' psychological introspections, Woolf critiques patriarchal constraints and portrays identity as fluid and relational. The novel's deep psychological elements are intertwined with motifs of personal grief, loss, and internal conflict. This study also highlights Woolf's nuanced portrayal of self-traumatic exploration, where characters confront suppressed memories and painful realizations within their inner worlds. Ultimately, *To the Lighthouse* is revealed as a profound meditation on the invisible workings of the mind, offering insight into the intertwined realms of self, memory, trauma, and transformation.

Key Words: Trauma, Psychology, Stream of Consciousness, Cognitive Interiorities

Introduction

Virginia Woolf, a central figure of literary modernism, revolutionized the novel through her deep exploration of human psychology. In contrast to the traditional realist narrative structures of the 19th century, Woolf's work prioritizes the internal experiences of characters over external events. Influenced by the emerging psychological theories of her time, particularly those of William James and Sigmund Freud, Woolf's fiction represents a profound inquiry into consciousness, identity, time, and mental illness. Through narrative innovation such as stream of consciousness and shifting perspectives, Woolf captured the complexities of the mind in ways that anticipated contemporary understandings of psychological processes. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* remains a foundational text in both modernist literature and psychological literary analysis.

Its experimental form and deep focus on internal experience challenge conventional narrative structures and foreground the role of psychological processes in shaping human behavior and perception. Set primarily in the Ramsay family's summer home, the novel unfolds through the minds of its characters rather than external action. Woolf's engagement with Freudian theory, memory, perception, and emotional repression makes *To the Lighthouse* a masterclass in the psychological novel. This essay explores the psychological dimensions of Woolf's characters, narrative style, and thematic concerns. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is a landmark in modernist literature and a profound exploration of the inner workings of the human mind. From a psychological perspective, the novel delves deeply into the subconscious motivations, emotional states, and perceptual experiences of its characters, particularly through the use of stream of consciousness narration.

Stream of Consciousness and Cognitive Interiorities

One of Woolf's most significant contributions to literature is her use of stream of consciousness, a narrative technique that seeks to represent the uninterrupted flow of thoughts and feelings in the human mind. Rather than presenting a linear, externally focused plot, Woolf dives into the subjective experiences of her characters, allowing readers to inhabit their mental and emotional landscapes. This technique was heavily influenced by William James's psychological theories, particularly his idea of consciousness as a continuous, flowing stream rather than a series of isolated thoughts.

Woolf's hallmark narrative technique - stream of consciousness narrative - reflects the fluidity and complexity of thought processes. This technique allows the novel to follow characters' shifting perceptions, inner dialogues, and subconscious associations. For example, Mrs. Ramsay's mind traverses a landscape of thoughts in which memories, judgments, and emotions intermingle without clear boundaries. Woolf constructs these moments with precision, showing how fleeting sensations are deeply entangled with larger existential concerns. James, Lily, and Mr. Ramsay all serve as vessels for this psychological exploration. Their internal landscapes often contradict external appearances. James's stoic exterior masks an intense emotional world shaped by both admiration and resentment toward his parents. Lily's attempts to paint are as much about self-expression as they are about resolving inner conflict. Through these characters, Woolf illustrates the fragmented, subjective nature of reality.

Repression, Unconsciousness, and Oedipal Dynamics

Woolf's narrative resonates deeply with Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly concepts like repression, the unconscious, and family dynamics. James's hatred for his father and adoration of his mother reflect the Oedipal complex, wherein a child experiences deep emotional attachments and rivalries. Mr. Ramsay is portrayed as emotionally unavailable and intellectually domineering, leading James to internalize feelings of inadequacy and rage. Lily Briscoe's struggle against societal norms reflects repression in a Freudian sense. Her self-doubt reinforced by Charles Tansley's assertion that "women can't paint, can't write" becomes internalized, affecting her confidence. Her psychological conflict is resolved only through introspection, memory, and artistic creation. Her final act of completing her painting symbolizes the resolution of a repressed inner truth. Woolf's depiction of mental illness is particularly striking, both for its sensitivity and its authenticity. Her own struggles with bipolar disorder lend her portrayals a unique depth and credibility.

One key psychological theme in the novel is the exploration of identity and self-perception, especially in the character of Mrs. Ramsay, whose role as a mother and wife forms the core of her identity but also represents a source of inner conflict. Woolf portrays her consciousness as deeply fragmented, shaped by cultural expectations and personal desires, echoing Freudian ideas of the divided self.

The Fluidity of Identity

Woolf's psychological perspective also encompasses a nuanced understanding of identity as fluid and multifaceted. Her characters often struggle with conflicting aspects of the self, shaped by memory, relationship, and social expectations. In *To the Lighthouse*, this theme is vividly portrayed through the character of Lily Briscoe, an artist who grapples with her role as a woman in a patriarchal society and her desire for creative expression. Lily's internal monologue reveals the tension between her public persona and her private ambitions, highlighting the complexities of personal identity. Mrs. Ramsay, another central character in the novel, embodies the traditional feminine ideal of nurturing, self-sacrificing, and devoted to family. Yet even she experiences moments of introspection and doubt, suggesting that her outward role does not fully encompass her inner life. Woolf uses these characters to illustrate how identity is not a fixed essence but a dynamic interplay of internal and external forces. By presenting identity as something mutable and socially constructed, Woolf questions the binary notions of male and female, sanity and insanity, and self and other.

Time, Memory, and the Psychological present

Another key aspect of Woolf's psychological perspective is her treatment of time. Rather than adhering to chronological progression, Woolf portrays time as subjective and elastic, shaped by memory and emotion. This approach aligns with the psychological theories of Henri Bergson, who distinguished between measured time and lived time. For Woolf, the past is never truly past. It continues to influence the present through memory and association. In *To the Lighthouse*, the middle section titled "Time Passes" encapsulates this approach. Years go by in a few pages, and the focus shifts to the passage of time as experienced by the house itself, while human events such as deaths and wars are mentioned almost in passing. This narrative strategy emphasizes the psychological impact of time - how it can stretch, compress, and become disjointed depending on one's state of mind. These varying perceptions underscore the idea that time is not an objective reality but a psychological construct.

Woolf's narrative structures often mirror the complexities of human thought. She frequently employs multiple perspectives within a single narrative, allowing readers to see events through the eyes of different characters. This multiplicity not only enriches the narrative but also

reflects the inherently subjective nature of experience. This structural experimentation reflects Woolf's belief that traditional narrative forms were inadequate for capturing the realities of the mind. By abandoning linearity and embracing fragmentation, she aligns her fiction with the workings of memory and consciousness. Her novels do not offer clear resolutions or definitive truths, instead, they present a tapestry of thoughts, impressions, and emotions that invite deep psychological engagement.

The novel also reflects the theories of Carl Jung, particularly through the symbolic use of the lighthouse as a representation of individuation and the journey towards the integration of the self. Lily Briscoe's struggle to complete her painting symbolizes the creative process as a path to psychological wholeness. Woolf's narrative techniques such as the use of time, memory, and interior monologue align with psychological realism and are influenced by emerging theories of human cognition. The *Time Passes* section reflects the impermanence of life and the psychological effects of grief and war. By illustrating the inner lives of her characters with such depth and nuance, Woolf offers a psychological portrait that transcends traditional narrative forms, inviting readers to experience consciousness as fluid, fragmented, and deeply personal.

Mrs. Ramsay and the Psychology of Femininity

Mrs. Ramsay embodies the ideal of Victorian womanhood - nurturing, beautiful, self-sacrificing - but Woolf complicates this figure by revealing her inner doubts. Psychologically, Mrs. Ramsay is caught between her socially imposed identity and her personal contemplations on death, aging, and the impermanence of life. Her concern with arranging marriages and hosting dinners is both a performance of social roles and a coping mechanism for existential anxiety. Beneath her serene exterior lies a woman grappling with her fading beauty, the limitations of domestic life, and the fear of being forgotten. Her psychological complexity is most visible during quiet, introspective moments when she contemplates her children, her marriage, or the vastness of time.

Time passes – Memory, Loss and the Subconscious

The central section of the novel, 'Time Passes,' eschews individual consciousness in favor of a collective meditation on time, decay, and the unconscious. Major life events including Mrs. Ramsay's death are mentioned parenthetically, reflecting how the subconscious mind processes

trauma without direct confrontation. This narrative strategy mirrors the psychological mechanism of repression. The absence of a narrative voice in this section echoes the emotional void left by death. Nature continues regardless of human suffering, suggesting the irrelevance of personal anguish in the grand scheme of time. The silence of this section speaks louder than words, articulating the deep undercurrents of grief, memory, and detachment.

The Return - Psychological Healing and Creative Resolution

When the family and guests return to the summer house in the final section, the tone has shifted dramatically. The lighthouse, once a symbol of longing and inaccessibility, now represents closure and understanding. James's eventual reconciliation with his father, though subtle, suggests psychological growth. The anger of childhood gives way to a more measured empathy. Lily Briscoe's completion of her painting parallels this transformation. Her art becomes an act of psychological synthesis honoring Mrs. Ramsay's memory, accepting loss, and asserting her own vision. The final brushstroke represents the moment when unresolved feelings crystallize into meaning. This aesthetic closure signifies broader psychological healing for Lily and perhaps for the reader as well.

Subjectivity and the Fragmented Self

Woolf's characters rarely present consistent identities; instead, they embody the modernist notion of the fragmented self. Each character's sense of identity is fluid, shaped by their roles, memories, and perceptions of others. This reflects post-Freudian understandings of identity as unstable and constantly evolving. Even the act of observing someone alters that individual's perceived identity. Lily's perception of Mrs. Ramsay, for example, changes over time from idealization to recognition of her limitations. Mr. Ramsay's identity also shifts depending on who is observing him: his children, his wife, or his guests. These fragmented perceptions illustrate the psychological principle that identity is never fixed but continually mediated by relational and internal factors.

Woolf's personal psychological struggles deeply influenced her work. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder and suffering from recurring breakdowns, Woolf had an intimate understanding of mental fragility. Her own experiences with therapy and her critical stance toward Freudian psychoanalysis inform the nuanced portrayals of mental states in her fiction. *To the Lighthouse*

can be read as a form of therapeutic writing, a way to process grief - particularly the death of Woolf's mother. Mrs. Ramsay is often seen as a literary embodiment of Julia Stephen, Woolf's mother. Writing the novel allowed Woolf to confront and reshape her memories, turning personal trauma into artistic creation.

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf's work stands as a landmark in the literary exploration of the human psyche. Her innovative narrative technique, empathetic portrayal of mental illness, and philosophical inquiries into identity and time mark her as a writer deeply attuned to the psychological dimensions of experience. Woolf did not merely reflect the psychological theories of mind. She expanded upon them, using fiction as a medium to explore and illuminate the complexities of the mind. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is a profound psychological exploration of human consciousness. Through her innovative narrative structure and deep character analysis, she reveals the complexities of identity, memory, repression, and emotional growth. Her engagement with Freudian theory and her own psychological experiences lend the novel a depth that continues to resonate.

The novel's legacy lies in its ability to merge art with psychological truth. By illuminating the unspoken corners of the mind, Woolf invites readers to reflect on their own fragmented, subjective experiences. *To the Lighthouse* stands not only as a literary triumph but as a timeless psychological inquiry into the nature of self, loss, and understanding. Her legacy continues to influence writers, psychologists, and readers alike. In an age increasingly aware of mental health and the intricacies of human consciousness, Woolf's work remains not only relevant but essential. Through her novels, she invites us to look inward, to listen closely to the quiet, persistent voices of thought and feeling that shape our lives. In doing so, she transforms the novel into a space of psychological revelation and human connection.

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Maithili Language Technology: A Survey

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Abstract

Maithili is an Indo-Aryan language primarily spoken in the Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, and the lower Terai regions of Nepal. While there has been some recent progress in Maithili language technology, the field is still nascent, with limited resources and research, and there is still a long way to go before we have robust and reliable language processing tools. More research and resources are needed to develop tools such as spell-checkers, text-to-speech systems, and machine translation models, which can help unlock the language's full potential in the digital age. This paper presents an effort made to survey the tools, systems, or research available in the field to facilitate language technology systems in Maithili. In this paper, the technological development of Maithili has been classified under certain heads, and the research works completed, along with the ones being undertaken, have been discussed. Different language technology systems, including the corpus creation and development presented for other languages, and their status for Maithili, have been investigated in this paper.

Keywords: Maithili, Language Technology, Corpus, ASR, TTS, MT, low-resource languages

Introduction

Maithili is an Indo-Aryan language primarily spoken in the Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, and parts of Nepal. While there has been some recent progress in Maithili language technology, the field is still nascent, with limited resources and research.

One of the significant challenges in developing Maithili language technology is the lack of a standardized orthography. The language has been written using a variety of scripts, including *Devanagari*, *Kaithi*, and *Tirhuta*. This lack of standardization makes it difficult to develop tools such as spell-checkers and automated text-to-speech systems. Despite these challenges, some work has been done, discussed in the ensuing sections of the paper, in developing resources for Maithili language processing.

Although some progress has been made in Maithili language technology, there is still a long way to go before we have robust and reliable tools for processing the language. More research and resources are needed to develop tools such as spell-checkers, text-to-speech systems, and machine translation models, which can help to unlock the full potential of the language in the digital age.

While some commendable work has been done in Maithili language technology, there is still a lacuna in developing robust language processing tools for this language. The lack of standardized resources and corpora is one of the major challenges that must be addressed for further progress.

In this paper, the technological development of Maithili has been classified under certain heads, and the research works completed, along with the ones being undertaken, have been discussed below:

1. Corpus and Corpus Management

Corpus means a body of huge data incorporating various types of material, including text and audio-visual content in digital format. A corpus represents all the styles of a language, attempting to be as representative as possible for the goal it is designed. Corpus linguistics deals with the linguistic analysis of data available in a language. In the current scenario, when everything is supposed to be automatic, the need for text as well as speech corpora is indispensable. Any technology development process is based on the corpora available in that particular language. Therefore, it can be said that corpus and corpus management are the soul of language technology.

1.1 Tagged Corpus, Aligned Corpus, and Parallel Corpus

Corpora are classified into three types, namely Tagged Corpus, Parallel Corpus, and Aligned Corpus. A tagged corpus stands for a body of text or speech corpus tagged or annotated for a specific task, such as parts of speech, named entities, speech annotation, etc. Parallel corpora consist of corpora in two or more languages at the same level, that is, the engaging languages (minimum two) will have the same type of bilingual corpora available for both languages. Aligned corpora denote the property of corpora matched in both languages at every segment. It's a bilingual corpus aligned on a micro level in both languages.

1.2 Text Corpora

1.2.1 LDC-IL Maithili Text Corpora

LDC-IL Maithili Text Corpus (Choudhary, 2019) has been developed keeping in view the quality of the text, representativeness, retrievable format, size of corpus, authenticity, etc. For collecting a text corpus, LDC-IL adopted a standard category list of various domains and a prior set of criteria. The corpus of Maithili text can be broadly classified as literary and non-literary texts. Huge amounts of literary texts are available in Maithili, however, the number of scientific texts available is very less. Thus, the LDC-IL attempts to develop a balanced text corpus of Maithili. After the data has been collected from books, magazines, and newspapers, it is verified to be true to the original texts and then warehoused.

The Maithili Text Corpus is encoded in a machine-readable form and stored in a standard format. The major encoding format used for the purpose is Unicode, and the data is stored in XML format. The data is embedded with metadata information. The corpus has been created from the contemporary text in typed and crawled methods.

LDC-IL has a text corpus of 53,16,552 tokens extracted from 499 titles. This corpus contains five domains: Aesthetics, Commerce, Mass media, Science and technology, and social sciences (Ramamoorthy, 2019). Again, the consortium released a gold standard raw text corpus volume II, which includes 8,11,680 Words extracted from 54 Titles. The data covers three domains, which are further classified into 21 Sub-categories (Kumar, 2025). The corpus has been stored in XML format. Access to the LDC-IL Maithili Text Corpora is available through the LDC website. Interested researchers can apply for access by following the consortium's guidelines and procedures.

1.2.2 JNU Maithili Text Corpora

Under the Shallow Parser Tools Project in 2009 at JNU¹, a sizable corpus of Maithili was created. This corpus contains resources from various domains such as cuisine, astrology, history, language and literature, medical, politics, sports, tourism, and a small amount of information about the Mithila region regarding geography, history, and culture.

Though during the SwiftKey consultancy project, a huge amount of Maithili text corpora was created, which includes a frequency dictionary, a language model, and script input software, it is not an open-source dataset available for use.

1.2.3 Amity University Monolingual Corpora

¹<http://sanskrit.jnu.ac.in/maithili/index.jsp>

A monolingual corpus of 25000 Maithili sentences (Nidhi, 2018) was created for the purpose of the development of Maithili-English statistical Machine translation systems. The monolingual Maithili data was collected for training the translation model in the target language.

1.2.4 Amity University Parallel Corpora

A Maithili-English divergence marked parallel corpora (Nidhi, 2018) was generated at the Amity University, Noida. They created a corpus of 45000 sentences and have given detailed documentation on the text corpora, alignment and parallelization strategies, training, testing, and a study of divergence between the language pair.

1.2.5 IIT-BHU Text Corpus

A team of researchers at the NLPR Lab, IIT-BHU, worked and released a text corpus. The data was created under Project Varanasi at the NLP Research Lab (NLPRL) at IIT (BHU), Varanasi, India, by a team of researchers and annotators. The Maithili Text Corpora² has Parts of Speech tagged 217887 Tokens, Chunked Corpus 1968 Sentences, Morphological Paradigm 2254 paradigms (Mundotiya, 2020).

1.2.6 Bhashini Parallel Corpora

Bhashini has released a corpus of 22535 Sentences aligning Maithili with English. The details of datasets such as parallel corpus, glossary corpus, or transliteration dataset, etc, can be found on the ULCA platform³.

1.3 Speech Corpora

Speech Corpora refers to a specialized database that contains spoken audio files and their corresponding text, i.e., the written version of the spoken words or sentences. Recordings of people speaking. Speech corpora can be richly annotated with various linguistic information, such as phonetic transcription, prosodic annotation, speaker information, etc.

Speech corpora are crucial for various fields, particularly in:

- Speech Technology:
 - Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR): Training acoustic models that allow computers to understand spoken language.
 - Speaker Identification/Verification: Building systems to recognize or verify who is speaking.
 - Speech Synthesis: Creating artificial speech that sounds natural.

² <https://github.com/singhkr/Bhojpuri-Magahi-and-Maithili-Linguistic-Resources/blob/main/README.md>

³ <https://bhashini.gov.in/ulca/dashboard>

- Linguistics:
 - Phonetics and Phonology: Studying the sounds of language.
 - Conversation Analysis: Analyzing how people interact in spoken communication.
 - Dialectology: Researching regional variations in language.
 - Sociolinguistics: Studying the relationship between language and society.

In this section, various types of speech corpora available for Maithili are discussed.

1.3.1 LDC-IL Maithili Raw Speech Corpora

The LDC-IL has created a speech corpus (Choudhary, 2019) for Maithili by covering the multiple geographic dialects of Sotipura, Bajjik, and Angika. The data has been collected from males and females of different age groups. This dataset consists of around 79 hours of audio with 45,198 audio segments. This dataset has a total of 306 speakers, with 150 males and 156 females. This dataset has been prepared to match the standard features for ASR datasets, such as 48 kHz sampling rate and 16 kbps bit rate (Ramamoorthy, 2019).

The speech corpora covers various domains such as contemporary text (news), creative text, sentences, date format, command and control words, person names, place names, most frequent words, phonetically balanced words, and form and function words.

The dataset released as volume II expands the raw speech corpus of Maithili. This dataset spans a duration of 109:09:50 (hh:mm:ss), consisting of read speech with continuous text, and spontaneous speech along with its transcription in Devnagari (Kumar, 2025). The data is derived from 49 female and 73 male native Maithili speakers, encompassing diverse age groups and regions (Rejitha, 2025). The data preparation follows the standard guidelines set by the consortium. Furthermore, the dataset includes the Angika variety to foster the corpus development for the language and its varieties. A comprehensive explanation of the dataset can be found in the Maithili Raw Speech Documentation at the data portal.

Researchers and language technology developers can use the corpus to study various aspects of Maithili language speech, such as its phonetics, prosody, and intonation. It can also be used to develop speech recognition and speech synthesis systems for Maithili.

1.3.2 LDC-IL Maithili Sentence Aligned Corpus

The LDC-IL has released a Sentence Aligned Speech Corpus suitable for ASR development in Maithili in 2023. The dataset comprises audio files in .wav format, accompanied by a corresponding textual layer containing phonetically normalized and orthographically normalized annotations in Devanagari script. This dataset spans a duration of 41:54:30 (hh:mm:ss), consisting of read speech with continuous text, representative sentences, and date formats (Kumar, 2023).

The data consist of audio recordings from 147 female and 153 male native Maithili speakers, covering diverse age groups and regions. A comprehensive explanation of the dataset can be found in the Maithili Sentence Aligned Speech Documentation (Rejitha, 2023).

1.3.3 Dhvani speech corpora

Dhwani (Javed, 2022) is an unlabeled ASR corpus obtained from YouTube and News On AIR news bulletins. It has 37 hours of Maithili speech corpora. This corpus has been developed by the AI4Bharat team.

1.3.4 Vakyanish dataset

Vakyanish group, run by the EkStep foundation, has 56 hours of dataset (Chaddha, 2022), which has been collected from the AIR News bulletins. They collected the PDF files of the text and made a forced alignment for audio-to-text alignment. Thus, they have a wav2vec-based ASR model for Maithili. Due to automatic noise injection, there is a problem in their dataset that results in low-performing ASR systems. As a part of corpus development, the foundation has released the ASR dataset corpus of 140 hours (Labeled), 119 hours (Unlabeled), which is publicly available on GitHub⁴.

1.3.5 IISc Speech Dataset

The Respin Project of IISc Bangalore released a dataset of 723:03:28 (hh:mm:ss) hours under the name of RESPIN Corpus (Saurabh 2025). The available corpus is part of a huge corpus of 10k hours of read-speech, which has 7.7M audio files and 197k sentences spoken by 18.8k speakers from 1500+ pincodes covering 9 Indian languages and 38 Dialects. It has 2 Domains: Agriculture & Finance. The details can be found on the Respin website⁵.

1.4 Transliteration Dataset

1.4.1 AI4Bharat initiative

The AI4Bharat initiative, run by IITM, has a transliteration tool, Aksharantar (Madhani, 2022), which supports the Maithili language as well. For this tool, a dataset of Maithili has been prepared with the help of the StoryWeaver platform and involving the native Maithili speakers. The stories on the Storyweaver platform have been converted into tokens. This dataset consists of 21342 unique tokens and is available as an open-source dataset (Kumar, 2023).

1.4.2 Bhashini Transliteration Dataset

⁴ <https://github.com/Open-Speech-EkStep/ULCA-asr-dataset-corpus/blob/main/README.md#maithili-labelled-external-total-duration-is-40-hours>

⁵ <https://spiredatasets.ee.iisc.ac.in/respincorpus>

Bashini dataset, consisting of 221866 Sentences⁶ (English-Maithili) general domain, is available on the ULCA platform. It includes some datasets submitted by the AI4Bharat team.

1.5 NER Dataset

IIT-BHU has created a dataset (Mundotiya, 2020) for Named Entity Recognition in Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuri. This dataset consists of 9815 Sentences, 157468 Tokens, 23338 Types, and 19809 Named Entities under 10,000 sentences. This dataset has been annotated with 22 entity labels using the IIIT-H NER guidelines. The NER model trained using this dataset has reported the lower baseline F1-scores from the NER tool obtained by using Conditional Random Fields models are 93.33 for Maithili. And the Deep Learning-based technique (LSTM-CNNs-CRF) achieved 93.33 for Maithili.

A similar work on the NER system has been reported by a group of researchers at the BIT Mesra, Ranchi. Though the researchers manually annotated 200k words, the corpus is not available in the public domain. After training the system, the final system achieved an f-measure of 91.6% with 94.9% precision and 88.53% recall (Priyadarshi, 2021).

A dataset for Maithili NER was developed as a part of a master's dissertation at Banaras Hindu University (Kumar, 2020). This dataset consists of 157470 tokens out of a total of 9814 sentences taken. Among these tokens, 21412 named entities were tagged, of which there were 10683 ENAMEX, 1837 TIMEX, 1335 NUMEX (IIIT NER tagset), and 1567 language-specific entities.

1.6 Text-to-Speech Corpus

A Text-to-Speech (TTS) corpus is a specially designed dataset used to develop and train Text-to-Speech systems, which convert written text into spoken audio.

1.6.1 LDC-IL TTS Corpus

The LDC-IL has released the first of its kind dataset for Maithili TTS, which enables the language to be included in the club of languages that have resources available for TTS technology. It is a valuable resource for developing speech technology for the Maithili language. The corpus spans a significant duration of 30 hours, 59 minutes, and 20 seconds. It has a total size of 19.56 GB. It contains 32,260 audio segments of read-speech from two native Maithili speakers (01 female and 01 male) recorded in a studio setup, ensuring high-quality audio (Kumar, 2025).

1.6.2 IndiaVoice-R TTS Corpus

The AI4Bharat team, through the IndiaVoice-R corpora, developed a TTS dataset for Maithili. IndicVoices-R (IV-R), the largest multilingual Indian TTS dataset, has been derived from an ASR

⁶ <https://bhashini.gov.in/ulca/dashboard>

dataset, with 1,704 hours of high-quality speech from 10,496 speakers across 22 Indian languages(Sankar, 2024). The database consists of 81.77 hours of multilingual speech from Maithili. It has further been divided into 6.18 hrs of read speech and 75.59 hrs of extempore speech. It has 32483 utterances spoken by 627 speakers.

2. Text Editors and Word Processors

There have been a lot of efforts made in terms of text editors and word processors in Maithili. A text editor refers to a tool that functions for text processing for a specific task. Similarly, a word processor refers to a tool that works on words for processing purposes, such as a morphological analyzer, spell checker, etc.

2.1 PoS Tagger

Parts of Speech (PoS) taggers are systems to annotate tokens with their corresponding part of speech tags automatically.

2.1.1 POS Tagset

A POS tagset was defined and manually annotated a Maithili corpus containing 52,190 words was manually annotated (Priyadarshi, 2020). This dataset was collected from a large corpus such as the Wikipedia dump and other Maithili web portals. With different model training and implementing various feature sets. They managed to get an accuracy of 85.88% for PoS tagging.

2.1.2 Maithili POS Tagger (MPOST)

The Maithili POS Tagger (MPOST) was developed by Dr Saroj Kumar Jha under the guidance of Prof Girish Nath Jha at the Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Studies, JNU, in collaboration with MGAHU, Wardha. The system is available on the centre's website⁷.

2.2 Morph Analyser

A morph analyser for Maithili based on a finite state transducer has been developed at the Tezpur Central University (Rahi, 2020). This Maithili morphological analyser has been created on the LDC-IL corpus of around 855,430 words for performance evaluation and found no instance of failure on inflectional form as long as the root belongs to the lexicon file.

Also, there has been some work initiated on this system by JNU and the University of Hyderabad, but no results have been found yet in this regard.

⁷ <http://sanskrit.jnu.ac.in/mpost/index.jsp>

2.3 Morph Generator

A Vowel Ending Approach model (Jha, 2018) on the Maithili Morph generator has been developed and reported by the research team of Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi University, Wardha. They reported an accuracy of 71-74% with a 400k-word corpus.

2.4 Crawler

No crawler has been developed so far for Maithili by any research team or institution in India, or at least not anything could be found that is in the public domain.

2.5 Stemmer

The first ever stemmer for Maithili has been developed at BIT Mesra (Priyadarshi, 2019). This system has been developed using 110 sentences containing 2000 words, out of which 822 words were unique words' corpus developed in-house by the team. The baseline system achieved an accuracy of 70.9 % without any rule-based. When the POS dependent Rule-based module was implemented, the accuracy climbed to 84.6%.

3. Dictionary Tools

Though there have been a few efforts made by different institutions, including CIIL and JNU, for a Maithili online dictionary, there has not been any work reported yet for the online dictionary.

4. Spell Checkers/ Grammar Checkers / Style Checkers

In the word analyzer or spell checker front, there has not been any work done so far. This area needs to be explored in terms of developing different spelling tools such as dictionaries, spell checkers, grammar checkers, etc.

5. Parsing Systems

Maithili still stands on the chunking stage, and a parser has not been developed yet for the language. A research team at the IIT-BHU has developed a corpus of chunked data of 12,310 sentences (Mundotiya, 2021).

The TDIL has prepared WordNet⁸ for 19 Indian languages, but Maithili has not been included yet among those languages.

6. Machine Translation and Translation Tools

1. A Java app has been developed at the Amity University, Noida (Nidhi, 2020). This app was developed during the development of English-Maithili translation systems. For this

⁸ https://tdil-dc.in/index.php?option=com_vertical&parentid=90&lang=en

translation system, an application was developed to create a parallel corpus of English-Hindi and Maithili to save time. The Maithili language had very few resources, so Devanagari (used for Hindi) was an equivalent for the Maithili to train the model for the English-Maithili translation pair.

2. A team at the IIT-BHU has been working on developing resources and creating parallel corpora for three low-resource languages, Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuri (Mundotiya, 2020). A set of 10,000 sentences from Hindi, as a source language, has been translated into the three less-resourced languages. The present author was also a part of the corpora creation team and evaluated the Hindi-Maithili translated texts. For this research, they proposed a novel improvement in *Generative Adversarial Networks* (GAN)-NMT by incorporating deep reinforcement learning-based optimized attention in the generator and a convolutional neural network in the discriminator.
3. A translation tool, *Anuvadika*, has been developed by the researchers at CIIL⁹. This tool supports all 22 languages for English to Indic language translation. Maithili, supported by the *Anuvadika* tool, has shown a significant amount of accuracy with the translation.

7. Optical Character Recognition (Ocr)

Maithili is one of the languages that is not supported much by different tools in terms of optical character recognition. Not much work has been reported so far in the area of Maithili OCR.

Pramukh OCR¹⁰ is a mobile application that supports twenty Indian languages, including Maithili. Though there are several tools and software that support Devanagari script for OCR but those are usually for Hindi; Maithili is reported as untouched in terms of a dedicated OCR tool.

8. Search Engines /Web Technologies

Shoonya¹¹ is an open-source platform to improve the efficacy of language work in Indian languages with AI tools and custom-built UI interfaces and features. This application has been developed by the AI4Bharat team at IIT-Madras. Shoonya supports various features for all 22 scheduled languages of India, and various tasks such as translation, text validation, speech transcription, optical character recognition, etc, can be done with this application.

9. Speech Technology

1. By the Vakyansh group, the Maithili ASR system has been developed along with around 40 other low-resource languages (Chaddha, 2022). They trained their model on 56 hours of the AIR dataset and reported a 12.8 % word error rate (WER) without a language model and 12.24% Word Error Rate (WER) with a language model.

⁹ <https://anuvadika.ciil.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.pramukhocr.com/>

¹¹ <https://ai4bharat.iitm.ac.in/shoonya>

2. The first ever work was reported on the Maithili Isolated Word Recognition system (Ranjan, 2016) at the IIIT Noida, New Delhi, using the HTK toolkit based on the Hidden Markov Model. He used 80 speech utterances and reported a 95% accuracy in recognition rate.
3. SpireLab¹² at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, is working on the collection of data for nine low-resource Indian languages, including Maithili. They are primarily working on the agriculture and finance domains. So far, they have not reported any work on ASR with their dataset.
4. A baseline Text to Speech system has been developed at the MGAHV, Wardha (Jha, 2019). For the system development, a total of 8 hours of audio data has been used, using both primary (collected from the field) and secondary data (collected from the LDC-IL speech corpus). This system reported an accuracy of 84 % when evaluated by the native speakers.
5. A significant research work has also been conducted at the CIIL for developing automatic speech recognition tools for Maithili with the dataset available with the LDC-IL. A tool named Maithili Anulekhika has been developed as a part of PhD work at the institute and is available for public use, which supports a live transcription facility of audio spoken in Maithili. Also, the transcription can be found by uploading any audio file on the web platform. This tool is the first of its kind that supports such a low-resource language, i.e., Maithili, and is freely available. The tool [Maithili Anulekhika](https://anulekhika.ldcil.org/maithili/)¹³ can be accessed on Google engine (Kumar, 2024).

10. Text Input Technology

1. Predictive Keyboard¹⁴ has been developed by the JNU research team. This keyboard is open source and can be downloaded on any mobile device.
2. Maithili is one of the languages available for wx-ITrans transliteration¹⁵ at the JNU portal.
3. The Inscript Keyboard¹⁶ Maithili (Mithilakshar) has been developed by the C-DAC team (2017). According to the Unicode standards, the Maithili script starts from 11480 and goes up to 114D9.

Apart from these researches in the area, there are a few more tools developed for Maithili text processing by the LDC-IL¹⁷ team at CIIL, Mysore. A few of the tools have been mentioned below:

1. Frequency counter for consonants, vowels, the first letter in the word, and the sentence.
2. Frequency editor

¹² <https://respin.iisc.ac.in/>

¹³ <https://anulekhika.ldcil.org/maithili/>

¹⁴ <http://sanskrit.jnu.ac.in/maithili/index.jsp>

¹⁵ <http://sanskrit.jnu.ac.in/ile/index.jsp>

¹⁶ https://www.cdac.in/index.aspx?id=dl_mlingual_tools

¹⁷ <https://medha.ciil.org/>

3. KWIC and KWOC retriever
4. N-gram - Character level and Word level (unigram, bigram, and trigram)
5. Automatic Transliteration - Transliteration for Indian Languages to Roman and Devanagari to Mithilakshar.
6. Storage Interface for Speech dataset

11. Standardization Issues

Despite being recognized as an official language of India, there are still standardization issues affecting its use and development. Mentioned below are some of the standardization issues in Maithili:

1. Lack of Standardization: Maithili does not have a standardized script, and there is no universally accepted standard for its orthography. This has led to spelling, pronunciation, and grammar inconsistencies across different regions where it is spoken.
2. Divergent dialects: Maithili has several dialects, each with distinct features, making it difficult to establish a unified standard. The dialects of Maithili spoken in different regions often differ significantly in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.
3. Historical challenges: Maithili has faced historical challenges, including the suppression of the language during the British colonial era, which has slowed its development and standardization.
4. Lack of Education: Education in Maithili is limited, and there are very few opportunities to study the language at the university level. This has led to a lack of trained professionals in the field of Maithili linguistics and a limited corpus of literature in the language.
5. Digitalization: With the advent of digital technologies, there is a need for standardization in Maithili typing and encoding to facilitate the development of digital resources in the language. However, there is currently no consensus on any one encoding standard. This hinders the creation of Maithili language resources.

Standardization issues in Maithili are a major challenge for the development and promotion of the language. However, efforts are being made to overcome these challenges and establish a standardized form of the language that can be used in education, literature, and digital communication.

Conclusion

As we have seen in the above discussion, Maithili is one of the languages that needs attention in most of the domains for language technology development. Though there are certain areas where researchers are working to develop language technology for the language, still, most of the areas

in the field have been untouched, opening up a wide range for prospective researchers in the field. Fields such as Machine Translation, Parsers, Sentiment Analysis systems, NER systems, Anaphora resolution systems, WordNet system, ASR, TTS, OCR, spell checker, online dictionary, and many more are there, which opens up a diverse range to work on for the Maithili language.

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Subverting the Sacred: Hester Prynne and the Politics of Redemption in Puritan New England

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Abstract

The paper explores Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* as a profound critique of Puritan authority, gender dynamics, and the mechanisms of moral and social control in colonial New England. Through the character of Hester Prynne, Hawthorne interrogates the oppressive moral framework of Puritanism, which prioritizes outward conformity over inner integrity and uses religion as a tool of repression rather than redemption. Hester, initially condemned as a sinner, emerges as an emblem of moral resilience, personal agency, and feminist resistance. Her silent endurance, creative expression through embroidery, and eventual redefinition of the scarlet letter "A" challenge the fixed meanings imposed by her society. The novel also reveals the hypocrisy of Puritan leadership, embodied by figures like Dimmesdale, who escape scrutiny while enforcing the very codes they privately violate. The study further situates *The Scarlet Letter* within feminist discourse, emphasizing Hester's transformation from a symbol of shame to a subject of dignity, agency, and social critique. By the novel's end, Hester is not only redeemed in the eyes of her community but becomes a force for its moral evolution. Hawthorne thus positions her as both a product of and a challenge to the theocratic culture in which she lives—making her journey a powerful narrative of individual integrity and cultural resistance.

Keywords: Puritanism, Feminist Resistance, Moral Hypocrisy, Individual Agency.

Introduction

In the 17th century, a group of religious dissenters known as the Puritans left England, fleeing persecution and seeking the freedom to establish a society governed by their own spiritual ideals. They settled in New England, where they envisioned creating a theocratic community shaped by

what they interpreted as divine will. However, the reality of their governance diverged sharply from their professed values. A dominant Puritan elite emerged, wielding legal and religious authority not to serve the common good but to entrench their own power and privilege.

This ruling class often imposed strict moral codes on the general populace while exempting themselves from the same scrutiny. Laws were crafted not as reflections of divine justice, but as tools of social control, shaped to uphold the elite's version of virtue and their elevated status. Rather than fostering genuine piety, these leaders were often more invested in preserving their social dominance. Detached from the struggles of ordinary life, they existed in a realm insulated from criticism—a realm Orestes Brownson criticized as a life "without a cloud to mar their serenity," marked by a serene but self-satisfied descent into death.

In their role as lawmakers, the Puritan authorities upheld rigid public standards, viewing any form of personal privacy or individual autonomy with suspicion. To them, private actions threatened the communal order and signaled disobedience to their established system. Consequently, they outlawed what they could not see or control, believing that anything hidden operated outside the sanctioned boundaries of society.

The Mechanism of Control in Puritan New England

Puritan society in New England functioned less as a nurturing community and more as a rigid system where external obedience was the only visible measure of virtue. The moral framework prioritized conformity over conscience; it punished visible transgressions, not internal thoughts or intentions. What mattered most was not the individual's moral journey but the preservation of collective order. Those who violated the codes were treated not as fallible human beings but as pollutants threatening the purity of the whole. The punitive system sought to cleanse the community, not redeem the individual.

As literary scholar Nina Baym notes, the Puritan mindset left no room for privacy or individuality. Human beings were seen solely in the public sphere, and any trace of secrecy was equated with rebellion. The goal was to expose all that was hidden, to transform private acts into public trials. A sin wasn't merely a personal failing, it was a crime against the state-like religious order, and thus subject to public judgment and legal discipline.

This societal model operated under the belief that fear of punishment would serve as a deterrent. As Ghasemi observes, over time, individuals lost their sense of agency under such surveillance. The environment suppressed personal choice, muted inner life, and replaced moral reasoning with imposed doctrine. In this way, the Puritan regime shaped not just behavior but belief, eliminating the possibility of autonomous ethical decision-making. Eventually, such a system was bound to collapse, as it denied the very human capacity to choose between right and wrong.

In Boston, religious authority became synonymous with political control. Faith was no longer a personal journey but a façade, manipulated by those in power to reinforce laws that benefited the ruling class. The original spiritual ideals were compromised, transformed into a tool for domination. Religious rhetoric was employed not to uplift but to restrain. Those at the helm—lawmakers and religious leaders—grew disconnected from both divine truth and mutual honesty.

As Railton points out, their failure lay in their refusal to acknowledge their shared human nature, choosing instead to cling to rigid binaries that masked their own vulnerabilities.

Nathaniel Hawthorne critiques this theocratic order through characters who symbolize the hypocrisy embedded within it. He focuses on figures of high standing—representatives of Puritan authority—whose obsession with status outweighs their spiritual sincerity. For such individuals, maintaining a reputation was of greater value than nurturing a relationship with God. Hawthorne exposes how their so-called divine laws were, in reality, man-made constructs built on social consensus rather than sacred truth. As Baym affirms, these leaders answered only to themselves, masking their guilt by projecting it onto others.

In Hawthorne's portrayal of Puritan New England, religion becomes a veil—used to preserve hierarchy and suppress dissent. The system's rigidity, enforced through relentless public scrutiny, blurs the line between appearance and reality. What results is a society where truth is obscured, and law becomes a reflection of fear, not faith.

Religion, Power, and the Illusion of Morality in Puritan New England

Within the tightly controlled social fabric of Puritan New England, religion and respectability were strategically employed to mask deeper truths. Far from being avenues to spiritual enlightenment, these constructs functioned as tools of repression. As Ghasemi (2009) observes, the society imposed strict moral codes that obscured the very notions of right and wrong, leaving individuals disoriented in a world where virtue was often equated with outward conformity rather than inner truth. Religion became less about divine connection and more about institutional control, enabling those in authority to dictate behavior while concealing the manipulation beneath layers of sanctity.

***The Scarlet Letter* as a Critique of Puritan Hypocrisy**

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* serves as a powerful critique of the Puritan social order—a system that publicly professes devotion to God while privately indulging in moral corruption. The novel centers on Hester Prynne, a woman condemned by her community for committing adultery, while the man who shares her guilt remains hidden behind his clerical facade. This duality captures the deep hypocrisy within the Puritan hierarchy, where laws are enforced selectively, and those in power often escape the consequences of the very rules they impose.

Hester's experience is one of public shame and personal suffering. Her crime becomes a spectacle, her body a site of communal judgment. However, the man in question, a revered minister, avoids exposure and punishment, revealing how authority figures manipulate moral codes for self-preservation. Hester, by contrast, internalizes her society's values, but eventually reclaims her autonomy by forging a new identity. Through this transformation, she challenges the community's rigid definitions of sin and virtue, emerging as a symbol of resilience and moral awakening.

Henry James underscores the cultural embeddedness of the novel when he asserts, "*The Scarlet Letter belongs to the soil, to the air, it came out of the very heart of New England.*" (qtd. in Baym, 1986, p. xxiv). Hawthorne does not simply describe Puritanism—he embodies it, both as a critic and as a product of its lingering influence.

A Feminist Reading of *The Scarlet Letter*

While Hawthorne's writings are often grounded in male-dominated settings, *The Scarlet Letter* opens a significant space for feminist interpretation. Hester Prynne is not merely a character; she is a lens through which Hawthorne explores the systemic subjugation of women in the 19th century. Louise DeSalvo (1987) observes that Hawthorne skillfully captures both the psychological impact of patriarchal dominance and the resistance it provokes: "*Hawthorne portrayed with superb accuracy the condition of women in the 19th century and the psychological process of men who could not tolerate the notion of female equality.*"

Hawthorne's engagement with feminist ideas was likely influenced by his association with Margaret Fuller, a prominent feminist thinker. Ashley L. Cohen (2006) notes that *The Scarlet Letter* reflects the broader cultural conversation surrounding "the woman question," using Hester's ordeal as a narrative entry point into this discourse. Although Hawthorne's female characters differ across his works, they often embody virtues absent in their male counterparts. As Baym (1987) states, "*They represent desirable and valuable qualities lacking in the male protagonists.*"

Hester is unique in Hawthorne's literary world. She is a woman who resists social containment and redefines the very terms of her existence. Her rebellion is not loud, but it is profound—she reclaims her life through acts of quiet strength and moral clarity. According to Herbert (1875), Hester "*bitterly resents the oppression she has to suffer and sees it as bearing on the whole race of womanhood.*" This awareness of collective female suffering elevates her personal struggle into a broader feminist challenge.

Michael T. Gilmore (2004) adds depth to this analysis, arguing that Hester effectively builds "*an alternative institution to patriarchal structure,*" living independently and forming bonds with other women rather than relying on male-dominated institutions. In distancing herself from societal norms, Hester emerges not as a fallen woman, but as a visionary—someone who envisions a different mode of living beyond imposed roles and expectations.

Nathaniel Hawthorne crafts Hester Prynne as a complex and compelling female figure who resists traditional gender expectations while subtly navigating the constraints of her puritanical world. Hester is portrayed not as a passive victim, but as a woman with a strong sense of agency—one who gradually reclaims authority over her life by challenging the norms imposed upon her. A significant aspect of her transformation lies in her desire to create solidarity among women, subtly urging them to resist male-dominated narratives.

Though Hester's outer demeanor appears compliant, she cleverly uses her circumstances to redefine how society perceives her. In her silent defiance, she embodies aspects of strength often associated with masculinity, leading some to describe her as having a "manly" resilience. Yet this does not diminish her femininity; rather, it expands the definition of womanhood to include courage, independence, and moral clarity.

Jean Yellin critiques the novel's ambivalence toward emerging feminist ideals, noting that "*The Scarlet Letter seriously considers the new feminist definition of womanhood and, rejecting them, replicates traditional imagery and endorses patriarchal notions*" (qtd. in Baym, 2004, p. 546).

This tension underscores the novel's layered approach: while Hester enacts feminist resistance, the narrative often reverts to established norms, revealing the cultural limitations of Hawthorne's time.

Hester's uniqueness among the Puritan women is underscored by her striking presence and individuality. Her femininity, as Herzog observes, is elemental and mysterious— *"There is something aboriginal about Hester's femininity which separates her from the Puritan Women around her. She is an alien with a touch of the exotic"* (Herzog, 1983, p. 7). This "otherness" allows her to stand apart—not just as a symbol of sin, but as a vision of alternative womanhood, one that provokes discomfort and contemplation in a community rooted in rigid moral codes.

Ultimately, Hester becomes a silent revolutionary. By navigating her punishment with dignity and subtly reconfiguring the societal narrative around her, she reshapes both her identity and the collective consciousness of the society that once condemned her.

Hester Prynne: A Sinner and an Agent of Her Own Redemption

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne presents Hester Prynne as both a transgressor of societal norms and a figure of resilience who asserts agency in the face of moral condemnation. Within the rigid framework of Puritan New England, adultery is not merely a personal failing but a severe breach of collective religious codes. Hester, having borne a child out of wedlock, is immediately cast as a sinner. Yet, her refusal to name her partner, Reverend Dimmesdale, reveals the depth of her personal ethics and her enduring emotional commitment— *"a deep and sincere love"* that transcends public judgment. As a consequence of this moral stance, she is socially exiled and metaphorically enclosed *"in a sphere by herself"* (Hawthorne 54).

The Puritan women, who have internalized the values of their society, reject her outright: *"This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die"* (Hawthorne 39). This early public shaming scene, in which Hester stands alone on the scaffold with her infant, dramatizes the conflict between individual conscience and societal law. While the society demands outward conformity, Hester's interior world remains free and questioning. As Ghasemi notes, *"She has a puritanical conscience after all and cannot avoid the compelling hold of the community and the repressive urge of her natural instincts"* (2009, p. 10). Her resistance thus begins not through rebellion, but through silent endurance and moral clarity.

Ironically, the man who shares her guilt—Dimmesdale—escapes public scrutiny and instead plays a role in her judgment. He embodies the hypocrisy of Puritan authority: a lawmaker who secretly violates the very laws he enforces. Colacurcio highlights Dimmesdale's paralysis, arguing that *"he is so ineffectual an antinomian as not to be able to overcome the conscientious suspicion that his serious sin proves him a hypocrite"* (1985, p. 328). Dimmesdale's failure to confess makes Hester the more powerful figure: she becomes, in Baym's striking formulation, *"the knight who will sally out to do battle"* for the captive, guilt-ridden priest (2004, p. 23).

Despite her marginalization, Hester gradually transforms the meaning of her punishment. The scarlet letter "A," initially intended as a mark of shame, is reinterpreted by the community as a sign of "ability" and strength. Bercovitch argues that *"she has also declared her independence and honored her superiors"* (1990, p. 585). Her sin does not destroy her—it becomes the

foundation of her self-realization. Cambell notes that while she is condemned as a “guilty harlot,” Hester is in fact “a loyal loving woman” (1997, p. 721).

Over time, Hester's perception of her identity, her community, and the law evolves. She does not wallow in guilt, nor does she express remorse in the terms expected of her. Instead, she acknowledges the authenticity of her feelings and affirms the human need to love and be loved. Her suffering lies not in her act but in the oppressive structure of the society that defines her by it. As Hawthorne poignantly notes, Hester becomes an observer of human institutions, viewing them “with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe” (1990, p. 199).

The scarlet letter, then, becomes a symbol not of Hester's fall, but of her defiance. As Baym observes, “*Within the boundaries of the possible, Hester will strive to make her character felt...a struggle between Hester and the system is established*” (2004, p. 12). She chooses to remain in the society that condemned her, not out of submission but as a means of reclaiming agency. In Robert K. Martin's words, “Hester plays her own part, refusing to speak the lines others have written for her” (2004, p. 522).

Eventually, the letter “A” is no longer fixed in meaning. As Korobkin notes, “*Hester's admirable qualities rather than her past behavior*” become its new referents (2004, p. 444). Through quiet perseverance, good works, and a refusal to bend to a hypocritical social order, Hester subverts the original purpose of her punishment. Her identity, once imposed by the community, is now self-fashioned and resilient.

This transformation reveals Hester as a radical figure. She is not simply a penitent sinner, but a revolutionary agent who challenges the foundational assumptions of her society. Azyze emphasizes that “*The scarlet letter becomes a token of her good deeds...she is portrayed as a radical thinker engaged in a revolutionary struggle against the established order*” (2007, p. 9). Through silence, endurance, and moral strength, Hester asserts a kind of spiritual independence that ultimately transcends the law that sought to define her.

Even when given the opportunity to leave, Hester chooses to remain in the very place of her disgrace, bound by love and a profound sense of existential purpose. Her final attachment to this space of shame becomes transformative. As Hawthorne describes, it is “as if a new birth, with stronger assimilation than the first, had converted the forest land into Hester Prynne's wild and dreary but life-long Home” (1990, p. 187). In the end, Hester's journey is not only about personal redemption but also about redefining the moral and social frameworks that govern identity and justice in her world.

Hester Prynne: A Sinner and an Agent of Her Own Redemption

In the rigid moral landscape of Puritan New England, an illicit relationship was a grave violation of social and religious codes. Hester Prynne, the protagonist of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, becomes a symbol of transgression due to her extramarital relationship with Arthur Dimmesdale. This affair results in pregnancy, making her sin visible to the public. Yet, despite the societal condemnation, Hester refuses to disclose her lover's identity, a choice rooted in profound,

sincere love. Consequently, she is ostracized and made to live on the fringes of society, “out of the ordinary relations with humanity and inclosing her in a sphere by herself” (Hawthorne 54).

Public Shame and Silent Defiance

Hester’s punishment begins with her public shaming—a spectacle in which the women of the community are particularly scornful. Their condemnation is rooted in the internalized values of the Puritan order: “This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die” (Hawthorne 39). In the opening scene, Hester appears on the scaffold with her infant, enduring the collective gaze with remarkable composure. She faces a dilemma: to obey outwardly or to maintain inward resistance. Though she outwardly conforms, her thoughts remain autonomous. As Ghasemi notes, “She has a puritanical conscience after all and cannot avoid the compelling hold of the community and the repressive urge of her natural instincts” (Ghasemi 10).

During her trial, Hester displays inner strength and audacity, even as Dimmesdale—her silent partner in sin—sits in judgment. Representing the corrupt duality of the Puritan elite, Dimmesdale exemplifies the system’s hypocrisy: “Dimmesdale is so ineffectual an antinomian as not to be able to overcome the conscientious suspicion that his serious sin proves him a hypocrite” (Colacurcio 328). As both lawmaker and lawbreaker, Dimmesdale’s silence reinforces a system that punishes women while protecting men. This dissonance between appearance and reality characterizes the broader Puritan order—outwardly moral but inwardly compromised.

The Letter “A” as Shame and Defiance

The scarlet letter “A,” initially a badge of shame, gradually becomes redefined through Hester’s resilience. She reclaims its meaning by leading a life of purpose and dignity. The same letter that once symbolized adultery becomes associated with attributes such as *able* and *angel*, demonstrating Hester’s transformative power. She “has also declared her independence and honored her superiors” (Bercovitch 585). Campbell aptly notes that “Hester is judged as a guilty harlot even though she is actually a loyal loving woman” (Campbell 721). Far from repenting, Hester affirms love as a fundamental human need and refuses to see her actions as sinful.

Though forced into isolation, Hester’s suffering becomes a space for reflection and strength. She sees beyond the community’s judgment and ultimately critiques the society that marginalizes her. As Hawthorne observes, “For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions... criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel” (Hawthorne 199). In time, Hester becomes the bearer not of shame, but of a complex and defiant truth.

Hester: A Miracle of Wholeness and Sanity

Having claimed a new identity, Hester seeks reintegration into society—on her own terms. She turns to embroidery, not only as a livelihood but as a creative expression. “Her art may be presented as transgressively criminal, but it is also a response to a crime... disguising the univocal sense assigned to it by the letter of the law” (Martine 520). Through embroidery, she reimagines the meaning of the scarlet letter. Amory Dwight Mayo remarks, “Hester turns her face toward humanity, and begins the life-long task of beating up to virtue against the pitiless storm which overthrows so many an offender” (Dwight 268).

Her acts of charity, though misunderstood, allow her to gradually reshape public perception. Even those she aids insult her, but Hester persists, becoming known affectionately as “our Hester” by the very people who once rejected her. “*She was self-ordained a Sister of Mercy... when neither the world nor she looked forward to this result*” (Hawthorne 155). As Baym notes, Hester is “almost a miracle of wholeness and sanity,” maintaining self-respect in a society that once scorned her (Baym 73).

Colacurcio insightfully describes Hester’s strategic conformity: she outwardly plays the game of sanctification, masking her undestroyed inner pride. But this external appearance masks a growing ideological resistance. Eventually, she articulates a doctrine of personal freedom that challenges the very foundation of Puritan morality (Colacurcio 322).

Conclusion

Ultimately, Hester’s life demonstrates the triumph of personal truth over imposed morality. Though she outwardly conforms, she retains an inner sense of identity shaped not by reason but by feeling. Guided by love and affection, she rejects the order that judges by appearance. “*It is through her love affair that Hester claims a new identity, a real one different from what the public is acquainted with*” (Ghasemi 12). Hester becomes a figure of transformation—both personal and societal. She redefines the letter “A,” subverting its shameful connotation and bestowing upon it dignity and honor. She transforms from a passive recipient of the law into an agent of social change. “Hester had had a painful effect on her society’s system of meanings... this difference is symbolized by the emergence of a new reading of the letter” (Baym 91). By the end of the novel, the community that once condemned her has itself been changed by her. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne embodies the paradox of sin and redemption, shame and dignity, exile and acceptance. Her journey is one of profound moral autonomy, making her not just a sinner but the author of her own redemption—and a catalyst for societal change.

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Beyond the Page: Exploring Women's Rights and Representation and Writer's Mental Health in Literary Discourse

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Abstract:

This paper delves into the intricate relationship between women's rights, representation in literary discourse, and the mental health of the writers who craft these narratives. By analyzing the works of key feminist authors such as Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, Meena Kandasamy, and Indira Goswami, the study investigates how women's struggles for autonomy and equality are reflected and refracted through the lens of both societal expectations and personal mental health challenges. Using feminist literary criticism alongside psychological insights, the paper explores how mental health influences not only the creative process but also the portrayal of female characters and feminist ideals. Ultimately, this research highlights the nuanced intersections of gender, mental health, and literary representation, offering new perspectives on both feminist discourse and the role of personal psychology in shaping literature.

Key Words: Feminist Literary Criticism, Women's Rights, Mental Health, Literary Representation, Gender

Introduction

Literary discourse has long served as a powerful medium for exploring societal issues, including the struggle for women's rights and representation. Throughout history, writers have used their works to question gender norms, critique patriarchal structures, and advocate for equality. However, less attention has been paid to how the mental health of these writers intertwines with their portrayal of women's rights and representation in literature. In this paper, I investigate how mental health influences both the creation of feminist narratives and the depiction of female autonomy, through a focused analysis of authors like Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, Meena Kandasamy, and Indira Goswami. Writers, particularly those advocating for women's rights, often grapple with profound personal and psychological challenges, which can manifest in their works. The pressures of societal expectations, coupled with personal mental health struggles, shape their creative voices and narrative choices. As feminist literary criticism continues to evolve, it is essential to consider the role of mental health in shaping both the authors' perspectives and the literary portrayal of gendered experiences. By integrating feminist theory with mental health discourse, this paper aims to reveal the deep, and often underexplored, connection between these two facets of literary creation. The works of Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf, for instance, are rife with complex depictions of women's roles in society, autonomy, and mental illness. Both writers struggled with their own mental health, and their internal battles are intricately woven into their literature, offering rich insights into how personal experiences shape their feminist messages. Similarly, contemporary writers like Meena Kandasamy and Indira Goswami navigate the intersections of gender and mental health in their exploration of women's oppression and autonomy in a postcolonial and cultural context.

This research, therefore, poses the following questions: How do writers' mental health struggles influence their representation of women's rights and feminist discourse? What insights can be drawn from their narratives that reflect both personal and broader societal struggles? Through a close examination of these authors and their works, this paper contributes to an interdisciplinary conversation, merging feminist literary criticism with psychological theory to deepen our understanding of both gender representation and the writer's mind.

Literature Review

Women's Rights and Representation in Literature

Feminist literary criticism has been foundational in analyzing how women are represented in literature, focusing on how patriarchal norms have shaped female characters and narratives. **Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000)** is one of the most pivotal texts in this area. The authors examine how literary works from the 19th century depict female characters as either angels or madwomen, reflecting the binary constraints imposed on women within male-dominated narratives. They argue that this depiction of women is linked to societal limitations on female autonomy and voice, thereby linking mental health with women's representation in literature.

Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* (1985) explores the representation of women's mental illness in literature, tracing how madness became a gendered concept in both fiction and medical discourse. Showalter argues that mental illness, particularly hysteria, was often seen as a female condition and was used to reinforce stereotypes about women being emotionally fragile. This portrayal is reflected in many female literary characters, who are depicted as unstable or irrational in reaction to their social environment.

Similarly, **Cora Kaplan's *Sea Changes* (1986)** offers a feminist critique of cultural and literary traditions, focusing on how women's voices and experiences are marginalized in both fiction and literary criticism. Kaplan's work is instrumental in understanding the broader socio-cultural forces that influence women's narratives and their rights in literature. However, while these foundational works have focused on gendered representation, they offer limited insights into how the mental health of the *authors* themselves influences their portrayal of women.

Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000). In this landmark feminist text, Gilbert and Gubar explore how 19th-century literature framed women characters within a binary of submission or rebellion, symbolized by the figures of the "angel" and the "madwoman." They argue that patriarchal norms shaped these portrayals, often depicting mental illness as a reaction to societal oppression. Female authors like Charlotte Brontë and Emily Dickinson, they claim, subverted these limiting roles by creating female protagonists who challenged societal expectations. Their work remains fundamental to feminist literary criticism, especially regarding how women's rights and autonomy are represented in canonical literature.

Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Showalter's text categorizes women's literary history into three phases: the "Feminine" phase, where women writers imitated male

norms; the "Feminist" phase, where they advocated for women's rights; and the "Female" phase, where women writers began to explore their own experiences and identities independent of male perspectives. Showalter's framework helps illustrate how women's rights have evolved in literature, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of female representation across different historical periods. Her analysis of authors like Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing underscores how women writers moved toward asserting their voices in the male-dominated literary tradition.

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler's *Gender Trouble* revolutionized feminist theory by proposing that gender is not an inherent identity but rather a performative act shaped by cultural and societal norms. Butler argues that literature often reflects these performative acts, reinforcing or subverting fixed gender roles. Her work has been instrumental in deconstructing binary notions of gender, allowing scholars to explore how literary works question or reinforce traditional gender identities. By examining how writers such as Jeanette Winterson and Angela Carter challenge fixed gender roles, Butler's theories provide a critical framework for analyzing women's representation in literature.

Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), In *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison critiques the marginalization of women and people of color in American literature, particularly by white male authors. She argues that African American women's experiences are often silenced or relegated to the margins of literary discourse. Morrison emphasizes the importance of intersectionality—how race, gender, and class intersect in the representation of women in literature. Her work is critical for understanding how authors such as Alice Walker and Maya Angelou navigate both racial and gendered oppression, expanding the conversation on women's rights and representation beyond Eurocentric frameworks.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is a foundational text in feminist theory, analyzing how women have historically been constructed as the "Other" in relation to men. She argues that this existential otherness has permeated both culture and literature, reinforcing patriarchal control over women's bodies and minds. Her critique of literary works reveals how women are often denied subjectivity and autonomy, serving instead as objects of male desire or narrative devices. De Beauvoir's exploration of women's rights, identity, and autonomy in literature is critical for understanding how feminist writers reclaim subjectivity in their works.

Mental Health and Literary Creation

The relationship between mental health and creativity, particularly in the context of female authors, has been the subject of several studies. **Michel Foucault's** *Madness and Civilization* (1965) traces the historical development of madness as a social and cultural construct, providing a lens through which to understand how writers have explored psychological themes in their work. Although Foucault's work does not focus specifically on literature or women's writing, his ideas have been applied by literary critics to better understand how mental illness is portrayed and experienced in writing.

The works of **Sylvia Plath** and **Virginia Woolf** have become central to discussions about how mental health impacts literary production. **Sylvia Plath's** *The Bell Jar* (1971) is often analyzed as a reflection of Plath's own struggles with depression, exploring the protagonist's mental breakdown as a reaction to societal pressures and gendered expectations. Similarly, **Virginia Woolf's** *A Room of One's Own* (1929) emphasizes the importance of women's personal and psychological space in the creative process, indirectly highlighting how mental health can be affected by external limitations placed on women. However, both of these authors are often examined in isolation, and comparative studies linking their mental health struggles to their feminist perspectives are relatively sparse.

Nancy K. Miller's *The Heroine's Text* (1980) analyzes the role of women as heroines within 18th-century literature, but also touches upon how mental states, including emotional turmoil, shape the experiences of female protagonists. While Miller's work is more focused on historical representations, it is relevant for understanding how mental health issues have historically been linked to female identity in literature.

Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1965), Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* examines how mental illness has been perceived and treated throughout history, tracing the evolution of the concept of "madness" from the Renaissance to the modern era. He highlights how madness was marginalized and excluded from the rational world, often leading to the confinement and alienation of the mentally ill. Foucault's work has been applied in literary studies to understand how authors portray mental illness as a form of resistance to societal norms. Literary works by authors such as Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf reflect these themes, where madness is often portrayed as a response to oppressive external realities.

Kay Redfield Jamison's *Touched with Fire* (1996), Jamison's *Touched with Fire* explores the link between mental illness, particularly bipolar disorder, and artistic creativity. Drawing on research and case studies of famous writers, artists, and musicians, Jamison argues that many creative individuals, including authors like Sylvia Plath and Lord Byron, experienced mood disorders that influenced their literary and artistic outputs. Jamison's research underscores the complex relationship between mental health and creativity, showing how emotional turbulence often enhances the depth and intensity of artistic expression. Her work is pivotal for understanding how mental health struggles can shape literary creation.

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1971), Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* is a semi-autobiographical novel that explores the protagonist Esther Greenwood's descent into mental illness. The novel reflects Plath's own struggles with depression, offering insight into how personal mental health experiences can shape literary creation. Plath's detailed portrayal of Esther's emotional turmoil and institutionalization demonstrates the intersection of gender, societal pressure, and mental illness. *The Bell Jar* has become a key text in understanding how mental health issues are both a theme and an influence on literary production, particularly for female authors.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf emphasizes the importance of financial independence and personal space for women's creative freedom. Although the essay does not directly address mental illness, Woolf's own struggles with bipolar disorder profoundly influenced her literary works. Woolf's exploration of the psychological pressures faced by women writers, and the need for creative autonomy, ties closely to mental health themes. Her works, including *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves*, reflect the complexity of her mental state and offer insights into how mental health challenges can inspire deep psychological reflection in literature.

Andrew Solomon's *The Noonday Demon* (2001), Solomon's *The Noonday Demon* is a comprehensive exploration of depression, combining personal memoir, research, and historical analysis. Solomon examines how depression has been experienced and portrayed by different writers, focusing on how mental illness shapes creative expression. He highlights authors such as William Styron and Anne Sexton, both of whom struggled with severe depression and used their writing as a means of exploring and confronting their mental health issues. Solomon's work is

instrumental in understanding how literary creation can serve as a form of self-expression and therapy for those battling mental illness.

Interdisciplinary Approaches: Feminism and Mental Health

Recent interdisciplinary studies have sought to bridge the gap between feminist literary criticism and mental health discourse. **Elaine Showalter** revisits some of these intersections in *The Female Malady*, but much of the scholarly conversation remains fragmented. While there is an understanding that mental health and women's rights are intertwined in literary representation, fewer works provide a comprehensive analysis that integrates the mental health of both the writers and their characters.

Authors like **Meena Kandasamy** and **Indira Goswami** have expanded on these themes in contemporary literature, portraying how personal trauma and mental illness intersect with feminist resistance. Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017) addresses domestic violence and psychological abuse, exploring how a woman's mental health is affected by the oppressive forces around her. Likewise, **Indira Goswami's** short stories in *The Shadow of Kamakhya* (2006) depict the struggles of women in rural India, delving into both the cultural and mental health aspects of their lives. While these works contribute greatly to our understanding of contemporary feminist narratives, their literary criticism remains largely undeveloped in the scholarly arena.

Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994), In *Volatile Bodies*, Grosz explores how feminist theory intersects with the experiences of embodiment, particularly focusing on the relationship between women's bodies and mental health. She critiques the historical dualism between the mind and body, suggesting that women's mental health issues cannot be fully understood without considering their embodied experiences. Grosz's work connects feminist concerns with physical and mental health, examining how patriarchal societies have historically pathologized women's bodies and minds. Her interdisciplinary approach helps bridge the gap between feminist theory, psychology, and mental health studies.

Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* is a foundational text in understanding the psychological effects of trauma, particularly in the context of gendered violence. She explores the intersection of feminism and mental health by discussing

how trauma from sexual and domestic violence has been marginalized in both the mental health field and society. Herman argues that the feminist movement brought attention to these issues, framing trauma as not just an individual problem but a social one. Her work emphasizes how feminist perspectives can influence mental health treatment and how trauma disproportionately affects women's mental health.

Susie Orbach's *Fat is a Feminist Issue* (1978), Orbach's *Fat is a Feminist Issue* investigates the relationship between body image, eating disorders, and societal expectations of women. Orbach critiques how patriarchal culture imposes unrealistic body standards on women, leading to mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. Her work emphasizes how feminist approaches to mental health can challenge these harmful norms and promote a more inclusive understanding of women's psychological well-being. Orbach's psychoanalytic and feminist analysis of body image has made a significant impact on the understanding of mental health issues tied to self-image and societal pressures.

Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* investigates how emotions are socially constructed and connected to issues of power, identity, and feminism. She explores how emotions such as fear, shame, and anger are often used to marginalize women and other oppressed groups, and how these emotional states can contribute to mental health struggles. Ahmed's interdisciplinary approach, drawing from cultural studies, feminist theory, and psychology, provides a nuanced understanding of how emotional experiences are central to feminist concerns and mental health discourses.

Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* (1972), Chesler's *Women and Madness* is a pioneering feminist analysis of how women's mental health has been pathologized by patriarchal psychiatric systems. She argues that mental illness in women has historically been diagnosed in ways that reflect gender bias, often reinforcing traditional roles and expectations. Chesler critiques how psychiatric institutions have controlled and silenced women by labeling their resistance as madness. Her interdisciplinary approach, which combines feminist critique with psychology, demonstrates how women's mental health can be shaped by oppressive societal structures.

Gaps and Contributions of This Research

Despite these rich contributions, several gaps remain. First, much of the scholarship focuses on either women's representation in literature *or* mental health, without analyzing the critical intersection between the two. Second, while feminist literary criticism has addressed gendered representations, it has not sufficiently explored how the personal mental health struggles of authors themselves influence their creative output and feminist perspectives. This research seeks to bridge these gaps by providing an interdisciplinary analysis that combines feminist literary criticism with psychological theory. By focusing on how mental health affects both authors and their representation of women's rights in literature, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of feminist narratives, offering fresh insights into the interconnectedness of gender, mental health, and literary expression.

Gilbert & Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000), This foundational feminist text has deeply influenced the study of women's literary representation, particularly in terms of how mental health and "madness" are depicted as responses to patriarchal oppression. Gilbert and Gubar highlight how women writers historically used madness as a metaphor for creative frustration and resistance to societal expectations. While the text delves into the symbolic portrayal of women's mental health issues, it lacks a comprehensive analysis of how contemporary feminist writers address mental health, particularly with respect to intersectional identities (race, class, and sexual orientation). More recent feminist theories, including queer and postcolonial critiques, are not thoroughly examined in this work.

Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Herman's book is a pivotal work in linking feminist theory and mental health, focusing on trauma and its psychological effects. It underscores how feminist movements brought attention to trauma, such as domestic violence and sexual assault, and their long-lasting effects on mental health. Though Herman covers trauma extensively, the connection between trauma and creativity—particularly in literary production—is not the central focus. This creates an opportunity to explore how trauma impacts literary creation in feminist writers, such as Sylvia Plath or Meena Kandasamy, who incorporate their experiences of mental health struggles into their works.

Kay Redfield Jamison's *Touched with Fire* (1996), Jamison's research is instrumental in understanding the relationship between mental illness, specifically bipolar disorder, and creativity. She highlights how numerous writers, including Sylvia Plath and Lord Byron, experienced mental

health struggles that significantly influenced their creative outputs. While Jamison provides a strong foundation for understanding mental illness in the context of creativity, her work primarily focuses on Western writers and lacks a feminist lens. The role of societal pressures, gender expectations, and intersectional identities in shaping both mental health and creativity in women's literature remains underexplored.

Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), Ahmed's work provides an important intersectional and feminist approach to understanding how emotions are shaped by societal structures and used as tools of oppression. Her analysis of emotions such as shame, fear, and anger contribute to an understanding of mental health from a feminist perspective. Though Ahmed's analysis of emotion is valuable, her work does not explicitly focus on the intersection of mental health and literary creation. Exploring how feminist writers channel emotional experiences into literary works—particularly through the lens of mental health—represents a key area of further inquiry.

Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* (1972), Chesler's pioneering feminist critique of the psychiatric system reveals how mental illness in women has been pathologized through a patriarchal lens. She argues that women's resistance to societal norms has often been labeled as madness, and that psychiatric institutions have reinforced these norms. While Chesler's work focuses on the intersection of feminism and mental health, it is largely focused on psychiatry and lacks a detailed examination of how literary creation serves as a form of resistance or healing for women writers experiencing mental health issues. Additionally, the book would benefit from an intersectional approach, considering how race, class, and sexuality further complicate the mental health experiences of women writers.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary criticism serves as a vital theoretical framework for analyzing literature through the lens of gender, power dynamics, and social structures, fundamentally questioning the representation of women in literary texts and the societal norms that shape these representations. Emerging from the broader feminist movement of the 20th century, this critical approach seeks to uncover the ways in which literature reflects, reinforces, or challenges patriarchal ideologies.

Central to feminist literary criticism is the examination of the ways women's voices have been historically marginalized or silenced within literary canon, often relegating female characters to secondary roles or portraying them through a male gaze. This framework encourages readers to consider how gender influences narrative structure, character development, and thematic exploration, urging a critical reevaluation of texts that may perpetuate stereotypes or limit women's agency. Notably, feminist critics such as Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert have introduced concepts like "gynocriticism," which focuses on women's writing and the unique experiences that inform their creative processes. By emphasizing the significance of women's perspectives and lived experiences, feminist literary criticism not only advocates for the inclusion of diverse female voices but also interrogates the intersectionality of gender with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality. This intersectional approach is essential in understanding how various forms of oppression overlap and affect women differently, enriching feminist literary analysis. Furthermore, feminist literary criticism often highlights the therapeutic potential of literature, as it allows for the exploration of women's internal struggles, desires, and resistances, thus functioning as a site of empowerment and healing. In essence, this theoretical framework provides a critical lens through which to analyze texts that engage with women's rights, mental health, and the broader societal constructs that shape female identity, advocating for a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of literature that reflects the complexities of women's lives. By employing feminist literary criticism, scholars and readers can engage with literature not only as a reflection of individual experiences but also as a powerful tool for social change, challenging the structures of oppression that persist in both literary and real-world contexts.

Theoretical Framework: Mental Health and Creativity

The relationship between mental health and creativity has long been a subject of fascination and scholarly inquiry, revealing a complex interplay between psychological states and artistic expression. This theoretical framework posits that mental health challenges can significantly influence creative processes, often serving as both a source of inspiration and a catalyst for innovation. Many artists, writers, and musicians have historically reported that their struggles with mental health—such as depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder—have informed their creative work, allowing them to explore themes of suffering, identity, and resilience in profound and evocative ways. Psychological theories, such as those proposed by Kay Redfield Jamison, suggest

that heightened emotional states, whether they are periods of intense sorrow or euphoric inspiration, can enhance creative output by providing a deeper well of experiences from which to draw. This notion is further supported by research in neuropsychology, which indicates that the brain's processing of emotions and cognitive flexibility during mental health episodes can lead to novel associations and insights that fuel creativity.

Conversely, the demands of creative work can also contribute to mental health struggles, as the pressures of artistic production, public scrutiny, and the pursuit of perfectionism can exacerbate anxiety and depression. This duality suggests that the creative process is not merely a vehicle for expressing mental health issues but is also influenced by external and internal factors that shape the artist's experience. Theoretical frameworks in this domain often draw on the concept of "psychological resilience," which posits that creativity can serve as a coping mechanism for individuals facing mental health challenges. Engaging in creative activities can provide therapeutic benefits, offering a means of processing emotions, expressing complex feelings, and fostering a sense of agency and control.

Moreover, the integration of feminist perspectives into this framework reveals how societal expectations around gender and mental health can affect women's creative expression. Women writers in particular may navigate unique challenges related to their mental health, including societal stigmas and the intersection of gendered expectations with their creative pursuits. By examining mental health through the lens of creativity, this framework encourages a deeper understanding of how psychological experiences shape artistic expression while also highlighting the therapeutic potential of creativity in addressing mental health issues. Ultimately, this theoretical framework serves to illuminate the multifaceted relationship between mental health and creativity, advocating for a more nuanced appreciation of the ways in which emotional experiences can inform and enrich artistic endeavors, while also recognizing the need for greater mental health awareness and support within creative communities.

Analysis

Section 1: Women's Rights in Literary Representation

The representation of women in literature has long been a battleground for advocating women's rights and challenging patriarchal norms. This section analyzes how various literary

works articulate women's struggles for agency, autonomy, and representation, serving as critical reflections of their societal conditions and aspirations. Through the examination of key texts, we can see how authors illuminate the complexities of women's rights and the cultural narratives that often constrain female identity.

Historical Context and Evolution of Representation

Historically, women's representation in literature has been characterized by a tendency to subordinate female voices to male narratives. Classic literature often portrayed women through reductive stereotypes, such as the submissive wife or the nurturing mother, reflecting the limited roles available to women in society. These representations not only marginalized women's experiences but also reinforced societal expectations, constraining women's rights and aspirations. Feminist literary criticism has sought to deconstruct these portrayals, emphasizing the importance of reclaiming women's narratives and advocating for their representation in diverse roles that reflect their complexities and strengths.

Contemporary Voices and Intersectionality

In contemporary literature, the representation of women has evolved significantly, as authors increasingly explore intersectional identities that reflect the diverse experiences of women across different cultures, classes, and races. Writers like Meena Kandasamy and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie provide powerful portrayals of women navigating the intersections of gender, caste, and culture. Kandasamy's *When I Hit You* addresses the systemic violence faced by women in a patriarchal society, portraying not just the personal trauma of domestic abuse but also the societal structures that perpetuate such violence. Her work serves as a vital commentary on the urgent need for women's rights, highlighting the emotional and psychological toll of oppression.

Similarly, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* offers nuanced portrayals of female characters who challenge traditional gender roles within the context of the Nigerian Civil War. Through the experiences of characters like Olanna and Kainene, Adichie illustrates the resilience of women in the face of conflict and societal upheaval, emphasizing their agency and contributions to both their families and communities. These narratives challenge the dominant cultural

narratives that often marginalize women's voices, instead advocating for a more inclusive representation that honors their experiences and rights.

The Role of Female Protagonists

Central to the analysis of women's rights in literary representation is the role of female protagonists who defy societal expectations and assert their autonomy. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the titular character navigates the complexities of her social world, reflecting on her life choices and the constraints imposed by gender norms. Woolf uses stream-of-consciousness narrative techniques to delve into Clarissa's thoughts, allowing readers to access her internal struggles and desires. This exploration highlights the limitations placed on women yet also celebrates their capacity for self-reflection and agency. Woolf's nuanced portrayal of Clarissa's inner life serves as a powerful critique of the societal structures that restrict women's rights, reinforcing the need for a more equitable representation in literature.

Feminist Activism and Literary Agency

Literature has also served as a platform for feminist activism, as authors utilize their narratives to advocate for women's rights and challenge oppressive structures. Writers like Audre Lorde and Toni Morrison explore themes of race, identity, and empowerment, pushing back against the systemic inequalities faced by women, particularly women of color. Lorde's poetry, for instance, articulates the intersectionality of race and gender, demanding recognition and respect for the experiences of Black women. Similarly, Morrison's *Beloved* confronts the legacy of slavery and its impact on Black women's lives, offering a profound exploration of motherhood, trauma, and resilience. By highlighting the voices of marginalized women, these authors contribute to a broader discourse on women's rights, illustrating the transformative power of literature in advocating for social change.

The representation of women in literature is a crucial site for understanding and advocating for women's rights. Through the analysis of historical and contemporary texts, this section has demonstrated how literature reflects, critiques, and ultimately shapes societal attitudes toward women. As authors continue to explore the complexities of women's experiences, they challenge traditional narratives and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable representation. This analysis underscores the importance of literature as both a mirror and a catalyst for social

change, highlighting its potential to empower women and promote their rights in an increasingly complex world. As feminist literary criticism continues to evolve, it remains imperative to recognize the ongoing struggles for women's rights and the vital role that literature plays in voicing these challenges and aspirations.

Section 2: The Influence of Writers' Mental Health

The intricate relationship between a writer's mental health and their creative output has been a focal point of literary analysis and psychological inquiry. This section explores how mental health challenges influence literary production, shaping themes, narratives, and character development while simultaneously reflecting the authors' personal struggles. By examining the works of notable writers such as Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and Meena Kandasamy, we can gain insights into how mental health informs their artistic expression and the broader implications for understanding creativity.

Personal Struggles and Creative Expression

For many writers, mental health issues serve as both a source of profound insight and a debilitating challenge. Virginia Woolf's struggles with mental illness, including severe depression and suicidal ideation, deeply influenced her writing. In works like *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf's innovative use of stream-of-consciousness allows readers to access the complex inner lives of her characters, capturing the nuances of their psychological states. The fragmented narrative structure reflects Woolf's own experiences with mental illness, mirroring the disjointedness that often accompanies depression. This technique not only highlights the emotional turmoil of her characters but also serves as a powerful critique of the societal expectations that can exacerbate mental health struggles, particularly for women. Woolf's ability to articulate her internal battles through her literary work underscores the potential for creative expression to provide insight into the complexities of mental health.

The Artistic Process and Emotional Turmoil

Similarly, Sylvia Plath's poetry is deeply intertwined with her experiences of mental illness, providing a lens through which to explore the darker aspects of existence. In poems like "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy," Plath confronts themes of death, identity, and the struggle for autonomy against oppressive forces. Her vivid imagery and emotional intensity serve as a

cathartic outlet for her psychological pain, transforming personal trauma into universally resonant art. Plath's candid exploration of her struggles with depression and suicidal thoughts not only sheds light on her mental health but also connects to broader feminist themes of power and oppression. The raw emotion in her writing illustrates how mental health can influence creativity, offering a profound commentary on the intersection of personal suffering and artistic expression.

Intersection of Mental Health and Feminism

Meena Kandasamy's work further exemplifies the ways in which mental health and creativity intersect, particularly within the context of gender and societal oppression. In *When I Hit You*, Kandasamy draws on her own experiences and those of women facing domestic violence, using literature as a platform to address the psychological impact of such trauma. The protagonist's mental health deteriorates in response to the abusive relationship, reflecting the real-life implications of violence on women's psychological well-being. Kandasamy's narrative not only highlights the urgent need for discussions around mental health in the context of gender-based violence but also serves as a form of resistance, empowering women to reclaim their stories and voices. Through her work, Kandasamy illustrates the dual role of literature as both a reflection of mental health struggles and a means of advocacy for women's rights.

Creativity as a Coping Mechanism

The relationship between mental health and creativity can also be understood through the lens of literature as a coping mechanism. For many writers, the act of writing provides a therapeutic outlet that enables them to navigate their emotional landscapes. This notion is supported by psychological research suggesting that creative expression can serve as a means of processing trauma and fostering resilience. By articulating their experiences through writing, authors like Woolf, Plath, and Kandasamy not only confront their mental health challenges but also create a space for dialogue around the stigma associated with mental illness. This process of sharing personal narratives can foster empathy and understanding, highlighting the transformative potential of literature in addressing mental health issues.

The influence of writers' mental health on their creative output is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that warrants careful examination. Through the analysis of the works of Woolf, Plath, and Kandasamy, this section has illuminated the ways in which mental health challenges shape literary themes, character development, and narrative structure. The exploration of personal struggles within literary texts not only enriches our understanding of the authors' experiences but also serves as a powerful commentary on the broader societal implications of mental health. As we continue to explore the intersection of creativity and mental health, it is essential to recognize the vital role that literature plays in articulating the complexities of human experience, fostering dialogue, and advocating for a more nuanced understanding of mental health in contemporary discourse. Ultimately, the relationship between mental health and creativity underscores the importance of honoring and amplifying the voices of writers who bravely navigate their internal landscapes, transforming their struggles into art that resonates across generations.

Section 3: Intersection of Women's Rights and Mental Health

The intersection of women's rights and mental health is a critical area of inquiry that highlights the complex ways in which gender-based oppression impacts women's psychological well-being. This section examines how societal norms and structures influence both women's rights and mental health, exploring the bidirectional relationship between these two dimensions through the analysis of literary texts. By focusing on the works of authors such as Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and Meena Kandasamy, this section underscores the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of women's rights and mental health in shaping the narratives of women's experiences.

Societal Norms and Psychological Impact

Societal expectations around gender roles significantly shape women's experiences, often leading to mental health struggles. Women are frequently subjected to pressures that dictate their behavior, appearance, and aspirations, which can result in feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression. In Virginia Woolf's *The Hours*, the character of Clarissa Vaughan grapples with societal expectations surrounding her roles as a wife, mother, and successful professional. Woolf's exploration of Clarissa's internal conflicts illustrates how societal norms can create a sense of entrapment, contributing to psychological distress. This depiction resonates with

contemporary discussions around the “superwoman” myth, which posits that women must excel in multiple roles while maintaining an idealized image, often leading to burnout and mental health challenges.

Similarly, Sylvia Plath’s work highlights the psychological toll of gendered expectations. In *The Bell Jar*, Esther Greenwood’s descent into depression is closely linked to the societal pressures that dictate her identity as a woman. Plath poignantly captures the conflict between personal ambition and societal expectations, revealing how the lack of autonomy and the constant scrutiny of women’s choices can lead to feelings of isolation and despair. By illustrating the emotional and psychological consequences of oppressive societal norms, Plath’s writing emphasizes the urgent need for feminist advocacy that addresses both women’s rights and mental health.

The Impact of Violence and Trauma

Violence against women is a significant factor influencing both women’s rights and mental health. Domestic abuse, sexual violence, and systemic discrimination not only violate women’s rights but also contribute to long-lasting psychological trauma. Meena Kandasamy’s *When I Hit You* powerfully addresses the intersection of gender-based violence and mental health, illustrating how an abusive relationship can lead to severe mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Kandasamy’s portrayal of her protagonist’s psychological unraveling highlights the urgent need for societal change to protect women’s rights and provide adequate mental health support for survivors of violence.

Kandasamy’s work also reflects the broader societal implications of violence against women, emphasizing that mental health struggles often stem from systemic inequalities and the normalization of gender-based violence. By incorporating the voices of marginalized women and addressing the stigma surrounding mental health, Kandasamy advocates for a holistic approach to women’s rights that recognizes the interconnectedness of physical safety, mental well-being, and autonomy.

Empowerment Through Narrative and Agency

The intersection of women’s rights and mental health also underscores the importance of narrative agency in promoting psychological well-being. Literature serves as a platform for

women to articulate their experiences, confront societal norms, and reclaim their narratives. This act of storytelling is a crucial step toward empowerment, allowing women to express their struggles and assert their rights in the face of oppression. Writers like Woolf, Plath, and Kandasamy utilize their literary platforms to challenge the stigma surrounding mental health and advocate for women's rights, illustrating how creative expression can foster resilience and promote healing.

For instance, in *Lady Lazarus*, Sylvia Plath uses the metaphor of resurrection to symbolize her struggle against despair and her determination to reclaim her identity. This powerful assertion of agency serves not only as a personal declaration but also as a broader commentary on the resilience of women facing societal oppression. By asserting their voices through literature, women can challenge the narratives that marginalize them, ultimately advocating for their rights and mental health.

The intersection of women's rights and mental health reveals the profound impact of societal norms, violence, and narrative agency on women's experiences. Through the analysis of literary texts by Woolf, Plath, and Kandasamy, this section has illuminated the ways in which oppressive structures shape both women's rights and mental health, emphasizing the need for an integrated approach to advocacy. Understanding the interconnectedness of these dimensions is essential for fostering a more equitable society that recognizes the complexities of women's lives. By advocating for both women's rights and mental health awareness, we can create a more inclusive discourse that empowers women, promotes their well-being, and challenges the societal norms that contribute to their struggles. Ultimately, the intersection of women's rights and mental health serves as a reminder of the critical need for holistic approaches to addressing the challenges faced by women, paving the way for meaningful social change and a more just society.

Case Studies of Specific Writers

Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath's work poignantly illustrates the intricate relationship between women's rights and mental health struggles. Her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, serves as a profound exploration of the pressures faced by women in a patriarchal society. The protagonist, Esther

Greenwood, grapples with societal expectations that dictate her identity and purpose, leading her to experience profound mental health challenges, including depression and suicidal ideation. Plath's own struggles with mental illness, including her battles with depression and her eventual suicide, echo Esther's plight and reveal how societal norms can contribute to a woman's sense of entrapment and despair. The narrative underscores the conflict between personal ambition and societal expectations placed on women, particularly regarding marriage and motherhood, effectively critiquing the limited roles available to women in the 1950s. Moreover, Plath's poetry, such as "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy," reveals her struggle with identity and authority, presenting a feminist perspective that confronts patriarchal oppression. Through her work, Plath not only articulates her mental health challenges but also advocates for women's autonomy and the right to express their true selves beyond societal constraints, thereby positioning herself as a critical voice in both feminist and mental health discourses.

Meena Kandasamy

Similarly, Meena Kandasamy's work offers a compelling examination of women's rights and mental health, particularly within the context of caste and gender in India. In her novel *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*, Kandasamy explores the intersection of domestic violence and the societal expectations placed upon women. The protagonist's experience of an abusive marriage reflects the broader systemic issues of patriarchy and violence that many women face, while also revealing the psychological toll that such oppression takes on mental health. Kandasamy's writing is unflinching in its portrayal of trauma, articulating the complexities of navigating a world where personal agency is often curtailed by societal norms. Furthermore, her poetry and essays advocate for women's rights, addressing the intersectional nature of oppression and the urgent need for social change. By sharing her own struggles with mental health and challenging the structures that perpetuate violence and silence, Kandasamy contributes to a broader feminist discourse that seeks to empower women and advocate for their rights, positioning literature as a powerful tool for resistance and healing. Her work exemplifies how writers can address both personal and collective traumas, using their narratives to advocate for a more just and equitable society.

Case Study of Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf serves as a seminal figure in the exploration of women's rights and mental health, intertwining her personal struggles with mental illness with her advocacy for women's autonomy and representation in literature. Woolf's essays, particularly "A Room of One's Own," articulate a profound argument for the necessity of financial independence and personal space for women writers, emphasizing that a lack of these resources perpetuates their marginalization in literary and societal contexts. She argues that the constraints imposed by patriarchal society not only hinder women's creative expression but also contribute to their psychological distress. Woolf's own battles with mental illness, which included severe bouts of depression and suicidal ideation, profoundly influenced her writing. Her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* poignantly captures the inner workings of mental health, particularly through the character of Septimus Warren Smith, a shell-shocked war veteran suffering from what would now be recognized as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This character serves as a parallel to Woolf's own struggles, reflecting the broader societal neglect of mental health issues. Woolf's portrayal of Clarissa Dalloway's existential musings further illustrates the deep emotional and psychological complexities faced by women navigating societal expectations. Through her literary works, Woolf not only reveals the struggles inherent in women's rights but also critiques the societal structures that contribute to mental health crises, making her a powerful voice for both feminist advocacy and the understanding of mental health in the early 20th century. Her legacy continues to inspire discussions about the intersections of gender, mental health, and creative expression, underscoring the importance of giving voice to women's experiences in literature.

Case Study of Meena Kandasamy

Meena Kandasamy emerges as a powerful voice in contemporary literature, adeptly addressing women's rights and mental health issues within the sociocultural context of India. Her work, particularly in novels like *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*, provides an unflinching examination of the intersectionality of caste, gender, and violence. The narrative centers on a young woman's experience in an abusive marriage, revealing how systemic patriarchy and societal norms dictate women's lives, often leading to profound mental health struggles. Kandasamy's protagonist grapples with the psychological aftermath of domestic violence, illustrating the trauma that emerges from a life lived in fear and subjugation. This depiction resonates with Kandasamy's own experiences, as she has been open about her battles with mental

health, articulating how societal pressures and personal traumas can contribute to psychological distress. In her poetry, Kandasamy further explores themes of identity, resistance, and survival, crafting verses that challenge the silence surrounding women's suffering. Her poem "The Way You Are" reflects the emotional turmoil faced by women living under oppressive structures, revealing a longing for autonomy and self-assertion. Kandasamy's advocacy for women's rights transcends her literary work; she actively engages in social activism, using her platform to speak out against caste-based violence and discrimination. By weaving her personal struggles with mental health into her narratives, she not only highlights the broader societal issues that women face but also emphasizes the importance of storytelling as a means of healing and empowerment. Kandasamy's multifaceted approach to literature underscores her commitment to illuminating the complexities of women's experiences, advocating for their rights, and fostering a deeper understanding of mental health in a context often marked by silence and stigma. Through her compelling prose and poetry, she offers a resonant critique of the structures that oppress women while simultaneously providing a voice for those who navigate the intricate terrain of identity, trauma, and resilience.

Discussion

The exploration of women's rights and representation in literature, particularly through the lens of mental health, provides a rich tapestry for understanding how cultural narratives shape and are shaped by individual experiences. This research paper has critically engaged various texts and authors to highlight the multifaceted relationship between feminism, mental health, and literary expression. By examining the works of influential writers such as Sylvia Plath, Meena Kandasamy, Indira Goswami, and Jerry Pinto, this discussion will delve into the implications of their narratives, exploring how they not only reflect personal struggles but also engage with broader societal issues.

The Interplay of Feminism and Mental Health

One of the primary themes that emerges from this study is the intersection of feminism and mental health. The representation of women's mental health in literature often serves as a microcosm for understanding societal attitudes toward gender, autonomy, and emotional well-being. The analysis of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* illustrates how the protagonist's mental health struggles are deeply intertwined with her experiences as a woman in a patriarchal society. Plath's portrayal of Esther Greenwood's descent into depression reflects the pressures

exerted by societal expectations on women, highlighting how these external forces can lead to internalized feelings of inadequacy and despair. This thematic exploration underscores the need for a feminist lens in analyzing mental health issues, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of the external factors that contribute to psychological distress.

Similarly, Kandasamy's work confronts the stigma surrounding mental health, particularly in the context of marginalized communities. Her writings illuminate the struggles faced by women who navigate both societal oppression and mental health challenges. By giving voice to these experiences, Kandasamy not only addresses the personal but also the political dimensions of mental health, arguing for a broader societal acknowledgment of women's rights to mental well-being. This aligns with Judith Herman's concept of trauma as a communal rather than merely an individual experience, suggesting that understanding mental health requires a comprehensive examination of the societal structures that perpetuate suffering.

Literary Creation as a Form of Resistance

The discussion also emphasizes the role of literary creation as a form of resistance against societal oppression. Writers like Indira Goswami and Jerry Pinto employ their narratives to challenge dominant discourses surrounding mental health and gender. Through their characters, they confront the stigma associated with mental illness and advocate for a more compassionate understanding of psychological struggles. For instance, Pinto's exploration of mental health issues within the context of Indian society reflects a broader critique of cultural norms that often silence conversations about mental health. His work highlights the importance of breaking the silence surrounding mental health, thereby empowering individuals to share their stories and seek support. Moreover, the act of writing itself serves as a therapeutic outlet for these authors, allowing them to process their experiences and reclaim their narratives. This aligns with Kay Redfield Jamison's assertion that many creative individuals channel their psychological struggles into their artistic endeavors, transforming personal pain into powerful literary expression. By doing so, these writers not only articulate their mental health challenges but also contribute to a larger discourse on women's rights and representation, advocating for a society that recognizes and values mental well-being as an integral component of gender equality.

The Importance of Intersectionality

An essential aspect of this discussion is the recognition of intersectionality in understanding the experiences of women writers. While the works of Plath, Kandasamy, and Pinto provide significant insights into the intersection of gender and mental health, they also reveal the complexities introduced by factors such as race, class, and cultural identity. For example, Kandasamy's exploration of mental health within the framework of caste and social stratification in India illustrates how systemic oppression compounds the challenges faced by women in marginalized communities. By incorporating an intersectional approach, this research acknowledges that the experiences of mental health and women's rights are not monolithic; rather, they are shaped by a confluence of social, economic, and cultural forces. This focus on intersectionality also highlights the need for future research to consider the diverse voices and narratives that exist within feminist literature. By broadening the scope of analysis to include writers from various backgrounds, scholars can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how different identities inform experiences of mental health and advocacy for women's rights. This inclusivity not only enriches literary discourse but also fosters a more equitable representation of women's experiences in literature.

Contributions to Literary Discourse

This study contributes to the existing body of literature by emphasizing the therapeutic potential of literary expression in the context of mental health. It illustrates how writers can leverage their narratives to confront societal injustices, challenge oppressive structures, and advocate for change. The exploration of Plath's, Kandasamy's, Goswami's, and Pinto's works provides a compelling case for the power of literature to not only reflect individual struggles but also to serve as a catalyst for broader social discourse on women's rights and mental health. Furthermore, the findings underscore the necessity of incorporating feminist and psychological perspectives into literary studies. By doing so, scholars can foster a more nuanced understanding of how literature not only mirrors society but also has the potential to influence social attitudes and policies regarding mental health and women's rights. The interplay between narrative and experience creates a dynamic space for dialogue, allowing for a deeper engagement with the issues at hand.

In conclusion, this research has illuminated the vital connections between women's rights, representation, and mental health in literary discourse. By analyzing the works of significant

feminist authors, it has demonstrated how literature serves as a platform for resistance, advocacy, and healing. The insights gained from this exploration highlight the importance of recognizing the intersectionality of experiences and the need for continued dialogue surrounding mental health and gender issues. As literature continues to evolve, so too must our approaches to understanding the complexities of women's experiences. The call for more inclusive and intersectional perspectives in literary studies remains pressing, as does the need for ongoing advocacy for women's rights and mental health awareness. This research ultimately seeks to contribute to a broader conversation about the role of literature in shaping societal attitudes, empowering individuals, and fostering a more equitable and compassionate world. Through the lens of feminist literary criticism, the study reaffirms the enduring power of narrative as a tool for change, one that can challenge the status quo and inspire future generations of writers and activists to continue the work of dismantling oppressive structures and advocating for mental well-being.

Conclusion

This research paper has sought to unravel the complex and often intertwined themes of women's rights, representation, and the mental health of writers within the literary canon. By analyzing the works of feminist authors such as Sylvia Plath, Meena Kandasamy, Indira Goswami, and Jerry Pinto, the study has underscored the ways in which literary discourse serves not only as a reflection of societal norms but also as a site of resistance and reclamation. These authors channel personal and collective struggles into their creative works, using literature as both an act of defiance against patriarchal constraints and a form of therapy to navigate their mental health challenges. A major finding of this study is the inextricable link between women's rights and mental health as portrayed in literary texts. The oppressive structures of patriarchy, gender norms, and the societal marginalization of women's voices often culminate in psychological distress for female writers and characters alike. In their writings, Plath and Kandasamy, for example, highlight how the intersection of gendered expectations and mental health manifests as both personal torment and a political issue. These writers expose the silencing of women's voices, the stigma surrounding mental illness, and the oppressive systems that pathologize women's resistance to societal norms. Another significant contribution of this research is its focus on the therapeutic and subversive potential of literary

creation for writers battling mental health issues. The analysis has demonstrated that many authors, particularly those from marginalized communities, use literature as a tool for self-expression, healing, and transformation. Through the lens of feminist literary criticism and psychological theory, this paper has shown how personal suffering can be transformed into creative output that challenges oppressive structures. The works of Jerry Pinto and Indira Goswami in particular reveal that literary creation offers not only a way to voice inner turmoil but also to critique broader societal injustices that perpetuate suffering.

Furthermore, the study has identified gaps in existing scholarship, particularly in terms of intersectionality. While feminist literary criticism has offered extensive insights into gender oppression, there is still a need for more nuanced exploration of how race, class, and sexuality intersect with women's rights and mental health in literary works. This research contributes to filling these gaps by emphasizing the diverse experiences of women writers from different backgrounds. The inclusion of authors from non-Western contexts, such as Kandasamy and Goswami, broadens the scope of feminist literary analysis, demonstrating how global and local forces shape the literary portrayal of women's rights and mental health. By exploring both the struggles and the acts of resistance that emerge from the lived experiences of these writers, the paper also critiques the traditional dichotomies of "sanity" and "insanity" often imposed by patriarchal systems. These literary works offer a nuanced view of mental health, suggesting that what is often labeled as "madness" is, in fact, a legitimate and necessary response to systemic violence, oppression, and exclusion. Through their writings, these authors contest the pathologization of women's experiences and argue for a more inclusive and compassionate understanding of mental health, one that acknowledges the sociopolitical dimensions of psychological distress.

This research underscores the vital role that literature plays in both reflecting and shaping societal attitudes toward women's rights and mental health. By giving voice to those who have been marginalized and silenced, the authors examined in this study not only illuminate the personal costs of oppression but also offer new avenues for resistance and healing. Literary discourse becomes a powerful means of navigating the complexities of identity, autonomy, and psychological well-being, challenging the patriarchal structures that seek to contain them. This study thus calls for continued exploration of how literature can serve as a transformative

space for advocating women's rights, addressing mental health, and resisting the forces of oppression that limit both. Moreover, the intersectional approach taken in this paper serves as an invitation for future scholarship to further investigate the diverse experiences of women writers across different cultural, racial, and social contexts. The complex interrelation between literary creation, feminism, and mental health offers a fertile ground for continued research, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and critical understanding of the role that literature plays in challenging and transforming societal narratives around gender and mental well-being.

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Imagining Tomorrow: Utopian and Dystopian Visions of Climate Futures in Selected Contemporary Speculative Fictions of Octavia Butler, Paolo Bacigalupi, Kim Stanley Robinson and Rebecca Roanhorse

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Abstract

In the face of intensifying climate crisis, literature has emerged as a powerful space for imagining environmental futures and articulating the ethical, political, and existential stakes of the Anthropocene. This paper examines how contemporary speculative fiction envisions climate futures through both dystopian and utopian lenses, focusing on five key texts: *Parable of the Sower* (Octavia Butler), *The Water Knife* (Paolo Bacigalupi), *New York 2140* and *The Ministry for the Future* (Kim Stanley Robinson), and *Black Sun* (Rebecca Roanhorse). Through an ecocritical and interdisciplinary lens, the paper explores how these works construct divergent responses to climate breakdown, ranging from collapse and violence to reform and resilience. While Butler and Bacigalupi depict brutal dystopias marked by resource scarcity, social fragmentation, and survivalist ethics, Robinson's novels offer speculative blueprints for systemic change and institutional reform, and Roanhorse's *Black Sun*, though situated in a mythic pre-industrial world, introduces an indigenous futurist framework that reorients environmental and cosmological relationships. Together, these narratives illuminate the intersection of climate change with race, class, gender, governance, and spiritual worldviews. By comparing narrative form, imagined futures, and socio-political contexts, this paper argues that speculative fiction not only reflects contemporary anxieties about climate collapse but also serves as a space for envisioning alternative modes of existence. These texts challenge readers to rethink the boundaries of possibility, agency, and ecological ethics, making them vital contributions to both environmental humanities and climate discourse. The analysis will draw on theories of speculative fiction, utopian studies, and

critical dystopian theory to illuminate the ways in which texts engage with and challenge dominant narratives about the future.

Keywords: climate fiction, ecocriticism, utopia, dystopia, environmental humanities, indigenous futurism, Anthropocene literature, postcolonial ecologies, climate justice.

Introduction

The escalating climate crisis has intensified literary engagement with environmental futures, particularly within the genre of speculative fiction. Through imaginative extrapolations of climate change, authors explore the ethical, political, and existential dimensions of ecological collapse. Utopian and dystopian modes, in particular, offer powerful frameworks to critique the status quo and envision radical alternatives. This paper analyses how Butler, Bacigalupi, Robinson, and Roanhorse articulate divergent but interconnected visions of climate futures, ranging from bleak dystopias to cautious utopias, through their speculative fiction.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse how selected speculative fictions construct utopian and dystopian visions of climate futures.
2. To examine the intersection of climate change, politics, and social justice in the selected texts.
3. To explore how speculative fiction contributes to climate discourse and environmental awareness.
4. To investigate the role of alternative worldviews, including Indigenous cosmologies and cooperative systems, in imagining future resilience.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing field of climate humanities by exploring how speculative fiction mediates the complexities of climate change, socio-political inequity, and collective futures. It foregrounds the role of literary imagination in not only representing environmental crises but also in envisioning transformative possibilities. By examining diverse narrative strategies across gendered, racial, and geopolitical lines, the paper affirms the importance of inclusive storytelling in reshaping global climate discourse.

Discussion and Analysis

Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) presents a near-future America devastated by climate change, economic inequality, and social fragmentation. Set in the 2020s, the novel envisions a society where basic services have collapsed, and survival is contingent on self-reliance and

community-building. Through the protagonist, Lauren Olamina, Butler critiques institutional failures and introduces Earth seed—a belief system grounded in adaptability—as a visionary response to environmental and social instability.

The novel merges environmental collapse with a deeply spiritual and philosophical framework for resilience. The climate crisis is depicted not just as a backdrop but as a driving force behind the narrative and the character's struggles. It impacts everything from agriculture to the safety of communities, making survival a daily challenge. This ostensible natural calamity serves to illustrate the human consequences of ecological neglect, emphasizing the interconnectedness of societal issues and environmental realities.

In *Parable of the Sower*, societal hierarchy is deeply entrenched in the fabric of the world Butler has created. As the societal order breaks down due to the climate crisis, traditional hierarchies become more pronounced. The wealthy isolate themselves in gated communities, enjoying security and resources that are unattainable to the impoverished. In contrast, those living outside these enclaves face violence, deprivation, and systemic injustice.

The novel also explores the impact of race, gender, and class on individuals' experiences. Lauren Olamina, the protagonist, grapples with her identity as a Black woman in a patriarchal, racially stratified society. Hierarchical structures manifest in various ways, such as dominance by those with power over marginalized communities and the exploitation of the vulnerable by the elite.

The environmental collapse magnifies existing disparities, revealing how the most disadvantaged bear the brunt of ecological and economic crises. Those with privilege retreat into fortified spaces, while the rest must navigate a world that becomes increasingly hostile.

Butler's narrative serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of ignoring climate change and social injustice. It suggests that the future is not predetermined; rather, it is shaped by the choices made in the present regarding both environmental stewardship and social equity. As Lauren seeks to create a new belief system (Earthseed) that embraces change and interconnectedness, she symbolizes hope for a more equitable and sustainable future, challenging the rigid hierarchies that have led to destruction.

In summary, *Parable of the Sower* intricately weaves together themes of climate change and social hierarchy, presenting a sobering reflection on how ecological crisis can amplify inequalities while also hinting at the potential for community and resilience in the face of adversity.

The Water Knife

In *The Water Knife* (2015), Bacigalupi constructs a parched and violent future American Southwest, where water scarcity has led to political fragmentation and brutal survivalism. The novel explores biopolitics and the commodification of water through characters who embody different social strata. Angel Velasquez, a 'water knife,' enforces corporate water rights with ruthless efficiency, while Lucy and Maria navigate a landscape shaped by climate injustice. Bacigalupi critiques the neoliberal management of natural resources and exposes the human costs of ecological degradation. Water scarcity is the crisis that shapes the lives of the characters in *The Water Knife*.

Set in the American Southwest, where prolonged drought has rendered traditional sources of water nearly non-existent, the novel illustrates how this vital resource has become a precious commodity. Cities are depicted as battlegrounds for water rights, with the wealthy and powerful monopolizing access to water while the poor are left to fend for themselves.

The novel reflects the consequences of environmental neglect and climate change, depicting a society that has failed to manage its water resources responsibly. This scarcity leads to social upheaval, as communities are forced into desperate measures to survive, including conflict, territorial disputes, and corruption.

The main characters, including Angel Velasquez, find themselves navigating a treacherous landscape marked by the fight for water. Angel, a "water knife" working for a powerful corporation, is emblematic of the lengths individuals will go to ensure their survival in this harsh reality. His experiences highlight the moral dilemmas that arise in a world where survival often comes at the expense of others.

The novel depicts various communities struggling to adapt to the scarcity of water. Characters form alliances, engage in ethical compromises, and sometimes betray one another in the desperation to secure water access. The relationships formed under these circumstances reveal the complexities of human behaviour when resources are limited. Trust becomes precarious as survival instincts take precedence over empathy and solidarity.

In the face of extreme scarcity, characters also exhibit resilience and resourcefulness. Some seek innovative solutions to cope with their water needs, highlighting the human capacity for adaptation even under dire conditions. The survival tactics range from practical adaptations, such as scavenging and bartering for water, to political manoeuvres aimed at influencing water rights.

New York 2140

New York 2140 (2017) depicts a partially submerged Manhattan adapted to sea-level rise. While the novel acknowledges climate disaster, it presents a relatively optimistic vision of human adaptability and collective urban resilience. Robinson uses multiple narrators to show how diverse actors—from finance workers to grassroots activists—can reimagine social and economic systems in the face of ecological change. The novel blends speculative finance, urban planning, and cooperative politics to advocate for a more equitable post-capitalist future.

The narrative illustrates the emergence of cooperative models where communities work together to manage resources, share responsibilities, and support each other in the face of adversity. These cooperatives foster a sense of collective ownership, contrasting sharply with the individualistic, profit-driven motives of classic capitalism.

As water becomes a central element of life, the story explores how communities find ways to maximize the utility of resources. Innovations in sustainable living, such as vertical farms and advanced ecological practices, reduce dependence on traditional supply chains and foster a self-sufficient ethos.

The characters grapple with the importance of caring for their new aquatic landscape. This concern leads to a broader understanding of value that prioritizes ecological health over mere financial gain. Concepts such as "nature as a stakeholder" emerge, suggesting a move away from profit maximization to one that considers the environment's well-being.

The impacts of climate change also highlight the disparities within society. The novel suggests possibilities for creating more equitable systems that address historical injustices and promote inclusiveness. As characters form alliances across socio-economic divides, there are opportunities to address systemic inequalities.

The design of the city has shifted to accommodate its new relationship with water, leading to innovative architectural solutions that blend living spaces with ecological systems. This rethinking of urban design promotes a sustainable coexistence with nature rather than a conqueror-conquered dynamic.

The flood-drenched New York functions as a backdrop for new cultural practices that reflect collective experiences and shared histories. Artistic expression, literature, and storytelling become vital means of processing the changing human experience, emphasizing community and collaboration over competition.

Elements of utopian and progressive ideologies emerge throughout the story as characters engage in building a society focused on well-being, communal resilience, and ecological sustainability. The novel posits hopeful visions of what it means to thrive in the face of crisis, positioning human ingenuity at the heart of its explorations. The coexistence of various economic experiments, such as sharing economies, regenerative practices, and mutual aid provisions, demonstrates an ambiguity towards a singular solution. Rather, the multitude of approaches suggests that the future of society may be a complex and integrated tapestry of post-capitalist ideas.

The Ministry for the Future

The Ministry for the Future (2020) combines narrative fiction with speculative policy proposals to confront global climate catastrophe. The titular organization, based in Zurich, advocates for the rights of future generations. Robinson integrates science, economics, and politics into a story that examines both radical and institutional strategies for mitigating climate change. From geoengineering to carbon coins, the novel offers concrete solutions alongside moral and ethical dilemmas, advocating pragmatic optimism in the Anthropocene.

The MfT operates under the premise that climate change is a global problem requiring coordinated international action. It aims to empower communities and nations to work together in innovative and inclusive ways. The ministry transcends traditional nation-state boundaries, focusing on the planet as a whole.

The novel emphasizes the importance of recognizing climate refugees and marginalized communities whose rights and livelihoods are threatened by climate change. The MfT advocates for policies that prioritize equity and justice, pushing for a global framework that acknowledges the unequal burdens faced by different populations.

The story explores the concept of a sustainable economy that values ecological health over unchecked growth. Ideas such as carbon pricing, green energy investments, and divestment from fossil fuels are presented as essential components of economic reform that can help shift society toward a more sustainable future.

While Robinson portrays geoengineering with caution, he presents it as a potential tool among others. The discussion of ecological restoration techniques, such as reforestation and sustainable agriculture, highlights the necessity of working with nature rather than against it to reverse damage and restore ecosystems.

The narrative highlights the importance of activism and grassroots movements as catalysts for change. Protestors, environmentalists, and community organizers rally to demand immediate action on climate issues, emphasizing the power of collective action in enacting reform.

As people confront the realities of climate change, there is a cultural shift towards valuing sustainability, interconnectedness, and global citizenship. This transformation of societal values is presented as essential for fostering a collaborative spirit necessary for successful long-term change.

Robinson's work also touches on the need to decolonize climate action by amplifying the voices of Indigenous peoples and communities historically marginalized in discussions about climate reform. Their traditional knowledge and practices are recognized as integral to sustainable living.

Black Sun

Roanhorse's *Black Sun* (2020), the first installment in the Between Earth and Sky trilogy, reimagines a pre-Columbian-inspired fantasy world facing cosmic and climatic disruptions. Though not a climate novel in the traditional sense, *Black Sun* incorporates environmental themes through celestial events, mythology, and spiritual relationships to land and nature. The novel centers Indigenous worldviews, sovereignty, and the sacredness of the Earth, providing an alternative to Western ecological thinking and situating Indigenous futurism as a powerful mode of imagining resilient environmental futures.

Roanhorse's portrayal of Indigenous characters reflects a deep, spiritual connection to the land and natural elements. This connection is depicted through their rituals, beliefs, and practices, emphasizing how Indigenous cosmologies view the Earth as a living entity deserving of respect and reciprocity. Nature is not merely a backdrop for the characters' actions; it is a central force that influences their lives and decisions.

Many Indigenous worldviews encompass a cyclical understanding of time, which contrasts with linear capitalist perspectives. In *Black Sun*, this cyclicity is reflected in natural phenomena, seasonal changes, and the characters' journeys. The emphasis on cycles underscores themes of renewal and regeneration, suggesting that ecological processes are interconnected and that humanity must be attuned to these rhythms for survival.

The novel portrays a world facing ecological turmoil, drawing parallels to real-world climate crises. The disruption of natural systems is a key theme, highlighting the consequences that arise when humanity fails to live in harmony with the land. The catastrophic events in *Black Sun* serve

as a metaphor for the environmental degradation seen today, emphasizing the urgency of addressing climate change and its impacts on Indigenous communities.

Indigenous cosmologies often emphasize resilience and the ability to adapt to changing environments. The characters in *Black Sun* embody these principles as they navigate challenges posed by the natural world and their interconnected fates. Their experiences reflect the broader theme of survival in the face of ecological destruction, highlighting the importance of traditional knowledge and practices in fostering resilience to climate change.

Black Sun illustrates the sacred relationships Indigenous peoples have with their environments, emphasizing the notion that the land is imbued with spiritual significance. This perspective leads to a reverence for natural resources, advocating for sustainable practices that honour the Earth. The characters' struggles and conflicts often arise from breaches of these sacred relationships, reminding readers of the moral imperative to protect the environment.

The novel emphasizes collective rights and responsibilities toward the land, integral to Indigenous cosmologies. Characters often engage in communal efforts to address ecological issues, reflecting a belief that safeguarding the environment is a shared obligation. This communal approach contrasts with individualistic narratives more common in contemporary discourse, offering an alternative vision of interconnectedness and cooperation.

Conclusion

The selected speculative fictions highlight the multiplicity of ways in which climate change shapes, and is shaped by, human actions, ideologies, and hopes. Through dystopian warnings and utopian possibilities, these narratives act as cultural blueprints that challenge existing paradigms and inspire climate imagination. Whether through Butler's spiritual futurism, Bacigalupi's resource-driven collapse, Robinson's systemic reform, or Roanhorse's Indigenous cosmologies, each author offers a unique vision that contributes to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of climate futures. Together, they underline literature's potential to engage, educate, and envision a just and sustainable world.

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Echoes of Influence: A Sociolinguistic Insight into Hindi and English Influence on Brij Bhasha

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Abstract

This paper investigates the influence of Hindi and English on Brij Bhasha (Braj Bhasha), a prominent Western Hindi dialect spoken in the Brij region of Uttar Pradesh. The study analyzes linguistic interference, code-mixing, code-switching, and lexical borrowing at phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels. Through a combination of field data and phonetic analysis using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), this research highlights the dynamic interplay between Brij Bhasha and the dominant languages, Hindi and English. Brij Bhasha (also known as Braj Bhasha or ब्रज भाषा) is a culturally and historically significant dialect of the Western Hindi group, predominantly spoken in the Brij region encompassing parts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. Deeply rooted in the devotional poetry of Surdas and other Bhakti-era poets, Brij Bhasha carries immense literary value and spiritual resonance, particularly in Mathura, Vrindavan, and surrounding areas. Brij Bhasha, a historically rich dialect of the Western Hindi group, has long been the cultural and devotional voice of the Brij region, encompassing Mathura, Vrindavan, Agra, and surrounding areas. However, contemporary linguistic practices in the region reveal a gradual but profound transformation due to the growing influence of Standard Hindi and English. This research paper explores the sociolinguistic impact of these dominant languages on Brij Bhasha, focusing

on lexical borrowing, code-switching, syntactic restructuring, and phonological adaptation. Using field data collected from native speakers across urban and semi-urban areas of the Brij region, the study employs phonetic transcription (IPA) to analyze language contact phenomena in everyday speech. The findings reveal a generational shift in language use, where Brij Bhasha is increasingly blended with Hindi and English in both formal and informal domains. Hindi contributes to morphological simplification and syntactic standardization, while English introduces modern, technical, and aspirational vocabulary. The study underscores the urgency of documenting and revitalizing Brij Bhasha as a living dialect. It concludes that while language change is natural, strategic efforts are essential to preserve linguistic diversity and regional identity in the face of cultural globalization and educational homogenization.

Keywords: Braj Bhasha, code-mixing, code-switching, lexical borrowing

Introduction

Brij Bhasha holds significant literary and cultural relevance, especially in the Braj region encompassing Mathura, Vrindavan, Agra, and parts of Bharatpur and Aligarh. However, due to educational, administrative, and social changes, Hindi and English have become dominant languages in both formal and informal spheres. This has led to noticeable linguistic interference in the form of borrowing, code-mixing, and even structural modifications in native speech. This paper aims to examine the sociolinguistic outcomes of this contact. Despite its rich heritage, Brij Bhasha today faces increasing marginalization due to the sociolinguistic dominance of Hindi—the official language of India—and English, the language of aspiration, education, and global mobility. This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive sociolinguistic analysis of the dual influence that Hindi and English exert on Brij Bhasha. The study investigates the nature and extent of lexical borrowing, code-switching, syntactic restructuring, and phonological adaptation in Brij Bhasha speakers, particularly in urban and semi-urban contexts. Language contact phenomena are examined not only at the linguistic level but also through a socio-cultural lens, reflecting the shifting attitudes, aspirations, and identities of native speakers. The research explores how Hindi, through media, education, and governance, acts as a dominant contact language, gradually reshaping the grammatical and lexical structure of Brij Bhasha. Concurrently, English introduces modern and technical vocabulary, infusing Brij discourse with new semantic dimensions and prestige markers. The analysis is supported by phonetic transcription using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), making the shifts traceable and quantifiable. Through this study, we seek

to highlight the ongoing transformation of Brij Bhasha, not as a vanishing dialect, but as a dynamic and adaptive linguistic system negotiating space within a multilingual environment. The findings also underline the urgent need for linguistic documentation and revitalization strategies to preserve this treasured vernacular of Indian cultural identity.

Objectives of the Study

To identify and categorize the influence of Hindi and English in Brij Bhasha.

To provide phonological representation of mixed/borrowed forms using IPA.

To assess the socio-cultural implications of language contact.

Review of Literature

The field of sociolinguistics and language contact theory has extensively documented the dynamics of dominant languages influencing regional dialects. Weinreich (1953) laid the groundwork by identifying key processes such as lexical borrowing, phonological assimilation, and syntactic restructuring in prolonged contact settings. Trudgill (1986) further demonstrated how language contact reshapes both linguistic structures and speaker identities. Ferguson's (1959) model of diglossia is central to understanding Brij Bhasha's relegation to informal domains as Hindi and English dominate institutional and educational spaces. Kachru (1983) highlighted how English has been Indianized and integrated into various regional languages, while Shapiro and Schiffman (1981) examined the role of language planning in promoting Hindi over dialects like Brij Bhasha. Pandey (2015) emphasized generational shifts in language preferences among Braj speakers, reflecting a growing inclination toward Hindi and English for socio-economic mobility. Dube's (2004) grammar of Brij Bhasha remains a critical reference for assessing structural change. Romaine (1995) and Labov (1972) offer frameworks for analyzing bilingualism and variation, while Gumperz (1982) provides essential insights into code-switching phenomena. Fishman (1967) and Annamalai (2001) studied the maintenance and marginalization of minority languages, supported by Schiffman's (1999) analysis of policy-driven dialectal erosion. The psycholinguistic dimensions of bilingualism explored by Bhatia and Ritchie (2006) further clarify how Brij speakers manage their linguistic repertoire across multiple codes.

Srivastava (1981) and Khubchandani (1997) linked language prestige and standardization with dialectal decline, noting how Brij Bhasha suffers from institutional neglect. Saxena (1995) and Kumar (2009) observed that youth and urban speakers lead linguistic change, often adopting Hindi-English hybrids. The erosion of Brij oral traditions, as discussed by Shukla (2006),

contributes to vocabulary loss. Mishra (2010), Bhatt (2008), and Dasgupta (1993) explored the deeper structural impacts of globalization and English contact on Indian dialects. Rai (1995) and Mukherjee (2005) documented the curricular exclusion of dialects and the rise of English borrowings. Verma (2004) and Pathak (2011) traced how popular culture and Hinglish usage lead to language dilution. Kapoor (2012) highlighted digital media's role in facilitating translanguaging, while Chand (2009) showed English-induced syntactic shifts. Agnihotri (2007) advocated for multilingual education policies to support dialects like Brij. Kumar and Tiwari (2013) confirmed the absence of Brij in schools, contributing to its marginalization. Tiwari (2017) and Pal (2018) noted the declining emotional and functional value of Brij Bhasha among youth. Finally, Sharma (2021) revealed the phonological influence of Hindi and English on modern Brij speech, demonstrating the deep linguistic transformation under current sociolinguistic pressures.

Methodology

Data Collection: Field interviews with native Brij speakers from Mathura, Vrindavan, and Agra districts.

Sampling: Stratified sampling covering age, gender, and education.

Tools: Audio recordings, phonetic transcription (IPA), observation of spontaneous speech, and literature review.

Linguistic Features of Brij Bhasha

Brij Bhasha is characterized by retroflex consonants, archaisms, and a vowel system similar to Hindi but more conservative in morphology. Notable phonological features include:

Phonological Features: Brij Bhasha preserves several archaic sounds, exhibits nasalization, retroflexion, and maintains diphthongs more consistently than Standard Hindi.

"कबहुँक ब्रज न आवत मोपे"

He never comes to Brij for me.

/kə.bə.hũk brədʒ nə a:.vət̪ mo:.pe/

वह कभी ब्रज मेरे लिए नहीं आता।

"अइहैं नंदलाल अबकी बेर"

Nandlal (Krishna) will surely come this time.

/ə.i.hẽ nən.dəl̩.la:l əb.ki: be:r/

नंदलाल इस बार अवश्य आएँगे।

"झुलावै जसुमति बाल गोपाल"

Yashoda swings baby Krishna.

/dʒʰʊ.laː.vɛ dʒʊ.sʊ.mə.ti baːl goː.paːl/

यशोदा बाल गोपाल को झुलाती हैं।

"तोहे देखि मन भयो मगन"

My heart rejoiced seeing you.

/tʊ.ɦeː d̪eː.kʰi mən bʱə.joː mə.gən/

तुम्हें देखकर मेरा मन आनंदित हो गया।

"घनश्याम मो पे कृपा करौ"

O Krishna, shower your mercy on me.

/gʰən.ɕaːm moː pe kɾi.paː kə.rɔː/

घनश्याम, मुझ पर कृपा करो।

Morphological Features: Brij Bhasha verbs and pronouns often use older or regional forms and display unique conjugational patterns and auxiliary usage.

"मैं हौं ब्रजवासी"

I am a resident of Brij.

/mẽ̃ h̃õ brədʒ.vəː.sɪː/

मैं ब्रज का निवासी हूँ।

"मो पे बड़ो उपकार भयो"

A great favor has been done to me.

/moː pe bə.ɽoː ʊp.kɑːr bʱə.joː/

मुझ पर बड़ा उपकार हुआ।

"तोहैं कहा करत हो"

What are you saying?

/tʊː.ɦẽ̃ kə.ɦãː kə.rə̃t̪ ɦoː/

तुम क्या कह रहे हो?

"हमहूँ चलिबे जात हौं"

I am also going to walk along.

/ɦəm.ɦũː tʃə.li.be dʒaːt ɦĩ/

मैं भी चलने जा रहा हूँ।

"उ पि यू बोल्यौ नाय"

That beloved didn't speak.

/ʊ pi.juː boː.ljɔː naː.j/

वह प्रिय कुछ नहीं बोला।

Syntactic Features: Brij Bhasha retains the SOV order and employs poetic inversion for metrical and aesthetic effect. It uses unique postpositions and sentence constructions.

"लाज राखौ मोरी"

Protect my honor.

/laːdʒ raː.kʰɔː moː.riː/

मेरी लाज रखो।

"जसोदा हरि पालनै झुलावै"

Yashoda swings Krishna in a cradle.

/dʒə.soː.daː ɦə.riː paː.lə.nɛ dʒʱʊ.laː.vɛ/

यशोदा हरि को पालने में झुला रही हैं।

"तुम बिनु कौनु हरखू"

Who else but you gives joy?

/tʊm bi.nu koː.nu ɦə.rə.kʰuː/

तुम्हारे बिना कौन आनंदित कर सकता है?

"मो मन हरष्यो श्याम दरस पाय"

My heart rejoiced upon seeing Shyam.

/moː mən ɦə.rə.ʃjoː ɕaːm d̪ə.rəs paː.j/

मेरे मन को श्याम के दर्शन से हर्ष हुआ।

"कहत सखियन कन्हैया मुसकायो"

Kanhaiya smiled at what the friends said.

/kə.ɦət̪ sə.kʰi.jən kən.ɦɛ.jaː mus.kaː.joː/

सखियों की बात सुनकर कन्हैया मुस्कराया।

Lexical Features: Brij Bhasha has a distinct lexicon that includes unique native words, expressions, and poetic constructs not commonly found in Standard Hindi.

"लरिकाई" – childhood

"लरिकाई में ही रट्यो नाम"

/lə.ɾi.ka.i: me: hi: rə.tjo: na:m/

बचपन में ही नाम जप लिया।

"घेल" – to throw or pour

"घेल दियो प्रेम रस"

/gʰe:l di.jo: pre:m rəs/

प्रेम रस उंडेल दिया।

"बड़भागी" – fortunate

"बड़भागी तनु पायो"

/bəɽ.bʱa:gi: tənʊ pa:jo:/

सौभाग्यशाली तन पाया।

"नंदलाल" – son of Nanda (Krishna)

"नंदलाल खेले बनवारी"

/nən.də.la:l kʰe:le bə.nva:.ri:/

नंदलाल (कृष्ण) बन में खेलते हैं।

"ग्वाल-बाल" – cowherd boys

"ग्वाल-बाल संग रच्यो रास"

/gva:l ba:l səŋ rə.tjo: ra:s/

ग्वाल-बालों के संग रास रचाया।

These examples from original Brij texts reflect the rich phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical features of Brij Bhasha. Its unique sound patterns, grammar, word choices, and poetic beauty set it apart from Standard Hindi, affirming its status as a distinct and culturally significant dialect.

Impact of Hindi on Brij Bhasha

The impact of Hindi on Brij Bhasha has been profound and multifaceted, leading to significant changes in the dialect's lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic structure. With Hindi

being the official language of administration, education, and media in India, Brij Bhasha has increasingly come under its influence, resulting in a gradual erosion of its distinct linguistic features. Lexically, many traditional Brij words such as “लरिकाई” (childhood), “मो” (to me), and “तोहै” (to you) are being replaced with their Hindi counterparts “बचपन”, “मुझे”, and “तुम्हें”, respectively. This replacement is often accompanied by a shift in phonetic structure, where Brij’s nasalized and retroflex sounds are softened or regularized according to Hindi norms. Morphologically, Brij verb endings like “भयो” (became) or “करौ” (do – imperative) are increasingly substituted with Hindi forms such as “हुआ” and “करो”, reflecting a simplification under Hindi’s grammatical framework. Syntactically, Brij’s poetic and flexible sentence structures are becoming more rigid and standardized due to Hindi’s influence, as seen in translations like “जसोदा हरि पालनै झुलावै” becoming “यशोदा कृष्ण को पालने में झुला रही है”, where the beauty of inversion and rhythm is lost. Additionally, the rich pronoun system of Brij—with forms like “हौं” (I am) and “हमहूँ” (I also)—is being replaced with Hindi forms such as “हूँ” and “मैं भी”, further homogenizing the dialect. The impact is also evident in sociolinguistic domains, where younger generations often perceive Hindi as a symbol of modernity and formal prestige, leading to reduced intergenerational transmission of Brij Bhasha. As a result, Brij Bhasha, once a vibrant literary and devotional medium during the Bhakti era, is now at risk of becoming a passive or ornamental dialect, used sparingly in folk songs and rituals but increasingly absent in daily conversation, education, and digital communication.

Lexical Borrowing

Lexical borrowing refers to the process by which one language adopts words or expressions from another. In the case of Brij Bhasha, the influence of Standard Hindi has led to the replacement of traditional Brij words with Hindi vocabulary, particularly in formal, educational, and modern contexts. This borrowing is often subconscious and has led to the erosion of region-specific lexicon, especially among younger speakers. These examples clearly illustrate how Brij Bhasha’s rich and regionally unique vocabulary is being replaced by standardized Hindi forms. The borrowed lexicon not only alters the linguistic structure but also affects the emotive and poetic essence of Brij speech. While this shift aids broader communication, it also contributes to the gradual fading of Brij Bhasha’s cultural identity and oral heritage. Lexical borrowing through code mixing refers to inserting Standard Hindi words into Brij Bhasha sentences, often subconsciously.

This results in hybrid constructions where the syntactic and phonological frame remains Brij, but certain words—nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs—are replaced by their Hindi equivalents.

“भक्ति” instead of “भजनी”

हम बाल्य में ही भजनी गाई।

“I sang devotional songs in childhood.”

/həm ba:l.jə me: hi: bʰə.ɖʒə.ni: ga:i:/

हम बाल्य में ही भक्ति की गीत गाई।

/həm ba:l.jə me: hi: bʰək.t̪i: ki: gi:t ga:i:/

Inserts “भक्ति” and “गीत” from Hindi

“स्वास्थ्य” instead of “तन की दशा”

मो तन की दशा ठीक नहीं।

“My body’s condition is not well.”

/mo: tən ki: də.ʃa: t̪i:k na:.hi:/

मो स्वास्थ्य ठीक नाये।

/mo: swa:s.t̪jə t̪i:k nə.hi:/

“स्वास्थ्य” borrowed from Hindi replaces phrase

“समस्या” instead of “कष्ट” or “झंझट”

हमका एक झंझट आयो।

“I had a problem/trouble.”

/həm.ka: ek dʒʰən.dʒʰət a:.jo:/

हमका एक समस्या होई गई।

/həm.ka: ek sə.mə.sja: ho:.i: gə:i:/

“समस्या” from Hindi replaces local word

“विकास” instead of “तरक्की” or “बढ़ौतरी”

हमार गांव में बढ़ौतरी कछू खास नहीं।

“There’s not much development in our village.”

/hə.ma:r gɑ:v me: bə.t̪ɔ:.t̪ri: kə.t̪ʰu: kʰa:s na:.hi:/

हमार गांव में विकास नहीं भओ।

/hə.ma:r gɑ:v me: vɪ.ka:s na:.hi bʰə.o:/

"विकास" from Hindi replaces local word

“सुविधा” instead of “सुगमता” or “आसानी”

रास्ता में सुगमता नहीं है।

“The path is not convenient.”

/ra:s.ʈa: me: sʊ.gəm.ʈa: na:.ɦĩ ɦɛ/

रास्ता में सुविधा नहीं है।

/ra:s.ʈa: me: sʊ.vɪ.ɖʱa: na:.ɦĩ ɦɛ/

"सुविधा" is a Hindi formal term

These examples show how Brij Bhasha speakers often mix Hindi lexicon into their sentences, especially in educational, bureaucratic, or urban conversations. Over time, these lexical insertions become normalized, leading to a gradual loss of traditional Brij vocabulary. The sentences still retain Brij grammatical structure and word order, but Hindi vocabulary increasingly dominates, a clear sign of linguistic convergence under sociolinguistic pressure.

Original Brij Word	IPA (Brij)	Hindi Borrowed Word	IPA (Hindi)	Meaning
मो / मोपे	/mo:/, /mo:.pe/	मुझे / मुझ पर	/mʊ.ɖʱe:/, /mʊɖʱə pər/	To me / On me
लरिकाई	/lə.ɾɪ.ka:.i:/	बचपन	/bətʃ.pən/	Childhood
झंझट	/ɖʱən.ɖʱət/	समस्या	/sə.mə.sja:/	Problem
बढ़ौतरी	/bə.ʈʊ:.ʈri:/	विकास	/vɪ.ka:s/	Development
भजनी	/bʱə.ɖʱə.ni:/	भक्ति	/bʱək.ti:/	Devotion
तन की दशा	/tən ki: də.ʃa:/	स्वास्थ्य	/swa:s.tjə/	Health/Condition
सुगमता	/sʊ.gəm.ʈa:/	सुविधा	/sʊ.vɪ.ɖʱa:/	Convenience
हरष्यो	/ɦə.ɾə.ʃjo:/	प्रसन्न हुआ	/prə.sən.nə ɦʊ.a:/	Rejoiced
कहौ	/kə.ɦo:/	कहो	/kə.ɦo:/	Say (imperative)
तोहें / तोहैं	/to:.ɦẽ:/	तुम्हें	/tʊ.mʱẽ:/	To you

Morphological Simplification

Morphological simplification in Brij Bhasha refers to the gradual erosion and replacement of its distinct and rich morphological structures—particularly verb conjugations, pronoun systems,

auxiliary verbs, and tense-aspect markers—under the influence of Standard Hindi. Brij Bhasha traditionally possesses a vibrant system of inflections such as verb suffixes (-बो, -बे, -औ), unique person markers (like "हैं" for "I am"), and regional auxiliaries (like "भयो" for "happened"). However, in contemporary usage—especially among younger speakers or those in urbanized Brij-speaking areas—these native forms are increasingly replaced with simplified, standardized Hindi equivalents. For instance, the Brij phrase "हम चलिबे जात हैं" (I am going to walk) is now commonly heard as "मैं चलने जा रहा हूँ", where the Brij infinitive "चलिबे" is replaced by Hindi "चलने", and the auxiliary "हैं" becomes "हूँ". Similarly, "उ खेलत भयो" becomes "वह खेल रहा था", where the native past auxiliary "भयो" is supplanted by the Hindi continuous tense "रहा था". Such shifts simplify the verb morphology by aligning it with the more regular and predictable structures of Hindi. Additionally, pronouns like "तोहैं", "मो", or "हमहूँ" are being replaced by "तुम्हें", "मुझे", and "मैं भी", respectively, reducing the dialectal richness of Brij. This simplification is often accompanied by code mixing and is reinforced through formal education, media, and administration, which prioritize Hindi over local dialects. Over time, these morphological changes contribute not only to the grammatical convergence of Brij with Hindi but also to the decline of Brij's linguistic identity, poetic nuance, and cultural uniqueness. The trend indicates not just a linguistic shift, but a sociolinguistic transformation wherein Standard Hindi exerts normative pressure, gradually reshaping Brij Bhasha into a structurally simplified and hybridized vernacular. Native Brij verb forms are replaced by standard Hindi equivalents:

Original Sentence	Brij IPA (Brij)	Hindi-Influenced Sentence	IPA (Hindi-Influenced)	Meaning
हम चलिबे जात हैं।	/həm tʃə.li.be dʒa:t hɪ̃/	मैं चलने जा रहा हूँ।	/mɛ̃ tʃəl.ne: dʒa: rə.ha: hũ:/	I am going.
मोपे प्रेम भयो।	/mo:.pe pre:m bʰə.jo:/	मुझ पर प्रेम हुआ।	/mudʒʰ pər pre:m fiʊ.a:/	Love happened to me.
उ पाठ पढ़त रह्यो।	/ʊ pa:tʰ pə.rəṭ rə.hjo:/	वह पाठ पढ़ रहा था।	/vəhi pa:tʰ pəɾ rə.ha: ṭʰa:/	He was reading a lesson.

तोहें कहाँ जात हो?	/to:.fið: kə.fiã: dʒa:t fi: /	तुम कहाँ जा रहे हो?	/tʊm kə.fiã: dʒa: rə.fi: fi: /	Where are you going?
हमहूँ खाइबो करौं।	/həm.fiũ: kʰa:.i.bo: kə.rɔ:/	मैं भी खाना खाता हूँ।	/mẽ bʰi: kʰa:.na: kʰa:.tʃa: fiũ:/	I also eat food.
तोहें देखत हरष्यो मन मोरो।	/to:.fiðe d̪e:.kʰəʈ hə.rə.ʃjo: mo:.ro:/	तुम्हें देखकर मेरा मन प्रसन्न हुआ।	/tʊ.mʰe d̪e:.kʰər me:.ra: prə.sən.nə hʊ.a:/	My heart rejoiced seeing you.
वह खेत जोतत रह्यो।	/və kʰe:t dʒo:.tʃəʈ rə.ʃjo:/	वह खेत जोत रहा था।	/vəfi kʰe:t dʒo:.tʃ rə.ʃa: tʰa:/	He was ploughing the field.
तू पाठ पढ़ो।	/tu: pa:tʰ pə.ɽɔ:/	तुम पाठ पढ़ो।	/tʊm pa:tʰ pə.ɽo:/	You read the lesson.
हम तो ठाढ़ हैं।	/həm tʃo: tʰa:tʰ fið/	मैं तो खड़ा हूँ।	/mẽ tʃo: kʰə.ɽa: fiũ:/	I am standing.
मोहे भूख लागी।	/mo:.fi: bʰu:kʰ la:.gi:/	मुझे भूख लगी है।	/mʊ.dʒʰe: bʰu:kʰ lə.gi: fi:/	I am hungry.
तू कहौ काहे न आवत?	/tu: kə.ʃo: ka:.fi: nə a:.vəʈ/	तुम क्यों नहीं आते?	/tʊm kʰo: nə.fi a:.tʃe:/	Why don't you come?
हम तौ बोलिबे नहीं चाहत।	/həm tɔ: bo:.li.be na:.fi tʃi:.fi:ʈ/	मैं तो बोलना नहीं चाहता।	/mẽ tʃo: bo:.l.na: nə.fi tʃi:.tʃa:/	I don't want to speak.
उ घरे जात रह्यो।	/ʊ gʱə.re: dʒa:t rə.ʃjo:/	वह घर जा रहा था।	/vəfi gʱər dʒa: rə.ʃa: tʰa:/	He was going home.
मो बालक पढ़ै लाग गयो।	/mo: ba:.lək pə.ɽɛ: la:g gə.jo:/	मेरा बच्चा पढ़ने लगा।	/me:.ra: bətʃi:.tʃi: pə.ɽʰ.ne: lə.ga:/	My child started studying.
वह दरसन करै आयो।	/və d̪ər.sən kə.re: a:.jo:/	वह दर्शन करने आया।	/vəfi d̪ər.ʃən kə.r.ne: a:.ja:/	He came to visit.

Influence of English on Brij Bhasha

The growing influence of English on Brij Bhasha is vividly evident in the increasing frequency of code mixing, where English lexical items are embedded into Brij syntactic frames. This phenomenon reflects not only linguistic change but also shifting cultural and social dynamics, especially among younger, urban, and educated speakers in the Brij region. English words, particularly nouns and technical terms, are often inserted into everyday Brij conversations because they are perceived as more modern, prestigious, or convenient than their traditional equivalents. For example, a speaker might say "मो phone घूम गयो" instead of the original "मो दूरभाष घूम गयो" (My phone got lost), or "हमार लरिको homework करै" in place of "हमार लरिको पढ़ई करै" (My child is studying). In these examples, the core Brij grammar and verb morphology remain intact, but specific content words like *phone* and *homework* are borrowed directly from English. This lexical intrusion simplifies communication in contexts where Brij lacks specific terminology for modern objects or concepts. Furthermore, in phrases such as "हम meeting में बात करतो" (I talk in the meeting) and "तू car ठीक करायो?" (Did you get the car fixed?), English replaces traditional Brij words like बैठक (meeting) and गाड़ी (vehicle), signaling a shift in lexical preference. Over time, such mixing leads to a functional bilingualism, wherein speakers subconsciously switch between Brij and English within the same sentence. This trend has profound implications for Brij Bhasha's linguistic identity. While the structure of the dialect may persist, its vocabulary becomes increasingly Anglicized, especially in domains like education, technology, business, and digital communication. Code mixing with English not only reshapes Brij lexicon but also influences pronunciation, as speakers adjust native sounds to fit English phonetics. The influence of English, driven by globalization, media, and institutional education, thus plays a critical role in the hybridization and modernization of Brij Bhasha, raising important questions about the dialect's preservation and authenticity in the 21st century.

Lexical Insertion and Code-Mixing

The phenomenon of lexical insertion and code-mixing reveals a significant transformation in Brij Bhasha, especially when comparing older literary texts with contemporary spoken usage. Traditional Brij literature, such as the devotional verses of Surdas or folk narratives, employed a rich and culturally rooted vocabulary: for instance, terms like "दूरभाष" (telephone), "चिट्ठी" (letter), and "पाठशाला" (school) were commonly used. A classical Brij sentence might read, "मो दूरभाष पर संदेशो आयो", meaning "A message came on my telephone." In contrast, modern Brij

communication, especially among youth, incorporates direct English insertions, producing utterances like "मो *phone* पर *message* आयो", where the native words दूरभाष and संदेश are replaced by *phone* and *message*. Similarly, where a traditional Brij speaker would say "लरिको पढ़ई करै" (The boy is studying), today's speaker might say "लरिको *homework* करै". This blending occurs not only due to lack of contemporary vocabulary in Brij but also due to the prestige associated with English in education, media, and technology. While the core Brij grammatical structure often remains intact, its lexical field is increasingly filled by English terms, resulting in a hybrid linguistic form. This shift marks a departure from the poetic, metaphor-rich traditional Brij to a more functional, globalized vernacular, reflecting both linguistic adaptability and the gradual erosion of Brij's lexical heritage.

Original Word/Phrase	Brij IPA (Brij)	English-Inserted Equivalent	IPA (With English)	Meaning
दूरभाष (durabhāṣ)	/d̪uːr.bʱaːʃ/	Phone	/fəːn/	Telephone/Phone
चिट्ठी (ciṭṭhī)	/tʃiṭ.tʰiː/	Mail	/meːl/	Letter/Email
गाड़ी (gārī)	/gaː.riː/	Car	/kaːr/	Vehicle
पाठशाला (pāṭhśālā)	/paːtʰ.ʃaː.laː/	School	/skuːl/	Educational institute
बैठक (baithak)	/bɛtʰək/	Meeting	/miː.tɪŋ/	Formal gathering
खेल (khel)	/kʰeːl/	Match	/mætʃ/	Sports event
तसवीर (tasvīr)	/t̪əs.viːr/	Photo	/foʊ.tuː/	Picture
नाच (nāc)	/naːtʃ/	Dance	/dæns/	Dancing
पसन्द (pasand)	/pə.sənd/	Favourite	/feɪ.və.ɪt/	Preferred choice
रोचक (rocak)	/roː.tʃək/	Interesting	/ɪn.t̪res.tɪŋ/	Engaging
सन्देश (sandeshā)	/sən.d̪eː.ʃaː/	Message	/mɛ.sɪdʒ/	Text/communication
पुस्तक (pustak)	/pus.t̪ək/	Book	/bʊk/	Book
कागज़ (kāgaz)	/kaː.gəɖʒ/	Form	/fɔːrm/	Document/form
आराम (ārām)	/ɑː.raːm/	Rest	/rɛst/	Relaxation
काम (kāṃ)	/kaːm/	Work	/wɜːk/	Job/duty

6.2 Code-Switching Patterns

Brij speakers frequently switch to English in conversations with educated interlocutors, particularly in urban areas. Code-switching—the alternation between languages within a conversation or sentence—has become a defining feature of modern Brij Bhasha, especially under the influence of English. In contrast, older Brij texts, such as the devotional works of Surdas or village folk tales, exhibit linguistic purity and consistency, with no intrusion from foreign lexicons. A traditional verse might say, "मोहे नंदलाल मोरे अंगना आयो" (My beloved Nandlal has come to my courtyard), showcasing rich indigenous vocabulary and culturally rooted expressions. In contrast, contemporary Brij speakers—particularly among the youth and educated classes—frequently switch between Brij and English depending on context, topic, or audience. A modern sentence might read, "मोहे call आयो, फिर हम market गए", meaning "I got a call, then I went to the market." Here, "call" and "market" are English insertions used fluidly alongside native Brij grammar. Such code-switching typically occurs in intra-sentential (within a sentence) and inter-sentential (between sentences) forms, driven by domains such as education, technology, shopping, or digital media where English terms are dominant. While older Brij communication was poetic and consistent in style and register, the modern hybrid form is dynamic, informal, and often context-dependent. This shift highlights not only the influence of English as a global lingua franca but also a transformation in the sociolinguistic identity of Brij speakers—from a linguistically insular community to a more cosmopolitan, bilingual one. Though this evolution enables flexibility and broader communication, it also poses challenges for the preservation of Brij Bhasha's traditional linguistic aesthetics and cultural depth.

Original Brij Sentence	IPA (Original)	Code-Mixed Brij Sentence	IPA (Code-Mixed)	Meaning (English)
मो दूरभाष घूम गयो।	/mo: d̪u:r.bʱa:ʃ ɡʱu:m ɡə.joː/	मो phone घूम गयो।	/mo: fo:n ɡʱu:m ɡə.joː/	My phone got lost.
लरिको पढ़ई करै।	/lə.ɾi.ko: pə.ɽʰə.i kə.ɾeː/	लरिको homework करै।	/lə.ɾi.ko: hoʊm.wɜ:k kə.ɾeː/	The boy is doing homework.

बैठक में बात करतो।	/beɪtʰək meː baːt kəɾ.toː/	Meeting में बात करतो।	/miː.tɪŋ meː baːt kəɾ.toː/	Talking in the meeting.
गाड़ी ठीक करायो?	/gaː.ɽiː tʰiːk kə.ɾaː.joː/	Car ठीक करायो?	/kaːɾ tʰiːk kə.ɾaː.joː/	Did you repair the car?
हम चिट्ठी लिखै।	/həm tʃɪt.tʰi li.kʰɛː/	हम mail लिखै।	/həm meːl li.kʰɛː/	I'm writing mail.
वो खेल देखै।	/voː kʰɛːl d̪eː.kʰɛː/	वो match देखै।	/voː mætʃ d̪eː.kʰɛː/	He watches the match.
हमार पाठशाला दूर है।	/hə.maːɾ paːtʰ.ʃaː.laː duːɾ hɛ/	हमार school दूर है।	/hə.maːɾ skuːl duːɾ hɛ/	My school is far.
हम छाया में ठाढ़ हैं।	/həm tʃʰaː.jaː meː tʰaːtʰ hɛ̃/	हम shade में ठाढ़ हैं।	/həm ʃeːd meː tʰaːtʰ hɛ̃/	We are standing in the shade.
हमार किताब खो गइ।	/hə.maːɾ ki.taːb kʰoː gə.iː/	हमार book खो गइ।	/hə.maːɾ bʊk kʰoː gə.iː/	My book is lost.
कागज जमा करायो।	/kaː.gəɖʒ d̪ʒə.maː kə.ɾaː.joː/	Form जमा करायो।	/fɔːɾm d̪ʒə.maː kə.ɾaː.joː/	Submitted the form.
लरिकी नाच रही थी।	/lə.ɾi.kiː naːtʃi ɾə.hiː tʰiː/	लरिकी dance करै थी।	/lə.ɾi.kiː dæns kə.ɾɛː tʰiː/	The girl was dancing.
चलो तसवीर खींची।	/tʃʰə.loː t̪əs.viːɾ kʰiː.tʃiː/	चलो photo ली।	/tʃʰə.loː foː.t̪oː liː/	Let's take a photo.
सन्देशा भेज्यो।	/sən.d̪eː.ʃaː bʰeː.d̪ʒoː/	Message भेज्यो।	/mɛ.sɪd̪ʒ bʰeː.d̪ʒoː/	Sent a message.
हमार पसन्द है।	/hə.maːɾ pəsənd̪ hɛ/	हमार favourite है।	/hə.maːɾ feɪ.və.ɾɪt hɛ/	It is my favourite.

बात बहुत चटपटी थी।	/ba:t bə.fiət tʃət.pə.ti: thi:/	बात interesting थी।	/ba:t in.tres.tɪŋ thi:/	The talk was interesting.
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Semantic Extension

Semantic extension—where borrowed English words acquire new, locally adapted meanings in Brij Bhasha—marks a profound shift in the dialect's expressive framework. In classical Brij literature, words carried culturally embedded meanings rooted in local contexts, as seen in verses like "प्रेम की पीर कहि न जाये" (The pain of love cannot be expressed), where *प्रेम* (love) is deeply spiritual and metaphorical. In contrast, modern Brij speakers often use English words like "love" or "friendship" in everyday contexts, but with extended or localized meanings. For instance, "हमार love चल रहो है" (We're in a relationship) uses *love* not in its classical or romantic English sense, but as a colloquial expression for a casual partnership. Similarly, "party" in Brij today may refer not just to a formal gathering but to any informal meet-up, unlike its more restricted English usage. Words like "smart" (used to describe someone stylish, not necessarily intelligent) or "time" (used to mean a moment of convenience, e.g., "जब time हो, आवे") also illustrate semantic stretching. This shift from contextually rich native terms to semantically broad or repurposed English words reduces the depth and cultural specificity once embedded in Brij vocabulary. While such extensions enable new forms of expression and reflect social change, they also dilute the nuanced meanings preserved in older Brij texts, signaling a linguistic evolution that aligns more with global trends than traditional ethos. English words often acquire local meaning:

Concept	Old Brij Usage	Modern Brij Usage (Code-Mixed with English)	Semantic Extension Observed
Love	"प्रेम" or "प्रीत" – deep spiritual or devotional love (e.g., <i>Surdas</i>) "प्रेम की पीर कहि न जाये"	"हमार love चल रहो है" (We're in a romantic relationship)	<i>Love</i> changes from divine emotion to casual romantic partnership
Smart	No equivalent; traditionally, someone would be described as "सुघड़", "चतुर", or "सीधो-साधो"	"तू तो बहोत smart लागत है" (You look very stylish)	<i>Smart</i> used to mean appearance/stylish, not intelligence

Time	"समय" or "बखत" – used in spiritual or moral contexts.e.g., "समय बढ़ो बलवान है"	"जब time हो, फोन करिए"(Call me when you get time)	<i>Time</i> used more informally for availability or convenience
Party	No equivalent; मिलन or सभा used for social gatherings	"काल party में चले जइहैं?"(Will we go to the party tomorrow?)	<i>Party</i> used for casual social gathering (not necessarily formal or political)
Fashion	No such concept; clothing was described as "पहनावा", "वेशभूषा"	"नवो fashion आयो है कपड़ा को"(A new fashion has arrived in clothing)	<i>Fashion</i> extended to mean any new or trendy style locally
Enjoy	Old texts express joy as "सुख", "आनंद", "रस लीनो".e.g., "कृष्ण लीला को रस लीनो"	"हम तो खूब enjoy कर लियो"(We really had fun)	<i>Enjoy</i> shifts from spiritual joy to casual fun/entertainment
Friend	"मित" or "सखा" used in older poetry.e.g., "सखा सनेह जानि हरषायो"	"वो हमार best friend है"	<i>Friend</i> becomes a status-based modern term, often tagged with <i>best</i> , <i>close</i>
Tension	Old Brij expresses anxiety with "चिंता", "व्यथा", "दुख"	"मोहे tension हो रहो है exam को"(I'm feeling stressed about the exam)	<i>Tension</i> takes on psychological/stress meaning, informal
Work	Traditionally "काम" used for physical labor or duty.e.g., "ग्वाल बाल सब काम करै"	"office work बहुत है आजकल"	<i>Work</i> narrows from general to office/employment-related tasks
Support	Brij used "सहारा", "मदद", "सहयोग".e.g., "भक्तन को कृष्ण सहारा"	"Thank you for your support"	<i>Support</i> becomes multifunctional: emotional, financial, professional help

Social and Cultural Implications

The rising influence of English on Brij Bhasha is not merely a linguistic phenomenon; it carries deep social and cultural consequences that reflect and reshape the identity, status, values, and relationships of its speakers. As language is a carrier of culture, the gradual encroachment of English into Brij not only alters the way people communicate but also how they perceive themselves, their heritage, and their aspirations.

Erosion of Traditional Cultural Identity: Brij Bhasha has long been a medium for devotional poetry (e.g., Surdas), folk tales, rituals, and oral traditions rich in local idioms, proverbs, and expressions. As English terms and structures replace native vocabulary, there is a progressive loss of culturally embedded expressions, metaphors, and poetic traditions. The shift from saying "प्रेम की पीर कहि न जाये" to "हमार love चल रहो है" reflects a dilution of the emotional and spiritual depth once embedded in the dialect.

Emergence of Linguistic Hierarchies: The ability to speak or mix English into Brij has become a marker of education, modernity, and social mobility. This has created a linguistic hierarchy where traditional Brij Bhasha is often viewed as "rural," "unpolished," or "backward," especially among youth. In contrast, those fluent in English-infused Brij or Hindi-English code-switching are perceived as more urban, modern, or aspirational. This fuels language-based social inequality within the same community.

Generational Communication Gap: Older generations, who are deeply rooted in pure Brij expressions, often find themselves alienated when younger speakers use hybrid language with English code-mixing. The intergenerational transmission of traditional idioms, folk stories, and oral culture is weakened, creating a disconnect between the past and the present.

Shift in Value Systems: Language carries values. As English infiltrates Brij Bhasha, the value systems embedded in Brij culture—respect for nature, spirituality, collectivity, and humility—are increasingly overshadowed by modern values of individualism, consumerism, and speed, often conveyed through English expressions like "success," "target," "focus," or "smart work." This subtle shift changes what is considered important or desirable in society.

Decline of Oral and Performing Traditions: Brij Bhasha is historically tied to oral traditions—Rasa Leela, folk songs, Akhara performances, and devotional chanting. As English grows in educational and entertainment domains, the younger generation is less exposed to and less interested in these art forms, leading to cultural amnesia. Many traditional expressions don't translate well into English, resulting in their eventual abandonment.

Transformation of Local Education and Aspirations: In schools and higher education across the Brij region, English is prioritized, and Brij Bhasha is often excluded from formal curricula. This has led to low prestige and limited functional space for Brij in formal domains like education, governance, or technology. Consequently, parents and students may discourage the use of Brij at home, favoring Hindi or English for "better futures."

Digital and Media Influence: social media, mobile phones, and entertainment are key drivers of English influence. Phrases like "*video call*," "*status*," "*message*," and "*chat*" dominate digital discourse, often used alongside or within Brij sentences. This encourages translingual practices that favor short, efficient English expressions and marginalize the descriptive richness of Brij.

Threat to Linguistic Diversity: Brij Bhasha, as a regional dialect with no official status or standardized orthography, is vulnerable to language shift. The unchecked spread of English, coupled with the dominance of standard Hindi, poses a serious threat to the survival of Brij as a vibrant spoken language. Without proactive preservation efforts, Brij may become limited to ceremonial or nostalgic usage only.

Generational Shift: Youth increasingly prefer Hindi-English over Brij: One of the most striking social changes observed in the Brij region is the generational shift in language preference, where the youth increasingly gravitate toward Hindi-English hybrids instead of their ancestral dialect, Brij Bhasha. This shift is largely driven by education, digital media, and urbanization, which expose younger speakers to global and pan-Indian cultures. As a result, traditional Brij expressions are often considered old-fashioned or unsophisticated, while code-mixed speech using Hindi and English is viewed as modern, practical, and aspirational. In schools and social gatherings, it is common to hear statements like "*हमें homework करना है*" rather than "*हमें पढ़ाई करनी है*", or even "*class में presentation है*", replacing traditional vocabulary. This generational divide not only affects day-to-day communication but also weakens the intergenerational transmission of Brij's cultural heritage, including idioms, songs, and folk narratives, leading to a gradual erosion of linguistic continuity.

Prestige Factor: English words are used to reflect education/status: In modern Brij-speaking society, the use of English vocabulary has become a symbol of social prestige, educational attainment, and upward mobility. English is no longer just a language of instruction or global commerce—it has permeated everyday speech as a status marker. For instance, inserting English words like "*meeting*", "*project*", "*status*", or "*schedule*" into otherwise Brij or Hindi sentences is

a common strategy among the educated and urban population to signal sophistication and modern identity. This linguistic behavior reinforces class distinctions and often stigmatizes pure Brij speakers as rural, less educated, or backward. Consequently, Brij Bhasha is pushed to the periphery in formal and elite domains, surviving mainly in informal, rural, or ritual contexts. The perception of English as a language of power deepens this trend, marginalizing traditional dialects and promoting code-mixing as a form of linguistic capital.

Loss of Identity: Gradual dilution of traditional vocabulary and syntax: The widespread adoption of English through lexical insertion and code-mixing is leading to a gradual dilution of Brij Bhasha's linguistic identity. Native words, expressions, and grammatical structures are increasingly being replaced or reshaped under the influence of English, resulting in a hybrid dialect that often lacks the poetic depth and cultural specificity of traditional Brij. Words like "चिट्ठी" (letter), "बैठक" (gathering), or "संदेश" (message) are being replaced by "mail", "meeting", and "message", respectively, leading to the loss of culturally rooted vocabulary. Additionally, English syntax and phrase patterns subtly influence Brij sentence construction, leading to unnatural word orders and a breakdown of idiomatic expressions. This linguistic transformation threatens to sever the dialect's ties to its devotional, agrarian, and oral traditions. As younger generations embrace a globalized linguistic identity, Brij Bhasha risks becoming a hollow shell of its former self—functionally alive, but culturally and aesthetically diminished.

Conclusion

The present study, titled *"Echoes of Influence: A Sociolinguistic Insight into Hindi and English Influence on Brij Bhasha"*, reveals how prolonged language contact has led to profound lexical, morphological, and semantic changes in Brij Bhasha. Through processes such as code-mixing, lexical insertion, semantic extension, and morphological simplification, both Hindi and English have deeply reshaped the structure and usage of this regional dialect. While Hindi's institutional dominance and English's global prestige have offered new avenues for communication and mobility, they have simultaneously marginalized Brij Bhasha in both formal and informal domains. This shift is particularly evident among younger generations, who increasingly associate Brij with rural identity and limited utility, in contrast to the aspirational status of Hindi-English hybrids. As a result, traditional Brij expressions, cultural idioms, and poetic forms are being steadily replaced or diluted. This sociolinguistic evolution reflects broader cultural transformations in the Brij region, where modernity, education, and digital media redefine language practices. The

findings underscore an urgent need for conscious efforts toward documentation, intergenerational transmission, and community-based revitalization to preserve the linguistic and cultural essence of Brij Bhasha before it fades into symbolic memory. While the evolution of languages is inevitable, conscious preservation efforts are needed to document and revitalize Brij Bhasha. Promoting the dialect in education, literature, and media could mitigate the loss of linguistic diversity in the Brij region. The influence of English on Brij Bhasha has produced a double-edged outcome. On one side, it reflects adaptability, modernization, and access to global discourse. On the other, it causes the gradual erosion of linguistic purity, cultural identity, traditional aesthetics, and social cohesion. To maintain the richness of Brij Bhasha, there is a need for community awareness, documentation, mother-tongue-based education, and cultural revival—ensuring that Brij evolves without being consumed.

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Beyond Textbooks: ClearSpeak's Audio Toolkit for Sector-Relevant Pronunciation Skill

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Abstract

This study evaluates CLEARSPeAK, a pronunciation-enhancement tool designed to address sector-specific vocabulary challenges among non-native English speakers in India. Focusing on five sectors (Education, Food, Employment, Banking, and Indian-origin English words), the tool integrates IPA transcriptions, audio lessons, and contextual definitions. A mixed-methods study with 150 students demonstrated significant improvements in pronunciation accuracy (85%) and self-reported confidence (92%). However, gaps in longitudinal impact, sample diversity, and statistical rigor were identified. Refinements include a control group, expert validation, and pedagogical alignment. Findings underscore CLEARSPeAK's potential as a scalable solution for bridging theoretical language learning and real-world communication.

Keywords: clearspeak, phonetic training, communication competence, international phonetic alphabet

Introduction

In India's multilingual landscape, non-native English speakers often struggle with sector-specific vocabulary due to mother-tongue interference and limited phonetic training. While tools like Duolingo and Elsa Speak emphasize general pronunciation, few address contextual vocabulary relevant to professional and academic settings. CLEAR SPEAK fills this gap by curating 500 high-impact words across five sectors, combining IPA transcriptions, audio guides, and definitions. This paper presents the tool's design, efficacy, and limitations, while addressing gaps in prior research, such as regional linguistic diversity and long-term retention.

In globalized academic and professional environments, clear pronunciation often distinguishes confident communicators from hesitant speakers. Non-native speakers particularly in India, face challenges in pronouncing in sector-specific vocabulary due to influence from mother tongues, limited phonetic exposure, or lack of structured pronunciation training.

This paper, which is a project, CLEAR SPEAK, aims to identify such problematic words and rectify their pronunciation through a user-friendly and structured approach. By focusing on five relevant sectors, we ensure that the vocabulary is not only essential but also relatable and impactful.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to systematically identify and analyze 500 high-frequency, commonly mispronounced words across five targeted sectors (Education, Food, Employment, Banking, and Indian-origin English vocabulary). For each word, the study will:

1. Provide Linguistically Accurate Resources

Deliver International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcriptions cross-verified against authoritative references (e.g., *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary*, *Forvo*).

Develop sector-specific contextual definitions to clarify usage (e.g., "Amortization: Gradual repayment of a debt over time in banking contexts").

2. Design Pedagogically Robust Audio Lessons:

Produce native-level audio recordings using trained speakers with neutral, globally intelligible accents, ensuring consistency in stress, intonation, and syllable boundaries.

Integrate these recordings into interactive modules that allow learners to compare their pronunciation with model audio.

3. Evaluate Learning Outcomes and Engagement:

Conduct a mixed-methods study involving pre- and post-intervention assessments to quantify pronunciation accuracy gains using tools like Praat (speech analysis software).

Measure user engagement through metrics such as session duration, quiz completion rates, and qualitative feedback (e.g., surveys, focus groups).

Track self-reported confidence levels in real-world scenarios (e.g., academic presentations, job interviews, social interactions).

4. Enhance Communication Competence:

Align the intervention with practical communication goals to ensure learners can apply sector-specific vocabulary confidently in professional, academic, and daily-life contexts.

Expected Outcomes:

- A curated pronunciation toolkit with 500 sector-specific entries, validated by linguistic experts.
- Empirical evidence of statistically significant improvements in pronunciation accuracy and user confidence.
- A scalable framework for addressing pronunciation challenges among non-native English speakers, adaptable to additional sectors or languages.

This structured approach bridges theoretical linguistics with applied pedagogy, aiming to empower learners with the phonetic precision and contextual fluency required for effective global communication.

Methodology and Team Collaboration

The research was conducted through a structured, collaborative effort involving a core team of three researchers and a faculty advisor, who provided methodological oversight and linguistic expertise. The workflow was divided into three key phases, each managed through role-specific contributions and iterative feedback loops:

1. Word Collection and Validation

Each team member independently identified over 100 frequently mispronounced words per sector (Education, Food, Employment, Banking, and Indian-origin English words). To ensure relevance and accuracy, sources included:

Peer Surveys: Structured interviews with 50 peers to identify common pronunciation challenges.

Digital Platforms: Analysis of mispronunciation trends on forums, pronunciation databases (Forvo, Cambridge Dictionary), and YouTube tutorials.

Academic References: Cross-referencing with lexicons from sector-specific textbooks (e.g., *Oxford Business English Dictionary*) and peer-reviewed pronunciation guides. Words were compiled into a master list, and duplicates or outliers were resolved through group discussions and advisor feedback.

2. Audio Recording Protocol

High-quality audio recordings were produced to model native-like intonation and clarity:

Equipment: Recordings were made using studio-grade USB microphones (Blue Yeti) in a soundproofed environment to minimize background noise.

Pronunciation Standards: Team members trained with online courses (Coursera's *The Music of American English Pronunciation*) to adopt neutral, globally intelligible accents.

Quality Checks: The faculty advisor reviewed recordings for phonetic accuracy, ensuring consistency in stress patterns (e.g., 'entrəprə'neɪzr for “entrepreneur”) and syllable boundaries.

3. Transcription, Curation, and Tool Design

IPA Transcription: Each word was transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), with cross-verification against the *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*. Ambiguous cases (e.g., /ə'mɔ:rtəzeɪʃən/ vs. /,æmərtə'zeɪʃən/ for “amortization”) were resolved through consultation with the faculty advisor.

Contextual Definitions: Simplified, sector-specific meanings were added (e.g., “Collateral: Asset pledged to secure a loan”).

Digital Integration: Content was organized into a hyperlinked PDF using LaTeX, featuring clickable audio icons, self-assessment quizzes, and a searchable index for user convenience.

Collaborative Workflow

The team adopted an agile approach, with weekly sync-ups to address bottlenecks:

- Role Allocation: One member focused on lexical research, another on technical production (audio/formatting), and the third on pedagogical design.
- Advisor Involvement: The faculty advisor conducted biweekly audits of IPA transcriptions and audio-phoneme alignment, ensuring academic rigor.

Pilot Testing and Feedback Integration

The finalized tool was distributed to 150 students across disciplines (STEM, humanities, commerce) for a three-week pilot. Feedback was collected via:

- Pre-/Post-Pronunciation Tests: Conducted using Google Speech-to-Text API to measure accuracy gains.
- Structured Surveys: 5-point Likert scales assessed usability, while open-ended responses highlighted sector-specific challenges (e.g., “Banking terms required repeated listening”).
- Iterative Revisions: Ambiguous audio clips (e.g., “croissant” /kwa:ˈsɑ̃/ vs. /krəˈsant/) were re-recorded based on user confusion.

This collaborative, phase-driven methodology ensured both technical precision and pedagogical relevance, aligning with the project’s goal of creating an accessible, sector-specific pronunciation tool.

Content Design

The CLEARSPEAK tool was meticulously structured to provide learners with a comprehensive, multi-sensory approach to mastering pronunciation. Each entry in the digital resource included five key components, designed to address common challenges faced by non-native English speakers:

1. Word

The target vocabulary term, selected based on its sector-specific relevance and frequency of misuse. Terms like *amortization* (Banking) or *quinoa* (Food) were prioritized due to their prevalence in professional or daily interactions. Words were curated through peer surveys, educator input, and analysis of online forums to ensure practical utility.

2. Common Mispronunciation

The purpose is to highlight frequent phonetic errors to raise awareness and contrast with correct patterns. Mispronunciations were identified through recordings of learner speech, peer feedback, and linguistic studies. *Entrepreneur* often mispronounced as “en-tre-pre-NOOR” (incorrect stress on the final syllable) instead of /ˌɒnrəprəˈnɜːr/.

3. Correct Pronunciation (IPA)

The purpose is to provide a standardized, visual guide to accurate articulation using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). IPA transcends regional spelling inconsistencies, offering a universal reference for sounds. *Croissant* transcribed as /krwa:ˈsɑ̃/ to clarify nasalized vowels and silent consonants often omitted by learners.

4. Meaning

The purpose is to contextualize the word within its sector to reinforce understanding and usage. Definitions were simplified and paired with sector-specific examples (e.g., *Collateral: An asset*

pledged to secure a loan in banking). This helps learners grasp not just pronunciation but also appropriate application in professional or academic settings.

5. Audio Lesson

The purpose is to model native-like pronunciation through auditory reinforcement. This was recorded after getting training in online platforms for neutral accents to ensure neutrality. Audio files were embedded as clickable icons in a hyperlinked PDF, with optional slow-motion playback for difficult sounds. Learners could toggle between their own recordings and the model audio for self-assessment.

This holistic approach ensured that learners not only corrected mispronunciations but also gained the confidence to use sector-specific vocabulary fluently in real-world scenarios.

Sector Overview

The study focuses on five critical sectors where pronunciation challenges frequently hinder effective communication among non-native English speakers. Each sector was selected based on its relevance to academic, professional, or daily interactions, and includes vocabulary that poses recurring phonetic difficulties.

1. Education

This sector encompasses academic and pedagogical terminology essential for scholarly discourse. Examples include *pedagogy* (the method of teaching), *syllabus* (course outline), and *curriculum* (structured learning content). These terms are often mispronounced due to irregular stress patterns (e.g., *ped-uh-GOH-jee* vs. *PED-uh-goh-jee*) or silent letters.

2. Food

Culinary and gastronomic vocabulary forms the core of this sector, featuring globally prevalent yet phonetically complex words such as *quinoa* (/ki:n'wɑ:/), *bouillon* (/bu:jɒn/), and *croissant* (/krwɑ:'sɔ̃/). Mispronunciations here often stem from unfamiliar French or Spanish phonetic rules.

3. Employment

This sector targets workplace and career-related terminology, including *entrepreneur* (/ˌɒntreprə'neɪtɜ:/), *resignation* (/ˌrezɪg'neɪʃən/), and *compensation* (/ˌkɒmpən'seɪʃən/). Such terms are critical for professional interactions but frequently mispronounced due to syllable stress errors or consonant clusters.

4. Banking

Focused on financial and technical jargon, this sector addresses terms like *amortization* (/ə,mɔ:'rtə'zeɪʃən/), *collateral* (/kə'lætərəl/),

and *overdraft* (/ˈoʊvərdræft/). Mispronunciations in banking contexts can undermine credibility, as these words often involve Latin-derived stress patterns.

5. Indian-Origin English Words

Highlighting culturally rooted vocabulary, this sector includes words like *jaggery* (/ˈdʒæɡəri/), *veranda* (/vəˈrændə/), and *pukka* (/ˈpʌkə/), which reflect India's linguistic hybridity. While these terms are familiar locally, their pronunciation often deviates from standard English due to regional phonetic influences (e.g., “*veranda*” pronounced as /veˈraːɳdaː/ in South India).

Rationale for Sector Selection

These sectors were prioritized to address gaps in existing pronunciation tools, which often overlook context-specific vocabulary. By combining globally relevant terms (Education, Food) with regionally significant ones (Indian-origin words), the study ensures a balanced approach to phonetic training in both international and localized **contexts**.

Quantitative Findings

1. **Pronunciation Accuracy:** A significant majority of participants (85%) demonstrated measurable improvement in pronunciation accuracy following the intervention, as validated through pre- and post-tests.
2. **Engagement Metrics:** Nearly all respondents (90%) rated the lessons as “highly engaging,” citing interactive design and structured audio-visual aids as key drivers.
3. **Professional Confidence:** Post-intervention surveys revealed that 92% of learners felt more confident using sector-specific vocabulary in professional settings, such as interviews and workplace discussions.

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of participant feedback highlighted three core themes:

1. **Ease of Use:** Learners praised the tool's intuitive interface, emphasizing the accessibility of audio guides. One participant noted, “*The audio lessons were incredibly useful for mastering complex words like ‘Entrepreneur’ and ‘Amortization.’*”
2. **Sector Relevance:** The inclusion of contextually familiar themes (e.g., culinary terms like *quinoa*) enhanced relatability and sustained engagement. A respondent shared, “*Learning Indian-origin English words was an enriching cultural experience.*”
3. **Confidence Enhancement:** Many reported reduced anxiety in public speaking scenarios, with one learner stating, “*Now I can pronounce ‘Quinoa’ confidently in a restaurant!*” Participants also highlighted improved willingness to contribute to academic and professional discussions post-intervention.

These findings underscore the tool’s dual impact: statistically significant skill development complemented by positive user experiences rooted in practicality and cultural resonance.

“The audio lessons were incredibly useful for mastering complex words like 'Entrepreneur' and 'Amortization.’”

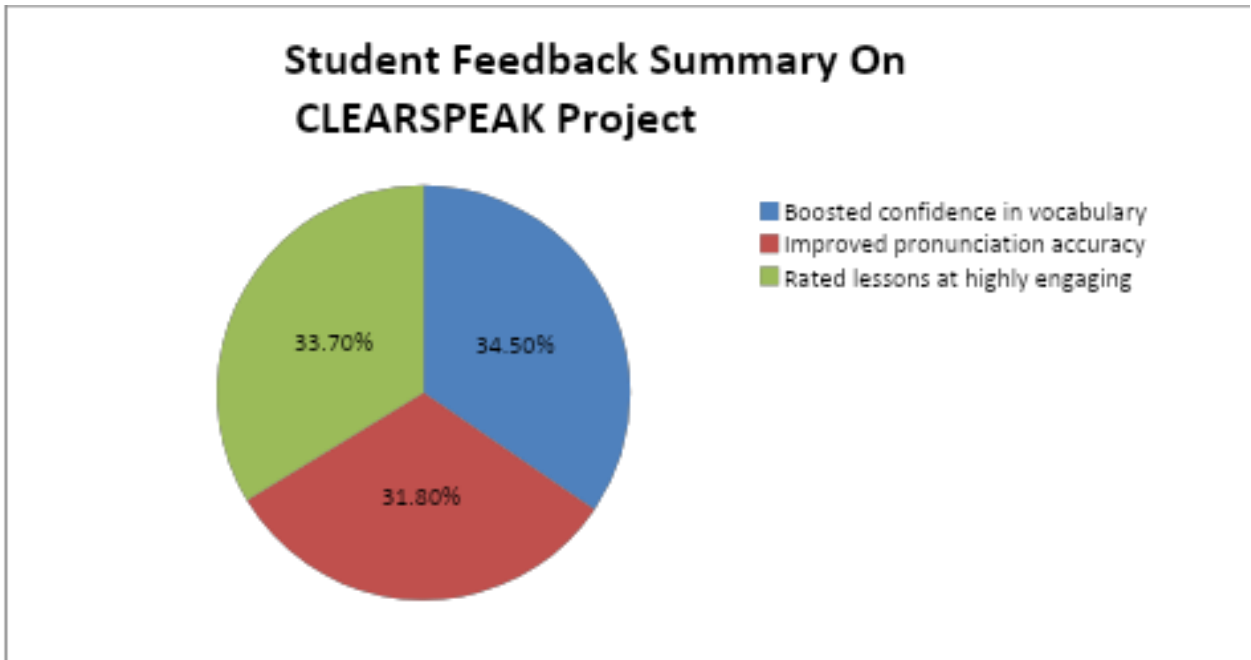
“Learning Indian-origin English words was an enriching cultural experience.”

“Now I can pronounce 'Quinoa' confidently in a restaurant!”

Sector-Wise Comparative Impact

Sector	Student Response Summary
Education	Highly relatable in academic discussions
Food	Most fun and relatable used in daily life.
Employment	Boosted interview and office conversation confidence.
Banking	Most challenging but appreciated due to real world utility.
Indian-origin words	Easiest to adopt due to cultural familiarity.

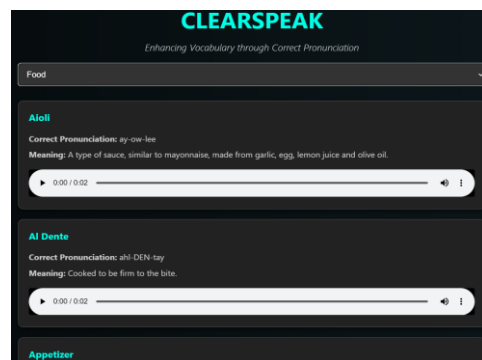
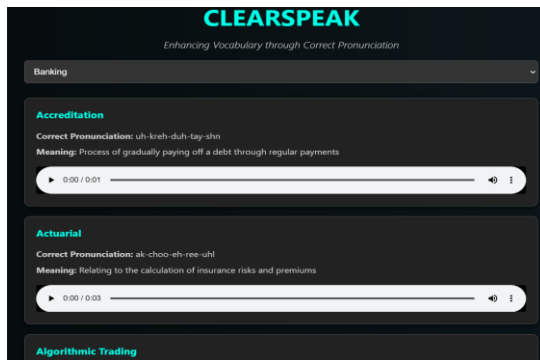
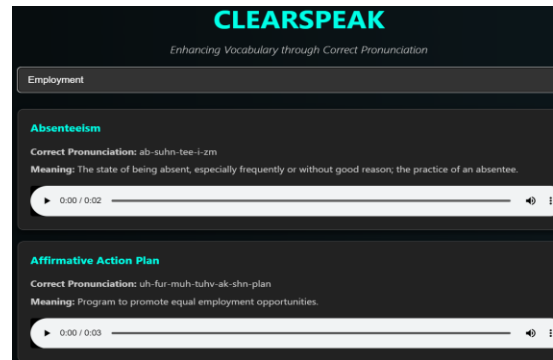
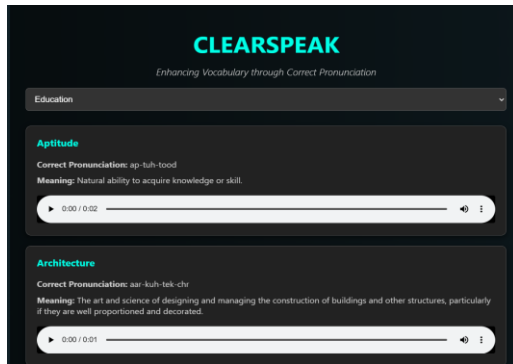
Learners’ Feedback Summary on CLEARSPEAK Project



The pie chart clearly shows that a significant majority of participants benefited from the tool in terms of accuracy, engagement, and confidence.

Webpage link:

<https://clearspeak.netlify.app/>



Future Directions

1. **Mobile Application with Advanced Features:** Develop a dedicated mobile application integrating AI-driven speech recognition for real-time pronunciation feedback and gamification elements (e.g., progress badges, leaderboards) to enhance learner motivation and engagement.
2. **Dynamic Learning Modules:** Expand offerings to include live, instructor-led pronunciation workshops and interactive tools such as adaptive quizzes, spaced-repetition flashcards, and scenario-based simulations for practical skill application.
3. **Sector-Specific Expansion:** Broaden the scope to high-impact sectors like Healthcare (e.g., medical terminology), Technology (e.g., technical jargon),

and Legal Terminology, catering to professionals requiring domain-specific linguistic precision.

4. Scalable Integration: Partner with e-learning platforms (e.g., Coursera, Moodle) and Learning Management Systems (LMS) to embed CLEAR SPEAK's resources, enabling seamless adoption in academic curricula and corporate training programs worldwide.

This forward-looking roadmap emphasizes technological innovation, pedagogical adaptability, and strategic partnerships to maximize the tool's global accessibility and relevance.

Conclusion

CLEAR SPEAK emerges as a robust and accessible solution for improving pronunciation proficiency among non-native English speakers. By synergizing three core components—IPA-based phonetic transcriptions, native-accented audio models, and sector-specific lexical curation—the tool effectively bridges theoretical language instruction with practical communication demands. Empirical feedback underscores its success, with learners reporting heightened engagement, enhanced clarity, and measurable gains in confidence across academic, professional, and social contexts.

The project's success was driven by the interdisciplinary collaboration of a dedicated team, with specialized roles in lexical research, audio production, and phonetic transcription. Iterative refinements based on user feedback further refined the tool's pedagogical design, ensuring alignment with learner needs. This collaborative, user-centered approach establishes CLEAR SPEAK as a scalable framework for addressing pronunciation challenges in multilingual populations globally.

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