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The next issue (the issue of April 2025) will be uploaded by the fourth week of April 2025 or earlier.

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Implementing Task-Based Role Play Activities to Develop English Language Fluency at Qassim University

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Abstract

English as a foreign language is applied as a difficulty in Middle Eastern students. Unfortunately, most educational facilities have learners whose English skills are rather poor. The intervention called for education approaches to solve challenges of English language difficulties. Therefore, an evaluation of the effectiveness of new and distinct approaches or ideas, particular to role-playing strategies, which are obtained from educational activities and plays, is especially relevant. Therefore, the significance of the present study lies in examining the effects of the use of role-playing strategies on the students' English speaking and writing skills. Since this was an intervention study, participants were assigned through random assignment to experimental and control groups. The research therefore concluded that since role-playing activities are tasks, then task factors were statistically significant on students' fluency in English.

Keywords: Role Play Activities; students; experimental and control; English Language Fluency; Qassim University.

1. Introduction

English is an official language which is accepted throughout the world, as it is regarded as an international language (Al-Mousah, 2020). English as pointed out by Al-Arifi (2020) is the globalized language for communication and interaction for a variety of countries and cultures for the purpose of speaking, communicating and learning. We can, therefore, conclude that the education of the English language has evolved and is now the second official language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Lack of sufficient English language proficiencies emanated from

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students' inability to use English as a foreign language (Manshar, 2020). This difficulty is not only felt in practice but also experienced in teaching English since there are no adequate modern methods involving the use of interactive activities. This led to children experiencing trouble in learning English and moreover, they were unable to speak English properly.

It is apparent that the level of English known by Middle Eastern students is not sufficient to learn this language. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to the following areas that can help one in reducing hindrances of learning English as a foreign language; This is by establishing students' areas of weakness in English skills, known limitations of conventional teaching techniques, and perhaps trying to evaluate the impact of innovative approaches to English language teaching in enhancing students' abilities at the various lessons.

Learning techniques are the ways or processes employed by teachers to ensure that their learners adapt during the learning process. Methods of teaching English are as follows; The provision of interactive tools and the employment of different methods that can be adopted in teaching this subject so that people can be more involved while learning English, the most important language in the world which at present, is difficult to learn. A prerequisite study that falls under second language acquisition is an understanding of the learning strategies employed and the relation of these strategies to objectives and curriculum map achieved while considering levels and differences between Arabic and English cultures. Consequently, it is stressed that there is (Chamot and El Dinary, 1999).

Several methods have been used in teaching English and reforming a number of strategies, efforts have been made to improve on the conventional teaching methodologies to teach English as a foreign language. The efficiency of those approaches in the teaching process plays an essential role in causing language acquisition and attaining the desired level of accomplishment in students. Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain that activity involvement by students and the overall performance achieved in class depends on the type of teaching technique used by the teacher.

In the past few years, there has been a revolution in the methods used to teach English occasioned by technological advancement that brings the modern methods of teaching English. Such methods include conducting online learning, using virtual classrooms, and other features like learning applications, digital platforms, and role-play strategies. It also indicates that these

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technologies are not only the means of attracting students' attention but are also helpful in building composite and effective environments promoting interactive education.

Besides, the result of the recent study also encourages the learning-teaching process that considers the learner differences that improve the student's understanding of linguistic concepts at special levels as well as in special needs. With the help of these methods, teachers can create individual classes and curriculum of education that take into account students' capabilities, address language barriers, and eliminate the monotonous effect of traditional learning, which in turn shifts the effectiveness of learning and attainment of the intended educational objectives. In this study, emphasis is given towards pinpointing the degree of impact that asserting the role-playing technique, in teaching English and its roles towards uplifting the student's fluency of the English language.

Unfortunately, it has been realised that students in many universities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have a weakness in the English language that hinders their ability to attain the necessary competence in this important area as well as traverse through academic and professional demands. These educational institutions endeavour to enhance the state of affairs with regard to English by implementing elaborate techniques of teaching.

Casting becomes the most important feature of the innovative form of education known as role-playing. Thus, Role-playing offers learners a chance to engage in the use of target language and conversational resources, which promote real-life sociable interaction in various social situations and in different roles (Al-Sanaidi, 2010; Richards, 1985). Role play is a type of communicative event where learners are assisted in manufacturing a meaningful language interaction that engages all the learners in some aspects of language use which include tone, body language, gesture, tone of voice and intonation among others (Abidin et al. (2012); Cheng, 2011).

Implementing this strategy in the development of the English language assists in building the student's linguistic competency thus speaking fluency and confidence in the usage of the English language since this strategy provides students with a chance of acting out roles and pretending conversations which are closer to the target culture as the learning of target language as a foreign language is learning of target culture. Therefore, it facilitates the students to achieve the situation that they would possibly meet in day-to-day lives and the professional world

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which makes language learning more real in comparison to fictional. Moreover, such activities help to boost the students' social communication skills and promote interaction in multicultural settings. Conversely, for Kusnierek (2015), role-play can be described as a communication process whereby the professor and students swap responsibilities or illustrate a scene to an audience. To the degree that it is sufficient to increase the students' confidence to express their opinions and emotions in a foreign language (Asensio, 2015; Zhang, 2010).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As for the key strengths and weaknesses universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia face versatile difficulties, such as, it seems, there is no or weak understanding and usage of the second state language – English. This weakness is brought about by several factors and among them is the student's inability to effectively apply English as a foreign language (Manshar 2020). First, with regard to the ways of teaching the English language, any furthering is supplemented with a critical lack of acceptance of new methods of education based on interactive activities.

 Prior research suggested that the approaches employed in education to teach the English language today are not adequate to amply the needs of the students, and consequently, improve their language ability hence the difficulty in their ability to learn the language and fluently speak it. This state of affairs leads to the necessity for the further introduction of new educational approaches aimed at the development of English lessons and polishing students' language skills. One of the useful strategies mentioned above is role-playing as it gives a learner a chance to practice in the target language during the imitation of real-life interactions to occur in various social domains. Thus, there is an urgent need to assess the role of the role-playing strategy in the development of the English language among students in Saudi universities. This research will aim at establishing the efficiency of this strategy in the enhancement of English language proficiency and fluency among students which will help in making suggestions on how to build upon the current curricula that are being offered thus increasing the efficiency of the teaching of the English language.

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1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the effectiveness of implementing task-based role-playing activities in developing English fluency in the Department of English Language and Literature at Qassim University?

2. Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in developing students' English language fluency that can be attributed to the experimental group through the post-application?

2. Literature Review

Specifically, Al-Arifi (2020) followed a study's objective designed to determine the teaching challenges relating to the English language. The target population for the present research study was the female English language teachers teaching at the primary level in Al-Quwayiyah Governorate. The questionnaire responses contained one teacher. As for the methodology of the research, it was carried out using the method of descriptive analysis with the help of the SPSS program. Various issues concerning the educational context, curriculum, and conventional methodologies were highlighted as the most prominent difficulties of English as a foreign language teachers.

More recent theoretical predictions have been made by Light Brown and Spada (1993), the educational approach is cooperative learning based on segregating activities into academic and social learning domains and the teacher's role is transformed from the controller of knowledge to the facilitator of students' learning. The idea behind this is grounded in the fact, that motivation, which a favorable environment makes, helps with the language learning process. Therefore, a comfortable environment removes the pressure that students feel when they need to speak in a foreign language. With group learning, students practice how to interact and communicate with other people hence, learning how to relate with fellow students better. This is done by developing tasks that require people to work in groups and solve problems, thus increasing the usage of English in realistic and manifold circumstances.

Strategies of role-play have attracted attention recently, especially as a way of enhancing children's English. Thus, the purpose of the study demonstrated by Kim and Chen (2021) is to assess the impact of using role-playing techniques in the development of communicative competence and critical thinking skills of English language learners.

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Some of the recent analyses have identified the importance of the methods of effective innovation in English language education. For example, in their study, Garcia and Nguyen (2023) examined the question of how the curriculum on culture which is given at school can enhance students' performance and language learning. The most significant one is the role-playing strategy which serves as an essential foundation for this context because it can enrich students' interaction and natural usage of English in various courses of life. Though this kind of strategy proves helpful in enhancing the students' linguistic proficiency, it also helps to develop enhanced self-esteem and interaction skills in different life situations.

Other research carried out by Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) involved the IELTS speaking examination used as a pre-and post-test to investigate the impact of role-play on the speaking proficiency of sixty semesters of Iranian EFL students. According to the research, learners' scores in the speaking post-test were significantly higher.

Henisah. Et al. (2023) examined the application of role-play as a pedagogical tool for enhancing speaking skills and improving the overall quality of English instruction for students requiring special attention. This research specifically targets first-grade pupils in vocational high schools, as role-play can render the learning experience enjoyable and free from stress, while also being highly memorable. The incorporation of role-play as an active learning strategy is anticipated to yield positive outcomes in teaching effectiveness by fostering student motivation. Employing this approach to teach the speaking components of a language cultivates a high level of enthusiasm and motivation among students. Data for this study was collected through observations, interviews, and a questionnaire survey. The implementation process of the role-play method in a speaking class includes several steps: identifying the discussion topic, selecting the scenario and crafting the dialogue, instructing students on the dialogue, rehearsing it, adjusting the scenario and dialogue as needed, and finally, presenting the dialogue to the class. Research findings and expert insights indicate that role-play is a highly effective method for improving students' speaking abilities..

Bedsides, Rojas Encalada, and Villafuerte (2018) investigated how using role-playing (RP) as a teaching method in English classes might improve the speaking abilities of EFL students in Ecuador. This study examines the characteristics of RP, which has its roots in psychodrama, as well as the instructional strategies that support it, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Task-Based Learning (TBLT), Cooperative Learning (CL), and Communicative Learning

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Teaching (CLT). As a result, RP is a teaching method that exposes students to real-world scenarios in order to improve their capacity to speak with peers in a natural and relevant way about their everyday experiences as well as their future work settings.

In addition, Waluyo (2019) suggested theme-based role-play as an alternate method for enhancing EFL learners' communicative ability within task-based instruction. The study investigated how students (N = 782) performed theme-based role-plays throughout the course of a 12-week academic term and how it affected their performance on the final speaking exam. The results supported the hypothesis that students' performances in theme-based role-play predict the development of their communicative competence. He concluded that the topics and contents of role-play activities, roles of students and teachers as an individual and a group, and teachers' provision of support may play key roles in implementation.

Besides, Sinwongsuwat (2014) carried out research studies on 26 second-year English major students at Songkhla Rajabhat University in Thailand. The research established that literal role play gives learners a lever to handle conversation difficulties and work on certain target aspects of the languages they are learning in real-life contexts and as such has a comparative advantage of enhancing the learners' communicative competency in English.

Essentially, Huang (2008) offered research concerning the dichotomy of role-playing as the key method to enhancing students' and instructors' confidence in the use of a second language to express themselves and their emotions without much pressure. The outcomes of the study are NY: This study showed that role–play can very much reduce students' constraints in speaking a foreign language which, in turn, enhances their self-confidence and their interaction with the tutors in class and therefore improves achievement and fluency in English.

Similarly, David (2014) noted that students' engagement in role-play enhances their desire to communicate with other people in collaborative learning activities in a foreign language. In so doing, the understanding of the lessons and outcomes of the research reveal that students who undertook role-playing activities were more inclined to contribute to group chats and group work hence improving their language and communication.

Finally, a study carried out by Suchada and Tasanameelaep (2018) on the effects of role-playing simulation activities in the improvement of 45 Thai EFL university students' business English oral communication. The findings from the questionnaire showed that students had

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positive attitudes towards learning through role-playing simulation activities. They recommended that teachers should provide more adequate practice with problem solving and fluency building in order to promote more sustainably successful oral communication in business English environments.

3. Methodology

This part deals with a description of the method and procedures used in this research, as it deals with: The rationale of the study, the participants involved in the study, the research instrument that was used which is the English language skills test and how the validity and reliability of the test were affirmed. This part also featured the demonstration of the -application of the role-playing strategy and the statistical processing methods applied to the data collected In the study.

The quasi-experimental approach was followed, however, people were randomly divided into two groups, experimental and control groups in which the effect of one or more independent variables on one or more dependent variables is to be treated. One can note that the primary feature of the predefined quasi-experimental approach is the purposeful establishment of the conditions to which a researcher is exposed. No different groups will experience different feelings. The quasi-experimental approach was adopted by the current study to determine the relationship between the independent variable which consists of the method of teaching the English language; the role-playing strategy and the dependent variable which is the development of the level of students' fluency in English among Saudi university students.

3.1 Population and Participants

The target group of the study include the bachelor's degree students of the Department of English Language and Literature of the Qassim University at KSA. For the experiment, Qassim University was selected to deploy for the academic year (2023-2024) for several reasons, including the willingness of the university administration its use and application of fresh strategies as solutions for a poor level of English among university students, their appropriate educational faculties and environmental means and necessary instruments for deploying the experiment. The possibilities of its application as a strategy and testing the effect it has on the targeted audience.

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In the framework of the Department of English Language and Literature two groups of students were chosen: the first group of 18 male and female students and the second group of 18 male and female students as well. Then, the two student groups were sorted into the experimental and control groups where Student Group 1 was in the experimental group and was instructed in the subject of English language skills using the identified role-playing strategy while the division categorized Student Group 2 as the control group and was taught according to the conventional approach.

3.2 Test Preparation Method

Identify the objective of the test. The test follows a role-playing strategy that seeks to establish the existing level of English proficiency among students in the Department of English Language and Literature of Qassim University. The test consists of five sections, each of which measures a different role-playing skill: performing, responding, differentiation, change, and innovation. To evaluate the student's progress in applying this strategy, we administer a pre- and post-test.

Preparing test questions: Since the role-playing strategy is applied here, questions are developed correspondingly, emphasizing different skills it. Several questions for every role-playing skill have been developed separately in advance to be used during the training.

Determine the test specifications and type of questions: As mentioned earlier, the test is planned to include five parts, and each part reviews the specific kind of role-playing strategy skill. Describing each of the questions used in the procedure, the author stressed that each question was aligned with the particular skill and focused the students on role-play and collaborative activities.

Test instructions: Specific directions are discussed with students, for example not to circle the selected answer and say 'This is the one' accompanied by pointing at the answer with a pencil; before moving to the next question in each part of the test, the demonstrative technique of turning to role-playing is used.

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4. Result

4.1 The Face Validity of the English Language Test

The apparent validity was confirmed in relation to the general impression of the test with regards to the type of vocabulary used, the method in which the test was constructed, the amount of clarity and specifically the level of objectivity of the test and the utility of the test for its intended purpose. In order to establish the construct validity of the test items, it was administered to arbitrators who are experts in measurement and evaluation, methods of teaching, curricula and those dealing with skill development courses for detection. In relation to the intended purpose of the tests, regarding the correspondence of the test questions to measure the five listening skills of predicting, inferring, expressing an opinion, distinguishing, issuing judgements, and criticizing, it can be stated that the study questions are quite scientific and accurate for the age group of bachelor's students. The required changes were made depending on the observations that the arbitrators made. The questions that were approved by the arbitrators and were accepted were the questions that elicited an approval rate of (80%). Regarding the test, the comment was made to reword two of the questions in relation to the skill in reading comprehension.

4.2 Construct Validity of the Listening Skills Test

The evidence for the construct validity of the English language test was determined by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient of each test question with the total score sum of the skill tested by reading, writing, speaking, listening, and the results of vocabulary and the sample used was from outside the sampling frame of (30) male and female students the table below shows the result. (1).

Table (1) Correlation coefficient values for the listening skills test questions with the total score of the skill they measure (n=30)

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Writing Skill		Listening Skill		Reading Skill		Speaking Skill	
Correlation coefficient	QN	Correlation coefficient	QN	Correlation coefficient	QN	Correlation coefficient	QN
0.440**	1	0.801**	1	**0.856	2	**0.839	1
0.427**	2	0.750**		0.631**	3	Role-play skill	
0.635**	3	**Fluency**				**0.545	3
		0.520**	2	0.767**	1	**0.870	4

The correlation coefficient is statistically significant at the significance level (0.01 ≥(α).

Observing the results presented in Table (1), we can identify the following: The correlation coefficients between each test question with the total of the skill it intends to measure are all positive values and statistically significant at the level (0. 01 ≥ (α), and the correlation coefficients' values vary from (0. 427) to (0. 870), and this shows that the questions in each skill do measure what they propose to measure.

4.3 Test Stability

The reliability of the English language test was confirmed in two ways: The first was done by getting the internal consistency coefficient in accordance with Cronbach Alpha, and the reliability coefficient in this method was (0. 86). With regards to the second method, the test-retest reliability method was adopted and for this, the test was given to the exploratory sample of (30) Male and Female students and then after two weeks, it was again given to the same students. It is in this way that the Pearson Correlation coefficient was arrived at to be equal to (0. 83). These values are considered appropriate and determine the stability of the test which measures the level of university students. Before and after using the role-playing strategy.

4.4 Test Correction

The test entailed (10) test questions in the test taker's English language proficiency. The correct answers were rewarded two points and for wrong answers, the students lost two points. Since the general score is computed as the sum of the scores that students get in the specific fields, it is clear that the range of the general score is between (0) and (20) marks.

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4.5 Study Design

O1   X   O1   EG:

O1   -   O1   CG:

Where:

- (EG, Experimental Group) = the experimental group.
- (CG, Controlled Group) = the control group.
- (O1) = the pre- and post-application of the listening skills test.
- (X) = the experimental treatment (a teaching strategy based on critical thinking skills).
- (-) = the conventional method.

4.6 Procedures

It consisted of obtaining the necessary approvals to conduct the study, reviewing the theoretical materials related to the research topic and its variables, then preparing the study tool represented in testing the student's level of fluency in the English language, ensuring their validity and reliability, and selecting and appointing the students participating in the study experiment, according to the learning method, in two groups: instructional group taught based on the role-playing list strategy, a second instructional group was taught based on the list strategy but as an experiment, and finally, there was the control group which was taught in a normal way. The English language skills test was administered to the students of the control and experiment groups for equalizing statistical variables. After that, the treatment was implemented: The intervention which is, in this case, the independent variable is the experimental (a strategy for teaching a list of role-playing activities used) while the other is a control that includes the traditional or usual approach to teaching. Finally, a test was also conducted on the bachelor's degree students in the Department of English Language in the experimental and control groups after the overall completion of the implementation of the treatment. The students' answers were corrected, written down by the teacher, and then transcribed to the computer and statistically analysed with the aid of the "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" (SPSS-V. 25). When the answers to the questions set in the study were obtained, they were followed by the extraction of results which in turn were discussed, proceeded by coming up with recommendations.

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The following part provides and analyzes the results of the study concerning the research question What effect does a teaching strategy based on role-play have on the fluency of the English language among the bachelor's students in the Department of English Language and Literature at Qassim University:

Q1: **Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level (α = 0.05) in developing students' English language fluency that can be attributed to the experimental group through the post-application?**

To answer this question, the cloud averages and standard deviations of the bachelor's degree students' scores were extracted for the English language test, which aims to evaluate the student's level of fluency in English language skills, and Table (3) shows the results of this: To answer this question, the cloud averages and standard deviations of the bachelor's degree students' scores were extracted for the English language test, which aims to evaluate the student's level of fluency in English language skills, and Table (2) shows the results of this:

Table (2) The arithmetic means of the experimental and control group in the English language test in the post-test

Tribal scale		Post scale			The levels
standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	The Group	
4.23	9.05	3.51	14.72	Experimental	English Language Test
3.57	9.22	2.21	11.22	Control Sample	

This can be deduced from Table (2) indicating the general backwardness between arithmetic means related to the post-measurement test of students', level of fluency in the English language for all skills. In order to establish the relevance of these differences between the arithmetic means the following one-way analysis of variance was used as depicted in Table 3):

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Table (3) one-way analysis of variance

The amount of impact	ETA square	Sig	F value	Mean squares	The total	Source of variance	level
		0.001	12.806	110.250	110.250	Pretest	**English language Test**
Medium	0.52	0.00	703.646	6058.028	6058.028	Between groups	
				8.609	292.722	The error	
					6461.00	the total	
					402.972	Corrected total	

It can be said that the differences between the means of the two study groups or groups with and without the application of the proposed procedure in the English language skills test for bachelor's students in the post-application are indeed statistically significant at a significance level of (0.00) as shown in Table (3) with an F value of 703.646 and an effect value of 0.52. Differences in the above parameters saw the experimental group, which was trained through role-playing activities record the highest arithmetic mean of 14.72. The result of this study suggests that the proposed teaching strategy of using role-playing task activities to teach English has benefits on the student's fluency in the language.

The researcher explains this observation to the effectiveness of the task-based role–playing activities. Having conducted these activities, as a university teacher, the improvement of the students' performance as well as their mastery of the English language was evident. The following activities have greatly assisted in enhancing the achievement levels as well as the motivation to learn among the students and their level of English. The context of the role-playing activities was to offer a number of pedagogical and learning activities and hence contributed to helping the students develop ways of discovering meaning and connecting it to their past experiences. This also created a platform for the students to work within groups, thus enhancing the process of communication among them.

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Q2: **What is the effectiveness of implementing task-based role-playing activities in developing English fluency in university students?**

Task-based role-playing activities were also found to enhance the University students' fluency in English remarkably when provided. Based on the findings of this study, students were able to enhance their linguistic abilities in English with ease and competency by using English and by creating realistic and variable conditions. The study showed that when the Role-Play strategy was employed, the students' general effectiveness in using English in relevant contexts such as restaurants, airports, hotels schools etc. was enhanced. The students were grouped into small groups, they were enlightened on what was expected of them, this created a nice learning atmosphere. Allotting much time to consider ideas and the execution of the same during the activity was instrumental in enhancing the realization among students. Moreover, the assessment of the performance of the students after each Role-Play session helped them analyze themselves in terms of quality and performance to be able to perform much better in the subsequent Role-play performance. Used by the teachers, the aspects that have been observed include the fact that there is enhancement of confidence while speaking English and sharing information with fellow learners thus fostering teamwork and sharing of incidences.

When it comes to teaching literature and drama, one has shown that utilising Role-Play, to act out scenes from the novels or plays, enhances students' comprehension of the texts and their mastery of appropriate and natural English. These activities also assisted the students the gaining their language skills through dramas, which are mimic and practical agendas.

Thus, the findings of this study are consistent with previous studies as the present study has similarities with Sinwongsuwat's (2014) work that investigated 26 second-year English majors at Songkhla Rajabhat University, Thailand. The study also revealed that scarcity of conversational challenges allows the learners to practice the required TL features in real-life communication and thereby have a better communicative proficiency in English.

In addition, the findings of this study are consistent with previous studies as the present study has similarities with Waluyo's (2019) work that suggested theme-based role-play as an alternate method for enhancing EFL learners' communicative ability within task-based instruction.

The findings of this study also, are consistent with Suchada and Tasanameelaep's (2018) study on the effects of role-playing simulation activities. They suggested that teachers should provide

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more adequate practice with problem solving and fluency building in order to promote more sustainably successful oral communication in business English environments.

The study's results align with Huang's (2008) research on role-playing strategies' role in enhancing the effectiveness of the educational environment. This study focused on the use of role-playing as a major approach to boost students' and instructors' confidence in expressing their thoughts and feelings in a comfortable setting. The study's findings revealed that role-playing significantly reduces students' fear of speaking a foreign language, which boosts their self-confidence and increases their participation in class, both of which have a positive impact on their academic achievement and fluency in English.

In addition, the study goes in line with Rojas Encalada, and Villafuerte's (2018) investigation how using role-playing (RP) as a teaching method in English classes might improve the speaking abilities of EFL students in Ecuador. As a result, RP is a teaching method that exposes students to real-world scenarios in order to improve their capacity to speak with peers in a natural and relevant way about their everyday experiences as well as their future work settings.

5. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following set of recommendations is presented:

1. Leading the instructors of the university to adopt the teaching that incorporates the aspects of role-playing activities as the effective one in the development of the English language.

2. Providing faculty with special training on how to use the teaching method of incorporating role-playing activities.

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Identifying the Acoustics Features of Malayalam Vowels

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Abstract

The study of vowel acoustics is fundamental to understanding the phonetic and phonological structure of a language. This research focuses on identifying and analysing the acoustics of vowel system in Malayalam by examining key acoustic parameters, particularly formant frequencies (F1, F2, and F3). Formant frequencies serve as critical indicators of vowel quality, influencing speech perception and linguistic classification. Through acoustic analysis, this study explores the distribution and variation of these formants across different vowel categories in Malayalam. The results provide valuable insights into the phonetic properties of the language, contributing to a deeper understanding of its vowel space. Furthermore, this research has potential applications in speech recognition, linguistic analysis, and language preservation efforts. By documenting and analysing the acoustic characteristics of Malayalam vowels, the study aims to support advancements in phonetic studies and computational linguistics while preserving the linguistic diversity of the language.

Keywords: Malayalam Vowels, Acoustic Analysis, Formant Frequencies F1, F2, F3.

Introduction

Vowel acoustics play a crucial role in the study of phonetics and phonology, as vowels serve as the fundamental building blocks of spoken language. The acoustic properties of vowels, particularly formant frequencies, provide valuable insights into the articulation, phonetic structure, and perceptual characteristics of a language. The fundamental frequency of the voice is determined by the rate of vocal cord vibrations per second of the voice produced, which is thus controlled by the speaker

through adjusting the tension in the vocal cords. It accompanies preferred resonating frequencies of the vocal tract referred to as formants. They are usually referred to as F1, F2, F3 etc. F1 is the first formant frequency, resulting from resonance in the first chamber, which extends from the glottis to the points of articulation or approximation. F2 is the second formant frequency, caused by resonance in the second chamber, which runs from the point of articulation or the area where the tongue reaches a particular height, to the front part of the tongue or the dental ridge. Finally, F3 is the third formant, occurring in the third chamber, a smaller air column between the tongue and the lips.

The first formant (F1) is primarily associated with vowel height, the second formant (F2) is linked to vowel frontness or backness, and the third formant (F3) can provide additional information about vocal tract characteristics, including speaker identity and certain phonetic features. Analysing these formant frequencies is essential for understanding how vowels are produced and perceived across different languages.

Languages vary in their vowel systems, and their acoustic characteristics are influenced by multiple factors, including the shape and length of the vocal tract, articulatory settings, and coarticulatory effects. While numerous acoustic studies have been conducted on well-documented languages such as English, French, and German, many lesser-studied languages, including Malayalam, lack detailed acoustic analysis. Malayalam, a Dravidian language spoken primarily in the Indian state of Kerala and by diaspora communities worldwide, has a distinct phonetic inventory that sets it apart from Indo-Aryan and other Dravidian languages. The vowel system of Malayalam consists of both short and long vowel pairs, each with unique articulatory and acoustic properties. Malayalam is a five vowel system language. /ɪ/, /e/, /a/, /u/, /ɔ/ with length contrast are the pure vowels in Malayalam and diphthongs /aɪ/, /au/ are also present in the vowel system of Malayalam. However, despite its linguistic richness, there has been relatively little acoustic research dedicated to the vowel system of Malayalam, particularly in terms of formant frequency analysis.

Given this gap in research, the present study aims to systematically analyse the vowels of Malayalam using acoustic parameters, specifically focusing on formant frequencies (F1, F2, and F3). By measuring and evaluating these formants, this study seeks to determine the distribution, variation, and acoustic characteristics of Malayalam vowels. This research will provide a detailed phonetic profile of Malayalam vowels, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the language's sound system.

The significance of this study extends beyond linguistic description. The findings will be beneficial for various applications, including speech synthesis, automatic speech recognition (ASR) systems, forensic linguistics, and language documentation efforts. A precise acoustic characterization of Malayalam vowels can improve speech technology applications by refining pronunciation models

and enhancing voice-based systems. Additionally, given the increasing focus on language preservation, documenting the acoustic properties of Malayalam contributes to linguistic conservation efforts and aids future research in comparative phonetics and phonology.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the methodology used for data collection and acoustic analysis, including details on participant selection, recording procedures, and analytical techniques. Section 3 discusses the results of the formant frequency measurements, highlighting patterns and variations within the Malayalam vowel system. Section 4 interprets the findings in a broader linguistic context, comparing them with established phonetic principles. Finally, Section 5 concludes the study by summarizing key insights, discussing practical implications, and suggesting directions for future research.

Literature Review

There are several studies available focusing on the acoustic features of vowels in English and how they differ across dialects of English and speaker groups. There are also significant studies on the acoustic properties of vowels in languages other than English. Choi (1991) analyzed the vowels of Kabardian, a Circassian language spoken in the northwest Caucasus, measuring formant frequencies using wide-band FFT power spectra with a filter bandwidth of 300 Hz. The mean formant frequencies obtained from the FFT measurements were considered in the study. Choi highlighted the impact of different consonant types on the vowels of Kabardian. Another notable study focused on the vowels of Hidatsa, a language from the Missouri Valley branch of the Siouan language family, spoken primarily around the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota. Additionally, Boyle et al. (2024) and Rai (2017) examined the acoustic features of Koyee, a language spoken in Nepal.

Significant research has also been conducted on the acoustic properties of vowels in Indian languages. Basu et al. (2017) investigated the acoustics of vowels in five North East Indian languages from Nagaland: Nagamese, Ao, Lotha, Sumi, and Angami. The vowels studied were /u/, /o/, /ə/, /a/, /e/, and /i/. A study by Chittaragi & Koolagudi (2019) identified certain features necessary for recognizing vowels in five different dialects of the Kannada language. In addition to formant frequencies (F1-F3), prosodic features were also considered for dialect identification. Other studies include research on the vowels of Lambada, a minor language spoken in various parts of India, with a special focus on the speakers from Telangana (Kumar & Duli, 2014); vowels of Bagri, a dialect of the Rajasthani language; vowels of Dhundhari, another Rajasthani language; vowels of Kashmiri; and a comparative study of the acoustic features of vowels in Maithili and Angika.

There is extensive research on the acoustic properties of vowels in various languages, the study of Malayalam vowels remains relatively under explored. Pallath (2023) examined the formant frequecies of Malayalam vowels in a fundamental level. This study aims to address these gaps by

conducting a detailed acoustic analysis of Malayalam vowels. By leveraging modern signal processing technique and exploring inter speaker variability, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Malayalam acoustics

Objective of the study

To identify and analyse the vowel system in Malayalam by examining key acoustic parameters, particularly formant frequencies (F1, F2 and F3), to gain insights into their distribution and variations in the language.

Methodology

Participant: A total of 30 participants took part in this study, including 15 males and 15 females aged between 25 and 35 years. They were from various regions of Kerala and were native speakers of Malayalam. The informants are devoid of any structural or functional speech abnormalities.

Method: The speakers' utterances were recorded in a semi-controlled environment. The analysis focused on the Malayalam vowels /ɪ/, /e/, /a/, /u/, and /ɔ/.The speakers' utterances were recorded in a semi-controlled environment. The selected words contained vowels appearing in all three-word positions: initial, medial, and final. The analysis focused on the Malayalam vowels /ɪ/, /e/, /a/, /u/, and /ɔ/. Specifically, six words each were chosen for /ɪ/ and /e/, twelve for /a/, nine for /u/, and seven for /ɔ/. Each word was uttered twice. Each recording was made using a high-quality IOS device, resulting in minimal background noise. The recorded voice samples were analysed using Praat Speech Recognition software.

Analysis and Discussion

Vowel identification of Malayalam is performed by analysing acoustic features, specifically by measuring the first three formant frequencies (F1, F2, and F3) of each vowel. The collected data is prepared carefully, maintaining its homogeneity. Trimming off the irrelevant pieces, collected sound were loaded to PRAAT. The first phase of analysis was to identify and record the three formant frequencies F1, F2 and F3 of the vowels /ɪ/, /e/, /a/, /u/ and /ɔ/. As we have considered repeated utterance of same instances of every vowel, the readings expected to be identical to almost all influences of practical situations on the production of vowels. The choice of words with vowels being at different positions too contributed to this.The mean formant frequencies of the vowels /ɪ/, /e/, /a/, /u/ and /ɔ/ are listed in the table below. As each entry is subjected to critical analysis, it was evident that the same vowel produced by the same candidate in the same conditions, almost instantly have some variations in the readings. This was observed in all of F1, F2 and F3. This suggested that taking

mean would not be an appropriate method to develop the identification of vowels. As the prevailing literature considers mean to determine vowels with F1, F2 and F3, we suggest a novel approach by considering a range of frequencies for each formant frequencies. Instead of looking for a precise value, this method will look in to a range of values which is expected to be more inclusive.

The range is taken around the mean.. With the readings, ranges are constructed for F1, F2 and F3 of each vowel of consideration. The left end point is taken as $mean - Std.Deviation$ and the right end point is taken as $mean + Std.Deviation$

Table 1

The *Table 1* depicts the means, standard deviations and ranges of F1, F2 and F3 frequencies of /ɪ/, /e/, /a/, /u/, /ɔ/ in Malayalam.

Vowel	F1 (Hz)			F2(Hz)			F3(Hz)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
/ɪ/	350.3	40.916	309.4 – 391.2	2281.55	254.65	2026.9 – 2536.2	2971.2	213.49	2757.7 – 3184.7
/e/	478.32	54.586	423.7 – 532.9	2140.5	196.22	1944.3 – 2336.8	2759.1	195.15	2563.9 – 2962.2
/a/	744.375	126.937	622.4 – 876.31	1474.35	121.012	1353.3 – 1595.4	2712.68	276.534	2436.2 – 2989.2
/u/	398.08	40.186	357.9 – 438.3	1247.96	402.63	845.33 – 1650.6	2749.304	244.44	2504.9 – 2993.7
/ɔ/	496.54	85.053	411.5 – 581.6	1050.5	240.43	809.6 – 1290.9	2749.8	287.48	2462.3 – 3037.3

Formant Frequencies of Front vowel /ɪ/:

The mean first formant frequency (F1) of the front vowel /ɪ/ is 350.3 Hz, while the second formant (F2) is 2281.55 Hz, and the third formant (F3) is 2971.2 Hz which is tabled below. The standard deviation of the first formant frequency (F1) for the vowel /ɪ/ is 40.916 Hz, while the standard deviations of the second (F2) and third (F3) formants are 254.65 Hz and 213.49 Hz, respectively. Therefore, the formant frequency ranges for the high front vowel /ɪ/ in Malayalam are as follows: F1 ranges from 309.4 to 391.2 Hz, F2 ranges from 2026.9 to 2536.2 Hz, and F3 ranges from 2757.7 to 3184.7 Hz.

Formant frequencies of front vowel /e/:

The mean formant frequencies for the front vowel /e/ are 478.32 Hz for F1, 2140.5 Hz for F2, and 2759.1 Hz for F3. The mean F1 of the vowel /e/ is 128.02 Hz higher than that of /ɪ/, while the mean F2 and F3 of vowel /e/ are slightly lower compared to /ɪ/. The standard deviations of formant frequencies F1, F2, and F3 for the vowel /e/ are 54.586 Hz, 196.22 Hz, and 195.15 Hz, respectively. Thus, the formant frequency ranges for the vowel /e/ are as follows: F1 ranges from 423.7 to 532.9 Hz, F2 ranges from 1944.3 to 2336.8 Hz, and F3 ranges from 2563.9 to 2962.2 Hz. The F2 and F3 ranges of the vowels /ɪ/ and /e/ overlap significantly, but they can be distinguished based on their F1 range.

Formant frequencies of front vowel /a/:

The mean formant frequencies for the front vowel /a/ are 744.375 Hz for F1, 1474.35 Hz for F2, and 2712.68 Hz for F3.The mean F1 of the vowel /a/ is 266.055 Hz greater than the mean F1 of the vowel /e/. Additionally, the F1 of /a/ is greater than that of /e/, which in turn is higher than that of /ɪ/. The mean F2 of the vowel /a/ is the lowest compared to the F2 of vowels /e/ and /ɪ/.The mean F3 is slightly higher for the vowel /ɪ/, followed by /e/, and then /a/. The standard deviations of F1, F2, and F3 for the vowel /a/ are 126.937 Hz, 121.012 Hz, and 276.534 Hz, respectively. Therefore, the formant frequency ranges for the vowel /a/ are: F1 from 622.4 to 876.31 Hz, F2 from 1353.3 to 1595.4 Hz, and F3 from 2436.2 to 2989.2 Hz. The F1 ranges of the front vowels /ɪ/, /e/, and /a/ are distinct and do not overlap. In contrast, the F2 ranges of vowels /ɪ/ and /e/ overlap, while the F2 range of vowel /a/ is lower than the other two and does not overlap with them. The F3 range overlaps across all three vowels: /ɪ/, /e/, and /a/.

Formant Frequencies of back vowel /u/:

The mean formant frequencies for the back vowel /u/ are 398.08 Hz for F1, 1247.96 Hz for F2, and 2749.304 Hz for F3. The mean F1of vowel /u/ is lower than F1 of vowel /a/ and /e/ but higher than F1 of vowel /ɪ/. The mean F1 of the vowel /u/ is lower than that of vowels /a/ and /e/ but higher than that of vowel /ɪ/. However, the mean F2 of the vowel /u/ is the lowest among all the vowels /ɪ/, /e/, and /a/. F3 is almost similar in all cases. The F3 values are nearly the same across all vowels. The standard deviations of F1, F2, and F3 for the back vowel /u/ are 40.186 Hz, 402.63 Hz, and 244.44 Hz, respectively. Hence, the formant frequency ranges for the back vowel /u/ are: F1 from 357.9 to 438.3 Hz, F2 from 845.33 to 1650.6 Hz, and F3 from 2504.9 to 2993.7 Hz. The vowels /u/ and /a/ do not overlap in terms of range of F1. However, /ɪ/ and /u/ show significant overlap in the range of F1, while /u/ and /e/ overlap only slightly in the range of F1. So vowels /ɪ/ and /u/ cannot be distinguished in terms of range of F1. In the case of F2 range, the vowels /ɪ/ and /e/ do not overlap with /u/, but there is a slight overlap between the F2 ranges of vowels /u/ and /a/. all the vowels overlaps in the case of range of F3.

Formant frequencies of back vowel /ɔ/:

The mean formant frequencies for the back vowel /ɔ/ are 496.54 Hz for F1, 1050.5 Hz for F2, and 2749.8 Hz for F3. The mean of F1 of vowel /ɔ/ is higher than that of /e/, /u/ and /ɪ/ but lower than that of vowel /a/. the vowel /ɔ/ has the lowest mean F2 when compared to Malayalam vowels /ɪ, e, a, u/. Mean F3 is almost similar in all vowels in Malayalam. The standard deviations of F1, F2, and F3 for the back vowel /ɔ/ are 85.053 Hz, 240.43 Hz, and 287.48 Hz, respectively. Therefore, the formant frequency ranges for the back vowel /ɔ/ in Malayalam are: F1 from 411.5 to 581.6 Hz, F2 from 809.6 to 1290.9 Hz, and F3 from 2462.3 to 3037.3 Hz. The range of F1 of back vowel /ɔ/ do not overlap with the range of F1 of vowels /a/ and /ɪ/. The range of F1 of /ɔ/ overlaps heavily with /e/ and slightly with /u/. Meanwhile, the F2 range of /ɔ/ overlaps with /u/ but does not overlap with /ɪ/, /a/, or /e/.
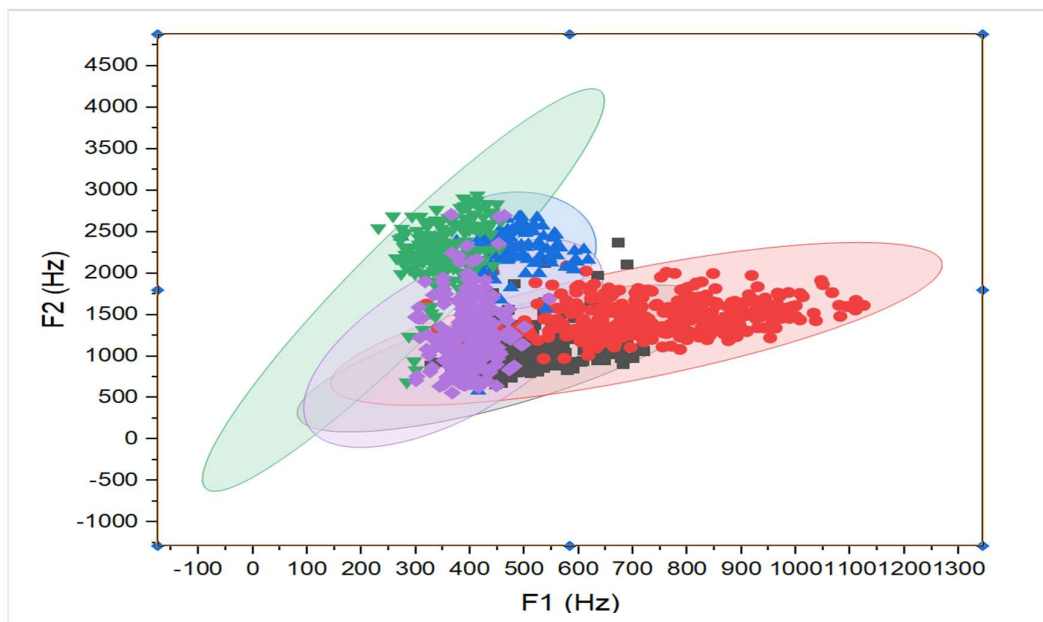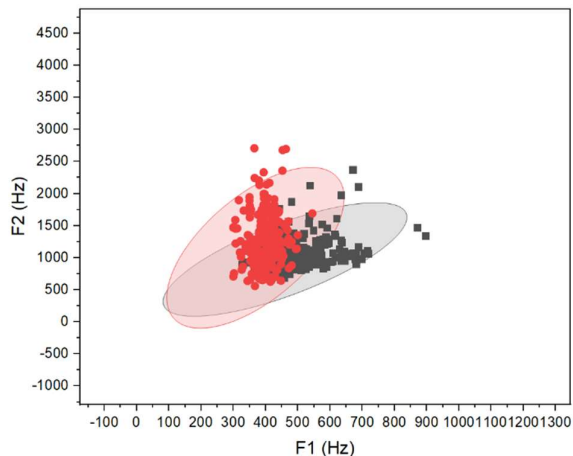
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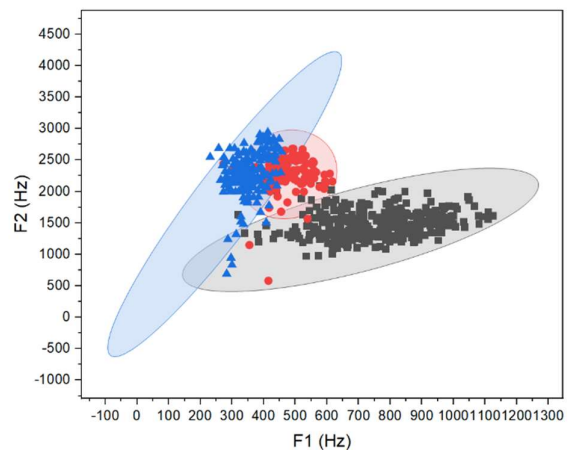
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Figure 2

Figure 2

Front vowel /a/ has the highest F1 frequency range, spanning from 622.4 to 876.31 Hz, while the high front vowel /ɪ/ has the lowest F1 frequency range, ranging from 309.4 to 391.2 Hz in Malayalam vowels. Low vowels exhibit a higher F1 frequency range, while high vowels have a lower F1 frequency range. This indicates a pattern of increasing F1 frequency range from high to mid to low vowels. The pattern follows the order: /a/ > /e/ > /ɔ/ > /u/ > /ɪ/ in terms of F1 frequency range.

For the F2 frequency range, the front vowel /ɪ/ has the highest frequency, ranging from 2026.9 to 2536.2 Hz, while the back vowel /ɔ/ has the lowest frequency range, spanning from 809.6 to 1290.9 Hz in Malayalam vowels. Front vowels have a higher F2 frequency range compared to back vowels. This shows an increasing F2 frequency range from back vowels to front vowels, following the pattern: /ɪ/ > /e/ > /a/ > /u/ > /ɔ/.
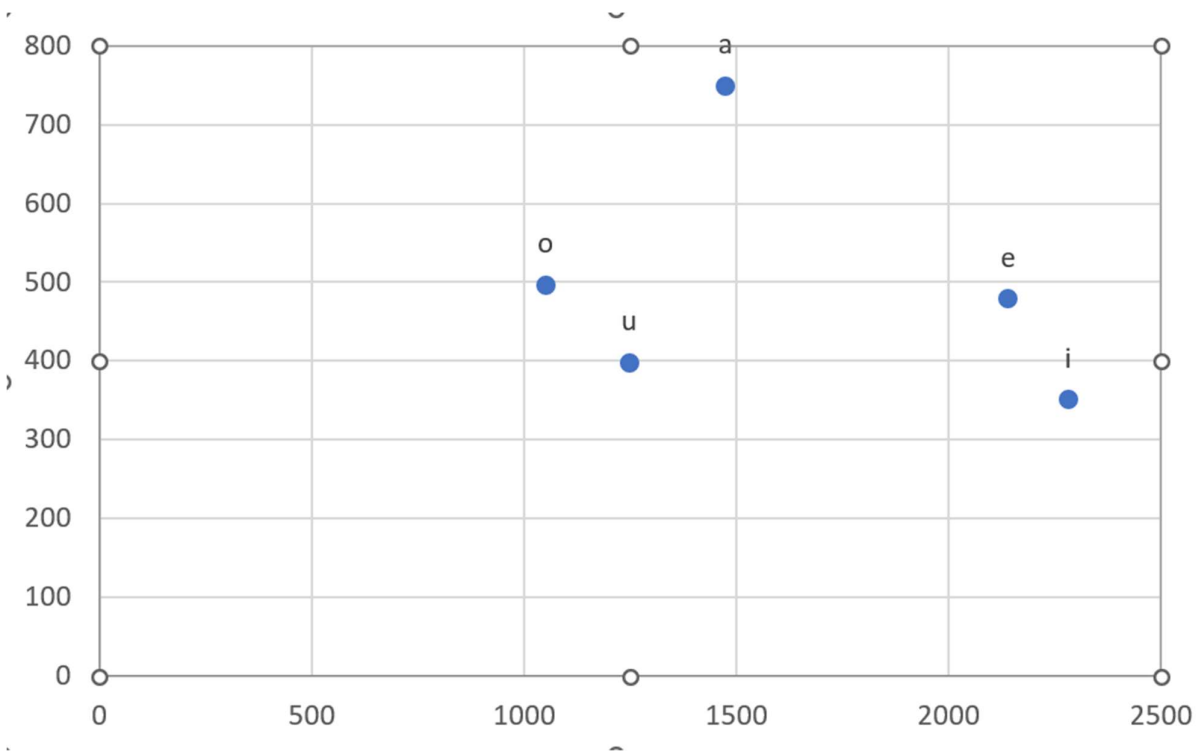
Conclusion

This study aimed to identify and analyse the vowel system in Malayalam by examining key acoustic parameters, particularly formant frequencies (F1, F2, and F3). Through acoustic analysis, the study provided valuable insights into the distribution and variation of these formants, contributing to a deeper understanding of the phonetic characteristics of Malayalam vowels. The findings confirm that low vowels exhibit higher F1 frequencies, while high vowels have lower F1 frequencies, consistent with general phonetic principles. Similarly, front vowels show higher F2 frequencies than back vowels, aligning with established vowel classification patterns. The range of first formant frequency

of vowel in Malayalam exhibit an increase from high to mid to low vowels. The pattern follows the order: /a/ > /e/ > /ɔ/ > /u/ > /ɪ/. the range of second formant frequency of vowels in Malayalam shows an increasing F2 frequency range from back vowels to front vowels following the pattern: /ɪ/ > /e/ > /a/ > /u/ > /ɔ/. These results highlight the systematic nature of vowel production in Malayalam and provide empirical data for future linguistic research.

The study's findings have significant implications for various fields, including phonetics, speech technology, and language documentation. Understanding the acoustic properties of Malayalam vowels can aid in improving speech recognition systems, text-to-speech synthesis, and linguistic education. Additionally, the research contributes to the preservation and documentation of Malayalam phonetics, which is crucial for future comparative linguistic studies.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The analysis was based on a specific set of vowel samples, and factors such as speaker variation, dialectal differences, and coarticulatory effects were not extensively explored. Future research could expand on these aspects by incorporating a larger dataset, analysing dynamic speech contexts, and comparing the acoustic properties of Malayalam vowels with those of other languages.

In conclusion, this study provides a foundational understanding of the acoustic characteristics of Malayalam vowels, contributing to both theoretical and applied linguistics. The insights gained from this research can serve as a valuable resource for further investigations into the phonetics and phonology of Malayalam and other Dravidian languages.

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Breaking Bread, Shattering Chains: Food, Caste, and Resistance in Dalit Women's Narratives

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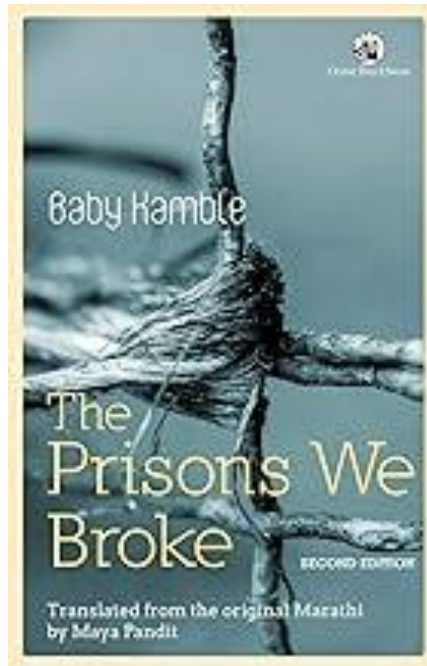
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Abstract

Food in Dalit women's lives is deeply intertwined with caste and gender oppression, as illustrated in the autobiographical narratives of Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* (2018) and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* (2009). These texts expose how caste hierarchies dictate access to food, relegating Dalit women to consuming discarded scraps, coarse grains, and foraged items, while the notion of purity and pollution further marginalizes them. However, food is not merely a site of deprivation but also an instrument of resilience and defiance. The communal preparation and sharing of meals foster solidarity among Dalit women, challenging their systemic exclusion. Moreover, the consumption of 'impure' foods such as beef and dried fish serves as a direct resistance to the so-called upper caste dietary norms. At the same time,

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in order to reclaim their agency, Dalit women dictate their access to food through culinary creativity and collective sustenance. These narratives not only document oppression but also forms a reposition of Dalit food practices as acts of survival, identity, and resistance, challenging dominant caste narratives and reclaiming dignity.

Keywords: Dalit women, food, oppression, *joothan*, class
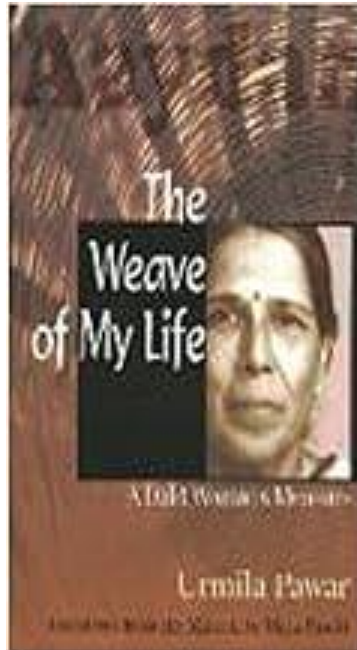
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Introduction

Food apart from being the source of sustenance is also a fundamental element through which cultural power is exercised. From being a genesis of delight, memory and identity formation, food also carries with it generation of pain, trauma, and oppression. The famous Indian political scientist Gopal Guru in "Food as a Metaphor for Cultural Hierarchies," (2009) has navigated a new dimension in Dalit discourse that observes how the freshness and sweetness of cooked food serve as a major criterion in determining its taste and acceptance in Indian culture. It is obvious that freshly prepared food with equally fresh ingredients is always considered of superior taste as compared to stale or leftover food. For many people in India, desserts are intricate dishes meant for the rich as they become "a hegemonic presence in the cultural practices of the poor" according to Guru Gopal.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu says that taste is determined by the social and cultural position from which it emerges. This paper traces the ideological impositions on food in the

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Indian context. These impositions are guided by sociological and cultural norms which are predominantly upper caste Hindu principles. According to the societal norms, the Dalits are supposed to eat the stale and leftover food. Their meals are meant to be spicy to hide the stench of the stale food. It is generally the meat of the dead animal or the *joothan* (leftover or rotten food) which is prescribed as the staple meal of the Dalits which literally means "broken" that is seen in a revolutionary sense, relating to the "material social experience" of marginalization of the culture and stratification of caste (Guru, 2005).

The literal meaning of the Hindi word *joothan*, as Arun Prabha Mukherjee explains, is food left on a plate that is to be thrown in the garbage. But such food would be characterized as *joothan* only if someone else were to eat it. This particular term has connotations of purity and pollution attached to it, as the root word *jootha* literally means "polluted" (Valmiki, 2003). In *The Prisons We Broke*, the Dalit author from Maharashtra, Baby Kamble describes their food intake as largely relying on stale and putrid leftovers, which is also the title of the Valmiki's autobiography, *Joothan* (2003), meaning scraps of food left on a plate, that signifies pollution through the saliva, a concept in Hindu Brahminical culture.

Freshly cooked vegetarian food and food items containing sweet flavours are not only considered to be of superior quality but also pure. The sense of civilised identity is specifically connected with the upper castes, practicing certain food norms where a certain deviation would be considered savage. It also implies that desserts and sweetness in food imply a sense of superiority because it is a strong flavour believed to regulate the mood and supposedly positive factor as per societal norms. Therefore, according to Guru, freshly cooked food and desserts serve as the standard food choices of the society which can only be afforded by the upper class.

The association of supposed sense of civilised identity only to certain food practices emphasise a notion of savage identity that disparages people who do not conform to such standardised food habits due to economic, cultural and social conditions. In the Indian state, Maharashtra, a dessert made of yogurt called *sreekhand* becomes an object of disdain only because it resembles *pithala* which is a kind of curry made with gram flour (Guru, 2009, p. 15). Therefore, society arouses a sense of humiliation for the people who cannot differentiate between the two due to cultural and economic conditions.

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Since food practice is also a determinant aspect of creating caste hierarchies in Indian society, Barthes points out that there is "a feeling of impatience at the sight of the 'naturalness' with which newspapers, art and common sense constantly dress up a reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history" (Barthes, 1972, 10). The majority of Dalit food emerged through the economics of survival, utilizing whatever resources were available. Hence, they are pragmatic choices rather than deliberate. It is the economic distress that forced the Dalit community to survive on the leftover portions of pricey meat, such as offal, blood, or intestines.

According to the Dalit author Omprakash Valmiki, "After working hard day and night, the price of our sweat was just *joothan.* And yet no one had any grudges. Or shame. Or repentance" (Valmiki, 2003, p.11). Ironically most of the basic food produce in India are yielded by the untouchables yet they are the ones who are denied any kind of access to it. They have to satisfy themselves with whatever available to them no matter how much prejudices are associated with their food practices or humiliation they have to face. Dalit food practices are often stigmatised and associated with impurity and pollution. Therefore, the degree of accessibility and control over food reflects one's position within the social hierarchies which highlights the profound disparities that exist (Counihan, 1998).

Mary Douglas' concept of purity and pollution, as outlined in her anthropological work "Purity and Danger" (1966) provides a framework for understanding how social and cultural norms shape perceptions of cleanliness, order, and boundaries within a society. In the Indian context, social boundaries have been traditionally established and upheld by dietary practices, the quality of the food consumed, and the customs surrounding food preparation and consumption.

Foods deemed as beyond human consumption mostly carry associations with the most marginalized groups, the wretched of the earth who are subjected to dehumanization (Shahani, 2020). Dalits are frequently prohibited from using the same utensils or even eating the same food as members of higher castes. This exclusion reinforces their underprivileged status by preventing them from accessing public dining establishments and water sources, marking their seclusion from society. Nevertheless, there is an unintended consequence of these coercive practices: they strengthen the bonds of solidarity and community among members of the same caste or sub-caste through these subjugations and oppressions. Which helps members of a

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certain caste amplify their shared identity and cultural cohesion by adhering to particular food customs, nutritional regulations, and culinary techniques.

The Dalit Cuisine

Karl Marx in *Grundisse* (1993) mentions, "Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail, and tooth" (92). Marx's discussion of primordial hunger is the reflection of the crisis of civilization brought on by tyrannical governments. The impoverished are portrayed as inferior people who require the kindness of the civilized in hierarchical power structures. Levi Strauss (1966) has sought to understand food as a cultural system that incorporates symbols, categories, and meanings.

For Dalits, food is frequently connected to feelings of dearth, embarrassment and deprivation. Their everyday food consumption is procured through minimum wages, lacking proper nutritious supplements (Rege et al, 2009). Therefore, the concept of *joothan* exposes the injustices that are embedded at the core of the caste system where only the upper castes are supposed to enjoy the luxury and abundance of food. It is necessary to mention the Dalit cuisine has emerged out of necessity and starvation which led to the crafting of unique array of gastronomy. Sharmila Rege in "Isn't This Plate Indian?" mentions that eating habits and food choices distinctly define the lines between pure and polluted food, as well as social hierarchies, gender roles, and even the divide between humans and the divine.

At the same time, the types of food that are deemed permitted, tolerated, or mandated—along with the manner in which they are consumed—are largely shaped by societal inequalities related to caste, class, and gender (Rege, 2009, p. 63). Dalit cuisine is a testament of the adeptness shown by the Dalit community to survive on whatever minimum ingredients available to them. Here, the Dalit women play an important part by challenging the societal stereotypes along with upholding their own culinary traditions. Food continues to be a battleground for caste-based discrimination. Dalit women have cultivated a culinary tradition centred on resilience and ingenuity. They transform leftover grains, wild greens, and neglected animal parts into nourishing meals, showcasing sustainable and anti-caste food practices long before contemporary sustainability movements gained popularity. Dalit women always endure

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systemic oppression at the intersection of caste, gender, and economic disparity. Their lived experiences are marked by extreme marginalization, often rendering them invisible in mainstream feminist and social justice movements. Hence, food serves as a lens to observe the stratifications of class, caste, gender, race, and other societal divisions (Probyn, 2000).

This article will analyse two Dalit autobiographies- *The Prisons We Broke* by Baby Kamble and *The Weave of My Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs* by Urmila Pawar through two-fold research objectives, that is to examine how Dalit women's food narratives challenge caste-based culinary hierarchies and to explore how Dalit women redefine their culinary practices as a form of identity and resistance against caste-based discrimination. The study would be guided by Arjun Appadurai's concept of gastro-politics to analyse the social dynamics and power relations revolving around food in the Hindu South Asian societies (*Gastro-politics in Hindu South Asia*, 1981). Appadurai's concept of gastro-politics expands to the conflict and competition over specific cultural or economic resources as it emerges in the social transactions around food (Appadurai, 1981, p. 495). His concept will be used to explores how the ways culinary practices determine gender politics and social hierarchies. He observes how men are the decision makers on everything including the culinary practices while women are associated only with cooking and other household activities requiring physical labour.

Breaking the Shackles in *The Prisons We Broke*

Baby Kamble in her autobiography *The Prisons We Broke*, portrays the oppressive conditions of the Mahar community of Maharashtra, using food as the metaphor to highlight the plight of the community. Food serves as a stark indicator of caste-based oppression. Dalit women are denied access to nutritious and sufficient food, often forced to rely on scraps, coarse grains, and foraged items for sustenance. Kamble describes the precarious ways in which Dalit families acquire food—often through hard labour or scavenging discarded leftovers from upper-caste households. This systemic deprivation underscores how food is weaponized to reinforce caste hierarchies, keeping Dalits in a state of perpetual marginalization.

The notion of purity and pollution further exacerbates food-based discrimination. Upper-caste communities view Dalit food as impure, ensuring that Dalit women remain excluded from public cooking spaces and religious offerings. The Brahmanical notion of purity and pollution dictated every aspect of Dalit lives, especially their relationship with food. Kamble's memoir

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illustrates how the upper castes enforced strict dietary boundaries, refusing to consume anything touched by Dalits. This belief in pollution extended to public spaces—Dalits were not allowed to enter temples or water sources used by the upper castes. Such restrictions ensured that Dalits remained socially and physically isolated, their mere presence deemed 'polluting' by caste Hindus. The regulation of touch and food access here aligns with Appadurai's view of gastro-political governance, where food taboos serve as mechanisms of control as the caste Hindus considered food as a fundamental link between men and gods (Appadurai, 1981, p. 496).

Even in government-led initiatives like temple feasts or school midday meal schemes, Dalit women are either denied the right to cook or their prepared food is rejected by upper-caste individuals. Such practices reveal how food becomes a tool of exclusion, used to maintain caste purity while systematically alienating Dalits. Throughout her book, Kamble employs irony to underscore the harsh realities of food availability for the Mahar community. She sarcastically remarks that they had access to the "best" leftovers, the "best" carcasses, and the "best" opportunities to harvest cactus shrubs. The repeated use of the superlative "best" is a deliberate satirical device, exposing how the Mahar people were systematically denied nutritious food and instead forced to consume what others discarded.

Kamble recounts how the Mahar community would make use of animal intestines, bones, and skin to prepare meals. This was not only an act of survival but also one of innovation, as Dalit women devised ways to make these discarded parts palatable and nutritious. However, the upper-caste Hindus viewed the consumption of meat, particularly beef, as a marker of impurity, further ostracizing Dalits. Here, food choice becomes a battleground of gastro-political contestation, where the imposition of vegetarianism serves as a means of caste domination. Dalit consumption of meat, therefore, becomes an act of defiance against Brahmanical norms. Therefore, "the vaunted Hindu preoccupation with "purity and pollution," with its vast plethora of rules about contact (with their endless permuations of rank, life-stage, context, and medium), can best be seen as an encyclopedic attempt to negotiate these incompatible goals" (Appadurai, 1981, p. 507).

Kamble's narrative brings attention to the severe deprivation of basic necessities, particularly food, among Dalits. Living in extreme poverty, Mahar parents had no choice but to forage for

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cactus pods to feed their starving children, despite the seeds being so tough that they felt like concrete in their stomachs. With no other means of survival, they resorted to consuming carcasses. Kamble paints a grim picture of their desperation, highlighting the tragic reality that the community found relief in the rising death toll of animals during an epidemic, as it meant a temporary increase in food supply as they were given the work of carrying away the carcasses from the localities. Through this portrayal, she critiques the structural violence that normalizes such inhumane living conditions for Dalits. The imagery of the Mahar women as created by the author, rejoicing in such condition, and singing with joy while carrying the carcasses on their heads, drenched with blood is strikingly mortifying- food collected in the worst possible way is making them content. Another significant reference to food in Kamble's book is the mention of *Bhakris*, a staple food among the Mahars. Kamble also highlights how food fosters a sense of community and solidarity. She fondly recalls her grandmother's generosity, as she turned their home into a refuge for the hungry, ensuring that no one went without food. Women from the neighbourhood would come together, sharing *Bhakris* with raw onions. The rhythmic crunching of the hard bread echoed like the roar of a factory machine, emphasizing its toughness. Yet, the shared experience of eating—rooted in companionship and mutual support—offered comfort, momentarily alleviating the pain of persistent hunger. Therefore, Guru Gopal asserts in his article "Dalit Women Talk Differently" (1995) that they have unique issues owing to their social conditions as hunger is their prime enemy while they struggle for sustenance.

A particularly striking aspect of this internalized oppression was the stark gendered disparity in access to food. As the lowest in both caste and gender hierarchies, Mahar women were often forced to beg for a handful of grains. Even during pregnancy, they go through extreme deprivation; many expectant mothers were left with nothing but the starchy water drained from boiling rice to suppress their hunger. In moments of unbearable pain, they would bind their midsections with tattered cloth to numb their empty stomachs. The grim reality Kamble presents is one where Mahar women routinely went to bed starving, victims of a cruel system that denied them even the most basic sustenance. Through this harrowing depiction, she critiques the intersection of caste and gender oppression, revealing how hunger itself became a form of systemic violence against Dalit women. Here Ruth Manorama, a leading advocate of Dalit women in India (2005) rightly points out "the Dalit women have to grapple with the discrimination due to caste hierarchy and untouchability on the one hand and extreme economic

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deprivation and poverty on the other coupled with political, legal and religio-cultural discrimination." The month of *Ashadh* is an integral period for the Mahar community. They share food and "the entire village flock to the temple with varied dishes as offerings to goddess-fried delicacies, curd rice, bhajis cooked with choice spices and *kuwadya*…This food is then divided, for distribution among the Mahars in keeping their status and honour" (Kamble, 2009, p. 29).

Power and gender hierarchy play a vital role in the distribution of food as it is the men and children who receive the greater share of the offerings. Eating meat of dead cattle points out the extreme poverty of the Mahar community as they "considered animal epidemics like diphtheria or dysentery a boon" (Kamble, 2009, p. 85). She narrates the horrific experiences of how the foul-smelling animals, filled with puss and infested with maggots were made edible.

For the Mahars, food is more a symbol of their identity and resistance against oppression than necessity of life. Here, Guru Gopal narrates by using food as the marker of socio-cultural identity of a particular group, scholars argue that "the Mahars became Mahars because they were Mrutahari (those who eat dead animals)" (Guru, 2009, p. 13). Further he added that leaders like Jyotirao Phule and V.R. Shinde considered Mahars as Maha-ari (the great enemy) as viewed by the caste Hindus as their food practices as an identity marker for lower caste.

Sustenance through *The Weave of My Life*

In *The Weave of My Life*, Urmila Pawar vividly recounts a childhood marked by hunger and deprivation, highlighting how the absence of adequate food fostered feelings of inferiority. Much like Baby Kamble's reflections on the struggles of Mahar women, Pawar's autobiography also exposes the dire circumstances of Dalit women, who were often left to survive on scraps or endure prolonged starvation. The intersection of caste and gender oppression is central to her narrative, as she explores how food practices starkly delineate caste hierarchies.

Pawar recalls the glaring disparities in food consumption between upper-caste and Dalit communities. Upper-caste girls would casually discuss delicacies such as *laddoo, modak,* and *karanja*—sweets that remained completely unfamiliar to Dalit children like her. During Holi, upper-caste households, financially well-off, would indulge in lavish meals, feasting on sweet

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chapatis made with molasses and *arhar dal* on the first day, followed by rich, meat-filled bondas the next. In contrast, the Mahars' celebrations were marked by scarcity, with meals consisting of coarse rice and *pithale*, a simple flour-based dish made from *kulith* (horse gram). Occasionally, they supplemented their diet with backyard-grown leafy vegetables. On other days, they relied on *bhakris* made from *milo* (red jowar) or even husk, which was so rough that swallowing it became an ordeal.

Pawar highlights the stark contrast in food consumption between upper-caste and Dalit communities. While upper-caste girls casually spoke of sweets like laddoo, modak, and karanja—treats that Dalit children had never even seen—festival meals further underscored this disparity. During Holi, wealthier upper-caste families relished extravagant feasts, beginning with sweet chapatis made from molasses and *arhar* dal, followed by hearty, meat-stuffed bondas. In stark contrast, the Mahars' celebrations were marked by scarcity, with meals comprising coarse rice and pithale, a simple dish made from kulith (horse gram) flour. Occasionally, they managed to include homegrown leafy vegetables. Sometimes their diet also depended on bhakris made from milo (red jowar) or even husk, which was so coarse that eating it was a struggle.

She remembers with greater joy a dish called katyacha motla, prepared from a little fish that is of finger-length. These little river fish after being carefully cleaned, a paste made of amsul (dried kokum), turmeric, oil, and salt were applied and prepared for cooking. Their culinary practices frequently frequently included fishes like mushi, wagala, and shingta, which are thick-skinned and foul-smelling that people from higher castes tend to avoid. Rice was the major ingredient in their not so socially accepted cuisine, which persisted even during festivities.

Despite such hardship, Pawar finds moments of joy in their modest meals. She fondly recalls the rare treat of eating *bhakris* with dried fish, which, though inexpensive, brought flavor and satisfaction when fried with onions, red chili powder, and salt. She also describes the poor women who travelled to Ratnagiri to sell mangoes, jackfruit, and firewood, making time to bake such fish along the way. Through these accounts, Pawar not only exposes the stark inequalities in food access but also emphasizes the resilience and resourcefulness of Dalit women, who found ways to create sustenance and community despite systemic deprivation. Her intricate weaving of Mahar identity through food reflects the deep-rooted caste, class, and

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gender-based subjugation. Expensive fish like *surmai* and *pomfret*, along with sweets such as *halwa*, were luxuries that remained out of reach for her community. Her autobiography is rich with memories of food and culinary practices that shaped her childhood and left a lasting imprint on her life.

Even in the face of such adversity, Pawar finds happiness in their simple meals. She remembers the peculiar pleasure of eating bhakris with dried fish, which, despite being cheap, enhanced gustatory and satisfaction when fried with salt, onions, and red chili powder. She also talks about the impoverished woman who had time to bake these fish while traveling to Ratnagiri to sell firewood, jackfruit, and mangoes. In addition to highlighting the glaring disparities in food access, Pawar's testimonies highlight the tenacity and creativity of Dalit women, who managed to establish communities and a means of sustenance in the face of prevailing injustice. The profound caste, class, and gender-based oppression is reflected in her elaborate culinary weaving of Mahar identity. Sweets like halwa and fancy fishes like surmai and pomfret were indulgences that her community could not afford. The memories of food and culinary practices of her early years have an intense effect on her life autobiography that also established her identity.

Pawar also mentions several delicacies that were prepared to celebrate festivities, desserts made of rice flour, such as *kheer*—a sweet preparation made with rice flour, molasses, and coconut—and *gharge*, a dish combining rice flour with shredded cucumber and a touch of oil. Ganapati festival is an integral part of their culture, her family would make *modak*, a traditional sweet dumpling of rice flour filled with molasses and coconut for the occasion. "Rice was our staple food. Special dishes for festivals were made from rice flour. Sweet kheer was made using rice flour cooked with molasses and coconut, *gharge* with rice flour mixed with shredded cucumber and baked with a little oil, and, for the famous Ganapati festival, *modak* with rice flour cooked with molasses and coconut! In our community, my mother was the only one who could make *modak* well. To do so, it is necessary to cook rice flour and knead it well. Small balls of cooked flour have to be flattened into small round shapes called puri. The puri has to be rolled in a round shape, with a spoonful of sweet filling inside made from coconut and molasses. Folding the puri into petal-like shapes to be joined at the end like a crown, without spilling the filling inside, is an art by itself! It is not at all an easy dish to make, but Aaye had mastered the art." (Pawar, 2009, p. 99-100).

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Another particularly cherished memory of gastronomic pleasure is of *bhanore*, a cake-like treat her mother prepared for festive occasions or as a gift for relatives. It was made by mixing molasses, coconut, and turmeric with thick rice flour, then cooking the mixture in an oil-coated pot placed over hot coal. "Aaye used to make a sweet dish called *bhanore* either at festive times or as a gift for relatives. This was a favorite dish of mine. It tasted like cake and was easy to make" (Pawar, 2009, p.100-101).

Cowan links sweet tastes with sweet feminine dispositions and salty ones with male dispositions, and power with pleasure, suggesting the difficulty of contesting such formulations both because of their "naturalness" and their seeming "triviality" (Cowan, 1991, p. 181). These rare moments of gustatory pleasure serve as a cherished memory that adds a different dimension to Pawar's autobiography, narrating how ordinary food could have a tantelising experience for the tastebuds.

Much like Baby Kamble's *The Prison We Broke*, Pawar's *The Weave of My Life* connects food with the lived experiences of the Mahar community, underscoring how caste hierarchy dictated not only access to resources but also the very nature of sustenance. Through these recollections, Pawar highlights the resilience of Dalit women, who, despite deprivation, preserved culinary traditions that spoke to both their struggles and their unyielding spirit.

Appadurai's gastro-politics highlights how food is an arena where social power is negotiated and contested. In Pawar's memoir, food is emblematic of oppression, with Dalits being forced to consume discarded or inferior foodstuffs due to their marginalized position. The act of preparing and consuming meat, for instance, often marks a boundary between the Dalit and upper-caste communities, reinforcing social stratification. The memoir underscores how food-related taboos and prohibitions serve as mechanisms of social control, restricting Dalit access to resources and reinforcing their 'untouchability' (Appadurai, 1981, p. 497)

At the same time, Dalit food practices become a form of cultural assertion and resistance. By embracing and celebrating their culinary traditions, Dalit communities reclaim agency over their identities. This counters the Brahminical purity-pollution dichotomy that seeks to stigmatize their diets. Pawar's narrative does not merely present food as a site of deprivation

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but also as a means of community building and resilience, where shared meals serve as acts of solidarity and resistance against caste-based exclusion.

Pawar documents how Dalit households are divided by gender in terms of food consumption and financial duties. A large percentage of Dalit men's earnings are spent on alcohol, and many of them neglect to take financial responsibility for their own households. Additionally, more nutritious foods are separately prepared for the male family members, demonstrating the gendered differences in food intake in the home. As Appadurai's gastro-politics reflects in South Asian cultures, the complex regulations around food are culturally structured attempts to counteract the way that food tends to homogenize interpersonal relationships. These guidelines control interactions among castes, forbid certain class and caste to consume specific foods, limit the use of food in particular situations, and specify how food should be prepared, served and consumed by different individuals (Appadurai, 1981, p. 507).

Pawar's family relied on a simple diet consisting of coarse rice, gram flour curry (*pithale*), leafy vegetables, bread (*bhakri*) made from millet or husk, and small dried fish seasoned with onions, red chili powder, and salt as they faced economic hardships after her father's death. The author's portrayal of Mahar women relying on leftovers or going hungry underscores the systemic injustices perpetuated against Dalit communities, especially Dalit women who are victims of both casteism and sexism.

The intersectionality of caste and gender oppression is starkly evident in her narrative, highlighting how these women faced multiple layers of discrimination and deprivation. The detailed account of their food serves as a metaphor for survival, cultural identity, and the everyday resistance against the socio-economic challenges imposed by their lower caste status. Mahar women faced challenges in accessing nutritious food, as evidenced by their consumption of dry bread and cheap, roasted fish before embarking on strenuous tasks like climbing uphills from the morning market. This indicates a lack of time and resources to adequately nourish themselves, prioritizing the needs of their children over their own. Pawar elaborates on how Mahar women, in the absence of their menfolk, resorted to consuming the leftover stock used by the affluent to boil their fish.

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Even certain dishes causing diseases such as diarrhoea were consumed by women. Pawar explains the preparation of one such dish, "The rich stored the flesh of *sode*, *tisrya*, or mule; poor people stored the water in which these fish were boiled. The stock was boiled till it became a thick-like sauce and was then stored in bottles. This was called *kaat*." (Pawar, 2009, p. 100). The women cooks this with chili powder and salt to make a dish which is called *saar*. Pawar describes a number of situations in which food causes extreme humiliation and embarrassment in public settings. For Dalits in particular, caste stereotypes and constraints weigh heavily on the act of eating. The upper castes often equate the eating postures of Dalits to defecating, "as if they were about to shit" (Pawar, 2009, p. 20). This comparison not only dehumanizes but also serves to reinforce caste hierarchies, equating Dalit bodies with impurity and unworthiness.

There is an instance mentioned in the autobiography where a Dalit woman from the Mahar community is subjected to violence at the hands of *Daldin* fisherwomen "for trying to buy fish from them" (Pawar, 2009, p. 80). Here, the purchase of fish represents the complex interactions across caste boundaries that goes beyond an ordinary economic transaction which reflects the institutionalized and systemic prejudice that controls all facets of life, including what can be eaten, who can eat it, and where it can be eaten. The dehumanisation of Dalits at the hands of the upper castes was not only restricted at to their dietary practices but also to their innate human response to food like hunger and appetite. Pawar recounts an instance from her school days where in a gathering, she was mentally harassed for her appetite. She narrates with horrification that in the gathering she was not allowed to be involved with any culinary preparations, "They did not allow me to touch anything, though we all ate together. I really enjoyed the meal. The next day, I was horrified to hear that my eating had become the hottest topic for juicy gossip. Girls were whispering in groups about how much I had eaten" (Pawar, 2009, p. 110). This humiliation she went through is representative of the more extensive dehumanization Dalits encounter, where their fundamental desires and basic requirements are ridiculed and treated with contempt, enforcing their exclusion and reinforcing the cruel hierarchies that govern societal interactions.

The hunger of Dalits is reflected as "monstrous" by the society not only because of their culinary practices but also because of their lack of dignity, respect, and humanity. Portraying them as inherently greedy and lacking in self-control and comparing them to animals like

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"goats" or "monsters" (Pawar, 2009, p. 102) dehumanizes them and reinforces the perception of their inferior status in society. Pawar's unwillingness to bring a lunchbox to school effectively demonstrates how caste, class, and food are intertwined, transforming a routine school activity as a reflection of social hierarchy. This kind of notion is reflected in the chapter "Bizarre Foods: Food, Filth, and the Foreign in the Culinary Contact Zone," where Gitanjali Shahani writes, "In the contact zone, particularly, food is frequently the object of disgust precisely because it is the marker of sameness and difference (Shahani, 2020, p. 118).Pawar feels embarrassed of her tiffin not because of the food but because of what it represents to the mainstream society- poverty, caste, and the prejudices attached to it. She mentions that she was so embarrassed, therefore, "would not even talk about it with her classmates" (Pawar 2009, 101). The public space like school which should have been a juncture of knowledge and discipline, becomes a space of vulnerability, and potential humiliation, where caste and economic disparities are highlighted.

By examining the dynamics of food taboos, Mary Douglas (1966) highlights how food practices become powerful symbols of social identity and hierarchy in caste-based societies. These taboos uphold caste-based inequality and discrimination by dictating social interactions and relationships in addition to food choices. Even the most basic gestures of hospitality and generosity are corrupted by caste-based prejudices, as Pawar's experience illustrates in the story, highlighting the pervasive stereotypes and social exclusion Dalits encounter.

During the celebration of Pawar's younger daughter, Manini's birthday, she invited her friend Kishori and her brother for the cake cutting ceremony. Both of them came, ate the cake and gleefully went home, celebrating the birthday. On reaching home Kishori's brother told their mother that he had seen the photographs of Buddha and Ambedkar at the author's home. This made the woman to rush to Pawar's home and without even stepping inside, she started hurling abuses to the, "We did not know that you belonged to this particular caste! That is why I sent my children to you. From now on, don't give my daughter anything to eat if she comes to your house. We are Marathas. We cannot eat with you. (Pawar, 2009, p. 202). Kishori's mother's outright refusal to allow her daughter to eat anything given by Urmila emphasizes the deep-seated beliefs in purity and pollution that underpin caste-based discrimination. The rejection and disdain faced by Urmila illustrate how food practices become potent symbols of Dalit identity and the pervasive discrimination faced by Dalit communities. The blatant reluctance

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of Kishori's mother to let her daughter consume anything that Pawar gave her highlights the ingrained notions of contamination and purity that serve as the foundation for discrimination based on caste. This rejection and contempt serve as an example of how food customs serve as powerful markers of Dalit identity and the widespread prejudice that Dalit people have to negotiate with.

Conclusion

Food plays a crucial role in shaping Dalit identity, serving as a site of both oppression and resistance. The food choices, consumption practices, and culinary traditions of Dalits reflect their historical experiences of caste-based discrimination. The narratives of Baby Kamble and Urmila Pawar reveal the deep entanglement of food with caste, gender, and systemic oppression. Their autobiographical accounts illustrate how food is not merely a source of sustenance but a site of exclusion, resilience, and defiance. Denied access to nutritious food, Dalit women have historically been forced to survive on discarded leftovers, coarse grains, and foraged items—an enduring symbol of caste-based deprivation. The rigid hierarchies of purity and pollution further reinforce their marginalization, positioning their cuisine as inferior and their food practices as impure.

However, food in these narratives is also a powerful instrument of survival and solidarity. The communal preparation and sharing of meals among Dalit women emerge as acts of defiance against a system that seeks to isolate them. The consumption of foods deemed impure by upper-caste norms—such as beef, dried fish, and foraged greens—represents not just an act of necessity but a deliberate assertion of identity against Brahminical dietary hegemony. In their kitchens and communal spaces, Dalit women transform food from a marker of oppression into an expression of resilience and agency.

The double burden of caste and gender further compounds Dalit women's struggles. Their access to food is not only dictated by caste hierarchy but also by patriarchal norms within their own community. Often the last to eat, they are denied even the most basic nourishment, their hunger silenced by social expectations and economic hardship. The heartbreaking realities of pregnant women subsisting on rice water or tying cloth around their stomachs to suppress hunger reflect the depth of their suffering. Yet, their ability to create sustenance out of scarcity, to preserve culinary traditions, and to sustain each other through collective struggle speaks to their enduring strength.

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Through their memoirs, Kamble and Pawar do more than document deprivation—they reclaim the dignity of Dalit women in the politics of food. By giving voice to their experiences, they challenge dominant narratives that erase or stigmatize Dalit food cultures. Their writings assert that food, far from being a passive reflection of caste oppression, is also an active site of resistance, identity, and communal resilience. In doing so, they reshape the discourse around caste and food, ensuring that the struggles and strength of Dalit women are neither forgotten nor ignored.

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Laryngeal and Supralaryngeal Manifestations of the Speech of Stutterers - A Spectrographic Study

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Abstract

Stuttering is a communication disorder affecting the fluency of speech. The cause of stuttering has been debated for many years and has been attributed to psychological, neurophysiological (spasticity), genetics, and environmental factors. The effect of stuttering is multifaceted. There can be incoordination /spasm /tension in the muscles of the subsystems of speech production like respiratory, laryngeal, and articulatory, often accompanied by anxiety, which can vary from patient to patient.

The aim of the study was to check whether these are reflected in the spectrographic analysis of the speech of the stutterers.

Methodology

This observational study consisted of 10 severe stutterers between the age range of 15 to 25 years and 10 normal subjects matched for age and sex.

The following acoustic parameters were extracted from the spectrogram.

1.   Formant frequencies - F1, F2, and F3

2.   Transition duration: (Fl, F2)

3.   Voice onset time

Results

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The results of our study revealed that stutterers differed significantly from nonstutterers in terms of the spectrographic parameters of transition duration and Voice onset time. There was no significant difference between stutterers and normal subjects for Formant frequency (Fl, F2, and F3).

Conclusion

The results showing no significant difference in formant frequencies but a significant difference in formant transition between stutterers and nonstutterers suggests that the stutterers have normal vocal tract, but abnormal vocal tract adjustments occur during formant transitions from one speech sound to the next.

Keywords: Stuttering, spectrogram, laryngeal and supralaryngeal mechanism

Stuttering is a communication disorder affecting speech fluency characterized by involuntary repetition or prolongation of sounds, syllables, or words or by involuntary hesitation or pauses that disrupt the smooth, rhythmic flow of speech (ICD-11; World Health Organization, WHO, 2022). (1) Though the exact cause of stuttering is unknown, psychological (logophobia – fear of speaking), neurophysiological (spasticity), genetics, and the environment have been suggested to be contributing factors. (2–8)

The effect of stuttering is multifaceted. There can be incoordination /spasm /tension in the muscles of the subsystems of speech production like respiratory, laryngeal, and articulatory, often accompanied by anxiety, which can vary from patient to patient.

The aim of the study was to check whether these are reflected in the spectrographic analysis of the speech of the stutterers. A spectrogram is a three-dimensional visual representation of the distribution of acoustic energy across frequencies and over time; the vertical axis is frequency, the horizontal axis is time, and amplitude is shown on a grey scale.

Objectives of the study

To do a spectrographic analysis of the speech of the stutterers.

Methodology

Participants

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This observational study consisted of 10 severe stutterers diagnosed based on stuttering severity instrument (9)between the age range of 15 to 25 years and 10 normal subjects matched for age and sex. The normal subjects had no history of speech difficulty.

Consents were taken concerning the participation in the study after explaining the details of the study.

Procedure

The subjects were seated comfortably in a sound-treated recording room with an average noise level of around 40 dB. The reading of the Rainbow Passage (9) by the subjects was audio recorded using a digital recorder (Sony IC Recorder, ICD-PX440). It is a standard oral reading passage used by speech-language pathologists. The microphone was held approximately 10 cm from the mouth of the subjects during the recording. The speech samples were recorded at a sampling rate of 44,100 Hz and with 16-bit quantization. The Vaghmi software (Speech and Voice Systems, Bangalore, India) was used to analyze data, which is an indigenous software developed for the objective analysis of speech and Voice.

The following acoustic parameters were extracted from the spectrogram.

1.   Formant frequencies - F1, F2, and F3

2.   Transition duration: (Fl, F2)

3.   Voice onset time

The formants F1, F2, and F3 of the vowels "a," "I," "e," u," and "o" were extracted from the words "end," "gold," "prism," "arch" and "beautiful" of the reading sample of the rainbow passage. The voice onset time of "p," "t," "k," "b," "d," "g" were extracted from the words "path," "take," "above," "division" and "gold."The visual display of the speech was correlated with the auditory form of the sample, and the words were identified and selected.

1. Formant frequencies - F1, F2, and F3: Midpoint of the visible dark energy bands appropriate to the first three vowel resonances.

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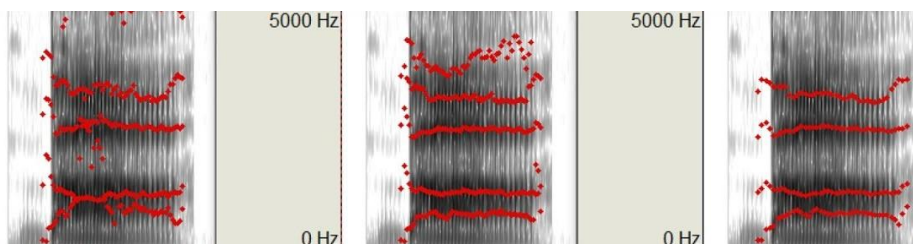
Fig 1. Formant frequencies

2. Transition duration: (Fl, F2) - Time between the (vowel onset) onset of transition of formant and the termination of the transition. Transition in the formant frequency reflects the change in the shape and, in turn, the resonance of the vocal tract. Vowel onset is defined as the first glottal pulse after the release burst of the preceding stop consonant. (10)
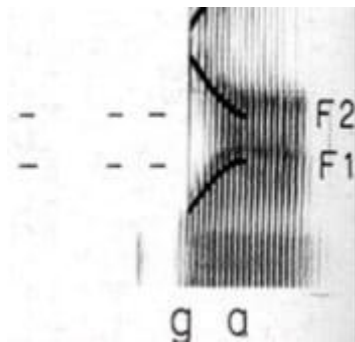
Fig 2. Transition duration of Formant frequencies

3. Voice onset time: Voice onset time is the duration between the burst and the subsequent onset of voicing of the following vowel.
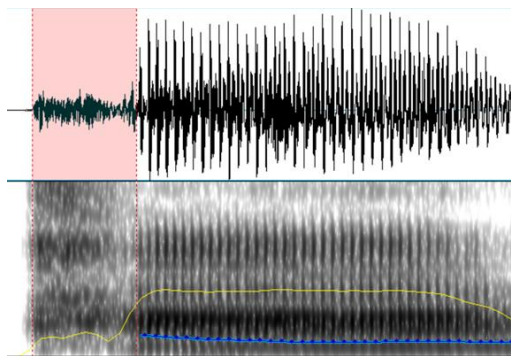
Fig 3. Voice onset time

Statistical Analysis

Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed ranks test was done to find out the significant difference between stutterers and nonstutterers.

Results

The mean and standard deviation of the formant frequencies F1, F2, and F3 for the vowels "a,"" i,"" e," "u," and "o" were calculated for both stutterers and normal subjects (Table 1). The

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analysis of variance indicated no significant difference between stutterers and normal subjects. (Table2)

Forman t frequencies -Normals			Formant frequencies -stutterers	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
F1 for a	927.22	10.75	758.98	54.28
F2 for a	1072.0	21.96	1139.12	166.74
F3 for a	2442.2	7.05	2498.72	200.3
F1 for e	496.06	39.1	442.92	30.74
F2 for e	1762.2	212.4	1618.40	486.3
F3 for e	2553.8	344.4	2650.00	199.08
F1 for i	271.54	15. 55	265.6	36.46
F2 for i	2183.8	75.49	2338.36	93.3
F3 for i	2816	144.7	2952.6	381.28
F1 for o	485	11.4	479.72	39.93
F2 for o	937.18	25.52	955.2	43.21
F3 for o	1752	131.62	1780.2	203.39
F1 for u	335.76	25.42	333.04	20.24
F2 for u	940.1	30.09	991.26	93.31
F3 for u	2163.54	166.76	**2239.54**	**226.11**

Table 1. Showing Mean and Standard Deviation of Formant Frequencies

Format frequencies (Fl)

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	Z valu e	P valu e	Significanc e
a	-0.5002	0.6742	-
i	-0.4045	0.6858	-
e	-0.0796	-1.7529	-
u	-0.1348	0.8927	-
0	-0.4045	0.6858	-
Formant Frequencies (F2)			
a	-0.4045	0.6858	-
i	-0.1348	0.8927	-
e	-0.0431	2.0226	-
u	-0.4045	0.688	-
0	-0.0796	1.7529	-
Formant Frequencies (F3)			
a	-0.4045	0.6858	-
i	-0.1348	0.8927	-
e	-0.5002	0.6742	-
u	-0.4045	0.6858	-
0	-0.1348	0.8927	-

Table 2. Comparison of stutterers and nonstutterers in terms of formant frequencies using Willcoxin' s matched pair s test.

The mean and standard deviation of the transition duration of the formant frequencies F1 and F2 for the vowels "a,"" i,"" e," "u," and "o" were calculated for both stutterers and normal subjects (Table 3). The analysis of variance indicated significant differences between stutterers and normal subjects. (Table 4)

Transition duration- Normals		Transition duration -stutterers	
Mean	SD	Mean	SD

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F1 for a	41	9.48	95.8	6.05
F2 for a	53.8	12.7	128.6	8 .98
F1 for e	40.4	2.7	198.2	9.49
F2 for e	29.9	3.7	117.8	5.6
F1 for i	48.8	4.97	95.4	4.87
F2 for i	55.4	4.83	120.6	3.71
F1 for o	23.4	3.97	59	6.24
F2 for o	39.4	3.8	62	5.8
F1 for u	21.8	16. 5	106	36.03
F2 for u	31	4.3	90	4.5

Table 3. Showing transition duration (Mean and Standard Deviation)

Transition duration (Fl)	Z valu e	P value	Significance e
a	-2.0226	0.0431	+
i	-2.0319	0.0422	+
e	-2.0226	0.0431	+
u	-2.0226	0.0431	+
0	-2.0412	0.0412	+
Transitio n duration n (F2)			
a	-2.0226	0.0431	+
i	-2.0226	0.0431	+
e	-2.0226	0.0431	+

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	Z value	P value	Significance
u	-2.0226	0.0431	+
o	-2.0226	0.0431	+

Table 4: Comparison of stutterers and nonstutterers in terms of transition durations using Willcoxin's matched pairs test.

The voice onset time values for "p," t," k," "b," "d," and "g" were calculated for both stutterers and normal subjects. The voice onset time values were higher for the stutterers than for normal subjects. The mean and standard deviation are given in Table 5. The analysis of variance indicated significant differences between stutterers and normal subjects. (Table 6)

	VOT - Normals		VOT - stutterers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
VOT 'p'	11.55	4. 51	96.13	3.24
VOT 't '	15.29	4.21	41.7	18 .36
VOT 'k'	25.78	3.20	66.59	2.70
VOT 'b'	-89.42	1.448	-104.82	3.94
VOT 'd'	-94.54	4.32	-125.48	2 .43
VOT 'g'	-87.89	1.511	-90.34	4.076

Table 5 shows the Mean and Standard Deviation for VOT.

	Z value	P value	Significance
P	-2.0226	0.0431	+
t	-1.7529	0.0796	+
k	-2.0226	0.0431	+
b	-2.0226	0.0431	+
d	-2.0226	0.0431	+
g	-1.2136	0.2249	+

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Table 6. Comparison of stutterers and nonstutterers in terms of VOT using Willcoxin's matched pair s test.

Discussion

There was no significant difference in formant frequencies but a significant difference in formant transition between stutterers and nonstutterers. The vocal cord vibrations produce a complex periodic wave (pressure fluctuation) whose spectrum contains energy at the fundamental frequency and multiples of the fundamental frequency called harmonics. The vocal tract acts as a filter. The complex periodic waves produced by the vocal cords are filtered by the resonance characteristics of the vocal tract, giving rise to formant frequencies, which appear as a frequency peak in the voice spectrum.

Formant frequencies reflect the filter function of the vocal tract. The column of air in the vocal tract has specific natural modes of vibration or resonances based on its size and shape, and hence, the length and shape of the vocal tract determine the formant frequencies of speech sounds. The formant frequency (steady-state) reflects a fixed vocal tract posture specific to the vowel. (9). The formant transition reflects changes in vocal tract shape (11). The results showing no significant difference in formant frequencies but a significant difference in formant transition between stutterers and nonstutterers suggests that the stutterers have normal vocal tract, but abnormal vocal tract adjustments occur during formant transitions from one speech sound to the next.

There was a significant difference in Voice onset time between stutterers and nonstutterers. Voice Onset Time (VOT) is the temporal relationship (duration) between the release of a plosive and the beginning of vocal fold vibration, measured in milliseconds(12). This reflects the physiological incapability for the movement of vocal cords from the abducted position to the adducted position and also the increased time taken by the articulators from the placement for production of "stops/ plosive" to the position of vowel "a" in stutterers. Ward's study on three stuttering subjects showed that voice-onset time (VOT) in the fluent utterances of stuttered speech is slower than those of their normal-speaking peers. (13) .It has been reported that stutterers produced, even during nonstuttering periods, an enhanced variation of voice onset time and an increased variability for the duration of phonation (14).

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Our results agree with the theories of Yates and Arnott, who wrote that the common cause of stuttering is the spasmodic interruption in the glottis, affecting all the articulations. (15–17).

Conclusion

The results of our study revealed that stutterers differed significantly from nonstutterers in terms of the spectrographic parameters of transition duration and Voice onset time. There was no significant difference between stutterers and normal subjects for Formant frequency (Fl, F2, and F3).

The results showing no significant difference in formant frequencies but a significant difference in formant transition between stutterers and nonstutterers suggests that the stutterers have normal vocal tract, but abnormal vocal tract adjustments occur during formant transitions from one speech sound to the next.

The above findings indicate that the laryngeal and supralaryngeal mechanisms during speech are different for stutterers compared to those of nonstutterers. Whether these differences in laryngeal and supralaryngeal mechanisms can be attributed as a cause for stuttering or as an effect of stuttering needs further research.

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Phonological Adaptations of Bangla Words in Chakma

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Abstract

This paper examines the phonological changes in the words from Bangla to Chakma. Chakma is considered to be heavily influenced by Bangla. The origin and advent of this language are controversial with no concrete proof. Scholars over time have categorised them as a dialect or a sub-dialect of Bangla. This paper is not further research as to whether or not this categorisation holds to the point but rather it has tried to capture the phonological changes taking place between the root words of the two languages. The processes involved in the phonological changes include: voicing, gemination, monothongization, fricativization, assimilation, cluster simplification, vowel harmony, de-fricativization, allophonic changes, and free variation, metathesis, and de-aspiration. This paper's analysis of sound changes sheds light on the intricate linguistic connection between Chakma and Bangla, revealing the substantial influence of Bangla on Chakma's vocabulary and phonology. The study's findings contribute to the broader discourse on language contact, linguistic identity, and the classification of Chakma within the Indo-Aryan language family in the conclusory note. Additionally, the research proposes potential avenues for future investigation into the linguistic dynamics of South Asia.

Keywords: Chakma Language, Bengali Influence, Phonological Processes, Language Contact, Linguistic Borrowing, Indo-Aryan Languages, Language Evolution, Multilingualism.

1. Introduction

The advent and origin of Chakma have no recorded history of their own. According to the 2011 Census of India, there are 2,28,281 Chakma speakers dwelling in India out of which 175 are found in West Bengal, 47,073 in Arunachal Pradesh, 92,850 in Mizoram, 84,269 in Tripura, 3,166 in Assam, 159 in Meghalaya, and 103 in NCT of Delhi. Besides India, Chakma speakers

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are also found in the Chittagong hill tract of Bangladesh. The Census of India categorises Chakma as a mother tongue under the Bengali language. Grierson (1903) has classified Chakma as a sub-dialect of the Bengali language which is seconded by Chatterjee (1967) in his letter to S.P. Talukdar (1994) which he has in his book.

There is a scholarly belief that the Chakmas originally belonged to the Sakya Dynasty and in the urge to spread Buddhism, they migrated to the Arakans. There is a certainty of their long history of migration which makes it difficult to achieve the original history except for the existing folklore and oral traditions which give a sketchy idea without concrete shreds of evidence. All these years of migration have made immense impacts on Chakma as a language. From the Arakans, they next moved to the Chittagong hill tract and from Chittagong to Rangamati. It was then they were believed to be introduced to the Bengali language. They started their formal education and daily survival exposure in Bengali.

All these years of migration and the direct impact of the Bengali language influenced Chakma as a language. The semantics and lexicon of the language are influenced largely by Bengali. The geographical area and contact with the Bengali language profoundly impact the language so much that linguists consider them as a dialect or variant of the Bengali language. There are considerable sound changes from Bengali to Chakma because Bangla has influenced the Chakma words. The borrowed words have undergone considerable phonemic changes through the processes of voicing, gemination, fricativization, assimilation, etc. A detailed analysis of those sound changes has been provided in this paper.

The impact of Bengali on Chakma can be observed in the phonological transformations that occur in Chakma words borrowed from Bengali. These transformations encompass processes such as voicing, gemination, fricativization, assimilation, vowel harmony, de-fricativization, allophonic changes, free variation, metathesis, and de-aspiration. This study aims to provide a comprehensive examination of these phonological changes, contributing to a better understanding of the linguistic relationship between Chakma and Bengali. Although this study does not seek to settle the debate over whether Chakma is a dialect of Bengali or a distinct language, it does offer valuable insights into the phonological processes that occur in the adaptation of Bengali words into Chakma.

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The influence of Bengali on Chakma is particularly pronounced in the realm of vocabulary and phonology. Chakma has borrowed extensively from Bengali, not only in terms of lexical items but also in the phonological processes that govern the language. This influence is visible in various phonological changes such as voicing, gemination, fricativization, assimilation, vowel harmony, de-fricativization, allophonic changes, free variation, metathesis, and de-aspiration, which occur when Bengali words are adopted into Chakma. The borrowed words often undergo systematic changes to fit the phonological structure of Chakma, resulting in a unique set of adaptations that distinguish the Chakma versions of these words from their Bengali originals.

The impact of Bengali on the colloquial speech of Chakma speakers is substantial. The everyday speech of Chakma speakers, known as colloquial Chakma, is heavily influenced by Bengali, especially in regions where the two languages are spoken together. This influence extends to not just vocabulary but also pronunciation and syntactic structures. As a result, many Chakma speakers have adopted Bengali colloquial terms into their daily speech, making it more challenging to answer the debate or whether or not Chakma is a mother tongue of Bangla. The aim of this study is to provide a valuable addition to the ongoing conversation about the classification of Chakma and to shed light on the broader language contact issues in South Asia by critically examining these phonological processes.

The relationship between Chakma and Bengali is complex and intricate, highlighting the intricacies of language evolution in a multilingual area. This raises significant questions about linguistic identity, the manner in which languages change, and the ways in which they influence each other as a result of sustained contact. This study's results will deepen our comprehension of the Chakma language and shed light on the broader phenomenon of language change in contact situations, especially in Indo-Aryan languages.

1.2. Literature Review

For years, scholars have been intrigued by the linguistic link between Chakma and Bangla, debating whether Chakma is a dialect or sub-dialect of Bangla. This debate dates back to early studies, notably Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1903), which classified Chakma as a Bengali sub-dialect. Chatterjee (1967) supported Grierson's view in his correspondence with S.P. Talukdar (1994). Talukdar also explored this issue in his research on the Chakma language.

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The linguistic identity of Chakma is more intricate, particularly considering the long-term interaction between Chakma and Bangla. Scholars such as Bhattacharyya (2004) have examined Chakma from sociolinguistic and phonological angles, emphasising how migration and historical contact with Bengali speakers have influenced the Chakma language. The extensive borrowing from Bangla has profoundly affected Chakma's lexicon and sound system, prompting some linguists to contend that Chakma should be classified as a separate language within the Indo-Aryan family, rather than a dialect.

Studies in contact linguistics, exemplified by Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) investigation into the evolution and mutual influence of languages in contact scenarios, offer a theoretical framework for comprehending the alterations observed in Chakma as a result of its interaction with Bengali. The work of Thomason and Kaufman underscores the importance of language contact in driving phonological, lexical, and syntactic modifications, which is pertinent to Chakma's extensive adoption of elements from Bangla.

Earlier research in the field, including Hock and Joseph's (2009) examination of historical and comparative linguistics, provides valuable perspectives on the phonological alterations that transpire when languages interact. Similarly, Labov's (1994) theories on linguistic change offer essential understanding of the internal elements that can shape the adaptation of borrowed words, a phenomenon observed in the relationship between Chakma and Bangla languages.

Additionally, Mishra's (2009) study on the phonological aspects of loanwords in Khasi offers a comparable instance of phonological borrowing within the South Asian linguistic landscape. His observations regarding how Khasi has incorporated words from surrounding languages mirror the phonological shifts observed in Chakma, particularly with respect to fricativization and vowel harmony processes.

Complementing these investigations, Ganguly and Talukdar (1996) offer a linguistic analysis of Chakma, emphasising its distinctive characteristics within the Indo-Aryan language group. Their research enhances the broader discussion on language interaction, shedding light on the sociolinguistic consequences of Chakma's contact with Bangla.

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The research conducted by Masica (1991) on Indo-Aryan languages provides crucial background for comprehending the broader categorisation of Chakma. Although Masica's classification system is based on structural characteristics, this study's emphasis on phonological adaptation introduces fresh evidence that may challenge the current classification of Chakma. This new perspective suggests that Chakma should be considered a separate linguistic entity rather than merely a sub-dialect of Bangla.

This study expands upon previous research by providing an in-depth examination of phonological mechanisms, including voicing, gemination, fricativization, and vowel harmony, which have influenced the incorporation of Bangla words into Chakma. The research's focus on phonological transformations complements existing work in contact linguistics, such as Fishman's (2000) investigation of language shift, which is particularly pertinent to comprehending the sociolinguistic aspects of Chakma's lexical borrowing from Bangla.

The scholarly discourse on the phonological adaptation of Bangla words in Chakma encompasses various key themes, including linguistic borrowing, language contact, and the ongoing debate regarding dialect versus language classification. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a phonological examination of Bangla word integration into Chakma. Additionally, it paves the way for future investigations, particularly in areas such as syntactic borrowing, the effects of language shift, and the broader categorisation of Chakma within the Indo-Aryan language family. Although substantial research has been conducted on the Chakma language, gaps in the literature persist, especially concerning its status as a dialect or distinct language. This investigation suggests that sociolinguistic factors, including urbanisation and bilingualism, play a pivotal role in Chakma's evolution, warranting further exploration of the dynamics.

1.3. Research Methodology

This research employs a descriptive and comparative methodology to investigate the phonological changes that have occurred in Chakma due to its interaction with Bengali. The study is underpinned by the theoretical framework of contact linguistics, which explores the ways in which languages impact each other when they have sustained contact. This approach is particularly useful for examining the relationship between Chakma and Bengali, given the historical and sociolinguistic context in which these languages have intermingled.

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The main source of data for this research was gathered from native Chakma speakers who reside in different regions of India, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura, and West Bengal, where a substantial number of Chakma speakers reside. These individuals gave us a collection of Chakma words that have been borrowed from Bengali. This corpus was then examined to detect and classify the phonological changes that have taken place during the shift from Bengali to Chakma. The study concentrated on recognizing sound change patterns, such as voicing, gemination, fricativization, assimilation, and others, as previously introduced.

In order to guarantee the accuracy of the data, various sources were consulted, such as historical linguistic surveys like Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1903) and recent studies on the Chakma language conducted by scholars like Bhattacharyya (2004) and Talukdar (1994). Additionally, the study utilized secondary data from published dictionaries, such as Chakma's (1986) *Chakma Bhasar Abhidan*, to verify the phonological changes identified in the primary data.

The comparative analysis involved a detailed examination of the phonological processes in both Chakma and Bengali, using standard linguistic methods, such as phonemic analysis and morphophonemic analysis. This approach enabled a systematic comparison of the two languages and the identification of specific phonological rules governing the adaptation of Bengali words into Chakma. Furthermore, the study considered the sociolinguistic factors that may have influenced these phonological changes, such as language contact, bilingualism, and language shift, drawing on theoretical insights from scholars like Thomason and Kaufman (1988) on the impact of language contact on phonology.

This study employs descriptive, comparative, and theoretical approaches to enrich our comprehension of the phonological adaptation processes in Chakma, while also illuminating the broader linguistic dynamics at play in the relationship between Chakma and Bengali. The outcomes of this research have important implications for the categorisation of Chakma within the Indo-Aryan language family and contribute to the broader field of contact linguistics in the conclusion section.

2. Phonological Processes

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2.1 Voicing

Voiceless consonants between two vowels get voiced.

kutum → hudum	'guest'
kukur → hugur	'dog'
upur → ugur	'lie back'
niti → nidi	'moral'

2.2. Gemination

/ʈ/ between two vowels gets geminated.

aʈ → aʈʈo	'eight'
kaʈa → kuʈʈa	'cut'
kaʈhal→Kuʈʈal	'jack fruit'

2.3. Fricativisation

2.3.1.   The affricate /tʃ/ in the initial position in Bangla gets fricativised into /s/ in Chakma.

1.   tʃit   → sit   'heart'
2.   tʃulo →sulwɔ   'Oven'
3.   tʃokʰ →sok   'eyes'
4.   tʃand → san   'moon'

2.3.2. /dʒ/ in Bangla bedcomes /z/ in Chakma

1. dʒal   → zal   net'
2. dʒagano→zagana   'to make someone wake up'
3. dʒogot →zogot   'world'
4. dʒɔma→zɔma   'submit'
5. mɔdʒa→moza   'fun'
6. badʒna→bazna   'instrument'
7. badʒi→bazi   'bet'
8.ledʒ→lez   'tail'
9. tedʒ → tez   ,   fast'
10. badʒ → baz   ,thunder'

2.4. Affricativisaion

The fricative /s/ in the word-final position in Bangla changes into affricate /tʃ/ in Chakma

1.   manus→manutʃ   'human'

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2. akas →akatʃ   'sky'

3. unis →unotʃ   'nineteen'

2.5. Assimilation

In bisyllabic words, one vowel often tends to affect the other in Chakma.

1. kalo → hala   'black'

2. adrɔk →ɔdrɔk   'ginger'

3. kɔkʰon →hɔkkɔn   'when'

4. ɔbotar →ɔbɔthar   'incarnation'

2.6. Vowel Harmony

Vowel harmony is the type of assimilation where one vowel shares certain features with the contrastive vowel in the same segment or word.

2.6.1. The close-mid vowel /e/ in Bengali becomes almost open /æ/ in Chakma and the close-mid /o/becomes mid-open /ɔ/ in Chakma, due to the influence of the open /a/ vowel in Chakma.

1. debota →dæbɔta   'God'

2. denadar →dænadar   'debtor'

3. deɽgun →dæɽgun   'two and a half quantities'

2.6.2. The back vowel often tends to affect the front vowel to become the back vowel in mono-syllabic words.

1. koi →kou   'where'

2. unis →unotʃ   'nineteen'

2.7. De-fricativisation

The glottal plosive /h/ in Bengali in the word-initial and medial position, becomes glottal stop/ʔ/ in Chakma.

1. hiŋsa→ʔiŋja   'jealousy'

2. har →ʔar   'necklace'

3. hat →ʔat   'hand'

4. hɔy →ʔɔy   'happen'

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5. daho →daʔo   'burn'

6. ha   →ʔa   'wide open'

2.8. Allophonic Changes and Free Variation

2.8.1. /k/ has two allophones velar fricative[x] and glottal fricative[h] in Chakma. The /k/ in Bangla changes to /x/ intervocally and initially.

1. kɔpal →xɔbal   'forehead'

2. klanto →xlantɔ   'tired'

3. akar   →axuk   'shape'

4. bekar   →bexar   'useless'

5. elaka   →elaxa   'area'

6. ækattor →æxattor   'seventy one'

7. dorkar →dorxari   'important'

2.8.2. In some cases, /k/ or the aspirated /kʰ/ changes to [h] in Chakma initially and intervocally.

1. kan   →han   'ear'

2. kʰun   →hun   'blood'

3. konuy →heŋuli   'elbow'

4. makʰon →mahɔn   'butter'

2.8.3. The allophones [h] and [x] are often in free variation with each other in Chakma.

1. kintu→xintu/ hintu   'but'

2. kal   →xal/ heile   'tomorrow'

3. khali→xali/ hali   'empty'

4. kil →xil/ hil   'door lock'

2.8.4. In Chakma, the bilabial fricative [ɸ] is used as the allophone of /p/ in many cases and replaces /p/ in Bangla words intervocalic and initially.

1. nepali→neɸali   'Nepali'

2. pensil→ɸensil   'Pencil'

3. pata →ɸata   'leaf'

4. pãtʃ →ɸatʃ   'five'

5. poŋgu→ɸoŋgu   'paralysis'

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2.9. Metathesis

Though a rare phenomenon, metathesis is found in some word and sentential levels.

1. konuy→hunoy   'elbow'
2. jabe →jeba   'will go'

2.10.   De-aspiration

Aspiration is not found in Chakma except in the case of the dental aspirated stop [th] which is an allophone of /t/ in Chakma. All other aspirated sounds in Bangla get de-aspirated in Chakma.

1. kʰun→hun   'blood'
2. dudʰ→dut   'milk'
3. tʃokʰ →sok   'eye'
4. kʰoti →xoti   'loss'
5. dokʰin→dogin   'south'
6. pʰuto→ɸudo   'hole'

The /t/ in Bangla changes to dental aspirated stop [tʰ] word initially and intervocally in Chakma.

1. tap   →tʰap   'heat'
2. ɔbotar→ɔbɔtʰar   'incarnation'
3. dʒæmiti→dʒæmitʰi   'geometry'

3. Socio-Linguistic Perspective

The influence of Bengali on Chakma is particularly pronounced in the realm of vocabulary and phonology. Chakma has borrowed extensively from Bengali in terms of lexical items and the phonological processes that govern the language. This influence is visible in various phonological changes such as voicing, gemination, fricativization, assimilation, vowel harmony, de-fricativization, allophonic changes, free variation, metathesis, and de-aspiration, which occur when Bengali words are adopted into Chakma. The borrowed words often undergo systematic changes to fit the phonological structure of Chakma, resulting in a unique set of adaptations that distinguish the Chakma versions of these words from their Bengali originals.

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The impact of Bengali on the colloquial speech of Chakma speakers is substantial. The everyday speech of Chakma speakers, known as colloquial Chakma, is heavily influenced by Bengali, especially in regions where the two languages are spoken together. This influence extends to not just vocabulary but also phonemic and syntactic structures. As a result, many Chakma speakers have adopted Bengali colloquial terms into their daily speech, making it more challenging to answer the debate of whether or not Chakma is a dialect of Bangla.

The relationship between Chakma and Bengali is complex and intricate, highlighting the intricacies of language evolution in a multilingual area. This raises significant questions about linguistic identity, the manner in which languages change, and the ways in which they influence each other as a result of sustained contact. This study's results have not only deepened our comprehension of the Chakma language but also shed light on the broader phenomenon of language change in contact situations, especially in the context of Indo-Aryan languages.

The findings demonstrate a substantial level of linguistic adjustment, highlighting the profound impact that Bengali has had on Chakma throughout the ages. This impact is not only noticeable in formal settings but also in the informal conversation of Chakma speakers, where Bengali lexical items and phonological patterns are frequently observed.

The research highlights the intricate bond between Chakma and Bengali, which has been influenced by historical movements, lasting interaction, and linguistic factors. Despite Chakma's preserved distinct linguistic identity, its pronounced borrowing from Bengali has resulted in significant changes in its sound system. While some experts have categorised Chakma as a Bengali dialect, the phonological evidence featured in this paper indicates that Chakma possesses special features that warrant acknowledgment as a separate language.

This study sheds light on the broader phenomenon of language change in contact situations, where languages adopt and adapt features from one another, giving rise to the emergence of fresh linguistic forms. The case of Chakma and Bengali offers a valuable illustration of how languages can impact one another over time, leading to substantial phonological modifications.

However, this study does not provide a comprehensive account, and there are several areas that require additional research. Future studies could delve into other aspects of the Chakma-Bengali

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relationship, such as syntactic changes, lexical borrowing beyond the phonological scope, and the impact of Bengali on other minority languages in the region.

Conclusion

The elaborate description of Bangla to Chakma sound changes has provided some marginal and some effective sound changes. There remain words in the lexicon of the two languages that are completely different with the same meaning which doesn't fall under the scope of this paper. The variation might be due to the contact and influence of each other. The above discussion and examples are insufficient to decide whether Chakma is a dialect of Bangla or a language of its own. This is a mere observation of sound changes between the two languages' common root words. Further scopes and areas can be looked into for future research on this aspect. The aim of this study is to provide a valuable addition to the ongoing conversation about the classification of Chakma and to shed light on the broader language contact issues in South Asia by critically examining these phonological processes. Moreover, the sociolinguistic dynamics of language shift among Chakma speakers, particularly in urban and bilingual contexts, merit further investigation. This study has investigated the phonological transformations that take place when Bengali words are adopted into Chakma, providing an in-depth examination of processes such as voicing, gemination, fricativization, assimilation, vowel harmony, de-fricativization, allophonic changes, free variation, metathesis, and de-aspiration.

In summary, the ongoing discussion about whether Chakma is a dialect of Bengali or a separate language remains undecided. Nevertheless, this study enhances our comprehension of the phonological processes that occur in language contact scenarios. It lays the groundwork for future research and unveils the complex interplay between languages in a multilingual environment. By examining phonological modifications, we acquire a greater understanding of the diverse linguistic landscape that defines the Chakma language and its associations with Bengali.

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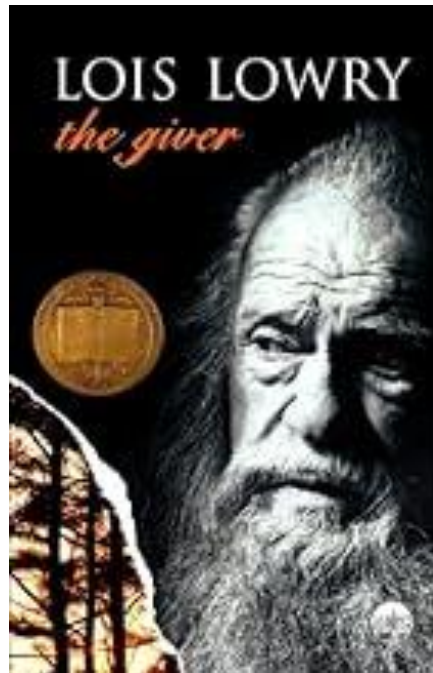# Sameness and Memory: A Study of Lois Lowry's *The Giver*

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Courtesy: www.amazon.com

Abstract

Lois Lowry's *The Giver* explores the concept of sameness and the significance of memory,

illustrating how enforced uniformity diminishes individuality, personal freedom, and emotional

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depth. Set in a dystopian society that eliminates differences to ensure stability and prevent conflict, the novel highlights the consequences of sacrificing diversity for control. Elements such as climate regulation, strict family structures, limited decision-making, and the suppression of emotions expose the risks of prioritizing order over authentic human experiences. Jonas's journey toward self-awareness and his resistance against the system serve as a critique of totalitarian rule, underscoring the essential role of memory in preserving humanity.

Keywords: *The Giver*, sameness, memory, dystopia, individuality, totalitarianism, emotional suppression, choice, utopia.

Is it possible to create a remarkable society by enforcing the concept of sameness? Imagine a world where differences are erased, and the dream of a perfect, conflict-free community becomes a reality. Every individual aspires to live in a society free from hunger, poverty, violence, prejudice, war, and discrimination. In such a world, every citizen is aware of their duties and responsibilities, striving to fulfill them to the best of their ability. The idea of constructing a model society, often referred to as a utopia, has led to the implementation of numerous rules and regulations. Lois Lowry, in *The Giver*, explores this notion by presenting a community devoid of war, pain, jealousy, vengeance, and suffering, achieved through the principle of sameness.

A society can never be purely good or evil; rather, it is a blend of both qualities. In *The Giver*, sameness is a concept that ensures uniformity in physical traits, behaviors, and attitudes from birth. "The society given in the novel "The Giver" strives for the sameness in physical appearance to eliminate any form of prejudice or differentiation based on looks". (Muthuvetrivel e53). The Committee of Elders, the ruling authority in Jonas's community, oversees the enforcement of this concept. One of their most striking actions in pursuit of sameness was the regulation of weather and climate through an artificial control system. Natural, unpredictable weather was seen as a threat to survival, as it could hinder agricultural production and lead to hunger, poverty, and suffering. By controlling the climate, the Committee eliminated factors that could cause pain and disruption, reinforcing the ideology that sameness equates to stability and security.

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However, the elimination of natural variations comes at a cost. "If everything's the same, then there aren't any choices! I want to wake up in the morning and decide things! A blue tunic or a red one?" Jonas laments" (*The Giver*, 127). The rigid structure of the community erases individuality, leading to a monotonous and predictable existence. Climate control, for example, results in a dull, gray world with no seasons, limiting agricultural diversity and diminishing the vibrancy of life. Roads are flattened, and landscapes are altered to ensure uniformity, eliminating any potential obstacles to efficiency. While this system reduces problems such as sunburns, floods, and natural disasters, it also strips the world of its richness and beauty.

The pursuit of equality extends beyond climate control. In *The Giver*, family structures, homes, and even transportation are identical. Every aspect of life is standardized to prevent disparity. "Our people made that choice, the choice to go to sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences. We gained control of many things. But we had to let go of others" (*Lowry*, 95). This enforced equality ensures a conflict-free life where no one takes advantage of another. However, it also eliminates individuality, innovation, and the motivation to explore new ideas. The community remains stagnant, cycling through the same patterns indefinitely.

The community's rigid control extends to personal decisions. Most aspects of individuals' lives including their jobs, spouses, and children are pre-determined by the Committee of Elders. "People must accept the roles prescribed for them by the government as the community being tightly regulated by the system of rigid rules. Based on their judgments, the committee of elder is responsible to decide and assign job to every person in the community." (Kezang 63) The only exception is volunteer hours, where individuals can choose where to spend their time. Jonas, the protagonist, gradually realizes the lack of personal agency in his world. While discussing colors, The Giver explains that people abandoned diversity to maintain control, sacrificing personal choices in the process. Jonas begins to see colors momentarily and becomes frustrated by the community's uniformity. Without differences, there are no true choices. The Giver

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acknowledges Jonas's concerns but warns that allowing choices could lead to unwise decisions, a fear that underpins the entire system of sameness.

The suppression of emotions is another consequence of this controlled environment. Pills are distributed to suppress stirrings, natural emotions and desires and ensure that citizens remain detached and compliant. Jonas initially follows this rule but later decides to stop taking the pills, longing to experience genuine feelings. This decision marks the beginning of his rebellion against the system. His realization deepens when he discovers that "release" a term used to describe the removal of individuals from the community is actually euthanasia. Witnessing his father euthanize an infant shakes Jonas to his core, leading him to question the ethics of his society.

Jonas's growing awareness compels him to take action. He learns that memories of the past were erased to maintain the illusion of a utopia. However, in doing so, the Committee of Elders has created a dystopia where individuals live in ignorance, devoid of true emotions, memories, and freedom. Jonas's decision to flee the community is driven by his newfound understanding of love, loss, and the importance of choice. As he embarks on his journey, he experiences the natural world for the first time, encountering wildlife, starvation, and the raw beauty of an unregulated existence. Although he momentarily doubts his decision, he ultimately realizes that staying in the community would have meant starving for emotions, color, and love.

The rigid structure of Jonas's world is reinforced by an extensive set of rules. Every aspect of life is dictated by regulations, from the way individuals dress to how they interact. Precision of language is strictly enforced, ensuring that citizens express themselves in the most neutral and controlled manner. Breaking rules results in swift correction, reinforcing obedience. Even seemingly minor infractions, such as taking an object from the Recreation Center, lead to public reprimands. The community's emphasis on control extends to its justice system, where third-time offenders face "release." Spouses are assigned based on compatibility factors such as intelligence and temperament, but love is never considered. Children are placed in families rather than being born naturally, further reinforcing the artificiality of relationships.

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The Giver, who serves as the keeper of memories, understands the significance of the past. When Jonas receives memories of pain, suffering, and love, he gains a perspective that others in the community lack. He begins to see the beauty of individual choice, despite the risks it entails. The Giver himself experiences sorrow, knowing that the community's attempt to eliminate suffering has also erased true happiness. He reveals that the previous Receiver of Memory, Rosemary, chose to end her life rather than endure the burden of memories alone. Her loss serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of suppressing human experience.

As Jonas and The Giver develop a plan to restore memories to the community, it becomes clear that true wisdom comes from shared experiences. Jonas ultimately escapes, carrying the burden of memories with him. Along the way, he draws strength from the recollections he has received, using them to survive the harsh journey. His final moments suggest that he reaches a place of warmth, music, and human connection, a stark contrast to the cold, calculated world he left behind.

In conclusion, *The Giver* explores the dangers of totalitarian control disguised as utopia. The community, in its attempt to eliminate suffering, has instead created a dystopian world devoid of choice, emotion, and individuality. By suppressing memories and enforcing sameness, the society sacrifices the very essence of what it means to be human. Jonas's journey symbolizes the struggle for freedom, love, and self-discovery, ultimately emphasizing the significance of memories in shaping a meaningful existence.

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Rediscovering Urmila: A Feminist Retelling of a Forgotten Heroine with Reference to Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister*

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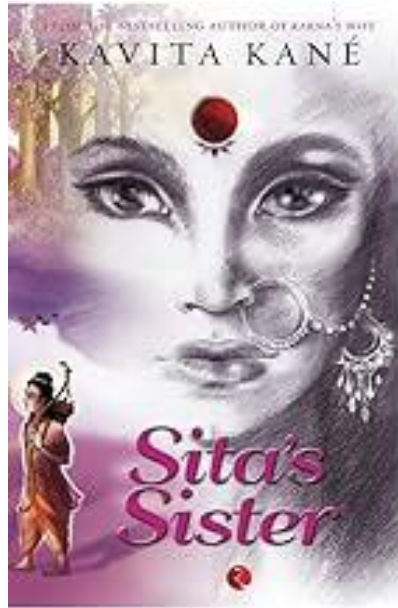saranyamanickam1998@gmail.com

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Abstract

Traditional mythological narratives often marginalize female characters, reducing them to secondary roles that emphasize sacrifice and obedience. Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister* reclaims the voice of Urmila, a character largely overlooked in Valmiki's *Ramayana*, granting her

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narrative agency and intellectual depth. This paper explores how Kane's reinterpretation challenges patriarchal constructs by portraying Urmila as a woman of resilience, wisdom, and emotional strength. Unlike traditional depictions that render her passive, *Sita's Sister* presents Urmila as a silent yet powerful figure who exercises personal autonomy in the face of adversity. Through an analysis of her intellectual and emotional agency, this study highlights how Urmila's choices serve as an act of resistance against the societal norms imposed upon women. Additionally, the paper draws parallels between Urmila and other silenced mythological women such as Draupadi's forgotten daughters, Mandodari, and Ahalya, emphasizing the importance of feminist revisionist mythology in reclaiming lost voices. By centring Urmila's narrative, *Sita's Sister* subverts traditional gender roles, presenting a nuanced portrayal of feminine strength that redefines the role of women in mythology.

Keywords: Kavita Kane, *Sita's Sister*, Feminist Revisionist Mythology, Urmila, Narrative Agency, Silent Resistance, Mythological Women

Throughout history, mythology has played a pivotal role in shaping cultural perspectives on gender roles, often reinforcing patriarchal ideals that dictate the behaviour and status of women in society. *The Ramayana*, an important epic in Hindu literature, primarily focuses on the heroic journey of its male protagonist, Rama, and his devoted wife, Sita. While Sita embodies the virtues of loyalty and sacrifice, the narrative largely sidelines other female characters, relegating them to the background and limiting their agency. This portrayal has historically contributed to a narrow understanding of femininity, one that glorifies subservience and highlights the importance of women only in relation to their male counterparts.

However, in recent years, women writers such as Kavita Kane, Chitra Banerji Divakaruni, and Sarah Joseph have emerged as powerful voices in the literary landscape, employing a framework of feminist reinterpretation of these ancient myths. By revisiting and reimagining the narratives of these characters, they challenge and rectify the entrenched patriarchal views that have long defined femininity within these stories. Their work promotes gender consciousness, actively confronting and dismantling gender stereotypes that have persisted through centuries of storytelling. According to literary critic Alicia Ostriker, employing revisionist mythmaking serves as a potent method for redefining women's

identity, allowing for a reclaiming of agency that has often been stripped away in traditional narratives. This facet of feminism is crucial in re-examining the portrayals of women who have faced collective and historical struggles, providing a platform for their voices to be heard and respected.

> 'Revision', as defined by Adrienne Rich, is 'the act of looking back' to an already existing text to construct a reality which has been deliberately ignored in patriarchal narratives. It inevitably involves a re-reading and re-writing of earlier texts from a feminist perspective. By becoming a 'resisting reader rather than an assenting reader' women writers and critics undertake to revise male assumptions through subversion of androcentric ideology in malist writings. Thus revisionist mythmaking enables writers across the globe to re-write myths and fairy tales which serve to perpetuate and promote an asymmetrical relationship between men and women. (96)

For instance, Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, is a character who is frequently overlooked in conventional retellings of the Ramayana. Her sacrifices, loyalty, and inner strength often go unnoticed, yet they hold significant value in understanding the broader narrative of womanhood in the epic. In her novel, *Sita's Sister*, Kavita Kane takes a bold step to re-examine Urmila's character, granting her a voice that was once muted and an identity that extends beyond mere association with her husband. Through Kane's portrayal, Urmila is depicted as a multifaceted individual with her own desires, aspirations, and struggles. This nuanced representation challenges the prevailing patriarchal narratives, emphasizing her intellectual, emotional, and personal autonomy as a form of subtle resistance against the constraints imposed upon her by society.

Kane's work not only enriches the understanding of Urmila but also invites readers to reflect on the broader implications of women's roles in mythology and how these roles can be redefined. By bringing forth the stories of women like Urmila, these writers encourage a more inclusive understanding of gender that recognizes the complexities and richness of female experience. As such, this research delves into how Kane's portrayal of Urmila not only serves as a critique of traditional narratives but also contributes to a larger movement towards gender equality and empowerment in literature and beyond, fostering a cultural shift that prioritizes the voices and stories of women. Urmila's agency is evident in her intellectual

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pursuits and emotional fortitude. She does not passively lament her fate but rather embraces her solitude as an opportunity for growth. As Kane writes, "She had not merely waited; she had lived, she had thrived" (Kane 215). This redefinition of patience as power reframes Urmila's story from one of victimhood to one of quiet resistance.

Urmila's independence on both an academic and emotional level is the foundation of her resilience. While Urmila stays inside the palace, she fights against loneliness and expectations, in contrast to Sita, whose loyalty is put to the test through exile and incarceration. This stark difference in their experiences underscores the complexities of womanhood within their societal context. Urmila's statement that "my life is not merely an extension of my husband's duty" (Kane 178) demonstrates her refusal to be defined exclusively by her connection with Lakshmana. In making this declaration, she asserts her individuality and underscores the importance of self-identity in a world where women are often relegated to the role of mere supporters of their husbands. This assertion contradicts the *pativrata* ideal, which holds that a wife's identity is completely absorbed by her husband's path, reducing her existence to an appendage rather than recognizing her as a full-fledged individual with her own desires and ambitions.

Rather than conforming to gender norms, Urmila creates her own identity by being independent, carving out a space where her intellect and emotional strength can flourish. "She was not a mere shadow, but a woman who thought, who dreamed, who lived on her own terms," as Kane highlights (Kane 189). This vivid characterization illustrates her vibrant spirit and courage, traits that empower her to navigate the challenges of her life with grace and determination. Urmila's journey becomes not only a testament to her personal growth but also a broader commentary on the potential for women to redefine their roles and assert their agency within patriarchal structures.

As she grapples with the solitude of palace life, Urmila immerses herself in literature and the arts, finding solace in the written word and the power of storytelling. This pursuit not only enriches her mind but also fortifies her resolve, allowing her to envision a future where she is not just a figure in the background but a key player in her own narrative. Her intellectual pursuits become a means of liberation, enabling her to engage with ideas that challenge the status quo and inspire her to advocate for her own place in the world. In the quiet moments of reflection, she often contemplates the nature of sacrifice and loyalty,

questioning the societal expectations that dictate how a woman should behave. Urmila understands that true strength lies not in blind adherence to tradition but in the courage to carve out one's own path, even in the face of overwhelming pressure to conform. This realization further fuels her determination to live authentically, embracing her passions and aspirations with fervour.

Through her journey, Urmila emerges as a symbol of empowerment, representing the struggles of countless women who seek to assert their identities in a world that often seeks to diminish them. Her story resonates with those who challenge the confines of societal norms, inspiring a new generation to embrace their independence and pursue their dreams unapologetically. Ultimately, Urmila's resilience serves as a powerful reminder that the quest for self-identity is a vital and transformative journey, one that can lead to profound personal and collective change. Urmila's wisdom and understanding of dharma further showcase her intellectual strength. She acknowledges the necessity of Lakshmana's duty but refuses to let it define her suffering: "Dharma is not just duty to others; it is duty to oneself" (Kane 204). This nuanced perspective allows her to endure her separation with dignity and personal growth rather than passive submission.

While Lakshmana, Rama, and Bharata are absent from Ayodhya, Urmila assumes a crucial role in maintaining the kingdom's stability. Kane's reinterpretation presents Urmila not just as a grieving wife but as a capable leader who steps into governance, offering counsel and ensuring the palace remains functional. She is actively involved in political and administrative affairs, ensuring that Ayodhya does not fall into disarray. Kane notes, "Urmila did not just endure; she ruled in her own quiet way" (Kane 230). Her governance extends beyond mere survival. Urmila ensures that law, ethics, and dharma are upheld in Ayodhya, demonstrating an astute political mind. She collaborates with elder advisors, upholds justice, and subtly influences the kingdom's affairs, proving that women are not just caretakers but active participants in governance. This feminist reinterpretation showcases women's ability to lead, even when removed from direct power.

In her role, Urmila cultivates a network of trusted allies within the court, fostering a sense of unity among the nobles and commoners alike. She organizes meetings to address the pressing issues of the day, from agricultural concerns to trade agreements, and ensures that

the voices of the people are heard. Her ability to listen and empathize creates an atmosphere where citizens feel valued, allowing her to enact policies that promote welfare and prosperity throughout the realm. Moreover, Urmila's leadership is marked by her commitment to education and the empowerment of women in Ayodhya. She establishes initiatives that encourage girls to receive an education, believing firmly that knowledge is the foundation of true strength. By advocating for women's rights to participate in societal matters, she lays the groundwork for future generations of female leaders. As the seasons change and the challenges of governance become more complex, Urmila faces opposition from those who are skeptical of her authority. Yet, through her unwavering dedication and strategic acumen, she navigates these obstacles with grace, proving that her intellect and compassion are more formidable than any sword. As she builds alliances and fosters goodwill, Ayodhya flourishes under her stewardship, a testament to her remarkable ability to lead during turbulent times.

In this new light, Kane's portrayal of Urmila as a central figure in the Ramayana not only redefines her character but also challenges traditional narratives that often sideline women's contributions. Through Urmila's story, readers are invited to reconsider the roles women have played throughout history, recognizing that their influence often extends far beyond the domestic sphere. In the end, Urmila's legacy becomes a beacon of inspiration, illuminating the path for future leaders and reminding all that true power often lies in the quiet determination to uphold justice and harmony in society.

Kane's novel emphasizes the profound bond shared between Urmila, Sita, Mandavi, and Shrutakirti. In spite of their diverse circumstances, the four sisters encapsulate a collective strength that opposes patriarchal desires. Their relationship is built on shared understanding, passionate bolster, and immovable dependability.

We get a glimpse of strong heartfelt conversation between the four sisters at the event of Sita's swayamwara. As Mandavi and Kirti (Shrutikirti) are excited for Sita, Urmila is concerned about her sister. The author paints their lively connection in the novel:

> The four young girls engaged in such banter all the time. There was no malice in it, not a shred of meanness. They were simply disarmingly frank with each other; brutally blunt sometimes. And why wouldn't they? They were sisters, after all, and there was no need to be nice and good all the time. (8)

Sita endures exile, whereas Urmila perseveres passionate confinement. Their memories and recollections support them, making a bond that rises above physical remove. Sita's quality rouses Urmila, and Urmila's continuance serves as a passionate grapple for Sita. Mandavi speaks to a more routine adherence to obligation, however she gives Urmila with calm solidarity. In spite of the fact that their adapting components vary, they share a shared regard for each other's strength. The most youthful sister, Shrutakirti, is frequently ignored, however she offers warmth and viewpoint. Her delicacy complements the quality of the others, displaying the shifted shapes of ladylike versatility.

They are delighted as the four sisters will be future sister-in-laws. When Sunaina was against the proposal of all four girls getting married in same family, Sita questions her-"How could our staying together harm us? Will marriage lessen our love for each other? No, Ma, it shall strengthen it further, as no one knows us better. We love each other too much for anything or anyone to come between us."(55)

Through their sisterhood, Kane subverts the idea that ladies in mythology exist as it were in connection to the men in their lives. They are always shielding each other, they stand prepared to safeguard one another's happiness Instep, and she presents them as independent people who draw quality from one another. This women's activist reinterpretation highlights the significance of women's collective solidarity in exploring abuse and misfortune.

Sita's Sister redefines feminine strength beyond the conventional notions of sacrifice and devotion by taking back Urmila's voice and challenging the erasure of women in mythology. The way that women are viewed in epics is altered by Urmila's leadership, emotional independence, intellectual fortitude, and quiet defiance. In addition to reconstructing Urmila's story, Kavita Kane's feminist revisionist method advances the larger conversation about reclaiming marginalized voices in literature.

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The Intersection of Trauma and Empowerment in Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps*

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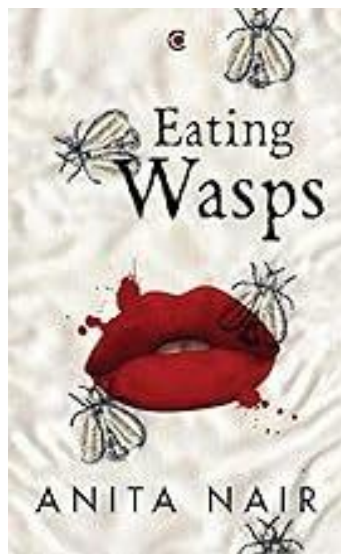
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Abstract

Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps* examines the intersection of trauma, resilience, feminism, empowerment, and patriarchy, portraying the experiences of women who endure various forms of oppression, including domestic violence, sexual abuse, societal expectations, and psychological distress. The novel presents multiple narratives that illustrate how trauma functions not only as a source of suffering but also as a transformative force that leads to self-realization and agency. The central character, Sreelakshmi, a writer who was silenced by societal norms and ultimately took her own life, serves as a persistent presence throughout the novel, symbolizing both the consequences of repression and the necessity of reclaiming autonomy. Each female character's experiences contribute to a broader discourse on gender identity, psychological endurance, and self-liberation, emphasizing the ways in which individuals challenge systemic constraints. Through a nonlinear narrative structure, the novel

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reflects the fragmented and often suppressed realities of women's lives under patriarchy. By depicting trauma as a catalyst for transformation rather than an endpoint, Nair challenges conventional portrayals of women as passive victims and instead presents them as individuals with agency and the capacity for change. This study situates *Eating Wasps* within the broader framework of feminist literature, illustrating the role of literature as a medium for articulating women's experiences, breaking silence, and fostering empowerment. Nair's work redefines the representation of women's suffering and resilience, offering a critical examination of the ways in which narratives of trauma contribute to personal and collective empowerment.

Keywords: Anita Nair, *Eating Wasps,* trauma, resilience, feminism, empowerment, patriarchy

I. Introduction

Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps* engages deeply with themes of trauma, resilience, and empowerment, exploring the multifaceted experiences of women exploring patriarchal structures. The novel, through its fragmented narrative and interwoven personal histories, foregrounds the ways in which trauma manifests as both an oppressive force and a catalyst for transformation. The presence of Sreelakshmi, a writer who succumbed to societal pressures and took her own life, serves as a spectral reminder of the consequences of silencing female voices. Her narrative, along with those of other female characters, underscores the persistence of patriarchal control over women's bodies, identities, and choices. The novel, through its exploration of sexual violence, domestic abuse, and psychological turmoil, aligns itself with feminist literary criticism and trauma studies, offering a critical lens through which gendered suffering can be examined. The non-linear storytelling reflects the disjointed and suppressed realities of trauma survivors, reinforcing theoretical discourses on memory and narrative fragmentation. By depicting female characters who resist, survive, and redefine their personal narratives, Eating Wasps reconfigures conventional portrayals of women as passive victims, instead presenting them as agents of their own self-realization. The text, in its interrogation of patriarchal constraints, trauma, and psychological endurance, necessitates scholarly inquiry within the broader framework of feminist literature and trauma studies.

A critical examination of Eating Wasps necessitates an inquiry into how trauma operates within the text as both a site of oppression and empowerment, contributing to feminist literary discourse. The study seeks to analyse the ways in which trauma functions within the novel, not

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merely as a source of suffering but as a transformative force that leads to self-awareness and resistance. By situating the text within feminist criticism and trauma theory, the research investigates the role of storytelling in reclaiming agency and subverting patriarchal silencing. Given the novel's engagement with systemic oppression, the study examines how personal narratives become a means of healing, resistance, and self-definition. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the evolving discourse on feminist trauma literature, reinforcing the need for literature as a medium for articulating gendered experiences. The methodology employed involves a close textual analysis of the novel, applying key theoretical frameworks from trauma studies, feminist literary criticism, and gender theory to establish how Nair's work challenges traditional representations of female suffering. The study, by engaging with comparative feminist discourse, contextualizes Eating Wasps within a broader literary and theoretical tradition, reinforcing its position as a significant text in contemporary feminist literature.

II. Review of Literature

Anita Nair's Eating Wasps is situated within a broader literary and theoretical framework that examines trauma, gendered oppression, and feminist resistance. The study of trauma in literature has been extensively developed through the works of Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, and Dominick LaCapra, each of whom offers critical insights into the representation of psychological suffering and memory. Caruth conceptualizes trauma as an event that resists direct representation and remains inscribed within the psyche in fragmented and nonlinear ways (Caruth 4). This theoretical lens is particularly relevant to Eating Wasps, as the novel's discontinuous narrative structure mirrors the disruptions caused by trauma, emphasizing the challenges of articulating and processing deeply embedded wounds. Judith Herman's framework of trauma recovery underscores the significance of storytelling in the reconstruction of identity, arguing that narrative articulation is essential for survivors to reclaim agency over their experiences (Herman 37). Nair's novel employs a multiplicity of female voices, each navigating their own experiences of trauma, thereby reinforcing Herman's assertion that testimony and narrative are central to the healing process. Furthermore, Dominick LaCapra distinguishes between "acting out" and "working through" trauma, emphasizing the necessity of moving beyond repetitive cycles of suffering toward meaningful engagement with the past (LaCapra 22). In Eating Wasps, the characters' varied responses to trauma ranging from

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repression to active reclamation reflect this theoretical division, illustrating the complex interplay between memory, identity, and healing.

Feminist literary criticism provides an essential framework for analysing Eating Wasps, particularly in its engagement with patriarchal oppression and the subjugation of female subjectivity. Simone de Beauvoir's theorization of woman as the "Other" elucidates the novel's critique of systemic gender marginalization, as several female characters struggle against societal expectations that define their worth in relation to male authority (de Beauvoir 267). The novel's portrayal of women's erasure from intellectual and public spaces aligns with Kate Millett's argument that patriarchal systems function through both ideological and institutional control, reinforcing a hierarchy that suppresses female autonomy (Millett 54). Furthermore, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity offers a critical lens through which to examine how Eating Wasps deconstructs socially imposed gender roles. Butler posits that gender identity is not an inherent or fixed attribute but rather a series of performed acts that are socially reinforced (Butler 33). The novel's female characters, by resisting prescribed roles and asserting their identities beyond societal expectations, challenge the notion of gender as a stable category, instead positioning it as a contested and mutable construct. Luce Irigaray's critique of phallocentric discourse is particularly relevant in analyzing the novel's interrogation of language, silence, and the erasure of female narratives (Irigaray 76). The persistent suppression of Sreelakshmi's voice, even in death, underscores the systemic silencing of women, while the act of reclaiming personal stories functions as a form of resistance against linguistic and ideological domination. By engaging with these theoretical perspectives, Eating Wasps is positioned within a critical feminist discourse that examines the intersections of trauma, oppression, and empowerment, contributing to a broader understanding of gendered suffering and resilience in contemporary literature.

III. Theoretical Application to *Eating Wasps*

Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps* employs a fragmented narrative structure that aligns with trauma theory, reinforcing the disjointed and non-linear ways in which trauma is experienced and remembered. Cathy Caruth's conceptualization of trauma as a disruption of temporality is evident in the novel's oscillation between past and present, as well as in the spectral presence of Sreelakshmi, whose story persists beyond her death. The narrative does not unfold in a linear progression but instead fragments across multiple personal histories, reflecting Caruth's

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assertion that trauma resists conventional representation and remains inscribed within the psyche in nonlinear ways (Caruth 4). Furthermore, the presence of Sreelakshmi as an enduring figure within the novel aligns with Jacques Derrida's theory of hauntology, which suggests that unresolved histories continue to manifest within the present, disrupting clear distinctions between the living and the dead (Derrida 10). In Eating Wasps, Sreelakshmi's posthumous narrative operates as a persistent reminder of female subjugation and the consequences of systemic silencing. The novel's fragmented storytelling and its interwoven personal narratives reinforce Judith Herman's assertion that storytelling is central to trauma recovery, as it enables survivors to reconstruct a coherent sense of self through narrative articulation (Herman 37). By presenting multiple women's experiences of oppression and survival, the text positions storytelling as an act of resistance, demonstrating how fragmented yet interconnected voices contribute to a collective reclamation of agency.

The novel's feminist critique of patriarchy and gendered oppression is deeply embedded in its portrayal of Sreelakshmi and other female characters who navigate societal constraints. The systemic marginalization of Sreelakshmi's voice and her ultimate erasure exemplify Simone de Beauvoir's theorization of women as the "Other," wherein patriarchal structures define women's existence in relation to male authority, restricting their autonomy and intellectual agency (de Beauvoir 267). The novel's engagement with issues of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and societal repression further aligns with Kate Millett's critique of patriarchal institutions as mechanisms of control that silence and subordinate women (Millett 54). Eating Wasps exposes how cultural and institutional structures perpetuate gendered violence, illustrating the ways in which patriarchal norms function as an oppressive force. Additionally, Judith Butler's theory of performativity is reflected in the ways female characters negotiate and resist societal expectations, revealing the constructed and regulatory nature of gender identity (Butler 33). Through acts of defiance, self-reclamation, and narrative articulation, the women in the novel disrupt prescriptive gender roles and assert their agency, thereby challenging the fixed and hegemonic constructions of femininity. By applying these theoretical frameworks, Eating Wasps is positioned as a significant literary exploration of trauma, gender, and resistance, contributing to feminist literary discourse and trauma studies.

The psychoanalytic dimensions of trauma in *Eating Wasps* align closely with Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject, particularly in the way the novel explores bodily trauma, exclusion, and the disruption of identity. Kristeva conceptualizes the abject as that which is

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cast out by the symbolic order, existing at the threshold of meaning and repulsion (Kristeva 4). The novel's portrayal of women's experiences with sexual violence, bodily degradation, and psychological distress mirrors this theoretical framework, as female characters are rendered abject within a patriarchal society that seeks to silence and control them. Luce Irigaray's critique of language and representation further informs the novel's engagement with the erasure of female narratives, emphasizing how phallocentric discourse systematically excludes women's voices, positioning them as objects rather than subjects (Irigaray 76). In *Eating Wasps*, the haunted presence of Sreelakshmi embodies this erasure, as her story persists despite attempts to suppress it, reinforcing the necessity of reclaiming female agency through narrative articulation. The novel also engages with intersectional feminism by depicting a multiplicity of female experiences that illustrate how oppression is shaped by intersecting structures of gender, caste, class, and sexuality. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of the universalization of women's struggles is reflected in the novel's nuanced portrayal of varied female identities, challenging monolithic feminist narratives that fail to account for cultural and socio-economic differences (Mohanty 72). Furthermore, bell hooks' vision of feminist solidarity emerges in the novel's collective exploration of empowerment, as the characters' interconnected stories underscore the importance of shared resistance and mutual support in confronting patriarchal constraints (hooks 157). By systematically applying these theoretical perspectives, *Eating Wasps* not only critiques gendered oppression but also reconfigures trauma narratives as sites of agency and transformation, demonstrating how literature serves as a means of reclaiming silenced histories and resisting systemic subjugation.

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illustrate how oppression is shaped by intersecting structures of gender, caste, class, and sexuality. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of the universalization of women's struggles is reflected in the novel's nuanced portrayal of varied female identities, challenging monolithic feminist narratives that fail to account for cultural and socio-economic differences (Mohanty 72 By systematically applying these theoretical perspectives, Eating Wasps not only critiques gendered oppression but also reconfigures trauma narratives as sites of agency and transformation, demonstrating how literature serves as a means of reclaiming silenced histories and resisting systemic subjugation.

Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps* critically engages with feminist literary discourse by portraying trauma not as an endpoint of suffering but as a catalyst for transformation, subverting conventional narratives that depict women as passive victims. The novel reframes trauma as a site of resistance and self-reclamation, illustrating how personal and collective histories of oppression can serve as foundations for empowerment. By depicting multiple female characters who navigate their traumas through acts of defiance, self-expression, and narrative reclamation, Nair challenges the prevailing literary representations that confine women to roles of despair and victimhood. The text underscores psychological endurance as a central aspect of empowerment, reinforcing theoretical perspectives that position trauma as a transformative force rather than a state of perpetual affliction (Caruth 5). Through its nonlinear, fragmented storytelling, the novel reflects the challenges of articulating trauma, aligning with literary trauma theory's assertion that conventional narrative structures fail to encapsulate the disjointed and repressed nature of traumatic memory (Laub and Felman 69). The spectral presence of Sreelakshmi symbolizes the necessity of reclaiming lost female voices, highlighting the way patriarchal institutions erase, distort, or appropriate women's stories to maintain systemic control. The act of storytelling, both within the diegesis and through the novel's structure, becomes a mode of resistance against the silencing mechanisms imposed upon women, reinforcing Judith Herman's assertion that narrative articulation is central to trauma recovery and agency (Herman 39).

The politics of female empowerment within *Eating Wasps* extends beyond individual acts of resilience to engage with broader feminist discourses on systemic oppression and social change. Nair's depiction of empowerment does not rely on traditional tropes of triumph but instead presents it as a continuous process of negotiation, self-assertion, and collective support.

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The novel critiques both overt patriarchal violence and more insidious forms of control, illustrating how societal expectations, cultural norms, and institutional constraints operate as mechanisms of female subjugation (Millett 47). By centering diverse female experiences, Eating Wasps aligns with intersectional feminism, recognizing that oppression is not monolithic but shaped by intersecting structures of gender, caste, class, and sexuality. This aligns with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of Western feminist narratives that homogenize women's struggles, instead emphasizing the importance of contextualized and varied feminist perspectives (Mohanty 78).

Furthermore, the novel expands contemporary literary trauma studies by incorporating an intersectional lens, addressing how women's experiences of violence and marginalization are informed by their social positions and historical contexts. Bell hooks' conceptualization of feminist solidarity is particularly relevant in analysing how Eating Wasps constructs a collective discourse on empowerment, illustrating how shared narratives and mutual support serve as mechanisms of resistance (hooks 142). The novel, in its refusal to present closure or singular resolutions, highlights literature's role as an agent of social critique, demonstrating how textual representation can challenge hegemonic structures and advocate for a reimagining of gendered subjectivities. By positioning trauma as both a site of suffering and transformation, Eating Wasps redefines the representation of female agency in literary discourse, reinforcing the significance of storytelling as a means of resisting systemic silencing and fostering empowerment.

Conclusion

Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps* engages with feminist literary discourse and trauma studies by illustrating how narratives of suffering function as both sites of oppression and catalysts for transformation. Through its fragmented structure and multiplicity of female voices, the novel challenges conventional portrayals of victimhood, positioning trauma as a means of self-reclamation and psychological endurance. The spectral presence of Sreelakshmi underscores the persistent silencing of women within patriarchal structures while simultaneously asserting the necessity of reclaiming erased narratives. By presenting a range of female experiences shaped by intersecting social, cultural, and economic forces, Eating Wasps aligns with intersectional feminism, reinforcing the need for nuanced and context-specific analyses of gendered oppression. The novel's engagement with trauma as a disruptive force that resists

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linear temporality further reflects theoretical perspectives that emphasize the fragmentation of traumatic memory and the centrality of storytelling in the process of healing and resistance.

Furthermore, the text critiques patriarchal institutions that enforce silence and subjugation, illustrating how both overt and subtle mechanisms of control operate to restrict female autonomy. By redefining empowerment beyond simplistic notions of triumph, Eating Wasps highlights the ongoing process of negotiating agency within oppressive systems. The novel's contribution to feminist trauma literature is particularly significant in its refusal to present closure or singular resolutions, instead advocating for the continuous rearticulation of female subjectivity through narrative. Literature's role as a tool for social critique and empowerment is reinforced through Nair's depiction of storytelling as an act of defiance, challenging dominant structures that seek to erase women's voices. Ultimately, Eating Wasps expands the discourse on trauma, resilience, and feminist resistance, demonstrating how literary representation functions as a mode of both witnessing oppression and envisioning possibilities for agency and transformation.

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E – Reading in Digital Age

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Abstract

This article explains the role that e-reading plays in the current digital world. Reading is the process of interpreting written symbols and letters by comprehending at them. The internet has taken the lead in this digital age, and advancements in modern technology have brought about changes in the book industry. Texts are changing drastically because of the advancements in digital technologies. The objective of this study is to outline on e-reading techniques and strategies. Additionally, it sought to increase e-reading retention. According to this study, e-reading has mastery as well as challenges.

Keywords: E-Reading, digital tools, strategies, pros and cons of digital content.

The process of reading is to construct meaning from texts using a variety of methods for finding, combining, and to transmit information (Lopatovska and Sessions). Word recognition, orthography (spelling), alphabetic, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and motivation are all components of this varied process. The process of understanding the meaning or sense of symbols—often those of a written language—is known as reading. Although reading aloud to others or to oneself for improved comprehension is sometimes done, it is mostly a solitary practice that is done in silence.

Acquiring and practicing the abilities required to comprehend the meaning of written words is known as learning to read or reading skills acquisition. A proficient reader finds reading to be easy, natural, and instinctive. But learning to read is a complicated process that builds on social, linguistic, and cognitive abilities that are formed from a very young age. Reading is essential to master written language since it is one of the four fundamental language skills - speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Digital reading, as defined by Lim and Toh, is the process of learning from texts that are accessible on tablets or other devices. Reading a book or article on an electronic device, such as a tablet, smartphone, or eBook, is known as digital reading. Books can be accessed in PDF, HTML, or ePUB formats. Electronic reading has become the new standard in the era of the internet. The contemporary counterpart of turning pages is e-reading, in which we interact with words on electronic screens rather than paper and ink. It's the flawless transition from print to digital books. Numerous reading tools have been made possible by the digital environment, such as instant access to information through a range of e-resources and online interfaces. In the twenty-first century, technological developments have changed the way that English is taught and learned. This technological development has modified reading practices and competencies.

The essential practice and reflection on the quality and content of digital texts to acquire the knowledge, abilities, and techniques needed for digital reading (Macedo-Rouet et al.,) Digital reading, according to Ebrahimi, is a technology tool that may be used to read texts on computers, smartphones, or tablets both online and offline. It has proven to be effective and beneficial for teaching reading to EFL/ESL students in particular (112). According to Brun-Mercer, the issue should be approached strategically; if not, students should receive practice and instruction to help them get beyond the difficulties they face when reading online and advance toward digital literacy, which the author interpret as being "able to read with sufficient accuracy, fluency, and ease" (4).

By offering easily accessible and varied reading materials in several languages, E - reading is essential to multilingual education. It enables students to interact with texts in their mother tongue while also advancing their literacy in other languages, which fosters cross-linguistic language learning and cultural understanding. The global expansion in online

learning activities after the COVID-19 outbreak has made digital reading even more popular. Furthermore, new technologies like chatbots with artificial intelligence, like Chat GPT, are being developed on a daily basis. The phrase "digital inclusion" describes a variety of factors that may form understanding in digital reading, including motivation and attitude, physical access, and technical abilities and usage.

The concept that reading on screens can result in lower comprehension levels than reading printed text is frequently the focus of criticisms of digital reading. These criticisms include worries about distractions, shallower information processing from scrolling and hyperlinks, increased eye strain, and a propensity for skimming rather than deep reading, particularly when using devices like smartphones with multiple notifications.

Activating prior knowledge, using digital tools to highlight and annotate text, reducing distractions, establishing reading objectives, utilizing text-to-speech features, monitoring comprehension through self-questioning, skimming and scanning for important information, and utilizing multimedia elements like videos and images embedded within the text to improve understanding are some strategies used when reading digitally. Interactive technology can be used into digital content to make more dynamic digital media, such as videos. Other digital tools that aid in comprehension include interactive digital storytelling platforms like Story Jumper and Book Creator, multilingual online libraries like Librivox and Project Gutenberg, language learning apps like Duolingo, Memrise, and Babbel with reading comprehension exercises, and e-book platforms like Kindle, iBooks, and Google Play Books with multilingual options. Additionally, it enables automated, personalized feedback on readers' assessments and practice. It gives pupils more options so they may individualize their education.

Global strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support strategies are the three categories into which Mokharti and Sheorey divided online reading tactics. The reader is prepared for digital reading through global reading practices. Gaining a general understanding of the book, drawing conclusions about its subjects of the text, and establishing a reading objective are examples of global reading strategies. When digital readers encounter comprehension challenges, their logical decisions serve as the foundation for their problem-solving techniques. These techniques, which include reading slowly to better comprehend and assess the digital text, guessing unknown words using context clues,

and rereading the material to increase comprehension, are meant to assist readers in overcoming reading problems. However, after using global and problem-solving techniques, support reading tactics help digital readers understand a book. A few strategies for offering support mechanisms include asking questions about the material to determine reader understanding, summarizing particular text passages, highlighting or underlining important points, and translating the text from the target language to the reader's mother tongue.

Although digital content has grown in popularity, is it always the best option? There are definite benefits and drawbacks to digital texts, but there isn't a definitive answer.

Pros of Digital Content

1. Accessibility

When it comes to accessibility, digital content has a significant advantage. Digital books are accessible on any device and from any location. A single phone or tablet may hold several textbooks. Even better, students can always find online textbooks when they need them.

2. Online Resources

Students who use an online textbook get instant access to additional content. With the use of electronic notes, highlighting, and annotating, note-taking can be done inside the book itself. Students can even collaborate quickly by sharing annotations.

3. Unique Homework Assignments

Teachers can expand their toolkit of instructional resources by include interactive learning components through digital content. Compared to a typical reading assignment, students can be given online exercises and tests that are much more interesting and inspiring.

4. No Damaged or Lost Books

It is possible for even the most attentive students to lose a textbook. This can occasionally occur at the most inconvenient moments. Digital content makes it impossible to misplace or destroy a book. Online textbooks are accessible from any computer or mobile device, even if an iPad is misplaced or dropped.

5. Easy-to-Find Information

It can take a while to locate the information that need in a typical textbook. With digital books, information may be found quickly through a search. Readers can also easily seek up definitions that built-in dictionaries.

Cons of Digital Content

1. Expires/No Resale Value

For the length of the course, some digital publishers only grant access to a textbook. Readers are out of luck if they want to review the material for a subsequent class. Although different publishers have different policies, it is fairly unusual for readers to pay for materials that they are not allowed to keep. Additionally, digital textbooks have no resale value. Readers are left without the book after they finish the course or decide they no longer require it.

2. Heavily Relies on Access to Technology

Online textbooks flexibility is typically viewed as a huge benefit, but their reliance on costly technology and internet connectivity can be problematic. Not every kid can afford an iPad or a dependable computer. Those without one are stranded in the library or have to rely on their peers to share their devices. Although the majority of young individuals do own a computer or iPad, those who do not may find mandated online study to be financially burdensome.

3. No Wi-Fi? No Home Work?

For the most part, digital textbook technology functions flawlessly. Students are unable to study or finish their assignments on time when anything does go wrong. Unfortunately, students can exploit this with ease. It is often impossible for a teacher to confirm whether a pupil actually experienced difficulties accessing internet resources. Teachers may find this problematic.

4. Too Close to Online Distractions

All ages of students are accustomed to regularly accessing social media and internet entertainment. Study time can seem too alluring when Facebook and YouTube are only a draw off. Ignoring incoming messages and notifications is difficult! Frequent online

diversions can interfere with study time and impede academic success because there is no distinction between work and pleasure.

The limited capacity system known as working memory that mediates reading, which is a complicated activity involving multiple components, including low and high-level processes, schema activation, proposition encoding, interpretation, and inference formation. In digital reading, retention capacity is a measure of how effectively a person retains information from digital texts. It is the amount of information that a person can recall after reading a text on a digital device, such as a computer or phone.

Key Points about Digital Reading Retention

1. Active reading strategies can improve retention:

People can use techniques like underlining, taking notes, summarizing important ideas, and asking themselves questions while reading to improve their digital reading retention.

2. Device and format impact:

Information retention may be impacted by the layout of the text (font size, spacing) and the design of the digital reading device.

3. Individual differences:

The amount of information people recall from digital texts is also influenced by their cognitive capacities and natural reading tendencies.

Although many people still treasure traditional books, the unavoidable advancement of technology has made e-books the preferred literary companion of the present era. Accessibility and sustainability concerns have swung the balance in favor of digital reading. With its promise of financial savings and environmental responsibility, e-reading presents a welcome substitute for paperbound books. To elevate the reading experience, the interactive e-books are to be used. For people who would rather listen to reading, text-to-speech technology provides a smooth aural experience. As we welcome this digital revolution, it is

evident that e-books represent a doorway to a new era of reading rather than merely a substitute for conventional books.

In addition to improving learning opportunities, boosting literacy skills, encouraging critical thinking, and enabling interactive features that can deepen understanding, digital reading is significant because it offers easy and accessible access to a wealth of information. Additionally, it is environmentally friendly due to its reduced paper usage. In the digital age, reading can improve focus, increase vocabulary and language proficiency, and foster the growth of analytical abilities.

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Translation, Language, and Psychology: The Interconnected World of Mental Understanding

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Abstract

Language is not merely a medium of communication; it is a fundamental aspect of human cognition, shaping our thoughts, perceptions, and emotions. Translation, as the bridge between languages, plays a pivotal role in the exchange of ideas, cultures, and psychological constructs. This comprehensive exploration delves into the intricate relationship between translation, language, and psychology. It examines how language influences our cognitive processes, emotions, and identity, and how translation serves as a conduit for cross-cultural psychological understanding. Through a multidisciplinary lens, we unravel the interconnected world of mental understanding in the context of language and translation.In addition to examining the interactions between translation, language, and psychology, this paper highlights not in depth, practical implications for fields such as education, therapy, and cross-cultural communication. Understanding the interplay among these disciplines offers insights into improving language instruction, enhancing communication strategies, and fostering a deeper appreciation for the role of language in mental understanding.

Keywords: language, psychology, translation communication, human cognition,

0. Introduction

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Translation, as a fundamental aspect of human communication, intersects with language and psychology in intricate and profound ways. The process of translation goes beyond mere word-for-word conversion; it involves a deep understanding of cognitive processes, cultural contexts, and psychological factors that influence how meaning is constructed and conveyed. This interconnectedness forms a complex web where language, thought, and cultural understanding converge, highlighting the necessity for translators to possess not only linguistic proficiency but also a keen awareness of psychological principles and cultural nuances.

The relationship between translation and psychology is multifaceted. Cognitive theories of translation emphasize the mental processes involved in translating, including comprehension, memory, and problem-solving (Kiraly, 1995). These cognitive processes are essential for translators to decode the source text and re-encode it into the target language, ensuring that the intended meaning is preserved and accurately conveyed.

Relevance theory, proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) and applied to translation by Gutt (1991), provides a framework for understanding how translators achieve optimal relevance by balancing effort and effect. According to this theory, translators must infer the intended meaning of the source text based on contextual cues and then reconstruct this meaning in the target language in a way that is most relevant to the target audience. This process requires not only linguistic skills but also an understanding of the cognitive environment of both the source and target audiences. Psychological insights into translation also highlight the role of emotions, attitudes, and cognitive biases in the translation process. Translators' subjective experiences and emotional responses can influence their choices and interpretations, affecting the overall quality and accuracy of the translation (Schäffner, 2004). Understanding these psychological dimensions is crucial for addressing potential biases and ensuring a more objective and faithful translation.

Furthermore, the cultural aspect of translation cannot be overstated. Language and culture are inextricably linked, and effective translation requires an appreciation of cultural contexts and norms. Nida's (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence underscores the importance of translating meaning rather than words, taking into account the cultural and experiential backgrounds of the

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target audience. This approach aligns with the psychological principle that language and thought are shaped by cultural experiences (Vygotsky, 1962). This interplay among translation, language, and psychology forms a dynamic triad, where each component is intricately interconnected with the others. This essay explores the profound relationships between translation, language, and psychology, shedding light on how these fields inform and influence one another.

1. The Interconnected World of Translation

Language, in its essence, is a means of expression, and translation serves as the bridge that allows ideas, knowledge, and culture to cross linguistic barriers. This intersection between translation and language lays the foundation for our exploration.

1.1. The Essence of Translation

Translation is the process of converting text or speech from one language into another, aiming to convey the original meaning and intent as accurately as possible. It is both an art and a science, demanding an understanding of not only the languages involved but also the cultural contexts and nuances embedded within them. This intricate process encompasses several challenges, including linguistic diversity, cultural sensitivity, and the subjectivity of interpretation.

1.2. Translation as Communication Facilitator

At its core, translation serves as a facilitator of communication across linguistic divides. In our increasingly interconnected world, where people from diverse linguistic backgrounds interact daily, translation enables effective dialogue. It allows individuals to express themselves in their native tongues while ensuring that their ideas are comprehensible to speakers of other languages. This inclusivity in communication fosters understanding and collaboration, ultimately strengthening global relationships.

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1.3. Preserving Cultural Identities

Translation plays a pivotal role in preserving cultural identities. It allows literary works, films, art, and other cultural products to transcend national borders and reach a global audience. Through translation, people can explore and appreciate the rich tapestry of cultures worldwide, promoting a deeper sense of empathy and understanding among diverse communities.

1.4. Democratizing Knowledge

One of the most significant contributions of translation is its role in democratizing knowledge. It makes valuable information, insights, and discoveries accessible to a broader audience. Scientific research, educational materials, and scholarly works are often translated, ensuring that individuals from different language backgrounds can benefit from the latest developments across various fields. This democratization of knowledge is instrumental in human progress.

1.5. Supporting International Business

In the business world, translation is a crucial enabler for companies operating in global markets. It allows them to communicate with customers, clients, and partners in their native languages, thereby facilitating international trade and collaboration. This is essential for the growth of the global economy and the prosperity of nations.

1.6. Preserving Endangered Languages

Translation also acts as a savior for endangered languages. By translating texts into these languages, the traditions and cultural heritage of minority communities are preserved and passed down to future generations. This not only helps in maintaining linguistic diversity but also ensures the survival of unique worldviews and knowledge systems.

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2. The Intricacies of Language and Thought

Language is far more than a medium for communication; it is deeply intertwined with human cognition and psychology. It influences the way we think, perceive the world, and interact with it. Understanding the connection between language and thought is pivotal to comprehending the broader role of language in mental understanding.

2.1. Linguistic Relativity

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, also known as linguistic relativity, postulates that language influences and shapes thought. This hypothesis suggests that the structure and vocabulary of a language can affect the cognitive processes and perception of its speakers. In other words, the language we speak influences the way we think and perceive the world around us.

2.2.1 Strong Linguistic Relativity: Some proponents of linguistic relativity argue that language determines thought to a significant degree. They believe that speakers of different languages perceive and conceptualize the world in fundamentally distinct ways.

2.2.2 Weak Linguistic Relativity: Others argue for a milder form of linguistic relativity, suggesting that language influences thought to a certain extent but does not entirely determine it. In this view, language plays a role in shaping cognitive processes but is not the sole factor.

2.2. Categorization and Language

Language plays a pivotal role in how we categorize and classify the world around us. Words are not merely labels; they are cognitive tools that help us organize and structure our thoughts. For example, in English, there are distinct words for various shades of color (e.g., "red," "blue," "green"), which influences how speakers perceive and categorize these colors. In contrast, some languages have fewer color terms, which can lead to different categorizations and perceptions.

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2.3. Memory and Language

Language is closely tied to memory. The way information is encoded, stored, and retrieved is influenced by the language in which it was learned. This connection is evident in research on bilingualism, where individuals who are proficient in multiple languages may find that their memory is influenced by the language they are using at a given moment.

2.4. Problem-Solving and Language

The role of language in problem-solving is another fascinating aspect of the connection between language and thought. The language we use can impact our problem-solving approaches and strategies. Research has shown that bilingual individuals, who have multiple language systems at their disposal, may exhibit enhanced cognitive flexibility and problem-solving abilities.

3. The Cognitive Advantages of Bilingualism

The interplay between language and thought is particularly evident in the cognitive advantages associated with bilingualism. Bilingual individuals, who navigate seamlessly between two or more languages, demonstrate a range of cognitive benefits, shedding light on the intricate relationship between language and psychology.

3.1 Cognitive Flexibility

Bilingualism fosters cognitive flexibility, allowing individuals to switch between languages and adapt to different linguistic and cultural contexts. This flexibility extends beyond language and can be applied to various cognitive tasks.

3.1.1. Code-Switching: Bilinguals are adept at code-switching, which is the ability to transition between languages within a conversation or context. This skill reflects their cognitive flexibility and adaptability.

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3.1.2 Enhanced Problem-Solving: Bilingual individuals often exhibit enhanced problem-solving skills, as they can approach challenges from multiple linguistic and cultural perspectives.

3.2 Inhibition and Cognitive Control

Bilingualism enhances cognitive inhibition, the ability to filter out irrelevant information and focus on the task at hand. This cognitive control is beneficial in various aspects of life, from academic performance to decision-making.

3.2.1 Enhanced Attention Control: Bilinguals are skilled at managing their attention and inhibiting interference from one language while using another.

3.2.1 Better Task Switching: Bilingual individuals excel in switching between different tasks or cognitive processes, showcasing their cognitive control abilities.

3.3 Neuroplasticity and the Bilingual Brain

Research has shown that bilingualism has a profound impact on the structure and function of the brain. The constant need to manage multiple languages and switch between them enhances neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to adapt and reorganize itself.

3.3.1 Increased Gray Matter: Bilingual individuals often exhibit increased gray matter in areas associated with language control and cognitive processes.

3.3.2 Slower Cognitive Aging: Bilingualism has been linked to a delayed onset of cognitive decline in older adults, indicating that it may have a protective effect against age-related cognitive disorders.

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3.3.3 Enhanced Executive Functions: The cognitive advantages of bilingualism extend to executive functions such as working memory, attention, and problem-solving.

4. Practical Implications: Education, Therapy, and Cross-Cultural Communication

Understanding the interconnected world of translation, language, and psychology carries practical implications for various fields, including education, therapy, and cross-cultural communication. This section explores the real-world applications of this interconnectedness.

4.1 Education

4.1.1 Enhancing Language Instruction: Recognizing the influence of language on thought, educators can develop more effective language instruction methods. This may involve integrating concepts from cognitive psychology and linguistic relativity into language teaching to improve comprehension and retention.

4.1.2 Promoting Bilingual Education: The cognitive benefits of bilingualism highlight the importance of promoting bilingual education programs. Schools can design curricula that support the development of multiple languages and the cognitive advantages associated with them.

4.1.3 Fostering Cultural Understanding: By emphasizing the interconnectedness of language and culture, educators can foster cultural understanding and empathy among students. This can lead to more inclusive and harmonious learning environments.

4.2 Therapy

4.2.1 Language and Mental Health: Therapists can consider the impact of language on mental health and well-being. Cultural sensitivity, language barriers, and linguistic relativity should be taken into account when providing mental health services to individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

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4.2.2 Bilingual Therapy: Bilingual therapists have a unique advantage in providing therapy to individuals with multilingual backgrounds. They can address cultural and linguistic factors that may influence mental health and therapy outcomes.

4.3 Cross-Cultural Communication

4.3.1 Effective Communication Strategies: In cross-cultural communication, understanding the role of translation, language, and psychology can lead to more effective communication strategies. This involves considering linguistic relativity, cultural nuances, and the potential impact of translation choices on the message's reception.

4.3.2 Cultural Sensitivity: Recognizing the interconnectedness of language and culture is essential for promoting cultural sensitivity in diverse interactions. Businesses, governments, and international organizations can benefit from an awareness of these dynamics.

Conclusion

The interplay among translation, language, and psychology forms a complex and interconnected world of mental understanding. Translation acts as the bridge that facilitates communication, promotes cultural exchange, democratizes knowledge, and preserves endangered languages. Meanwhile, language influences thought, perception, memory, problem-solving, and cognitive flexibility. Bilingualism demonstrates the cognitive advantages of navigating multiple linguistic and cultural worlds.

Recognizing and appreciating these interconnected relationships has far-reaching implications in education, therapy, and cross-cultural communication. Education can benefit from tailored language instruction and bilingual programs. Therapy can become more culturally sensitive and effective, especially for individuals with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Cross-cultural

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communication can be enhanced by considering the role of translation, language, and psychology in shaping interactions.

As we navigate the intricacies of language, we must remain mindful of its profound influence on our mental understanding of the world. This interconnected world of translation, language, and psychology enriches our lives, broadens our perspectives, and invites us to explore the depths of human cognition and communication. Ultimately, it reinforces the notion that language is not merely a means of expression; it is a gateway to the human mind and the world it seeks to understand.

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Gender Roles and Societal Expectations in the Novels of Preeti Shenoy

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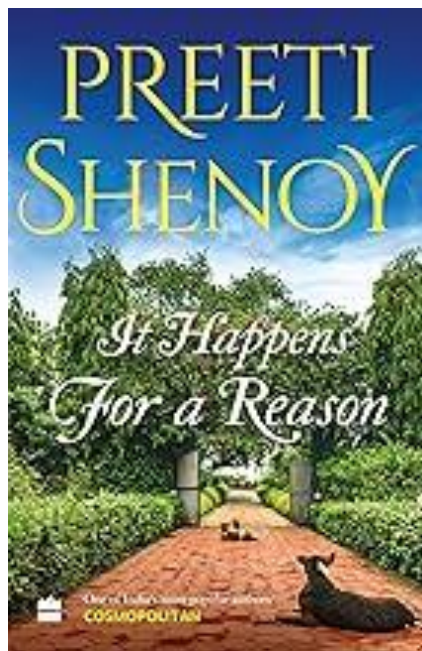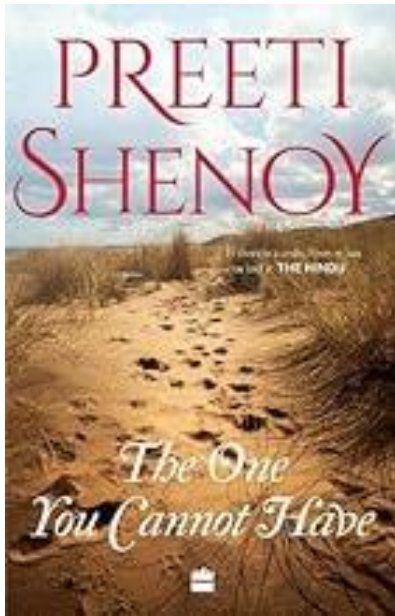
Abstract

Preeti Shenoy, a popular Indian author, is also a speaker and illustrator who primarily explores themes of love, relationships, female empowerment, personal growth, mental health, and navigating societal expectations through her novels. Preeti Shenoy's novels *It Happens for a Reason* and *The One You Cannot Have* explore the twists and turns on one's inner world, blended by the themes of love, loss, personal development and life's volatility. A common thread in both works is how characters work through emotional complexities, particularly through the yearning of love and agony later finding solidity in self-discovery. Through relatable characters and vivid storytelling, she is talking about several societal challenges regarding gender roles, societal customs and expectations, and the family dynamics in personal decisiveness is also elaborately woven into both novels, presenting an analysis on societal norms while advocating for personal sovereignty. Shenoy also touches on the idea of closure, both in relationships and during the time of maturation is another recurring component, where characters must come in terms with the past to stride ahead.

Keywords: Preeti Shenoy, *It Happens for a Reason, The One You Cannot Have,* Personal development, Gender roles, societal expectations.

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Courtesy: www.amazon.com

Preeti Shenoy's *It Happens for a Reason* is a story about love, friendship, exploration of life's unpredictability and the choices one makes that change the course of one's life. The story illustrates the idea that everything that ever happens in our life, happens for a reason even if it's good or bad. These experiences will shape us to be better in every aspect encouraging us for personal development. The protagonist of the narrative, Vipaasha (vee) is bits of the author herself. Vipasha is a single mother who faces various challenges from deprivation to disappointment. As an independent woman who lives opposite of societal expectations, the struggles she faced made her question the point of her life. As the protagonist's story progresses, she eventually understands that every difficulty or obstacle she came through led her to find deeper connections in people and in her life. The themes emphasize in the novel are, societal expectations, love, heartbreak, gender roles, personal development etc. In the end, the protagonist comes to peace with her life holding close to the belief that everything happens for a reason, which will ultimately lead her to the true path of happiness.

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     The One You Cannot Have, a page turning romantic novel by Preeti Shenoy, has a captivating narrative revolving around four main characters Aman, Shruti, Anjali, and Rishabh. Aman and Shruti were inseparable and so much in love during college, but because of Shruti's mother's illness she unexpectedly ended their relationship leaving Aman devastated forcing him to go out of the country. Aman even after his return to India, still longed for Shruti. Shruti also kept Aman's memories close to her heart even though she was married to Rishab. Anjali an independent writer was attracted to Aman, but he resisted himself from reciprocating her feelings back because of his affection towards shruti. The narrative centers on the themes of love, heartbreak, and the struggles one faces while moving on from a past commitment. The novel goes deep into the twists of unrequited love and complex relationships. The story leads to a poignant climax when Aman finally decided to spend his future with Anjali. Shenoy's style of writing and relatable characters reflect on our life, encouraging us to accept the past and move forward even if we have a 'one you cannot have' we met along our path.

     It Happens for a Reason explores themes of love, independence, sacrifice, unconventional life choices and personal growth. The protagonist Vee, then just an 18 years old becomes pregnant out of wedlock and decides to have the baby. She sacrifices her promising modelling career, leaves behind her family and cut ties with her child's father to raise the child alone. She moves and starts a new life. After sixteen years Vee is a single mother handling two careers: running a dog-boarding

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facility and working as a gym trainer. The story develops when Ankush- father of her child comes into her life again forcing her to confront her past and decisions which resulted in unresolved emotions. The book portrays Vee as a strong, independent woman and the book is famously noted for its vivid descriptions and the strong character development of Vee.

It happens for a reason goes deep into her struggles in a patriarchal society, complexities of unconventional choices and finally to her journey towards self-reliance, and independence.
The One You Cannot Have a modern-day romance novel by Preeti Shenoy which focuses on themes such as unrequited love, complicated relationships and struggles to move on from past relationships. The story revolves around Aman who just can't move on from his once inseparable ex- girlfriend Shruthi even though she is married to someone else. Aman's attempt to start over with Anjali, a woman who loves him deeply comes in vain when he realize that his heart still belonged to Shruthi and he can't move on. The narrative gives a perspective of both Aman - who can't get over Shruthi and Anjali- who struggle to win his heart. The book is praised for its relatable characters as it represents heartbreak, healing and moving on. It also highlights how no matter how we desire, there will always be a one we cannot have and how unresolved issues can have impact in our present life, giving importance to closure.

The One You Cannot Have and *It Happens for a Reason*, one of the notable themes she mentioned is on societal expectations and how it played a role in influencing the characters personal development and social relationships. We can find the main characters Aman and Shruti, who can't seem to find happiness in their current relationships, because of their internal conflict between societal expectations and personal longing. Shruti and Aman were deeply in love but because of some unforeseen circumstances and interference of fate, Shruti had to marry someone else from her community. This emphasized the immense pressure to abide by the traditional marriage norms by marrying within their own communities. Shruti's decision to marry within her own community even though she was deeply in love with Aman is a typical example. Societal expectations prioritize factors like family background, religion, caste, and community over personal desires and love, leading to several unhappy marriages.

The importance of family approval in matters of love and marriage is a significant factor in a typical Indian household. The characters were pressured by their families to make choices that match with their values and expectations, forcing one to surrender their own personal desires.

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There is also an unspoken expectation of people to "move on" after a heartbreak. Shruti and Aman are expected to accept their reality by leaving their past behind. However, the author made sure to mention the complexities of this expectation, revealing how past experiences can impact one's personal life and current relationships. The story suggests that moving on isn't that simple and a straightforward process as feelings can be deep and profound and will affect future decisions. Going deep into the novel *It happens for a reason* we can see characters representing societal expectations and conventional expectations.

It happens for a reason tells the story of Vipasha, a rising star in modelling with a socially respectable family background, who faced many sudden challenges in her life due to stubborn decisions. Shenoy's characters often carry qualities like having standard professions, value stability, success, and living within the standards of the society and norms. Through Vipasha's story the author indirectly mentions societal expectations related to career paths. While she is a model, initially her mother gave her disapproval as it was a profession perceived as unconventional, featuring her mother's character as someone who value stability and conventional success. Later, when she became successful in modelling her mother was delighted to boast about her to her social circle. This contrast underscores various expectations on individuals to choose careers that are both financially stable and socially conventional.

The novel is present with a lot of supportive friends and family members, reflecting the societal expectation of individuals expected to rely on their social circles for support. These characters usually give out conventional guidance and advices that go with the standard societal norms, later influencing the protagonist's decision. The novel also emphasizes the societal expectation on how individuals are pressured into carefully considering their decisions to avoid consequences and to make choices that abide with conventional values and expectations. In both the novels, Shenoy explores the pressure one face between individual desires and societal expectations. Her characters are often in dilemma while they are forced to choose between conventional norms and choosing their own happiness. The Novel also gives out the importance of self-awareness and self-resilience, and the courage to challenge societal norms and expectations to find pursuit in our own happiness.

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Preeti Shenoy's novels *The One You Cannot Have* and *It Happens for a Reason* seek on various aspects of gender roles and societal expectations. In the novel *The One You Cannot Have* the author explored the inner conflicts within individuals regarding complexities of relationships, especially emphasizing the societal pressures placed upon genders within those relationship. While this novel is not entirely focused on gender roles, it slightly showcases how gender roles can have an impact on individual decisions, when they are in a dilemma to choose between personal desires and conventional norms especially in the matter of extra marital-affair. The novel portrays the expectations placed on women in a patriarchal society like India. Their roles are secondary in social aspects and yet they are expected to be the obedient primary caretakers, maintainers and managers of home, and emotional Anchor that support the family. The female characters can be often seen struggling to choose between their personal desires and societal obligations. Women are often judged more oppressively for not following these norms than men in our society. Since, Men are portrayed as givers and protectors they often get immense pressure to succeed in their careers and maintain a certain financial stability. The novel explores how these expectations can strain a person and eventually lead them to find emotional comfort in connections outside their marriage. The novel highlights the social stigma and judgement upon women for engaging in extra marital-affairs than men even though both the parties are equally responsible. The concept of emotional exhaustion with female characters is presented by the author. They are often expected to bear the burden of emotional well-being and mental health of their partners and family, this force to stop their yearning for personal wishes outside of their domestic roles.

In the novel *It happens for a reason* Author portrays a 'New Woman' concept, a revolutionary ideal that challenged male patriarchy through the character of Vipasha, who makes eccentric choices despite the consequences. She lives independently both emotionally and financially supporting her family, challenging societal norms and gender discrimination.

In conclusion, both novels showcase Preeti Shenoy's ability in crafting engaging stories and portraying characters relatable to the audience. Her skill to add emotional depth while conveying contemporary social issues through her narration, explores the complexities of love and relationships. Both the themes of the stories analyze the relation on how societal expectations shapes individual experiences and how personal growth only occurs when the characters challenge

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these expectations. Preeti Shenoy's works represents the contemporary society, highlighting its struggles and social issues.

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The Young Vagrants: A Journey of Friendship and Adventure

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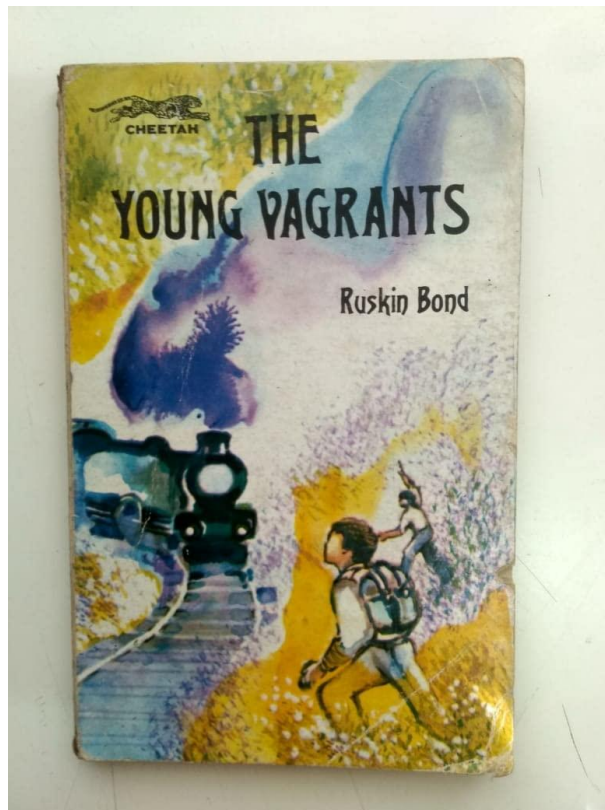
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This paper aims to analyse Ruskin Bond's *The Young Vagrants* as a piece of children's literature. The path for children's books' future was established when the requirements were recognized as one of the most important components of child development. Even though children's literature has been around since antiquity, it was included in mainstream literature. Only in the 19th century did it attain its own significance. Prior until that moment, parents forced children to read the books

they believed were suitable to them. The majority of this material was moralistic. Children were deprived of the things that would make them happy. The middle class began to gradually shift its perspective as a result of political and social shifts, starting to comprehend the intrinsic value of "children" and "childhood." This further contributed to the creation of children's literature that was written with their interests and relevance in mind.

Since Ruskin Bond is one of the best children's authors and his books have been cherished by young readers, his writings are more relevant while talking about children's literature in India. Several images, occurrences, and characters from his life contribute as vital avenues for inspiration for his writing, giving it an autobiographical tone. Bond paints a clear picture of his young figures by peering directly into their transparent hearts. His portrayal of the characters shows how well he understands the children's unassuming nature. The first-hand experiences of children who appear in his books serve as the foundation for his realism.

The novel *The Young Vagrants* was first published in 1981 by Indian book house. It is the sequel to the novel *The Room on the Roof* and has Rusty as the main character. It is autobiographical in tone and is pleasurable to read and is exciting with the alterations of the journey of Rusty and his companions. It is a suitable novel for older children. It deals with the pre-pubescent years of Rusty and his companions. It is a phase of identity crisis. The person is too old to be a child and too young to be an adult. At this transitional stage Rusty and his friends have to make several major decisions   regarding their future. The friend's runaway from their houses under various circumstances and wander to different places in search of livelihood and stablility.Finally Krishan finds a guardian in a well to do distant relative Mr.Bhusan and Rusty stumbles upon good fortune which changes his life and the novel ends with a traditional ray of hope.

Rusty's parents die when he is very young. His guardian, an Englishman, is very strict and restricts the boy's movement to his own community. Rusty's friend Somi once takes him to bazaar and shows him India and the world and life itself. Rusty's guardian beats him up on his return. Rusty returns the beatings and runs away from home. Somi introduces Rusty to Krishan who later on

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becomes Rusty's close friend. They both run away to Hardwar a wrong place to live. As they are at penury they have to walk much of the distance back to Dehra Dun. Their journey is filled with a lot of adventure. Back in Dehra Dun Krishan is found and taken home by his distant and well-to-do relative Mr. Bhusan. Rusty makes friends with Davinder and Sudhir the lafunga (loafer). He meets his father's friend Mr. Pettigrew who helps Rusty find his aunt who in turn hands over his father's belongings which proves to be Rusty's fortune. He then decides to go to England in search of a better future. The novel ends with the parting of the friends with a promise to meet again and Rusty's journey to England. The story ends on an optimistic note.

Rusty is the protagonist of the novel. He is a strong character. He is restless to know more about children of his age group. He is convent educated and has good knowledge of books and literature. He is very confident in himself and moves forward in search of a place to live. He makes good decisions hence his friends always rely upon him. He is a bookworm as mentioned by his friends and does not like to be disturbed while reading or writing. He is very focused from a very young age. Once his guardian takes him to Tarai jungle. Rusty finds a collection of books in the forest rest house. He reads all of them while the hunters are feasting. As Bond narrates: "Anyway, there they were – a shelf of some thirty volumes. The habit of reading books had brought in him the interest to be a writer. The shelf was catholic in its contents-as Rusty had soaked up Dickens, Woodhouse, M.R. James, George Eliot, Maugham and Barrie" (55). His keenness in books is seen by his extensive reading habits. Rusty has a very clear perception of life even at a very tender age.

Though the maturity level varies from one person to another in pre-pubescent age the peer group influence is more. Rusty's friends learn a lot of things from him .Even Rusty learns from hid friends the Indian way of living. He is now familiar with the language, local habits, society and culture of the place. But he is careful and has not accepted the wrong in his friends.

Peer groups have both positive and negative influence on adolescent. They learn traits like smoking, delinquency, careless driving; drug intake etc. sudhir has these negative traits. He offers Rusty to join him to earn money by duping people in the disguise of Sadhu. But Rusty refuses his

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offer.' I want to give some direction to my life. I want to work, I want to be free, I want to be able to write. I can't wander about the hills and plains with you forever (155) '. These words of Rusty are strong but humble. He is very focused about his goal and leaves no stone unturned in his path. He faces all odds to reach his aunt's abode in the hills. Rusty's determination to meet his aunt is so strong that he faces all odds of meeting her.

The hardships faced by Rusty shows his determination to achieve what he aims at. His love for his father is the sole cause for his eagerness to obtain the things left back by his father for him. Though the journey to the hills is tough he moves forward along with his friend Sudheer. He accepts Mr. Pettigrew's suggestion to go to England in search of a better life. He reaches this decision only after reasoning it out with Mr. Pettigrew which shows his maturity.

Rusty and his companions just act upon their instinct and run away from home. Though they have very little money and vague idea about their future cause of action, they seemed to be unshaken and confident and unregretful about their decision. The boys with their wit and wisdom could finally find their path in life.

The American's character in the novel is symbolic. He and Rusty meet twice only in the train and railway platform. First when they meet, they both are on a journey one in search of life and the other on a mission. The second time they meet both not very successful but undeterred they keep trying. The role of the American is significant. He is a dedicated white man who tries to bring about modernism in people for their better living. The American tries his best to convince the farmers about the benefits of the steel plough. But, even after several visits he manages to make very little progress. He says:

 "Oh! They are quite prepared to be convinced. The trouble is, they

Find it cheaper and easier to repair a wooden plough. You see

How complicated everything is ?it is a question of parts. For

Want of a bolt, the plough was lost, for want of a plough the

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Crop was lost, for want of crop…".

The despair is quite clear in American's tone. The backwardness and superstitions of the farmers fail to make them understand the importance of the steel plough. But the American seems never to give up until he succeeds. His character is significant in depicting the state of progress in Indian villages which are plagued by superstitions and distrust towards whiteman.

Apart from the protagonist Rusty the other important characters are rusty's friends.Krishan joins Rusty on his journey to Hardwar. He becomes homeless after losing his mother. Rusty changes his plan to go too England only due to Krishan.His feelings of responsibility towards Krishan as an elder brother holds him back. Krishan on the other hand is a carefree boy who do not take things seriously. His distinct relative Mr. Bhusan takes him away. He is happy in the company of Mrs.Bhusan's daughter Aruna. Rusty is happy for Krishan for he is secure in his rich aunt's house. He is one happy go lucky types who has everything but lose only to be found later.

Goonga on the other hand is a dumb youth, a thick person with shaved head at the tea stall. Everybody makes fun of him. He is used to these everyday torments. He likes Rusty because he buys him tea. He follows Rusty to the playground but is sent back by the latter. The plight of the disabled youth is depicted through this character. How Goonga accepts his faith and circumstance and just leaves on brings a feeling of compassion to the child reader. Devinder is another friend of Rusty. He is a partition refugee who is confident that he is quite older to make earnings to live as well as save for his studies. The boy on his own wits comes a long way in doing his intermediate course.

The other important character is Sudheer who is an orphan. He is originally from the frontier. He wanders as a homeless refugee over the border into India. He is adopted by a smuggler who teaches him the profession. When the smuggler is shot by the police, he once again becomes free. He is quite a criminal with principles who rob the rich and the greedy. His best friends are two dancing girls-Mrinalini and Hasthini. He often borrows money from them. Sudheer is a carefree and

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cheerful boy. He spends money as he earns and saves nothing. He is nicknamed 'lafunga' a loafer. He likes Divender and later on becomes a good friend of Rusty. He accompanies Rusty to the hills in search of Rusty's aunt. Sudheer though he chose robbery as his profession, he is a good boy in many ways. He is friendly; he lends money for Rusty's journey to the hills.

The novel is set in the backdrop of Himalayas. The long range of Shivalic hills spread with a magnificent carpet of greenery provide a good backdrop to the story. The protagonist rusty lives in picturesque Dehra Dun from where he and his friends wander to Hardwar (a pilgrim place of the Hindus), Raiwala, Doiwala. Dehra Dun is an old town but it is not the reign of Rajput prince or Maughal King under which it grew and flourished. It acquired a certain size and importance with the coming of British Anglo-Indian settlers. They have a sense of nostalgia since it reflects a little bit of England's green and pleasant atmosphere.

Bond states in the preface to the novel *Time Stops at Shamli and Other Stories* India is not found either in villages or metro cities but the "true India is found in the small towns" (9). His description of the social settings in the novel gives a true and varied picture of society during the early pre-independence period. The people are humble and have strong belief in god. They equally believe in supernatural elements like ghosts. The tea stall owner in the bazaar tells a few Jinn stories. Society is all powerful and everybody abides by the rules, customs and taboos set by society. Since Hardwar is a pilgrim centre people come in from all parts of India for religious fairs. Many wandering Sadhus are found here. Sudheer also puts on Sadhu disguise to cheat on the beliefs of rich men. "A Sadhu such as I, must have disciples, and they should be rich disciples. There must be many fat, rich men in the world, who are unhappy, about their consciences. Come, we will be their consciences!" Sudheer takes advantage of the beliefs and superstitions of the people to dupe them.

The bazaars are crowded and noisy. All the nearby village people come with their agricultural produce and have transactions. Business is very active in these towns though chaotic in state. The transport system is caravans, tongas, horses and bullock carts and occasionally crowded buses

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which also find most of the dust on the roads on its body. The roads are dusty and bumpy. The tea stall is a busy place. People sit for a small chat over tea and relax. The stall owner even tells stories to his customers. There is a railway line, which runs along Dehra Dun, Hardwar, Rishikesh and Delhi. The otherwise calm platforms become crowded on the arrival of trains. Men, women and children push and struggle to enter and get out of the train. Bundles of belongings are passed through windows to reserve seats. Several young men enter through windows. This kind of rush is usually during religious fairs.

There was a jam on the platform, while men, women and
children pushed and struggled, and it was several minutes before
anyone could get in or out of the carriage doors. The American
had been swallowed up by the crowed. Bundles of belongings
were passed through windows ,over the head of bystanders .
Several young men climbed in at the windows, heads first,
assisted by pushes from behind. Rusty assumed that there was
another fair at Hardwar, For the rush was even greater than usual.

Bond's description of the platform on arrival of the train is very realistic. His fineness in bringing out a live picture of the situation in a humorous way is laudable and also is pleasurable for the child reader.

The style used is simple with good use of appropriate words and sentences. The tone of the narrator is mixed and changes from casual to serious and sometimes humorous according to the situation. The sentences used are sharp and witty and convey a lot of meaning. For example: "A year ago when I ran away I slept on the maidan, and again I am going to sleep on the maidan. That's called progress."

Ruskin Bond's use of words is simple yet grips the child reader's attention. This novel is autobiographical in tone. Many incidents which bond went through in his childhood are

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fictionalized. The young reader finds the subject of the story realistic and identifies with the characters in the novel. This makes interesting and pleasurable reading for the teenagers.

The Young Vagrants is autobiographical in tone on the lines of Wordsworth epic poem *The Prelude* celebrating adolescence which is a brief and passing phase. It is a transition period from childhood to adulthood. This formative stage is full of ideas and conflicts which every teenager faces, and their families and society have a great influence on them. Rusty and his friend also go through similar experiences. Though they have no roof over their head and are wandering they are still optimistic.

Rusty's friends help him in many ways. Though they are at penury they are undeterred with principles and always true to guide each other in correct ways. Throughout their wandering period they display courage to face all odds in life and come out winners. Rusty's words of wisdom to Krishan speak about his foresight and realities of life when he says: "You can't run away from it (life) and service. You can't be a vagrant forever. You're getting nowhere, so you've got to stop somewhere"(124).Bond's *The Young Vagrants* is a novel about adolescent children who enjoy vagrancy with good friendship, exciting adventure, uncontrollable humour,dreams and reality and finally attain wisdom which enthralls the young audience.

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