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Women Don't Speak, the Land Remembers: Gender and Ecological Loss in *The Orchard Keeper*

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Abstract

The Orchard Keeper, published in 1965 by Cormac McCarthy, is frequently interpreted as a regional bildungsroman or as a story about Appalachian outlawry. It provides an interesting yet under-researched intersection of gendered silence, ecological decline, and environmental injustice. The paper posits that the landscape of the novel, especially the contaminated spray-pit, the rotting orchard and the militarised government tank, serve as archival places which recalls what its human community, and especially its women, are incapable of or unwilling to say. There are female figures such as Mildred Rattner, whose agency is limited and whose voices are silenced, a reflection of the exploitation of the land by industrial incursion and underground economies. The research explores how the logic of patriarchy and extractivism intersect, making women as well as nature inactive, expendable landscapes, through the prism of an ecofeminist approach based on the works of Karen Warren and Val Plumwood. Land becomes symbolic: soil, water and trees testify to buried trauma, unmentioned grief and systemic neglect. McCarthy looks to the modern issues in environmental justice, particularly, the morality of memory, the politics of disposability, and the displacement of silenced bodies, both human and nonhuman.

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The paper concludes that *The Orchard Keeper* is not just a Southern Gothic artefact but a prophetic reflection on the fact that gendered oppression and ecological violence are inseparable.

Keywords: gendered silence, ecological memory, patriarchy, ecological loss, toxic landscapes, female erasure, slow violence, interconnected oppressions, nonhuman narration.

Introduction

The Orchard Keeper is a novel that is frequently placed among Southern Gothic or regionalist textual traditions, yet, and perhaps most importantly, it provides an interesting location upon which ecofeminist research may be founded. The novel is set in the rugged terrain of rural Tennessee in the period between the World Wars. It follows the intertwining lives of the orphaned boy John Wesley Rattner, the bootlegger Marion Sylder and the old man Arthur Ownby, who is reclusive and lives a life of quiet violence. What is particularly lacking in the discourse on the novel is the long-term analysis of the ways gendered silence and ecological degradation interact. This paper contends that in *The Orchard Keeper*, the silence of women, whether of narration, marginalisation, or erasure of symbols, is likened to the gradual erosion of the natural world; the land itself becomes the repository of unspeakable trauma, of that which human speech, particularly female voice, is unable to express.

The portrayal of women by McCarthy is quite pathetic. The mother of John Wesley, Mildred Rattner, is represented solely by fragmented memory and household habits, her mourning is privatised and her power is restrained (McCarthy 42-43). Other female characters, the unnamed wife of Sylder, Mrs. Tipton, are moved to the background, limited to practical utterances or to outbursts of emotion lacking narrative control. This obliteration reflects the so-called "logic of domination," in which the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature can be traced back to the same logic of hierarchical thinking that places reason above emotion, culture above nature and male above female (Warren 22). This logic can be seen in McCarthy's *Red Branch*, not merely in the dynamics between the characters, but also in the physical shift to the industrial, the dead orchard, and the government tank that is built on Red Mountain. All of these indicate an advancing industrial order that re-places the ecological balance and communal memory.

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More importantly, the landscape takes a mnemonic role where human testimony is weak. The wasted orchard and the polluted pit are not simple manifestations of an absent-mindedness they are conscious of. Western dualisms, as Val Plumwood argues, divide mind and body, human and nature, making the nonhuman world dumb and lifeless (Plumwood 45). However, McCarthy breaks this dualism: the land speaks in its scars. Whenever children discover a dead body in the spray-pit, it is the soil and not any adult who testifies to concealed violence (McCarthy 78-79). This is in line with the idea proposed by Rob Nixon of the concept of a slow violence that is incremental, invisible violence that is caused to marginalised bodies and to the environment over time (Nixon 2). "Slow violence" is accumulated in Red Branch through water that is contaminated, vacant huts, and women who have been muted, and are merely some of the victims of the system that values neither persons nor the location.

Therefore, this research question is the following: How does McCarthy treat women in nature? How does the landscape act as a witness or memory-keeper? And what ecological loss are gendered reflections of dispossession? Through questioning *The Orchard Keeper* with an ecofeminist approach, we find the way in which *The Orchard Keeper* predicts modern issues in environmental justice, in which voice, visibility, and care meet in the fight against systemic erasure.

Discussion

Absent Voices: The Erasure and Marginalisation of Women

In Cormac McCarthy's *The Orchard Keeper*, women are not actors, but ghost images who are seen briefly or recalled in pieces or subjugated to a functional role in a male-dominated world. The fact that they are virtually absent in the centre of the narrative is not accidental but structural in nature, and it shows a community where gendered exclusion takes place collaboratively with ecological dispossession. The three female characters: Mildred Rattner, the nameless wife of Sylder, and Mrs. Tipton are the perfect example of this erasure since none of them are shown in depth but rather only in their relationships with men or as housewives.

The most heartrending instance of such marginalisation is the mother of the boy, John Wesley, Mildred Rattner. She does not even speak in the novel; she is mediated totally by the memory or the observation of others. When she comes on stage, physically, it is in domesticity-

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drudgery scenes: "pinching from loaf to loaf across the bread rack" or tending to a smokehouse (McCarthy 32). The signs of misery imprint her body; she feels "gaunt," with sunken eyes, but her sorrow at the loss of her husband is privatised, heterosocial separation. Even her moral declamations ("When them as wallers in sin thinks they's gettin by with it, that's when He strikes em") are uttered in isolation, unheard by those who perpetuate the violence she condemns (McCarthy 32). The agency is cancelled out; her agency is an instrument of loss, not of moral or ecological existence on the Red Branch.

Sylder has a wife, but in a little domestic scene, she is silent as well. She only appears after Sylder had gone through a violent run-in and is looking after him as he bleeds and whispers, "Damn you," a phrase that captures frustration without authority (McCarthy 195). His bruises are bathed by her hand, her hand bringing his clothes, nurturing, but reactive, never of plot or place. Importantly, she is not referred to by name, which further promotes her as the extension of Sylder instead of a person. Her role is representative of the so-called subsistence perspective, as Maria Mies calls women's reproductive and care labour: this type of work supports the social life. Still, it is economically and narratively invisible (Mies 116). Red Branch male existence is based on such labour, which does not allow access to decision-making, land, and discussion.

Mrs. Tipton is even more ephemeral, as she is only mentioned as a wife to June Tipton at a time of need. She gives the wet boy and wounded Sylder coffee and dry clothes, but she does so as a sign of hospitality and not independence (McCarthy 178-79). She possesses nothing, owns no resources, and has no opinion concerning the deterioration of the environment that is happening to her, the poisoned creek, the dead orchard, the government tank towering over the mountain, like the rest. None of the women of the novel possesses land, plants trees and challenges industrial encroachment. Their silence is not an individual one but a systematic one that is reminiscent of what Adrienne Rich terms the "re-vision" of patriarchal narrative: women are not written, they become passive observers of the male action (Rich 18).

This annihilation does not only end on the characters but also on the very structure of the novel. The scenery, orchards, creeks, and spray-pits are viewed solely through the eyes of the man: the stewardship of Arthur Ownby, the bootlegging paths of Sylder, the trapping of John Wesley. This ecological imagination does not include women. Their non-presence does not merely suggest literary omission; it demonstrates a world perception where nature and femininity are actually places of exploitation, rather than a conversation. According to Mies, "the systems

of capitalism and patriarchy make women invisible, inactive and non-political labour" (Mies 45), a phenomenon that is reflected in the Tennessee hollow of McCarthy, where women are the ones who make things work but are deprived of voice, visibility, and volition.

Therefore, the women of *The Orchard Keeper* are haunting not due to their lack of substance, but due to the unwillingness of the story to offer them substance. Their mute reflection is the degradation of the land: both are not subjects, but mute land to be used.

The Land as Archive: Nature's Mnemonic Function

In *The Orchard Keeper* by Cormac McCarthy, the landscape is not only an object in the background, but it functions as a living reminiscence, trauma, and moral history. The orchard, creek, spray-pit and Red Mountain act as mute witnesses to human violence, neglect and erasure as witnesses to precisely where the human voice has failed. As societies are unwilling to speak or even cannot speak the truth about death, exploitation or complicity, the land takes the role of the person to remember. The soil, water, and trees become nonhuman narrators, and their materiality is filled with the residue of the unspoken past. This ecological mnemonic action coincides with the idea about "trans-corporeality" of Stacy Alaimo, according to which, "human being is continually entangled in the material world and that bodily boundaries are permeable allowing substances, toxins and memories to pass through human and nonhuman bodies" (Alaimo 2). The earth does not forget; land archives in McCarthy, Tennessee hollow.

There is no more chilling performance of this archival part than in the spray-pit, a concrete tank previously employed in mixing insecticide, but now in use as a secret grave. When two children fall into the pit and peep through the green face wrought and coming out of the clear, rotting water with the eyeless socket and green fleshless grin, they run away in horror, with no time to process it. (McCarthy 108). The deceased, who came to be Kenneth Rattner, the father of John Wesley, stays underwater over the years, and nobody recognises it or acknowledges its existence. The pit turns into a place of mass negation: nobody takes the body away, no investigation is initiated, and life is moving on as though nothing has been taking place. Yet the land holds fast. The thick green furred top of stagnant water, the "sour... odour, like bad milk," and the moss clinging to the concrete walls all testify to the decay festering beneath the surface (108). The pit is silent; the very fact of its existence demands memory. Toxic environments, as Alaimo argues, exist "materialise social injustices," making visible what dominant narratives suppress (Alaimo 27). The spray takes the form of the silent complicity of the community.

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Similarly, the ruined orchard serves as a palimpsest of generational loss. Once productive "fruit had come so thick and no one to pick it that at night the overborne branches cracking sounded in the valley like distant storms raging the orchard now lies in desolation, baked under a sky of pitiless blue" (McCarthy 65, 3). The reference to rotting fruit left to the ground not only brings one to the image of economic deprivation but also a more essential failure of care, stewardship, and continuity. The rot of the orchard is a reflection of the weakening of the family and social ties: Mildred Rattner mourns alone, Arthur Ownby is a hermit, and Marion Sylder works beyond the law. This entropy gets recorded in the land. Its red dust, "like powder from a brick kiln and cracked clay in endless micro cataclysm reflect a world where coherence has collapsed" (3). Even though it reflects the paradox of abandonment, the orchard is a reminder of the abundance, even when it is abandoned, as an ecological memory that continues to exist outside human will.

The old man, Arthur Ownby, the guard of the spray-pit, the tender of his bit of mountain, represents another epistemology which is based on close, embodied knowledge of place. He is walking the forest with a hickory pole "hewed... octagonal and graced the upper half with hex-carvings nosed moons, stars, fish of strange and pleistocene aspect, suggesting a cosmology woven into the landscape itself" (115). He is familiar not with the seasonal cycles, animal footprints, and spots of concealed springs, but with the experience of relationship. This is in stark contrast to the infiltration of the state tank, a fenced-in and anonymous building with red markings placed on red mountain with no explanation or consultation. The tank is a symbol of institutional blindness: it enforces order in ignorance and control in unconcern. When later Ownby shoots holes into the tank using spent cartridges of the shot hollowed out, he does a ritual of resistance where he claims that the land cannot be turned into a state utility (194). His action is no vandalism but re-taking: a statement that the meaning of the mountain is bigger than bureaucratic naming.

This conflict between the embodied ecological knowledge and institutional abstraction exposes the nature of memory as a site of contention. The state views the mountain as an infrastructure place; Ownby as an archive of living. McCarthy goes on the same side as the latter. The novel indicates that the truth is not found in the written documentation, but in the tangible remnants within the ground and water, which are due to the diligence of Ownby and to the persistence of the land itself. We have to learn to, as Donna Haraway encourages us to "make kin

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rather than make empire to forge relationships of reciprocity with the more-than-human world" (Haraway 58). In *The Orchard Keeper*, the land is family: it cries, recalls, and holds to its feet. In the event of the failure of human institutions, such as the sheriff's office, the church and the family, all the creek, the orchard and the pit assume the role of witnessing.

Even the flora and fauna of this mountain are involved in this mnemonic ecology. The dying hound of the family, Scout, detects the dead body in the pit before the human beings accept it (109). Possums, owls and buzzards creep in and out of the story as ghostly spectators, their presence reinforcing the boundaries of human perception. The natural world is governed by another temporality, one that tolerates decay, seasonal re-emerging and long-repressed truths. The trapping of muskrats by John Wesley makes him part of an ancestral subsistence, although he even has his own traps caught up in the violence of the land: seized by officers seeking to find out what is happening with bootlegging, they represent the policing and violation of ecological intimacy. However, the creek lives, and the water of the creek brings silt, blood, and memory to the downstream.

Finally, McCarthy introduces the land as not scenery as a passive object but as an ethical actor. It is not judgmental, it is not forgetful. The odour of the spray-pit, the sterility of the orchard, the silent vigilance of the mountain, all this is testimony. In a society where women are oppressed, men become violent, and institutions are indifferent, the earth is the sole valid narrator. As Alaimo writes, "the environment is not 'out there' but is intertwined with the human body and social practices" (Alaimo 10). In Red Branch, conscience is lacking in the people because they do not have one.

The Orchard Keeper, therefore, foresees the current environmental justice issues by making land the location of historical resolution. The novel urges the view that ecological degradation and social amnesia are co-constitutive and necessitate the acknowledgement of the stories that are written in soil, water and bones to be healed. The land remembers. Whether man will ever know how to read it is the question.

Parallel Oppressions: Linking Gendered and Ecological Violence

The Orchard Keeper creates a world where domination is not the exception but the organising principle, which works at once on human bodies, especially on female ones, as well as on the natural world. The novel never expressed it explicitly as a political critique. Still, through its imagery, the interaction between its characters, and ecological destruction, a deep fit

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between gendered oppression and environmental oppression can be seen. Hunting, bootlegging, dumping, and shooting are not just survival or rebellion; they are manifestations of a widespread logic of mastery where land and femininity become territories to be conquered, devoured or dumped. This group ideology of a common sense that ecofeminist philosopher Karen J. Warren calls the "logic of domination posits that the same conceptual framework that grounds and justifies the domination of nature also grounds and justifies the domination of women" (Warren 43). The logic of this situation can be traced in the Red branch as parallel violence, the silencing of women and the poisoning of creeks, the erasure of female agency and the deforestation of hillsides, the vulnerability of domestic animals and the disposability of feminine life.

Look at the factory incursions that are etched in the scenery. The government tank in Red Mountain comes without consultation, explanation, or consideration of the local knowledge through a fenced structure, which is anonymous with red warning signs (McCarthy 194). It is a representation of state power that imposes itself on communal space, transforming the mountain as a lived, narrated space into a bureaucratic location. Similarly, the Green Fly Inn functions as a node of moral and ecological decay: its waste pit overflows with refuse, its patrons engage in illicit trade, and its very name evokes contamination ("green fly" suggesting rot and infestation). The whiskey trade, which forms the main occupation of Sylder, also involves the land in the workings of digging and wasting away; the stills concealed in gullies damage the streams with chemical effluents, and the hauling of whiskey leaves the paths in the woods scratched. Not neutral economic activities but ecological forms of violence based on instrumentalism, the perception of nature as a resource and not a relation. Such instrumentalism as Greta Gaard notes is "inextricably linked to patriarchal values that position women, like nature, as passive, inert, and available for male use" (Gaard 57).

This is instrumental logic when applied to the treatment of women. Women characters never have the freedom to decide what to do with their bodies, voice and space. Mildred Rattner is just a prisoner of the house; her lamentation lives inside her, her voice is never heard in the conversation (McCarthy 32). Sylder's wife appears briefly to tend his wounds, uttering only "Damn you" before receding into silence, a reactive cry, not a constitutive act (195). No woman is a land-owner, a tree-planter, or even an inquisitor of the encroachment of industry. Their marginalisation is not incidental but systemic, reflecting what Gaard identifies as the "interlocking systems of oppression" that bind sexism, classism, and ecological destruction

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(Gaard 60). Poverty in Red Branch brings out such a dynamic: as women work to make ends meet, their efforts go unacknowledged, as is the case with soil that feeds crops but gets trampled on.

This dominance in duality is shown even by apparently harmless contact with nature. Hunting, as an example, is not represented as a means of subsistence, but as a challenge. John Wesley does not hunt muskrats according to the need to do it, but as a way of initiation into a masculine economy of capture and control (McCarthy 89-90). Arthur Ownby is more sensitive to land, but he nonetheless uses dominion shooting crows, traps and finally shoots into a government tank as a measure of defending territory (194). His opposition, however noble, is nevertheless put in a paradigm of ownership: the mountain is his to defend. This is a reflection of men who, in the novel, assert dominance over the lives of women: Sylder, his wife, Kenneth Rattner, his wife (even after her death), the sheriff, his community, and the moral order of the community. The common denominator is control, whether it is control over terrain or control over the body.

The most frightening demonstration of such parallel vulnerability, perhaps, is the death of the cat. Early in the novel, an owl attacks a housecat, leaving it "half eaten... entrails strung along the fence like garlands" (McCarthy 22). It is grotesque lyricism to depict the helplessness of the cat to face a predatory power it could have never imagined or counterattack. This scene reverberates further than its horror at the moment: the cat, the domesticated, needy, and silent creature, is used as a metaphor of the feminine in a world of eating. Similar to Mildred, it is in a liminal zone between the wild and the fully secured and suffers the consequences. Its bloody conclusion highlights the fragility of any vulnerable body within a structure that values power, aggression and dominance.

McCarthy avoids explicit condemnation; his criticism lies between the lines of juxtaposition. The dead body in the spray-pit is lying next to empty bottles of whiskey. The government tank dominates over the cabin of Ownby, who carves stars in his walking stick. The garden is rotting as men wrangle over land. These images are piled up to reveal a world perspective where domination is normalised on registers. As Warren argues, "oppressions are interconnected not just empirically but conceptually," meaning that challenging one requires confronting the underlying logic that sustains them all (Warren 50). Although steeped in

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Southern Gothic fatalism, this reasoning, though, finds oblique reproach in *The Orchard Keeper*, which reveals its effects: poisoned water, muffled women, dead cats and broken lineages.

The novel prefigures, in this regard, ecofeminist demands of intersectional justice in the contemporary era. Gaard insists that "environmental issues cannot be separated from issues of gender, race, and class" (Gaard 62), and McCarthy's Tennessee hollow embodies this entanglement. The land is hurt as it is perceived to be expendable, and women are hurt as they are perceived to be secondary. Both are victims of one long-standing ideology that mistakes power and control and considers care as a sign of weakness. In turning neither masculinity nor wilderness into a romantic image, McCarthy shows what the price of such a worldview is: a world where memory is drowning in poisonous pits, voices are disappearing to the wind, particularly those of women.

Resistance Through Stewardship: Quiet Acts of Care

Despite the fact that women in *The Orchard Keeper* are not given much narrative centrality, they continue to have power through minor but consistent gestures of caring that are a form of veiled revolt against the logic of domination that fills Red Branch. These gestures, preserving food, maintaining domestic order, and mourning in silence, are not grand political statements but forms of what Ariel Salleh terms "embodied materialism": a mode of knowing and acting rooted in reproductive labour that sustains life even amid ecological and social decay (Salleh 23). Even though there is no explicit feminist criticism in McCarthy, these feminine-infused practices demonstrate a long-standing ethics of care that defies the ethos of extraction and violence that dominate the novel.

One of such actions is the work of Mildred Rattner in the smokehouse. Though she appears only briefly, her labour is precise and purposeful: "she pinched from loaf to loaf across the bread rack" and oversees the curing of meat in the smokehouse, a space of preservation in a world marked by rot and abandonment (McCarthy 32). This subsistence work, while embedded in domestic confinement, embodies what Vandana Shiva calls "seed sovereignty": the assertion of autonomy through nurturing life-sustaining practices outside capitalist or state control (Shiva 56). The smokehouse by Mildred is not just a storage shed where food is placed to avoid spoiling, but it is also one of the places where memories are preserved, as much as it is the place

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where food is preserved. It is still too soon and unexpressed that she mourns the death of Kenneth, but the fact that she is still labouring is an expression of resistance against chaos.

In addition to the individual deeds, McCarthy suggests offstage female networks, which become the sources of communality. Women are shown at the general store, in church pews, or sitting on porches, characters who swap news, resources and maintain social solidarity by informal means. While never named or developed, their collective presence echoes the "Stitch-and-Bitch" circles Barbara Kingsolver depicts in novels like Animal Dreams, where women's talk becomes a form of cultural preservation and mutual support (Kingsolver 112). In *The Orchard Keeper*, these networks are ghostly, but the implied presence of these networks indicates that care is moving even where it is not being told. These women do not even challenge the sheriff or destroy the government tank, yet they preserve the houses, feed children, and preserve rituals that bind the community to continuity.

Above all, this ecological sensitivity of John Wesley Rattner can be interpreted as a legacy of this repressed maternal morality. John Wesley is not as thoughtless as Sylder, who uses the land to make money, or the authorities, who develop infrastructure without knowing it; he picks his traps but also tracks animal tracks, hears the birds call, and follows the seasonal cycles (McCarthy 89-90). He is not at war with nature in a master-slave relationship but rather in a relationship of reciprocity, an ethic that has more to do with care than domination. This sensibility, since he has had little experience with male mentors (his father has died, Sylder is transient, Ownby is reclusive), could have been ingrained in him at an early age by the silent attentions of Mildred. As Salleh argues, "reproductive labour transmits values of nurturance and interdependence across generations," even when those values are marginalised in dominant discourse (Salleh 41). It is a displaced manifestation of a feminine ethic that survives despite being repressed, as is the reverence of the land by John Wesley.

These acts of care do not overturn patriarchy or halt deforestation, but they constitute what Shiva describes as "living economies", spaces where life is valued over profit, connection over control (Shiva 72). Such scenes are not accidental in a novel, which is full of violence and loss; they are resistant ones because they reject the logic that makes both the women and nature disposable. A smokehouse, the pew in the church, the careful steps of the boy over the creek, these are places where there is still a second way of seeing the world.

Conclusion

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The Orchard Keeper shows that ecological degradation and gendered erasure are not similar processes but identical violences which constitute one another. Only women such as Mildred Rattner can become spectral, as they are only remembered by men or even their usefulness in the household, as the land becomes poisoned by industrial intrusion and black market economies turn into the only storehouse of unspoken trauma. However, within this silence, the novel finds a silent ethics of care: there is the smokehouse, the pew in church, the boy paying attention to the creek. Drawing on ecofeminist frameworks, this analysis shows how McCarthy's early work critiques the "logic of domination" that exploits both nature and femininity, even as it gestures toward alternative modes of relation embodied, gynocentric, and ecologically attuned. No character itself appears to stand against systemic violence, but the land itself serves as witness, archive and moral compass. By doing this, *The Orchard Keeper* preempts the current environmental justice issues, stating that remembrance, care, and accountability are to be based on the very soil from which we have lost the knowledge of reading.

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Recovering the Unspoken: Urmila and Narrative Silence in Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister*

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Abstract

This study revisits the marginalised figure of Urmila—who endures fourteen years of separation during her husband's exile—through the lens of narrative silence and gendered exclusion in Indian epic traditions. In Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister*, Urmila, largely eclipsed within canonical *Ramayana* narratives, is brought to the centre of narrative and critical attention. While epic traditions privilege masculine action, exile, and heroism, women's emotional endurance and ethical labour remain largely unrecorded. Kane's retelling intervenes in this narrative hierarchy by foregrounding Urmila's interior life, ethical reflection, and sustained endurance as meaningful forms of agency. Drawing on feminist criticism and postcolonial perspectives, particularly Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's interrogation of silencing, this paper examines how dominant narrative structures marginalise women while claiming to represent them. Through close textual analysis, the study argues that Urmila's articulation in *Sita's Sister* constitutes a mediated recovery of suppressed subjectivity rather than a purely modern or anachronistic reimagining. By re-signifying silence as a historically produced narrative condition, the paper demonstrates how

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feminist retellings reclaim ethical and narrative space for marginalised women within Indian epic traditions.

Keywords: Kavita Kane, Urmila, Ramayana retellings, feminist criticism, narrative silence, Indian mythology

Introduction

Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister* intervenes in the *Ramayana* tradition by foregrounding Urmila, a figure whose prolonged absence from the epic's narrative centre reveals the gendered logic of canonical storytelling. Across authoritative tellings of the *Ramayana,* women's experiences are selectively narrated, with priority accorded to masculine action, exile, and heroism, while female endurance remains largely unrecorded. This pattern is evident in canonical versions such as Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Kamban's *Iramavataram*, where Urmila appears only fleetingly and without narrative access to her emotional or ethical labour. Her silence in these texts is not incidental but structurally produced through epic conventions that privilege public action over private endurance.

By re-centring Urmila, Kane's retelling exposes how patriarchal narrative authority renders certain forms of suffering and ethical labour invisible. *Sita's Sister* does not merely supplement the epic with an omitted character; rather, it reconfigures narrative focus by treating Urmila's waiting, restraint, and interior conflict as ethically significant forms of experience. In doing so, the novel makes legible what canonical tellings systematically exclude. Urmila's articulation emerges not as a rupture from tradition but as a mediated recovery of suppressed subjectivity, revealing how epic silence functions as a mechanism of gendered marginalisation rather than as an inherent feminine virtue.

This paper examines *Sita's Sister* as a feminist reinterpretation of epic silence that interrogates the gendered hierarchies embedded in *Ramayana* traditions. Rather than treating myth as a static cultural inheritance, Kane's retelling engages critically with the epic as a dynamic narrative tradition shaped by historical, social, and ideological forces. Read within this framework, feminist retellings do not disrupt epic authority but participate in its ongoing reconfiguration by foregrounding marginalised perspectives that canonical narration renders peripheral.

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Scholarly work on the *Ramayana* has consistently emphasised its plural and non-monolithic nature, shaped by multiple tellings across regions, languages, and historical moments. Within such a tradition, narrative silences are not accidental gaps but structurally produced absences that reflect dominant ideological priorities. Kane's intervention operates within this narrative plurality by reorienting attention toward Urmila, whose marginalisation exemplifies how women's emotional endurance and ethical labour are excluded from epic remembrance. The novel thus reinterprets epic authority itself by treating silence as a critical site of feminist inquiry.

Within this context, decolonising gender does not imply rejecting tradition but critically examining how gendered meanings are produced through intersecting structures of patriarchy and historical power. In this study, "decolonising gender" does not refer to a nationalist return to a pure precolonial past, nor to the rejection of Western feminist thought. Rather, it refers to examining how colonial modernity and indigenous patriarchy together shaped interpretations of epic womanhood. The term is used here to advocate culturally situated readings of gendered subjectivity within Indian narrative traditions rather than universalised feminist frameworks. Rather than imposing universal feminist models, this approach foregrounds culturally situated forms of subjectivity shaped by kinship, dharma, and ethical obligation. In *Sita's Sister*, silence is not represented as a feminine ideal but as a structurally imposed condition that regulates women's visibility within epic narratives.

Positioned within this framework, the paper analyses how Urmila's marginalisation in canonical *Ramayana* tellings reflects patriarchal narrative authority that privileges heroic masculinity while rendering women's ethical labour invisible. Kane's retelling intervenes in this hierarchy by foregrounding Urmila's interior life and moral reflection, transforming silence into a site of critical inquiry. Rather than presenting Urmila as a liberated subject outside tradition, the novel constructs her agency within the constraints of kinship and dharma, revealing how gendered subjectivity is negotiated rather than freely articulated. In this sense, *Sita's Sister* functions as a feminist narrative intervention that reclaims indigenous narrative space for marginalised women while remaining grounded in epic tradition.

Literature Review

Scholarly engagement with the *Ramayana* has long recognised the epic as a foundational cultural text shaping social ethics, gender norms, and moral imagination in South Asia. Early

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Indological and nationalist scholarship often treated the *Ramayana* as a unified and authoritative narrative, privileging Sanskritic versions while marginalising regional, oral, and vernacular tellings. Such approaches reinforced a masculinist narrative focus centred on kingship, exile, and heroic action, confining women largely to idealised archetypes of devotion, chastity, and sacrifice, while rendering their experiential realities narratively insignificant.

Feminist historiography has challenged these interpretive frameworks by foregrounding the systematic exclusion of women's experiences from historical and literary archives. Scholars such as Gerda Lerner and Uma Chakravarti have demonstrated how patriarchal kinship structures shaped women's social roles, obscuring their emotional, ethical, and intellectual labour. Chakravarti's critique of nationalist historiography, in particular, exposes how claims regarding women's "high status" in ancient India often rely on symbolic representation while masking lived inequalities. These insights are especially relevant to epic narratives, where women are frequently elevated as moral ideals even as their subjective experiences remain unarticulated.

Within literary studies, feminist interventions into mythological narratives have increasingly focused on retellings as critical sites of reinterpretation rather than derivative adaptations. K. Ramanujan's articulation of the *Ramayana* as a plural and evolving tradition destabilises the notion of a singular epic authority, opening interpretive space for marginalised perspectives. Paula Richman further emphasises the legitimacy of diverse renderings across languages, genres, and audiences, situating retellings as integral to the epic tradition rather than as deviations from an "original" text.

Postcolonial feminist theorists have cautioned against universalising feminist frameworks that erase cultural specificity. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's interrogation of subalternity reveals how women's voices are often mediated or rendered non-narratable within dominant discursive systems, while Chandra Talpade Mohanty critiques Western feminist constructions of "Third World women" as homogeneous victims, calling instead for historically grounded and culturally situated analyses of agency. Together, these perspectives underscore the need to examine how gendered subjectivity is negotiated within specific social and ethical frameworks rather than through universalised models of resistance.

Recent feminist mythological fiction, including works by Kavita Kane, participates in this critical landscape by revisiting epic silences through culturally embedded narratives.

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However, existing scholarship has often approached such retellings descriptively, focusing on themes of recovery or empowerment without sustained theoretical engagement with how silence, narrative authority, and gendered exclusion operate within epic traditions. In particular, *Sita's Sister* has received limited critical attention as a postcolonial feminist intervention grounded in indigenous ethical frameworks.

While figures such as Sita and Draupadi have been widely examined in feminist epic studies, secondary women characters positioned outside the epic's central moral economy remain critically underexplored. This imbalance reflects a broader tendency to privilege overt resistance and visible transgression while overlooking forms of endurance, ethical negotiation, and interior reflection. A focused engagement with Urmila therefore offers an important opportunity to extend feminist readings of the *Ramayana* beyond recovery narratives, enabling a deeper interrogation of how silence functions as a historically produced narrative condition that regulates women's visibility within indigenous storytelling traditions.

Research Gap

While existing scholarship has extensively examined the plurality of the *Ramayana* and the rise of feminist retellings, there remains a significant gap in sustained analysis of silence as a narrative and structural mechanism within epic traditions. Studies of feminist mythological fiction often emphasise themes of empowerment, recovery, or resistance without sufficiently interrogating the conditions that render women's experiences marginal in the first place. In particular, *Sita's Sister* has received limited critical attention as a postcolonial feminist intervention grounded in indigenous ethical frameworks. Where the novel is discussed, Urmila is frequently treated as a recovered or empowered figure rather than as a site through which patriarchal narrative authority and gendered exclusion can be critically examined. The absence of focused analysis on Urmila's silence—understood not as passivity but as a historically produced condition—marks a clear gap in existing research.

Furthermore, readings of contemporary mythological retellings rarely engage Indian feminist historiography in sustained dialogue with literary texts. Feminist frameworks developed by scholars such as Chakravarti, Lerner, Spivak, and Mohanty are seldom integrated to examine how gendered subjectivity is negotiated within indigenous cultural systems rather than in opposition to them. This study addresses these gaps by offering a theoretically grounded reading

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of *Sita's Sister* that foregrounds silence, ethical labour, and narrative marginalisation as central analytical concerns.

By reframing silence as a structural and epistemic condition rather than a narrative absence, the study moves beyond celebratory readings of empowerment to examine how women's agency is shaped within kinship, dharma, and narrative authority. In doing so, it contributes to postcolonial feminist literary studies by demonstrating how indigenous feminist interventions operate through ethical negotiation from within tradition, positioning Urmila as a culturally situated subject whose experience complicates dominant models of resistance.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodology grounded in close textual analysis and feminist criticism. The primary text, *Sita's Sister* by Kavita Kane, is examined through a postcolonial feminist perspective informed by feminist historiography, subaltern studies, and narrative theory. Rather than approaching the novel as a simple act of recovery or revision, the analysis focuses on how narrative silence, ethical endurance, and emotional labour are constructed and re-signified within the text.

The methodological framework draws on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of subalternity to examine the limits of articulation and the mediation of women's voices within patriarchal narrative structures. Postcolonial feminist critiques of universalised feminist categories inform the study's emphasis on culturally situated forms of agency, while insights from Indian feminist historiography, particularly Uma Chakravarti's work, provide a historical grounding for analysing gendered exclusion within epic traditions.

Close textual analysis is conducted by examining key narrative moments in which Urmila reflects, questions, or negotiates her ethical position. These moments are read in relation to canonical *Ramayana* traditions to identify shifts in narrative focus, authority, and ethical emphasis. The study does not seek to establish authorial intent or historical authenticity but instead examines how contemporary retellings participate in the ongoing reconfiguration of epic meaning.

In addition, a comparative narrative approach is employed to analyse how omission, brevity, and silence function differently across epic tellings. Feminist narrative theory is used to

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examine how interiority, ethical reflection, and emotional endurance are represented as meaningful forms of action, challenging epic hierarchies that privilege heroic mobility over restrained endurance. By situating Kane's retelling within the *Ramayana*'s plural storytelling tradition, this methodology treats feminist reinterpretation as an integral mode of cultural production rather than as a corrective to an "original" text. The approach thus enables a culturally grounded analysis of gendered silence without reducing indigenous narratives to universal feminist models.

Analysis and Discussion

Epic Silence and the Gendered Economy of Narration

Women in the Itihasas are predominantly represented through idealised tropes of chastity, devotion, and obedience, while figures who do not directly advance the epic's heroic trajectory remain marginal to its narrative economy. Canonical epic structures privilege masculine action— exile, warfare, kingship, and renunciation—while rendering women's emotional endurance and ethical labour narratively insignificant. Characters such as Sita are elevated as moral exemplars of sacrifice, whereas others, including Mandodari and Kaikeyi, are positioned within restrictive binaries of virtue and transgression. This narrative logic produces a hierarchy in which women's value is measured by their proximity to male protagonists rather than by autonomous subjectivity.

Urmila exemplifies this structural marginalisation. Despite enduring the same temporal span of exile as the epic's male heroes, her experience remains largely unarticulated within canonical *Ramayana* traditions. She is remembered primarily through relational identity—as Lakshmana's wife and Sita's Sister —rather than as a narrative subject in her own right. Such erasure is not accidental but reflects the epistemic priorities of epic storytelling, where waiting, restraint, and emotional labour are normalised as feminine duty rather than recognised as historically meaningful experience. Epic silence thus functions not as absence, but as a narrative mechanism that regulates which forms of suffering and endurance are deemed worthy of remembrance.

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, this absence reflects what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak identifies as the structural silencing of the subaltern, wherein marginalised subjects are

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spoken about but rarely permitted narrative agency. Women in classical epics do not simply lack voice; rather, their interior lives are rendered non-narratable within dominant frameworks of meaning. Silence, in this sense, operates as a form of narrative exclusion rather than as an inherent feminine trait.

Experiential Focalisation and the Ethics of Endurance

Crucially, *Sita's Sister* does not approach marginalised women merely as subjects whose viewpoints are retrospectively inserted into an already established epic framework. Instead, the narrative itself evolves from within the experiential interiority of characters who remain peripheral in canonical tellings. In traditional epic narration, figures such as Urmila are rendered narratively distant and emotionally opaque, making it difficult for readers to access their lived realities. Kane's retelling reconfigures this distance by shifting narrative focalisation toward women's experience, allowing the epic world to be mediated through Urmila's endurance, ethical reflection, and emotional negotiation.

The reader does not observe Urmila from an external or evaluative standpoint; rather, the narrative unfolds through the affective and ethical consequences of epic events on her interior life. This shift from action-centred narration to experiential focalisation transforms silence from narrative absence into a meaningful site of interpretation, enabling a reading of the epic that foregrounds women's lived experience rather than heroic spectacle.

Sita's Sister intervenes in this narrative economy by reconfiguring epic focalisation. Rather than approaching Urmila as a supplementary figure whose perspective is retrospectively inserted into an established epic framework, the novel allows the narrative itself to evolve from within her lived experience. In canonical narration, Urmila remains narratively distant and emotionally opaque; Kane's retelling collapses this distance by anchoring the epic world in her interiority. The reader does not observe Urmila from an external or evaluative standpoint; instead, the epic is mediated through her endurance, ethical reflection, and emotional negotiation.

This shift foregrounds the asymmetry between Lakshmana's mobility and Urmila's enforced immobility. While Lakshmana's decision to accompany Rama into exile is narrativised as ethical action grounded in dharma, Urmila's remaining behind is neither framed as sacrifice nor recognised as moral labour. Epic ethics thus privilege visible action over invisible endurance:

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Lakshmana's movement becomes heroic, while Urmila's waiting is rendered narratively inconsequential. Kane's retelling exposes the ethical cost of this idealised masculinity on women's lives by presenting Urmila's waiting as a parallel form of exile.

Urmila's questioning does not reject dharma itself but interrogates its uneven application. As she articulates to Mandavi, "Mandavi, of course, it is unjust! … We are women, we are wives, we are creatures of circumstance… We do not have the power to change anything but ourselves" (Kane 235). Rather than signalling resignation, this articulation exposes how injustice is normalised through gendered expectation. Urmila's plea to "give back my old Sister" captures the psychic fragmentation produced by enforced conformity, revealing how women's identities erode when ethical choice is continually subordinated to duty. Silence here becomes a constrained mode of articulation—legible yet mediated—rather than passive submission.

Negotiated Agency and Indigenous Feminist Reclamation

Kane further develops this mediated agency by portraying Urmila as intellectually engaged and ethically reflective even within restrictive gender norms. Her artistic pursuits, questioning of elders, and refusal to accept permanent secondary status reveal a consciousness shaped by, yet not fully contained within, patriarchal expectation. Mandavi's incredulous challenge "In this prioritization of his emotions, you are always going to be second place, is that it? And you accepted?" (Kane 66)—exposes how women are conditioned to subordinate their emotional lives to masculine ideals of duty.

Rather than positioning Urmila as either a victim or a liberated subject, the novel presents her agency as negotiated—formed through tension between compliance and critique. This challenges feminist paradigms that equate resistance solely with vocal dissent or radical transgression. Within indigenous ethical systems shaped by dharma and relational obligation, agency often manifests through endurance, ethical reasoning, and emotional self-regulation. Such forms of agency are frequently misread as passivity within Western feminist frameworks that privilege individual autonomy over rupture.

Kane's retelling thus operates as a decolonial feminist intervention that resists both patriarchal erasure and colonial generalisation. Urmila emerges not as a universal emblem of oppression but as a culturally situated subject whose agency is articulated within kinship,

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dharma, and moral responsibility. By foregrounding experiential interiority rather than heroic spectacle, *Sita's Sister* reclaims narrative legitimacy for marginalised women while remaining embedded within the plural and adaptive *Ramayana* tradition. Silence, re-signified as ethical endurance, becomes a critical site through which indigenous feminist subjectivity is articulated from within tradition rather than imposed from outside.

Kane's engagement with epic silence may also be situated within a broader postcolonial literary practice that turns to myth not to recover origins, but to interrogate the exclusions produced by authoritative narration. In this context, *Sita's Sister* demonstrates how myth functions as a narrative archive in which omissions are as significant as events. By foregrounding Urmila's experiential interiority, Kane reveals how feminist retellings recover not forgotten stories, but the affective and ethical residues left unrecorded by canonical narration. Such recovery does not overwrite tradition but exposes the narrative conditions under which silence itself is produced.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how *Sita's Sister* opens up critical possibilities for feminist and postcolonial re-readings of classical Indian epics by interrogating the structural silences that marginalise women such as Urmila. Rather than approaching the *Ramayana* as a fixed cultural inheritance, the novel engages with it as a dynamic and plural narrative tradition shaped by historical, ideological, and ethical negotiations. Kane's retelling operates from within this tradition, revealing how women's emotional endurance and ethical labour have been normalised yet excluded from epic remembrance.

By centring Urmila's interior life, Kane does not reject the epic but reanimates it through a gender-conscious lens that exposes the patriarchal priorities embedded in canonical narration. Urmila's repositioning is not presented as a deviation from tradition but as a legitimate continuation of the *Ramayana*'s adaptive and dialogic nature. Each retelling reflects the social concerns of its historical moment, and Kane's reimagining contributes to this continuum by foregrounding a marginalised figure whose silence is structurally produced rather than naturally given.

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The study has further shown that silence in *Sita's Sister* is not an absence of voice but a historically produced narrative condition that regulates women's visibility within epic discourse. Through a shift in narrative focalisation, the novel transforms silence into a meaningful site of interpretation, allowing the epic to be read through women's lived experience rather than heroic spectacle. Urmila's endurance emerges as ethical labour, challenging dominant narrative hierarchies that equate agency solely with action, mobility, and masculine heroism.

Importantly, Kane's intervention affirms the significance of indigenous storytelling traditions in reconstructing cultural memory. Writing in English while remaining rooted in vernacular imagination and ethical frameworks, *Sita's Sister* demonstrates how postcolonial literature can function as a space of cultural reclamation rather than displacement. The novel exemplifies how feminist retellings can interrogate power, silence, and narrative authority without abandoning cultural continuity.

In foregrounding Urmila's long-silenced experience, this study underscores the enduring relevance of plural, gender-conscious readings of Indian epics in contemporary discourse. By recovering the unspoken, *Sita's Sister* invites a rethinking of whose experiences are remembered and whose labour remains unacknowledged, reaffirming the importance of indigenous feminist inquiry in reshaping how epics are read, remembered, and reimagined in postcolonial contexts.

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Exploring the Human Dimensions of Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Over the years, the teaching methodology of the English language continues to evolve as teachers take maximum efforts to impart language skills to the learners with more precision. Artificial intelligence (AI) with its intriguing tools and methodologies support teachers to a great extent in transforming the pedagogical landscape of English language teaching. Consequently, academicians focus more on enhancing language skills with AI tools than on the lack of human dimensions of English language teaching such as teacher-student interaction, ethical considerations, and emotional engagement. This paper explores how AI assists teachers in imparting language skills to learners while giving importance to the human facets of English language teaching. Also, it analyzes the opportunities and challenges that the teachers encounter in this process. The study further highlights how AI supplements both teachers and learners with learning resources, whereas teachers complement the classroom teaching-learning process through their unique human qualities such as empathy, cultural sensitivity, ethical judgment, and the responsible use of technology. The research article is based on the first-year syllabus of the Professional English course followed at the author's institution.

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Key words: Artificial intelligence, technologized classrooms, human dimension, language acquisition, ELT

Introduction

The rapid adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English language teaching (ELT) has transformed contemporary pedagogy. Intelligent Tutoring Systems, Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools, automated writing evaluators, chatbots, immersive virtual environments, and generative AI applications are transforming the process of teaching and learning. These innovations can increase efficiency, personalization, and accessibility.

Intelligent Tutoring Systems design content based on the learner's performance and offer guidance and instant feedback. Automated writing evaluators help students to correct grammar, add coherence, and develop vocabulary. Chatbots and virtual assistants stimulate conversations, help students practice fluency, and enhance their communication skills. Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools train learners in pronunciation and prosody. Generative AI provides learners with prompts, conversations, and writing tasks that make them practice effective speaking and writing. Though these tools help learners acquire language skills, a teacher's intervention in the learning process can contextualize feedback, spot errors, and identify cultural appropriateness.

A technologized classroom gives fewer opportunities to the learners to interact well during the teaching-learning process. Teachers project emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and ethical judgment in their learning spaces. They show empathy, rapport, motivation, creativity, and understanding to equip learners with the required language skills. On the contrary, AI lacks this human dimension, reinforcing the idea that it can serve as a complement to human teachers rather than a replacement.

Literature Review

Since AI can process linguistic data, offer instant feedback, and create an adaptive learning atmosphere, it is beneficial to integrate AI into English language teaching. Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) have shown how teachers have adopted Intelligent Tutoring Systems, Automated Essay Scoring (AES), speech-recognition-based pronunciation trainers, and chatbots for enhancing

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learners' English competency. Godwin-Jones (2018) argues that AI improves learner autonomy, efficiency, and the ease of using it in a mixed learning environment.

Learners can learn a second language effectively when teachers provide a humanistic approach to the teaching-learning process. Stevick (1990) and Dörnyei (2005) confirm this idea and argue that acquiring language skills relies on emotional, social, and cultural contexts. In fact, teachers understand the learners' background well, which allows them to create a supportive learning atmosphere. Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective (1978) also affirms the idea that teachers facilitate learners' development through their interaction and collaboration. These views underscore the crucial role of human interaction in the learning process.

Holmes et al., (2022) highlight that the major concern in the integration of AI into language teaching is related to the ethical issues that encompass data privacy, surveillance, algorithmic bias, and the transparency of AI-generated feedback. Addressing these concerns is serious as language learning is associated with identity formation.

Literature offers a well-balanced approach that integrates AI with human-centered instruction. Mishra and Koehler (2006) refer to Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) to prove the need for teacher agency and pedagogical judgment while integrating technology into language teaching. Luckin (2016) concentrates on the "human-in-the-loop" model, which considers teachers as decision makers because they guide the learners and contextualize AI-supported learning.

Though researchers have focused more on the benefits of integrating AI into English language teaching, a systematic study of adding a human dimension to AI-assisted English language teaching needs to be explored. The author bridges this gap by examining how to integrate AI into ELT without compromising the essential human values.

Human dimension in AI-assisted ELT

While AI offers a plethora of learning tools, it lacks the human sensitivity that is intrinsic to the teaching-learning process. On the contrary, teachers provide the learners with the required

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support, such as cognitive, interpersonal, cultural, and ethical aspects, to advance their mastery of the subject. At every stage of the teaching process, educators project empathy and creativity thanks to their intuition and personal judgement. Since language learning is deeply rooted in communication, identity formation, and social interaction, teachers cater to these needs of the students quite effectively, unlike the AI tools.

As Stevick, E.W. (1990) observes, mere acquisition of linguistic rules cannot develop learners' communicative competence, cultural understanding, or interpersonal skills. However, when learners get guidance from human teachers, they enhance not only their communicative skills, but also hone their abilities to handle the challenges of their future professional tasks. This proves that AI can assist learners in learning and minimize the workload of teachers, but it can never replace the teachers who "play a central role beyond what AI tools can offer" (Dörnyei, Z. 2005).

Role of Language Teachers in AI-Assisted classrooms

Unlike traditional classrooms, teachers in AI-supported classrooms are required to perform multiple roles. Firstly, teachers have to be designers who integrate AI effectively into learning, rather than using technology passively. Secondly, they must be facilitators by guiding students to understand AI generated feedback, identify inaccuracies, and apply suggestions aptly to their language usage. Thirdly, they ought to offer emotional support to learners as AI lacks emotional intelligence. Since second-language learners require encouragement and motivation throughout the learning process, teachers have a crucial role in reassuring and supporting them. Fourthly, teachers need to act as ethical guides while monitoring data usage and raising students' awareness of digital responsibility. Finally, teachers should be co-learners by embracing the rapid changes in the methodologies with a view to growing professionally, and bridging the gap between technological and pedagogical expertise. As Fullan rightly points out, "teachers have no chance of becoming better educators, unless each and every teacher is learning everyday" (p.153)

Teachers' intervention in the AI-supported teaching process can emotionally uplift the learners and help them enhance their learning experience. Though AI tools empower learners to

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have self-paced learning and promote learner autonomy, automated feedback that lacks a personal touch may increase their anxiety. The excessive use of AI tools can make learners lose their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. However, when teachers guide and explain the rationale behind the AI-generated suggestions, learners understand the functionalities of the English language with ease. As Briggs and Schwab view it "teachers play a vital role in mediating AI feedback, preserving learner autonomy, while reducing anxiety and promoting critical thinking" (p.112). Hence, consistent teacher support is essential to prevent students from getting emotionally disengaged.

Implications

The author integrated artificial intelligence for teaching with the first year Professional English syllabus with engineering students. Though AI gave access to a wide range of learning materials and practice opportunities, the teacher applied her higher-order thinking to motivate, support, and guide learners, thereby maximising the learning process.

While selecting appropriate AI powered resources, teachers have to periodically intervene in the learning process to help analyze the machine-generated feedback and suggestions. This makes learners gain sufficient knowledge in the syllabus as well. For instance, AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, ELSA Speak, YouTube EDU, TED-Ed, Quill Bot, Google Lens, Resume-in, Interview Warmup (Google), Speech-to-text tools, YouGlish, etc. support learners in preparing emails, reports, process descriptions, interviews, and public speeches. Hence, AI tools enable self-paced and repeated practice, which promotes learner autonomy and conceptual understanding thanks to the teachers' intervention in scaffolding the learners' engagement according to Vygotsky's (1978, pp.86-90) theory of socially mediated learning.

Teaching concepts such as self-introduction, narration of personal experiences, and interview preparation with the support of AI provides learners with proper structural models and linguistic accuracy. However, AI remains insensitive to learners' emotional states, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic apprehensions. In this context, teacher's empathetic support, guidance

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and instructional interference create an inclusive learning atmosphere, which encourages learners to participate in tasks with more confidence. This practice aligns with Nodding's' (2003) view that "care and responsiveness are foundational to effective pedagogy" (p.175), a facet that no automated system can replace.

AI tools bring better clarity to teaching and learning the employability-related components in the syllabus. For instance, platforms such as resume.in, in interview warm-up (Google), and LinkedIn enable learners to practice cover letter writing and resume preparation, and to gain insights into company profiles and industry expectations. Nevertheless, teacher's intervention plays a key role in preventing students from preparing stereotyped responses. Moreover, the timely guidance of teachers helps learners articulate their ideas ethically, personalize their responses' and communicate their career objectives effectively.

Tasks based on public speaking and ceremonial communication require learners to project social awareness and emotional expressiveness while speaking. AI tools like Speech-to-text, YouGlish, TED-Ed, offer effective support through their pronunciation models and speech templates. However, teacher's intervention, supervision and guidance help learners identify audience response, ensure cultural appropriacy and manage emotional expressiveness. This observation complies with OECD's (2021) findings that teachers contribute to "fairness, inclusivity, and holistic learner development" (p.45) in AI supported classrooms.

On the whole, this discussion demonstrates that teachers can effectively integrate AI into ELT while giving due importance to human dimensions. Within this pedagogical framework, teachers shift their roles from mere content providers to empathetic facilitators, ethical guides, and contextual experts. The synergy between AI capabilities and human intervention establishes a learner-centered platform where learning is socially relevant and culturally sensitive, even in AI-mediated educational environments.

Challenges

The changing teaching-learning landscape and the concern to keep Gen Z learners active in the classrooms make teachers employ AI tools that offer both benefits and challenges. The

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pedagogical benefits include personalized learning, help learners correct errors in real time and reducing the workload of teachers with the aid of automated routine tasks. On the contrary, excessive use of AI tools may have an adverse effect on teacher-student interaction. Moreover, as AI is sensitive to cultures and emotions, it may create stress among the learners. However, teachers can combat this challenge through meticulous planning and careful integration of collaborative activities, peer learning, and creative tasks that foster interaction and better understanding. Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel also express similar idea that the integration of AI tools must "preserve meaningful human relationships in the classroom" (p.45). Moreover, the increasing demand for AI tools results in high energy consumption and requires improvements in digital infrastructure, which may not always be feasible.

Ethical and Human-Centered Perspectives

The major concern to teachers while integrating AI into language teaching is the ethical issues coupled with holistic learner development, since AI based teaching-learning process may create breaches in privacy and data protection. To overcome this problem, teachers have to ensure that the employed tools collect minimal students' information, store data securely and use it responsibly. Alongside, teachers must deal with issues connected with bias and fairness carefully, as AI tends to reproduce cultural or linguistic inequalities embedded in training data. In this context, it is apt to quote Arriagada-Bruneau, López, and Mendoza (2025), who reinforce the idea that "fairness, accountability, and transparency are core ethical requirements for trustworthy artificial intelligence systems" (p.64).

AI systems depend on data centers and computational infrastructures for generating information, which consumes substantial amounts of electricity. Moreover, the energy resources required to operate AI tools lead to carbon emissions, which intensify the strain on the environment. As Crawford (2021) observes, "AI technologies are deeply embedded in material and energy-intensive infrastructures" (p.81) that are largely invisible to the human eye. Hence,

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the judicious use of AI can help maintain a perfect balance between ecological sustainability and pedagogical innovations.

Human-centered AI integration in ELT

The changing teaching landscape, driven by technological innovations and the learning choices of Gen z learners in the digital era, makes it necessary to integrate AI into English language teaching.in this new dimension, teachers have to rely on their expertise to embed effective pedagogical principles, prioritizing sound learning objectives that develop learners' critical thinking skills. Indeed, AI supports teachers in brainstorming and scaffolding learning activities that ultimately encourage the learners to evaluate and assess AI-generated suggestions rather than accepting them passively.

Consistent training in AI literacy, ethical practices, and collaborative sharing of the best practices can significantly enhance teachers' professional development. Likewise, educational institutions should give clear parameters for using AI ethically and protecting data carefully, as Clark observes, "unchecked data collection can compromise student confidentiality" (p.26). Moreover, institutions need to offer periodic training programs to teachers so that they can effectively integrate AI into ELT. Hence, teachers and learners can enhance the productivity and learning outcomes with the support of AI.

Summation

AI provides teachers and learners with excellent opportunities to teach and learn the English language with precision. Nevertheless, the pedagogical aspects add value to learning through teachers' judgment, empathy, and ethical responsibility. Indeed, the human dimension plays a crucial role in understanding learners' emotions and the cultural sensitivity. Therefore, when educators use AI wisely giving priority to the environmental concerns, it promotes meaningful learning experiences. Future research must explore region-specific and needs-based methodologies, the emotional state of teachers and learners, and the impact of AI on second language acquisition.

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A Comparative Phonological Study of Bihari Languages

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Abstract

The major Bihari languages, Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuri, represent an important cluster of Eastern Indo-Aryan languages. They have significant speaker populations and rich linguistic features. Despite their shared historical origins in the Magadhi group of Middle Indo-Aryan, these three languages exhibit distinct phonological characteristics while maintaining substantial similarities. This study presents a comparative phonological analysis of the three major Bihari languages, examining their vowel systems, consonant inventories, diphthongs, and distinctive phonological features based on contemporary linguistic data. The study reveals how these languages have evolved from their common ancestor while maintaining contact-induced similarities and developing innovative features that set them apart from neighbouring language groups.

Keywords: Bihari languages, Maithili, Magahi, Bhojpuri, comparative phonology, Eastern Indo-Aryan languages

1. Introduction

The Bihari languages hold a significant place in the linguistic landscape of South Asia. Their combined speaker population exceeds 40 million people, primarily distributed across Bihar, Jharkhand, and neighbouring regions of Uttar Pradesh and Nepal. Historically, these languages have been recognised as part of the Magadhi branch of Middle Indo-Aryan languages (Grierson, 1883-1887). This view has generally been subscribed to by many scholars, including Chatterji (1926) and Katre (1968). However, their exact classification within the New Indo-Aryan language family has been subject to scholarly debate (Cardona, 1974; Jeffers, 1976). The term "Bihari,"

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although traditionally used to refer to these three primary languages, has often caused confusion, as it was initially employed by Grierson (1883-1887) in his seminal work, Seven Grammars of the Dialects and Subdialects of the Bihari Language (Grierson, 2005).

Unlike the varieties of Hindi, which exhibit considerable mutual intelligibility and are often regarded as varieties of a single language, the Bihari languages demonstrate sufficient phonological, morphological, and lexical divergence to warrant recognition as distinct languages. However, they share sufficient syntactical and lexical similarities to indicate recent common ancestry and continued linguistic contact. The study of their phonological systems provides valuable insights into both diachronic language change and synchronic language variation in the eastern Indo-Aryan region.

1.1 Scope and Objectives

This comparative study focuses on the phonological systems of three languages: Maithili, Magahi, and Bhojpuri. The primary objectives are:

1. To compare the basic vowel inventories of the three Bihari languages

2. To analyse consonant systems and their distinctive features

3. To examine diphthong formation and allophonic variations

4. To identify phonological features that distinguish one language from another

5. To provide insights into historical phonological development from their common ancestor

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1.2 Linguistic and Demographic Context

Linguistic Map of Bihar

(https://www.mapnations.com/countries/india/states/bihar-linguistic-map.html) (Accessed at

13:30 on 30/01/2026)

Maithili, spoken by approximately 30 million speakers in Bihar and the Nepali Tarai (foothills), represents the largest Bihari language (Yadav, 1996). It is the second most widely spoken language of Nepal and has been officially recognised as the 20th major language of India in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The standard dialect is identified with the speech of Madhubani in Bihar and Rajbiraj in Nepal.

Magahi, with an estimated 10-12 million speakers, is primarily spoken in the districts of Patna and Nalanda, as well as in the present-day Magadh districts, which correspond to the historical Magadh Kingdom. The language maintains considerable internal regional variation. The standard Magahi and eastern Magahi are the two primary varieties.

Bhojpuri, the third primary Bihari language, is spoken by over 30 million people across eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand. It represents the western branch of the Bihari group and shows somewhat different phonological characteristics compared to Maithili and Magahi.

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2. The Bihari Languages: Background and Classification

2.1 Historical and Genealogical Status

The Bihari languages are descendants of Magadhi, a Middle Indo-Aryan language that held a prominent position in ancient India, serving as the state language of Emperor Ashoka and being associated with Buddhist texts. Their evolution from Magadhi through the transitional Middle Indo-Aryan period has resulted in three distinct yet closely related languages (Grierson, 1927).

Grierson's classification placed these languages within the Magadhi branch of the Eastern group of New Indo-Aryan languages, along with Bangla, Assamese, and Oriya. This classification has been generally maintained, although some modern scholars have proposed modifications, with certain linguists arguing for an independent Bihari subgroup (Cardona, 1974; Jeffers, 1976). Cardona places it into the Central group together with Eastern Hindi and Western Hindi. Jeffers goes even further and proposes a Bihari subgroup within New Indo-Aryan that is separate from both the Hindi languages and the Bangla languages.

2.2 Mutual Relationships and Contact

Within the Bihari group, Maithili and Magahi are generally considered closer to one another, forming an eastern branch, while Bhojpuri constitutes the western branch. This internal grouping is reflected in numerous shared phonological and morphological features. All three languages maintain contact with neighbouring Indo-Aryan languages: Maithili with Nepali and Bangla; Magahi with both Maithili and Bhojpuri; and Bhojpuri with Western Hindi.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Sources

The phonological descriptions presented in this study are based on contemporary linguistic descriptions and analyses available in peer-reviewed academic sources and comprehensive grammatical studies of each language (Yadav, 1996; Verma, 2007; Verma, 2007). The analysis draws on:

1. Detailed grammatical descriptions by recognised scholars in the field

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2. Documented phonemic inventories with clear phonological contrasts

3. Examples from natural language use in contemporary speech

4. Comparative analysis with established phonetic and phonological frameworks

3.2 Framework of Analysis

The analysis follows the framework established in the comparative study of Hindi dialects, examining the following linguistic patterns:

1. Basic vowel inventory and nasalisation patterns

2. Diphthong formation and distributional constraints

3. Basic consonant inventory and place-manner distinctions

4. Allophonic variations and phonological processes

5. Distinctive features that differentiate the three languages

6. Stress and intonation patterns were relevant

4. Comparative Phonological Analysis

4.1 Vowel Inventories

The three Bihari languages exhibit both similarities and significant differences in their vowel systems, reflecting a shared ancestry and divergent phonological evolution.

4.1.1 Maithili Vowels

Maithili maintains the most elaborate vowel system among the three Bihari languages, with eight oral vowel phonemes (Yadav, 1984d):

High vowels: /i/ (front), /u/ (back)

Mid vowels: /e/ (front), /o/ (back)

Low front vowel: /æ/

Central vowels: /ə/ (high-mid), /a/ (low)

Additional vowel: /ɔ/ (low back) in some dialects

All vowels can be nasalised, producing nasalised counterparts. Lip rounding is not distinctive; only back vowels /u/ and /o/ are phonetically rounded. Length is not distinctive in Maithili, though the Devanagari script provides separate graphemes for what are phonetically long and short vowels.

Vowel contrasts:

- /i/ vs /e/: /*ik*/ 'one' vs /*ek*/ (variant)

- /a/ vs /æ/: /*as*/ 'hope' vs /*æs*/ 'luxury'

- /u/ vs /o/: /*us*/ 'whitener' vs /*os*/ 'dew'

- Nasalised: /ĩ/ in /ĩʈʈa/'brick', /ũ/ in /sũra/ 'grain bug'

4.1.2 Magahi Vowels

Magahi has a somewhat reduced vowel system compared to Maithili, with six basic oral vowels (Verma, 2007):

1. **High vowels:** /i/ (front), /u/ (back)

2. **Mid vowels:** /e/ (front), /o/ (back)

3. **Low vowels:** /ə/ (central), /a/ (low)

All vowels can be nasalised. Magahi has no phonemic length distinction, though allophonic variations in length occur based on stress and syllabic environment. The central vowel transcribed as /ə/ (or /a/) has a phonetic value of [ʌ] in stressed positions and [ə] in unstressed positions.

Magahi vowel system characteristics

The vowel system of Magahi is simpler than that of Maithili, though it retains essential phonemic distinctions necessary for clear contrast among vowels. It shows strong alignment with the reduced vowel systems found in neighbouring Indo-Aryan languages, emphasising efficiency over complexity. Additionally, Magahi exhibits stress-dependent vowel quality alternations, in which the realisation of certain vowels varies with syllabic stress, resulting in subtle phonetic shifts that contribute to its distinctive prosodic profile.

4.1.3 Bhojpuri Vowels

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Bhojpuri essentially has a system of six vowels with nasalised counterparts (Tiwari, 1960):

1. **High vowels:** /i/, /u/

2. **Mid vowels:** /e/, /o/

3. **Low vowels:** /a/ (both short and long), /ə/ (schwa)

Two additional high short vowels, high short /ɪ/ and high short /ʊ/, occur with well-defined positional restrictions, but these are treated as subphonemic due to their complementary distribution.

The vowel system of Bhojpuri eliminates length contrasts, much like Magahi, while maintaining a distinct rhythmic balance through other phonetic means. It features an "attenuation" process, an allophonic length-reduction phenomenon that influences vowel duration in syllabic and prosodic contexts. The language also exhibits stress-based vowel quality variations, in which the timbre of vowels changes with emphasis or position within a word. Among its vowels, /a/ functions as the only truly short vowel, while /aː/ serves as the only genuinely long vowel. Furthermore, all vowels in Bhojpuri can bear word stress, making vowel prominence an essential feature of its phonological system.

4.2 Diphthongs and Vowel Clustering

The three Bihari languages show different patterns of diphthong formation, reflecting their divergent phonological histories.

4.2.1 Maithili Diphthongs

Maithili has an extensive set of diphthong inventory, with most being rising diphthongs (Yadav, 1984d):

- [au]: [ɟaunt] 'husband's brother's son'

- [ɪu]: [pɪuasi] 'father's sister'

Constraints   on   diphthongisation:
Diphthongs such as *æɪ, *æu, *eɪ, *ɪɪ, *uu are not permissible in Maithili. Diphthongisation is closely related to vowel clustering phenomena in the language.

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4.2.2 Magahi Diphthongs

Magahi shows a diphthong inventory, though somewhat less elaborate than Maithili (Grierson, 1903-1928):

- /aɪ/: [*maɪ*] (from /*mai*/ 'mother')

- /əʊ/: [*əo*] (from /*sau*/ 'hundred')

- Additional diphthongs emerge from vowel clustering in morphologically complex forms

4.2.3 Bhojpuri Diphthongs

Bhojpuri has truly diphthongal forms with more central initiation points (Tiwari, 1960):

- aɪ: phonetically [sɪ]

- [au]: phonetically [su]

- These diphthongs arise from vowel adjacency and word formation processes

4.3 Consonant Inventories

The consonant systems of the three Bihari languages exhibit remarkable uniformity in overall structure, while displaying significant differences in peripheral segments.

4.3.1 Basic Consonant System

Magahi, Bhojpuri, and Maithili uphold a parallel consonantal framework characteristic of eastern Indo-Aryan languages, structured around standard places and manners of articulation. Places include bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, velar, and glottal, while manners encompass stops, affricates, nasals, fricatives, taps/flaps, laterals, and glides. All three languages consistently exhibit a four-way stop contrast across these places: voiceless unaspirated (/p, t, ʈ, c, k/), voiceless aspirated (/pʰ, tʰ, ʈʰ, cʰ, kʰ/), voiced unaspirated (/b, d, ɖ, j, g/), and voiced aspirated (/bʱ, dʱ, ɖʱ, jʱ, gʱ/).

1. **Places of articulation:** Bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, velar, glottal

2. **Manner of articulation:** Stops, affricates, nasals, fricatives, taps/flaps, laterals, glides

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All three languages exhibit a four-way contrast in stops:

1. Voiceless unaspirated: /p, t, ʈ, c, k/

2. Voiceless aspirated: /pʰ, tʰ, ʈʰ, cʰ, kʰ/

3. Voiced unaspirated: /b, d, ɖ, j, g/

4. Voiced aspirated: /bʱ, dʱ, ɖʱ, jʱ, gʱ/

Maithili Consonants

Place	Bilabial	Dental	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops (4-way)	p, pʰ b, bʱ	t, tʰ d, dʱ	ʈ, ʈʰ ɖ, ɖʱ	—	k, kʰ g, gʱ	—
Affricates	—	—	—	c, cʰ j, jʱ	—	—
Nasals	m	n	ɳ	—	—	—
Taps	—	r	—	—	—	—
Laterals	—	l	—	—	—	—
Fricatives	—	s	—	—	—	h
Glides	w	—	—	y	—	—

Magahi Consonant Inventory

Magahi exhibits a notably reduced inventory of nasal and fricative consonants compared to the more expansive systems in related Indo-Aryan languages. The nasals are restricted to only two distinctive phonemes: the bilabial /m/ and the dental /n/. Other nasals, such as the retroflex /ɳ/, palatal /ñ/, and velar /ŋ/, appear only in limited phonetic contexts, specifically before stops or within consonant clusters, and lack phonemic status. Similarly, the fricative system comprises a single dental sibilant /s/ and the voiceless glottal fricative /h/. Native phonology excludes additional fricatives like the palatal /ʃ/, retroflex /ʂ/, voiced /z/, labiodental /f/ or /v/, velar /x/, or postalveolar /ʒ/.

Bhojpuri Consonant Inventory

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Bhojpuri preserves a consonant system broadly akin to that of Maithili, yet distinguished by key innovations in its nasal and liquid segments. Unlike the reduced nasal inventory of Magahi, Bhojpuri retains a fuller set of distinct nasals, including the velar /ŋ/ as a phonemic segment. It further extends aspiration to nasals and liquids, yielding contrasts such as /m/, /nh/, /ŋh/, /rh/, and /lh/, as evidenced by minimal pairs like /barma/ 'Verma (surname)' versus /barmha/ 'Brahma'. The phonemic status of /ŋ/ is underscored by pairs like /manani/ '(I) asked', contrasting with /mañani/ '(I) admitted', highlighting Bhojpuri's richer phonological contrasts.

4.3.2 Distinctive Consonantal Features

Aspiration: All three languages extend aspiration as a phonological feature beyond stops to nasals and laterals. Bhojpuri shows particularly rich development of aspirated nasals and liquids.

Retroflex contrast: All three languages maintain distinctive retroflex stops and nasals, distinguishing them from dental counterparts.

Sibilant syncretism: In all three languages, the historical distinction between dental /s/, retroflex /ʂ/, and palatal /ʃ/ has been neutralised, typically in favour of dental /s/. Neither Magahi nor Bhojpuri admit Arabo-Persian fricatives in their native phonology, though they handle such segments differently in loanwords.

Fricatives in Magahi: Magahi particularly demonstrates systematic phonological reshaping of loanwords containing fricatives:

- /f/ → /ph/: /pʰilam/ 'film' (English)

- /z/ → /j/: /jid/ 'stubbornness' /zidd/ (Arabic)

- /x/ → /kh/: /khəraːb/ 'bad' /xəraːb/ (Persian)

- /ʃ/ → /s/: /səhar/ 'city' /ʃəhr/ (Persian)

4.4 Allophonic Variations and Phonological Processes

4.4.1 Vowel-Related Processes

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Nasalisation in Maithili:

Vowel nasalisation in Maithili is both phonologically distinctive and phonetically conditioned. Nasalisation can occur within a syllable and occasionally across syllable boundaries:

- [nãk] 'nose' (nasal consonant triggers nasalisation)

- [tõhũ] 'even you' (from underlying /to+hu/, nasalisation across boundary)

Attenuation in Bhojpuri:

Bhojpuri exhibits a phenomenon called "attenuation," which is allophonic vowel shortening not segment-determined but governed by syllabic structure, word structure, or derivation:

- /ra:ja:/ 'king' but /rəjwa:/ 'the king'

- [moti] 'pearl' but [mɔti] 'the pearl'

- Related to stress patterns and syllable weight

Defective phonemes:

- Maithili /æ/ is defective and often diphthongises as [əĕ], [aĕ], or [ai]

- Maithili /ɔ/ varies with [o] and [əŭ]

4.4.2 Consonantal Processes

Glide replacements in Magahi

Magahi exhibits systematic phonotactic constraints on word-initial glides. It replaces them with stops that correspond to its native phonological preferences. The palatal glide /y/ consistently shifts to /j/, as seen in /jəntər/ 'instrument' (from Sanskrit /yəntra/). Similarly, the labial glide /w/ becomes /b/ (Sanskrit /vənʃ/ → /bəns/). Magahi avoids glide onsets and adapts its native phonological strategy for incorporating loanwords and inherited lexicon. This represents an essential divergence from standard Sanskrit-derived vocabulary.

- /y/ → /j/: /jəntər/ 'instrument' (Sanskrit /yəntrə/)

- /w/ → /b/: /bəns/ 'lineage' (Sanskrit /vənsh/)

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Cluster reduction in Bhojpuri

Bhojpuri employs distinctive strategies to avoid consonant clusters, reflecting its phonotactic preferences across word positions. Word-initially, it employs svarabhakti vowel insertion as in /bharam/ for underlying /bhram-/, prothesis in forms like /asnaːn/ for /snaːna/, or conversion of semivowels to full vowels. Word-finally, clusters are restricted to homorganic nasal-plus-stop sequences to ensure articulatory compatibility. Medially, the language favours geminates over singleton consonants in inherited forms, promoting length-based stability in complex onsets or codas.

1. Word-initially: Svarabhakti insertion (/bʱaram/ for /bʱram-/), prothesis (/asnaːn/ for /snāna/), or semivowel to vowel conversion

2. Word-finally: Clusters restricted to homorganic nasal + stop

3. Medially: Preference for geminates over singleton consonants in inherited forms

Geminate preservation in Bhojpuri

Bhojpuri distinguishes itself through robust geminate preservation in positions where Hindi and Bangla opt for simplification accompanied by compensatory lengthening. For instance, Bhojpuri retains the geminate in /ujjar/ 'white, bright' in contrast to Hindi /ujaːla/ and Bangla /ujjvəlaː/. Similarly, /pittər/ 'brass' preserves the geminate unlike Hindi /piːtal/, and /bajjər/ 'thunderbolt' contrasts with Bangla /baːj/. These patterns highlight the phonotactic integrity of Bhojpuri and its resistance to length substitution in geminate contexts.

- Bhojpuri /ujjar/ 'white, bright' (with geminate) vs Hindi /ujaːla/, Bangla /ujjvəlaː/

- Bhojpuri /pittər/ 'brass' vs Hindi /piːtal/

- Bhojpuri /bajjər/ 'thunderbolt' vs Bangla /baːj/

4.4.3 Morphophonemic Alternations

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Maithili:

Maithili exhibits two highly productive and regular phonological processes that systematically alter vowel quality and structure in morphological contexts. The first, schwa deletion, eliminates the schwa as the second vowel when a vowel-initial suffix attaches, as in /həmər-o/ → /həmro/ 'even mine'. The second process involves a → ə substitution, whereby the initial syllable /a/ shifts to /ə/ upon addition of a vowel-containing affix, yielding forms like /babhən/ 'brahmin' versus /bəbhinia/ 'brahmin (F, IMPOL)' and /mar/ 'kill' versus /məra/ 'caused to kill'. These rules underscore sensitivity to morpheme boundaries of Maithili and its efficient vowel-reduction strategies.

Schwa deletion: Schwa, as the second vowel, is deleted when a vowel-initial suffix is added.

> E.g., /həmər-o/ → /həmro/ 'even mine'

a → ə substitution: First syllable /a/ becomes /ə/ when an affix containing a vowel is added.

> E.g., /babɦən/ 'brahmin' vs /bəbɦinia/ 'brahmin (F, IMPOL)'
>
> /mar/ 'kill' vs /məra/ 'cause to kill'

Magahi

Similar to Maithili, Magahi too exhibits two highly productive and regular phonological processes that systematically alter vowel quality and structure in morphological contexts (Kumar & Sinha, 2022). The first, schwa deletion, eliminates the schwa as the second vowel when a vowel-initial suffix attaches, as in /həmər-o/ → /həmro/ 'even mine'. The second process involves a → ə substitution, where vowel length is shortened when any inflexional suffix is attached to (Kumar & Sinha, 2022, 2024). E.g., ra:ja 'king' + wa: 'diminutive' → rəjwa: 'the king'

4.5 Stress and Intonation

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4.5.1 Stress Patterns

Maithili: Stress plays only a marginal role in distinguishing words. The general pattern places stress on the penultimate syllable with some exceptions.

Bhojpuri: Bhojpuri displays a more intricate prosodic system than its eastern Indo-Aryan sister languages. Predictable yet variable stress patterns characterise it. In disyllabic words, stress typically falls on the penultimate syllable, while longer words favour antepenultimate stress unless overridden by other prosodic factors. Stress assignment is sensitive to syllable weight, with heavy syllables (i.e., with a coda (CVCC) or containing /a/ or a diphthong in CVC structure) exerting stronger attraction. Additionally, derivational and inflexional affixes often induce stress shifts, contributing to rhythmic flexibility and morphological transparency.

1. Penultimate syllable stress in disyllabic words

2. Antepenultimate stress in longer words (unless other factors intervene)

3. Stress influenced by syllable weight (CVCC or CVC with /a/ or diphthong is heavy)

4. Derivational and inflectional affixes can shift stress

4.5.2 Intonation Patterns

Maithili employs distinct intonational contours to signal sentence types, aligning with typical Indo-Aryan prosodic patterns. Declarative sentences and polite commands typically feature falling intonation, with a rising onset and a descending end. Information questions, which contain 'what' or 'why' words, such as 'k-questions', likewise exhibit falling intonation, maintaining continuity with declarative phrasing. Yes-no questions initiated by /ki/ 'what' follow the falling pattern, whereas those without /ki/ are marked by rising intonation, providing a clear auditory cue for interrogativity.

1. Declarative sentences and polite commands have falling intonation

2. Information questions with k-question words have falling intonation

3. Yes-no questions with initial /ki/ 'what' have falling intonation

4. Yes-no questions without /ki/ have rising intonation

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5. Distinctive Features and Language Differentiation

5.1 Features Distinguishing Maithili

Maithili stands out among the eastern Indo-Aryan languages due to several distinctive phonological and morphosyntactic features. It possesses the most elaborate vowel system, comprising eight vowels subject to systematic nasalisation, alongside a complex diphthong inventory that exceeds those of its relatives. The schwa vowel /ə/ holds greater prominence in Maithili than in Magahi or Bhojpuri, while the defective /æ/ exhibits strong tendencies toward diphthongisation. Morphologically, Maithili features an extended verbal agreement system, unique among Bihari languages, which enhances its expressive capacity for person, number, gender, and honorific distinctions.

1. **Most elaborate vowel system:** Eight vowels with systematic nasalisation

2. **Complex diphthong system:** Most extensive diphthong inventory

3. **Schwa vowel:** /ə/ is more prominent than in Magahi or Bhojpuri

4. **Defective vowels:** /æ/ with diphthongisation tendencies

5. **Extended verbal agreement system:** Unique among Bihari languages

5.2 Features Distinguishing Magahi

Magahi distinguishes itself among eastern Indo-Aryan languages through a streamlined phonological profile marked by simplification and systematic alternations. Its vowel system comprises six vowels whose quality varies predictably with stress, yielding realisations such as [ʌ] in stressed positions versus [ə] in unstressed ones. The nasal inventory is markedly reduced, featuring only /m/ and /n/ as primary phonemes. At the same time, the fricative series includes a single dental sibilant /s/, which systematically reshapes loanwords lacking native equivalents. Additionally, glides undergo consistent replacement. /y/ becomes /j/ and /w/ shifts to /b/ word-initially, reflecting Magahi's adaptive phonotactics and stress-driven allophony.

1. **Simplified vowel system:** Six vowels with stress-dependent quality

2. **Reduced nasal inventory:** Only /m/ and /n/ as primary nasals

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3. **Single sibilant:** Dental /s/ only, with systematic loanword reshaping

4. **Systematic glide replacement:** /ɣ/ → /j/, /w/ → /b/ word-initially

5. **Stress-dependent vowel quality:** [ʌ] in stressed vs [ə] in unstressed positions

5.3 Features Distinguishing Bhojpuri

Bhojpuri sets itself apart among eastern Indo-Aryan languages through innovative consonant contrasts and prosodic processes that enhance its phonological complexity. It extends aspiration beyond obstruents to nasals and liquids, permitting forms like /mh/, /nh/, /rh/, and /lh/, while preserving geminates in positions where Hindi exhibits simplification. The language features a systematic attenuation process involving complex allophonic length reduction, vowel harmony shared with Magahi, and stress-based vowel quality shifts tied to syllable weight. Additionally, complex nasal gemination arises in /nC/ sequences, yielding distinctive geminate patterns that underscore Bhojpuri's robust phonotactic structure.

1. **Extended aspiration:** Nasals and liquids can be aspirated (/mh/, /nh/, /rh/, /lh/)

2. **Geminate preservation:** Retains geminates where Hindi shows simplification

3. **Attenuation process:** Complex allophonic length reduction system

4. **Vowel harmony:** Shares with Magahi

5. **Stress-based vowel quality shifts:** Related to syllable weight

6. **Complex nasal gemination:** /nC/ → nasal geminate patterns

6. Comparative Summary: Phonological Similarities and Differences

6.1 Shared Features

Magahi, Bhojpuri, and Maithili share core phonological characteristics that unify their eastern Indo-Aryan profile. Collectively, they are referred to as Bihari languages. All three maintain a four-way stop contrast encompassing voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated, voiced unaspirated, and voiced aspirated stops, alongside a robust distinction between retroflex and dental stops. They exhibit the elimination of phonemic vowel length contrasts, a single sibilant /s/

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(varying in distribution), and nasalisation as a suprasegmental feature, with basic SOV word order shaping phonological phrasing and stress patterns centred on penultimate or antepenultimate syllables.

1. Four-way stop contrast (voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated, voiced unaspirated, voiced aspirated)

2. Elimination of length contrast in vowels

3. Single sibilant /s/ (with variations in distribution)

4. Retroflex vs dental contrast

5. Basic SOV word order influences on phonological phrasing

6. Nasalisation as a phonological feature

7. Stress patterns centred on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable

6.2 Significant Differences

Feature	Maithili	Magahi	Bhojpuri
Vowel	8 vowels	6 vowels	6 vowels
Nasal distinctions	3 phonemic (/m/, /n/, /ŋ/)	2 phonemic (/m/, /n/)	3 phonemic (/m/, /n/, /ŋ/)
Nasal aspiration	Minimal	Absent	Rich (/mh/, /nh/, /rh/, /lh/)
Diphthong richness	Most extensive	Moderate	Moderate
Geminate handling	Simplification	Simplification	Preservation
Schwa prominence	High	Moderate	Moderate
Attenuation process	Absent	Present	Present
Glide treatment	Preserved	Replaced (y→j, w→b)	Mostly preserved

7. Phonological Implications and Historical Development

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The phonological similarities and differences among the three Bihari languages provide important insights into their linguistic evolution:

Common ancestry: The shared four-way stop contrast, retroflex system, and basic vowel features reflect descent from Magadhi.

Divergent evolution: Different treatment of historical sibilants, glides, and nasals suggests differential language contact and internal phonological change since the languages separated.

Contact effects: Maithili's close contact with Nepali and Bangla appears to have contributed to the development of its elaborate diphthong system, reflecting phonological influence from these neighbouring languages. In contrast, Magahi's systematic adaptation of loanwords suggests a stronger historical interaction with Persian, which has shaped its phonetic assimilation processes and expanded its sound inventory. Bhojpuri, on the other hand, demonstrates consistent preservation of geminates, a feature that likely reflects specific inheritance patterns from earlier stages of Middle Indo-Aryan, showing its tendency to retain conservative phonological traits within the Bihari group.

- Maithili's contact with Nepali and Bangla may have influenced its elaborate diphthong system.

- Magahi's systematic loanword adaptation suggests stronger contact with Persian.

- Bhojpuri's geminate preservation may reflect specific patterns of inheritance.

Typological shifts: Magahi's reduction of its nasal and fricative inventories marks a distinct shift toward phonological simplification, streamlining its sound system relative to its sister languages. Bhojpuri, by contrast, exhibits an extension of aspiration across nasals and liquids, representing an elaboration and diversification of pre-existing phonological features. Meanwhile, Maithili's continued maintenance of fine-grained phonemic distinctions reflects both its large and stable speaker base and its long-standing literary and cultural tradition, which have helped preserve greater phonological complexity over time.

- Magahi's reduction in nasal and fricative inventory represents a shift toward phonological simplification

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- Bhojpuri's aspiration extension represents the elaboration of existing features
- Maithili's maintenance of distinctions reflects its large speaker population and literary tradition

8. Conclusions

This comparative phonological study reveals that while the three Bihari languages share a substantial phonological structure reflecting their common origin in Magadhi, they have undergone significant divergence over time. Each language maintains its own distinctive phonological characteristics:

- **Maithili** represents the most conservative system in terms of vowel inventory and the most innovative in terms of diphthong development
- **Magahi** shows systematic simplification tendencies, particularly in nasal and fricative inventories
- **Bhojpuri** demonstrates rich elaboration of aspiration features and selective geminate preservation

These phonological systems reflect not only historical sound change but also the social, geographic, and linguistic contexts in which each language has evolved. The study of Bihari phonology contributes to a broader understanding of Indo-Aryan language evolution, phonological typology, and language contact dynamics in South Asia. Further research should include:

1. Acoustic analysis of phonological distinctions in each language
2. Detailed dialectal variation studies within each language
3. Investigation of language change in progress among younger speakers
4. Analysis of code-switching effects in multilingual communities
5. Comparison with neighbouring language systems to assess contact-induced change

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Dependency Relation between Number and Gender in Chang

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Abstract

The present paper highlights the dependency relations of gender and number in Chang, a Naga language belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family spoken in the North East state of Nagaland, India. The study is based on Greenberg's universal 36, which states that if a language has the category of gender, then it always has the category number (Greenberg 1963). Chang validates Greenberg's universal 36 and explores the presence of gender and number in the language, where nouns in Chang differentiate the marking of masculine and feminine gender in both animate human and animate non-human nouns. The language distinguishes plurality in the form of suffixation. The order of gender and number in the language is fixed, which shows the interdependence of Gender and number in the language.

Keywords: dependency, gender, number, Chang

1.0 About Chang

Chang is a language spoken in the North East state of Nagaland, India. Chang is a major tribe that has its own distinct culture and language. Chang is dominant in the Tuensang district, which is 274 km from the capital city, Kohima. The term Chang indicates both the language and the community

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that speaks it. Chang is also known by alternate names Mojung, Changyanguh, Mochumi and Mochunger. According to the 2001 census, the total population of Chang is 60,9000 inhabited in 36 villages. Chang doesn't have its own script; it uses Roman script for writing purposes. Benedict (1972), has classified Chang with the Konyak group.

2.0 Introduction

The paper explores the formation of gender and number and their interdependence based on Greenberg's Universal 36, which states that if a language has the category of gender, then it always has the category number (Greenberg 1963). According to Corbett, gender and number are two features of nominal morphosyntax which contributes to reference construal and reference tracking, that is, to the linguistic representation of real-world entities. Gender is a nominal classification strategy which, in the languages that possess it, functions as an inherent lexical property of nouns. Corbett further stated that Gender distinctions distribute the nominal lexicon of a language into two or several classes whose semantic motivation varies a great deal in the languages of the world, while generally revolving around such notions as animacy, sex, size and shape. Number is a feature of inherent nominal inflection. Number distinctions serve the purpose of representing nouns and noun phrases as denoting one or several instances of an entity (Corbett 2000). Plurality is the most frequently attested type of number value, and the one that is also most likely to be obligatorily coded across the languages of the world (Corbett 2000; Greenberg 1963). The present paper focuses on two sections, namely the marking of gender and number in Chang and testing the validity of Greenberg's universal 36 to see whether gender hinges on number in the language or not.

3.0 Marking of Gender and Number in Chang

Chang is an SOV language where agreement is not a feature of the language. Having agglutinating feature, Chang morphology is rich with affixation. Number and gender in the language are marked with the process of suffixation.

3.1 Gender

Gender is a class of nouns reflected in the behaviour of associated words (Hockett, 1958). This term was first used in the 5th century B.C by the Greek philosopher Protagoras, when he divided

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Greek nouns into three classes: 'feminine', 'masculine', 'inanimate' (nowadays called neuter). It is a term used in three ways: i) a biological distinction between male and female called natural gender; ii) a distinction between classes of nouns as masculine, feminine (or neuter), also called grammatical gender; iii) a distinction between social roles of men and women, also called social gender (George Yule: 2006). Chang has a natural gender. There is a distinction in the marking of animate human and animate non-human, while an inanimate noun doesn't carry any gender marking. In the case of an animate human, the male gender is marked by *-bəu* while the female gender is marked by *-ɲu*. Animate non-human also distinguishes masculine and feminine gender. Masculine is marked as *-baŋ,* while feminine is marked as *-bi.*

Animate human		Animate non-human	
Musculine	Feminine	Musculine	Feminine
heiʃaubəu 'bachelor'	*mədeiɲu* 'maiden'	*keibaŋ* 'male dog'	*keibi* 'female dog'
tʃjalaubəu 'male singer'	*tʃjalaɯɲu* 'female singer'	*munibaŋ* 'male cat'	*munibi* 'female cat
tʰuŋbəu 'male cook'	*tʰuŋɲu* 'female cook'	*maʃubaŋ* 'ox'	*maʃubi* 'cow'

There are also many kinship nouns in the language that don't inflect for gender as below

Masculine	Feminine
lao 'husband'	*jak* 'wife'
jai 'brother'	*nou* 'sister'
kou 'uncle'	*ɲi* 'aunt'

3.2 Agreement

The language doesn't show grammatical agreement in gender. In (1), the verb *'juŋda'* 'drank' and the subject *bəusu* 'man' doesn't show any agreement. The following example supports the absence of grammatical agreement.

1. *bəusu-ei   tei   juŋ-da*

   man-ERG   water   drink-DECL

   'A man is drinking water.'

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Inanimate objects are gender unmarked in the language. In the following example (2) *le* 'book' is suffixed with the determiner *kʰo* and not with the gender suffix- *ɲu* or -*bao*

2. *le-kho   məja-gei*
   book-DET good-DECL
   'The book is good.'

3.3 Number

Number is a grammatical category used for the analysis of word-classes displaying such contrasts as singular (sg, SG, sing), plural (pl, PL), dual (du) ('two'), trial ('three'), paucal ('few'), etc., as in English boy v. boys, he walks v. they walk. The contrasts generally correspond to the number of real-world entities referred to, but linguistic discussion has drawn attention to the problems involved in proposing any such straightforward one-to-one correlation. (David Crystal, 2008).

Plurality in Chang can be shown in any one of the three ways, as shown below

 a) using a plural suffix

 b) using a numeral

 c) using a quantifier

3.3.1 a) Using a Plural Suffix

Chang distinguishes number as singular and plural. Singular is unmarked, while plurals in the language are marked by the suffix -*ʃoŋ*. All animate human, animate non-human and inanimate nouns are marked by the plural marker -*ʃoŋ*.

Animate human		Animate Non-human		Inanimate	
bəuʃu	'boy'	*muni*	'cat'	*tebəl*	'table'
bəuʃuʃɔŋ	'boys'	*muniʃoŋ*	'cats'	*tebəlʃoŋ*	'tables'
jaksa	'girl'	*kei*	'dog'	*ʃətʃaŋ*	'chair'
jaksaʃoŋ	'girls'	*keiʃoŋ*	'dogs'	*ʃətʃaŋʃoŋ*	'chairs'

3.3.2 b) Using a Numeral

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In chang, cardinal number follows the noun and in the following example, in the presence of a cardinal numeral, the noun doesn't take the plural suffix. Example (3) shows that the plural suffix -*ʃoŋ* is not required with *tʃəusi* 'child' in the presence of cardinal number *mətʃəm* 'three'.

3. *tʃəusi mətʃəm* *ləwada*
   child three   come-DECL
   'Three children are coming.'

3.3.3 c) Using a Quantifier

Nouns in chang are not plural-marked in the presence of a quantifier. In the following examples, the nouns *bəusu* 'boy' and *jəksa* 'girl' don't take any plural suffix in the presence of the quantifiers *bəndəu* 'all', *ət* 'some' and *mətʃuŋ* 'many'. Examples 4), 5) and 6) also show the absence of number agreement in the language.

4. *bəusu bəndəu iskul hə-wa*
   boy all school go-PST
   'All the boys went to school'

5. *ət bəusu məja-gei*
   some boy   good-PRF
   'Some boys are good'

6. *jəksa mətʃuŋ tət ə-ləu-gei*
   girl   many today NEG-come-PRF
   'Many girls were absent today'

4. Greenberg's Universal 36 and Chang

Chang agrees with Greenberg's universal 36, which states that *"If a language has the category of gender, it always has the category of number".* The above explanation on the formation of gender and number clearly indicates the presence of number and gender in the language, where Chang nouns are marked with masculine and feminine, and it also distinguishes nouns with plurality.

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However, the discussion also concentrates on the dependency between gender and number in the language and how far it agrees with the statement that gender hinges on number.

According to Walchil (et al. 2019), this universal establishes an asymmetry about the existence of gender and number in the languages of the world, such that the presence of grammatical gender (as a general morpho-syntactic category) always hinges on the existence of some type of number system (also as a general morphosyntactic category). In other words, languages possessing gender and lacking number are expected to be rare, whereas languages with number only or both gender and number are more common. From a language evolution perspective, this would suggest that before the gender category can emerge, a language should have developed number first. Similarly, other works propose the dependence of gender on the availability of number or other morphosyntactic categories in a language. Specifically, the emergence of gender has been described as *"parasitic on other category types, notably number and case"*.

According to Corbett (2013), the key difference between gender and number morpho-syntactically is that the presence of gender agreement is the prerequisite to establish that a grammatical gender system exists in a given language, whereas the presence of number marking can be restricted to nouns only, or to the noun phrase level. In general, number tends to be marked on nouns more frequently than gender does.

Though agreement is not a feature of chang language and there is no agreement of gender and number with other parts of the sentence in the language, the pattern of gender and number in a noun phrase is fixed and they are bundled together and not independent. As stated above, gender and number in the language are expressed by the process of suffixation. In a noun phrase with number and gender, the order will be noungendernumber and this order cannot be broken, which stands against the statement that Gender hinges on Number. Gender and number are properties of noun and the suffixes denoting gender and number in the Chang are always dependent on noun, where the number suffix is dependent on the gender suffix, it has to occur after the gender suffix in a noun phrase. Order of gender and number in Chang in terms of plurality by suffixation, numerals or quantifier is fixed, where they occur only after gender. In the following examples, the

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plural marker *-ʃoŋ* and the gender marker *-bəu* and *-ɲu* are intertwined and cannot occur independently.

7. *tʃjalau-bəu-ʃoŋ*
   singer-male-PL
   'male singers'

8. *tʃjalau-ɲu-ʃoŋ*
   singer-female-PL
   'female singers'

9. *lelən-bəu-ʃoŋ*
   teacher-male-PL
   'male teachers'

10. *lelən-ɲu-ʃoŋ*
    teacher-female-PL
    'female teachers'

5. Conclusion

The present study discusses the relationship of number and gender from the perspective of Greenberg's universal 36. Chang is an SOV language where agreement is not a feature of the language. Chang gender and number are interdependent in a noun phrase, where number depends on the gender. To indicate plurality in a gender marked noun, plural is dependent on the number, as it has to occur after the gender suffix. The language distinguishes masculine and feminine gender in both animate human and animate non-human nouns, while inanimate nouns are not gender marked. Chang nouns are marked for plurality with the help of suffixation, a numeral and a quantifier. The paper showcases further scope to study the relationship between number, gender, demonstrative and adjective, which is not mentioned in the paper.

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The Reflection of Health Consciousness in Bhojpuri Idioms: A Study on Language and Tradition

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Abstract

This paper examines the reflection of health consciousness embedded in Bhojpuri idioms and proverbs, highlighting the close relationship between language, traditional knowledge, and cultural practices. Bhojpuri, a widely spoken regional language of Bihar, possesses a rich oral tradition through which collective wisdom has been transmitted across generations. Focusing on idiomatic expressions related to health, wellness, diet, seasonal awareness, and preventive care, the study explores how indigenous knowledge systems are preserved and communicated through everyday speech. Adopting a qualitative and descriptive methodology, data were collected through interviews with native Bhojpuri speakers from the Bhojpur and Buxar districts of Bihar, as well as observations of natural conversations in households, marketplaces, and social gatherings. The collected idioms reveal a deep-rooted understanding of health as the foundation of prosperity,

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emphasising preventive measures, moderation in diet, disciplined daily routines, and harmony with natural and seasonal cycles. These expressions demonstrate an intuitive understanding of practices that closely align with modern concepts of holistic health and wellness. The study argues that Bhojpuri idioms function as cultural repositories of folk medicine, environmental wisdom, and ethical living. By documenting and analysing these expressions, the paper underscores the importance of preserving Bhojpuri not merely as a linguistic system but as a living archive of traditional health knowledge. In the context of increasing linguistic marginalisation and cultural homogenization, this research highlights the urgency of safeguarding regional languages as vital carriers of indigenous knowledge and cultural identity.

Introduction

Language is not merely a system of signs used for communication; it is a powerful social institution that shapes human thought, behaviour, and collective life. Through language, societies organise their experiences, transmit values, and construct shared meanings. As scholars of language and culture have emphasised, language both reflects and produces social reality, embedding within it the norms, beliefs, and worldview of a community (Kramsch, 1998; Duranti, 1997). Every linguistic expression—whether a word, phrase, or proverb—carries traces of social history and cultural knowledge. Thus, language plays a central role in the formation of society.

Closely linked to language is traditional or indigenous knowledge, which refers to knowledge systems developed by communities through long-term interaction with their environment. Such knowledge is experiential and holistic, deeply rooted in local ecology, culture, and social practices. Unlike modern scientific knowledge, which is relatively recent and institutionalised, indigenous knowledge has evolved over centuries and has been sustained primarily through oral traditions (Magga, 2005). Even in contexts of rapid modernisation—where dominant development models often sideline local cultural frameworks—these knowledge systems continue to provide alternative, context-sensitive understandings of health, development, and well-being (Dube 1998). Consequently, indigenous knowledge encompasses a wide range of domains, including healthcare, food habits, agriculture, climate, ethics, and social relations.

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Traditional knowledge systems have historically helped communities survive in challenging environments. They provided practical guidelines for maintaining health, preventing illness, adapting to seasonal changes, and ensuring sustainable living. Scholars argue that indigenous knowledge is not static or obsolete; rather, it is dynamic and adaptive, continuously refined through observation and lived experience (Agrawal, 1995). In the absence of formal medical institutions, people relied on this accumulated wisdom for healing, nutrition, and preventive care. Even today, many principles of indigenous health practices resonate with modern concepts of holistic and preventive medicine (Helman, 2007).

One of the important mediums for the transmission of traditional knowledge has been idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions. In oral societies, where written records were limited or absent, idioms and proverbs served as mnemonic devices, condensing complex experiences into concise, memorable forms. As Mieder (2004) notes, proverbs are "folk wisdom in miniature," carrying moral, practical, and cultural lessons. Idioms related to health, food, seasons, and daily routines guided people's behaviour in everyday life. Through repeated use in conversation, these expressions ensured that knowledge was passed from one generation to the next in an informal, yet effective manner.

The Bhojpuri language, spoken widely across eastern Uttar Pradesh, western Bihar, and among diaspora communities, offers a rich example of how indigenous knowledge is embedded in everyday speech. Bhojpuri possesses a strong oral tradition in which idioms (kahavat) and proverbs (lokokti) play a significant role. These expressions reflect not only social values but also a deep awareness of health, environment, and lifestyle, as idioms and proverbs derive their meanings from shared cultural contexts rather than from literal interpretation (Norrick, 1985). Long before the emergence of modern medical science, regional communities possessed practical medical knowledge related to diet, hygiene, seasonal adaptation, and preventive care. This knowledge is evident in Bhojpuri idioms that emphasise moderation, cleanliness, early rising, seasonal eating, and harmony with nature.

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Bhojpuri idioms and phrases act as carriers of traditional medical and health-related knowledge, demonstrating that earlier societies were not ignorant or unscientific but possessed their own systematic ways of understanding the human body and its relationship with the environment. Studying these idioms allows us to recognise Bhojpuri not merely as a regional language but as a repository of indigenous wisdom that continues to hold relevance in contemporary discussions on health, culture, and sustainability. This study treats Bhojpuri health-related idioms as culturally embedded knowledge systems that are collectively produced, orally transmitted, and integral to community identity (Battiste 2002).

Literature Review

Alessandro Duranti (1997) in *Linguistic Anthropology* provides a foundational understanding of language as a social practice deeply embedded in cultural life. Duranti argues that language cannot be separated from the social contexts in which it is produced and interpreted, as it functions as a primary medium through which cultural knowledge, beliefs, and values are transmitted. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study, as Bhojpuri idioms related to health are not isolated linguistic forms but social practices shaped by lived experience, collective memory, and everyday interaction.

Building on this cultural view of language, Clair Kramsch (1998) in *Language and Culture* emphasises that language both reflects and constructs cultural realities. Kramsch highlights how linguistic expressions encode shared meanings, norms, and worldviews, allowing speakers to interpret reality through culturally specific frameworks. Her work supports the analysis of Bhojpuri idioms as carriers of culturally grounded health beliefs, where language becomes a symbolic resource for shaping attitudes toward the body, lifestyle, and well-being.

The study of proverbs and idiomatic expressions as repositories of collective wisdom has been extensively developed by Wolfgang Mieder (2004) in *Proverbs: A Handbook*. Mieder characterises proverbs as "folk wisdom in miniature," condensing generations of experience into concise and memorable forms. He argues that proverbs serve practical, moral, and pedagogical functions within societies. This conceptualisation is crucial for understanding Bhojpuri health-related idioms as informal yet effective tools for guiding behaviour related to diet, routine, and preventive care.

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Complementing this functional approach, Neal Norric (1985) in *How Proverbs Mean* focuses on the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of proverbs. Norrick contends that the meanings of idioms and proverbs are culturally negotiated and context-dependent rather than literal. His framework justifies the methodological approach of interpreting Bhojpuri idioms within their social and cultural contexts, ensuring that their health-related meanings are understood as products of shared cultural knowledge.

The theoretical grounding for indigenous knowledge systems is provided by Arun Agrawal (1995) in *Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge: Some Critical Comments*, where he challenges the dichotomy between scientific and indigenous knowledge. Agrawal argues that traditional knowledge systems are empirical, systematic, and adaptive, developed through long-term observation and practical engagement with the environment. This argument directly supports the present study's position that Bhojpuri health idioms reflect structured and experience-based medical knowledge rather than superstition.

Further elaborating the epistemological significance of indigenous knowledge, Marie Battiste (2002) *Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education* conceptualises indigenous knowledge as a holistic system rooted in culture, identity, and community survival. Battiste emphasises that such knowledge is transmitted orally and embedded in everyday practices. Her work provides a strong theoretical basis for treating Bhojpuri idioms as culturally embedded knowledge systems that preserve health wisdom across generations.

The environmental dimension of indigenous knowledge is highlighted by Ole Henrik Magga (2005), who defines indigenous knowledge as arising from sustained interaction between communities and their natural environments. Magga's emphasis on ecological awareness and adaptive living is particularly relevant for analysing Bhojpuri idioms related to seasons, climate, and environmental adaptation, which link human health directly to natural cycles.

The cultural understanding of health is developed by Cecil G. Helman (2007) in *Culture, Health and Illness*, where he presents health as a holistic concept shaped by lifestyle, environment, and

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social relations. Helman's framework aligns closely with Bhojpuri idioms that emphasise moderation, discipline, preventive care, and harmony with nature, reinforcing the argument that these expressions reflect an indigenous model of holistic health.

The concept of community-based health systems is articulated by Arthur Kleinman (1980) in *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture*, where he introduces the idea of "local health systems." Kleinman argues that communities develop their own explanatory models of illness and healing based on experience rather than biomedical institutions. This perspective is central to the present study, as Bhojpuri idioms encode preventive and lifestyle-oriented health knowledge that functions independently of formal medical systems.

Within the Indian context, S. C. Dube (1998) in *Modernization and Development* examines the tensions between tradition and modernity, highlighting the value of indigenous cultural frameworks in alternative models of development. His work provides a broader sociocultural backdrop for understanding why traditional health knowledge embedded in Bhojpuri idioms continues to hold relevance despite modernisation.

The richness of Indian oral traditions is further illustrated by A.K Ramanujan (1989) in *Folktales from India*, which demonstrates how narratives, expressions, and folklore function as repositories of ethical, ecological, and social wisdom. Ramanujan's insights support the treatment of Bhojpuri idioms as narrative forms that preserve health-related values and practices.

At the global level, *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* emphasises the importance of indigenous knowledge for sustainable development and community well-being. UNESCO (2017) highlights that oral traditions play a crucial role in preserving local health practices and ecological wisdom, reinforcing the global relevance of studies such as the present one.

Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design to explore the reflection of health consciousness embedded in Bhojpuri idioms and proverbs. Since the research aims to

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understand meanings, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge transmitted through language, a qualitative approach is considered most appropriate. This method allows for an in-depth examination of oral expressions within their natural social and cultural contexts.

The study was conducted in Bhojpur and Buxar districts of Bihar, regions where Bhojpuri is widely spoken and where oral traditions remain active in everyday life. These districts were selected due to their strong cultural association with the Bhojpuri language and the continued use of idioms and proverbs among rural and semi-rural communities.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing primarily on elderly native Bhojpuri speakers aged above 50 years. Elderly members were chosen because they are the custodians of traditional knowledge and are more familiar with idiomatic expressions used in daily life. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

Data Collection Methods

Data for the study were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to ensure authenticity and reliability:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with native Bhojpuri speakers to elicit idioms and proverbs related to health, food habits, seasonal practices, and daily routines.

Participant observation was carried out in households, marketplaces, and social gatherings where idioms naturally occur in conversation.

Informal conversations were recorded during routine social interactions, allowing idioms to emerge spontaneously rather than through direct questioning.

These methods helped capture idioms as they are used in real-life contexts, preserving their cultural meaning.

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The collected idioms were documented in their original Bhojpuri form, followed by literal and contextual English translations. Care was taken to retain the cultural nuances and intended meanings of the expressions. Multiple informants were consulted to cross-check interpretations and ensure accuracy.

The documented idioms were analysed using thematic analysis. They were grouped under broad themes such as health as wealth, preventive care, dietary discipline, seasonal awareness, and daily routine. The analysis focused on identifying underlying beliefs, values, and traditional health practices embedded in the idioms, rather than treating them as isolated linguistic units.

Research Questions

➢ Which Bhojpuri idioms and proverbs reflect indigenous health consciousness and traditional medical knowledge?

➢ What beliefs related to diet, lifestyle, seasonal changes, and preventive care are embedded in Bhojpuri idiomatic expressions?

➢ Do Bhojpuri health-related idioms function as tools for transmitting knowledge across generations?

➢ Do Bhojpuri idioms demonstrate the relationship between human health and the natural environment?

Results / Findings

The fieldwork conducted in Bhojpuri-speaking regions led to the documentation of a set of idioms and proverbs that explicitly reflect health consciousness, preventive care, and ecological awareness. These expressions are widely recognised among community members, particularly

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elderly speakers, and are used in everyday conversations related to health, food habits, seasonal changes, and daily routines.

- तन हइ त धन हइ।

   (If there is health, then wealth will follow.)

- बीमारी से बचला के उपाय इलाज से नीमन होला।

   (Prevention is better than cure.)

- मीठ खा, त दात हारा; करेजा खा, त तन हारा।

   (Too much sweetness ruins the teeth; too much desire ruins the body.)

- जाड़ा में कम्बल ना होखे त सुखिया सोखे।

   (Without a blanket in winter, happiness dries up.)

- प्रात:काल खाट से उठि के पीहीं तुरतहि पानी, ओ घर बैद कबहुं ना आवे।

   (Drink water immediately after waking up; the doctor will never visit that house.)

- पहिले जागे, पहिले सोवे, जो वह सोचे वही होवे।

   (Early to bed, early to rise; as one thinks, so one becomes.)

- सावन साग न भादों दही, कुवार दूध न कातिक मही।

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(Eat greens in Sawan, curd in Bhado, milk in Kuar, not in Kartik.)

- माघे जाड़, ना पूसे जाड़, जब बयारी बहे तबे जाड़।

(The real cold is not in Magh or Paush, but when the cold wind blows.)

- अगहन दूना पूस सवाई, माघ मास घरहू से जाई।

(Cold increases in Agahan, worsens in Paush, and in Magh one should stay indoors.)

- चैते गुड़ बैसाखे तेल, जेठे पन्थ असाढ़े बेल।

(Jaggery in Chaitra, oil in Baisakh, walking in Jeth, and wood apple in Asadh.)

Analysis and Discussion

The Bhojpuri idioms documented in this study collectively demonstrate that health consciousness in Bhojpuri-speaking communities is embedded within everyday language and social practice. From a theoretical perspective, this supports Duranti's (1997) view that language is inseparable from social life and functions as a medium through which cultural knowledge is produced and sustained. The idioms analysed here do not merely describe health; they actively shape attitudes toward the body, food, environment, and daily discipline, thereby fulfilling the objective of uncovering indigenous health beliefs encoded in language.

The repeated emphasis on health as the foundation of prosperity, evident in proverbs such as "तन हइ त धन हइ", reflects what medical anthropologists describe as a holistic model of health, where physical well-being is closely linked to social and economic stability (Helman, 2007). Rather than isolating health as a biomedical condition, these expressions situate it within the broader framework of everyday living. Similarly, the proverb "बीमारी से बचला के उपाय इलाज से नीमन

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होला" illustrates a preventive orientation toward health, aligning with Kleinman's (1980) concept of local health systems, in which communities develop their own explanatory models of illness and care based on experience and observation.

Dietary moderation and seasonal regulation, emphasized in idioms such as "मीठ खा, त दात हारा; करेजा खा, त तन हारा" and "सावन साग न भादों दही, कुवार दूध न कातिक मही", further reflect the empirical nature of indigenous knowledge. Agrawal (1995) argues that indigenous knowledge systems are often wrongly dismissed as unscientific, despite being grounded in long-term observation and practical testing. The Bhojpuri idioms support this argument by revealing a systematic understanding of nutrition, bodily limits, and seasonal suitability of food. These expressions function as informal regulatory mechanisms that guide behavior, demonstrating how health knowledge is normalized within everyday speech.

Environmental awareness forms another crucial dimension of the health knowledge embedded in Bhojpuri idioms. Proverbs related to winter severity and climatic changes, such as "माघे जाड़, ना पूसे जाड़, जब बयारी बहे तबे जाड़" and "अगहन दूना पूस सवाई, माघ मास घरहूं से जाई", reflect an indigenous ecological consciousness. Magga (2005) emphasizes that indigenous knowledge develops through sustained interaction with the environment, and the Bhojpuri proverbs clearly illustrate this principle. These expressions advise behavioral adaptation—such as reduced mobility or increased protection—during harsh seasons, thereby linking environmental awareness directly with health preservation.

The idioms encouraging disciplined daily routines, including early rising, hydration, and regulated living—such as "प्रात:काल खाट से उठि के पीहीं तुरतहि पानी, ओ घर बैद कबहुं ना आवे" and "पहिले जागे, पहिले सोवे, जो वह सोचे वही होवे"—highlight the moral and behavioral dimensions of health. From a cultural theoretical standpoint, Kramsch (1998) notes that language embodies cultural values and norms, shaping how individuals understand and practice everyday life. These Bhojpuri expressions reinforce the idea that health is sustained through self-discipline, routine, and mental balance, rather than through external medical intervention alone.

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Importantly, these idioms function as tools of intergenerational transmission, a key feature of oral knowledge systems. As Mieder (2004) explains, proverbs serve as condensed forms of collective wisdom that are easily remembered and transmitted across generations. The continued circulation of these Bhojpuri idioms in domestic and social contexts demonstrates how traditional health knowledge is preserved without written documentation. This directly addresses the research objective of examining idioms as mediums for transmitting indigenous knowledge.

The theoretical analysis confirms that Bhojpuri idioms constitute a coherent indigenous health knowledge system encompassing prevention, diet, environmental adaptation, and disciplined living. Far from being random or purely metaphorical, these expressions represent what Battiste (2002) describes as culturally embedded knowledge systems that are vital for community survival and identity. By situating Bhojpuri idioms within established theoretical frameworks, this study demonstrates that earlier Bhojpuri-speaking communities possessed structured and experience-based medical knowledge, challenging the dominance of Western biomedical narratives and reaffirming the epistemic value of indigenous traditions.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how Bhojpuri idioms and proverbs reflect indigenous health consciousness and traditional medical knowledge embedded in everyday language. Through the collection and analysis of health-related idiomatic expressions, the research demonstrates that Bhojpuri is not merely a medium of communication but a repository of experiential wisdom developed over generations. The findings clearly show that earlier Bhojpuri-speaking communities possessed a systematic understanding of health grounded in prevention, moderation, seasonal adaptation, and disciplined living.

The documented idioms reveal that health was traditionally viewed as the foundation of a meaningful and productive life. Emphasis on preventive care, appropriate diet, climate-sensitive behaviour, and daily routines indicates an indigenous health system based on close observation of the body and its environment. These expressions functioned as informal guidelines that shaped everyday practices and ensured community well-being in the absence of institutional medical

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systems. In doing so, they fulfilled the objective of uncovering traditional beliefs and practices related to health and wellness.

Furthermore, the study highlights the crucial role of idioms and proverbs as vehicles for the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Learned and used within families and social settings, these expressions enabled the preservation of medical and ecological wisdom through oral tradition. By documenting and analysing Bhojpuri idioms, this research contributes to the broader goal of safeguarding indigenous knowledge systems and affirms the cultural and intellectual value of regional languages.

In the contemporary context of rapid modernisation and linguistic shift, the relevance of such traditional knowledge cannot be overlooked. Many of the health principles embedded in Bhojpuri idioms resonate with modern ideas of preventive healthcare and holistic well-being. Therefore, preserving the Bhojpuri language and its oral traditions is not only a matter of cultural identity but also an important step toward recognising alternative knowledge systems that offer valuable insights into sustainable living and community health.

This study underscores the need for further interdisciplinary research on regional languages and indigenous knowledge. By foregrounding Bhojpuri idioms as carriers of traditional health consciousness, it challenges dominant narratives that marginalise folk wisdom and reaffirms the importance of language as a living archive of human experience.

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A Descriptive Analysis of the Morphosyntactic Features of Dhundhari: Structure, Agreement and Order

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to find out key morphosyntactic features of Dhundhari, focusing on the major morphological, verbal, agreement, and typological description of the language by following Payne's idea of Morphosyntax (1997). Findings show that Dhundhari has the dominant SOV order, reflecting a head final structure. The structure of the words combines both agglutinating and fusional features. The language has two genders, two numbers, and three persons. Gender differentiation is also possible in terms of [-animate] objects. Case markers are also inflectional markers and except for the nominative case, other case markers are overtly marked. Tense, aspect and mood are distinctly visible, and it plays an important role in understanding the nature of an action. Aspect and mood are also distinguished in the verb forms. Using examples and structural description of the language, this study highlights the regional morphosyntactic features of Dhundhari while placing it within the larger Indo-Aryan group of languages. Further theoretical and comparative research on Rajasthani variations is made possible by the findings, which further advance descriptive Indo-Aryan linguistics.

Keywords: Dhundhari; morphosyntactic features; tense-aspect-mood; descriptive Study

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INTRODUCTION

Morphosyntax is one of the core areas of Linguistics that studies the interface between morphology and syntax. It shows how grammatical meaning is examined through word formation and structural analysis. Morphosyntactic features include several grammatical features including tense and aspect, number, gender and person, case markers, argument structures etc., which are all seen by syntactic relations or inflections Dhundhari. This study seeks to investigate how Dhundhari's morphosyntactic elements are realized and how they influence word order, meaning, and sentence structure.

Dhundhari [dʱʊndʱaɾi], also known as Jaipuri, is one of the major Central Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Rajasthan. It comes under Rajasthani subgroups. The language is spoken in Jaipur, Tonk, Dudu, Sawai Madhopur, Dausa, and a few parts of Ajmer. One of the oldest groups of people to live in Rajasthan were the Dhundhari native speakers. There are 1.8 million people in the speech community, according to the 2011 Census. "It is the second widely spoken variety of Rajasthani group of languages after Marwari" (Gogoi & Shougrakpam, 2025: 199). According to the locals, the term Dhundhari is derived from the name of a mountain known as *Dhundhakriti;* whereas another opinion holds that the name 'Dhundhari' has come from the *Dhund* river that flows across the region. Grierson (1908) has mentioned several other names of Dhundhari that includes Dhundhari- Jaipuri, Dhundhali, Dhundhahdi, Jhadshahiboli and Kai-kui boli, and it is alternatively termed as 'Dhundhari' by the natives of Rajasthan. "Alternative names for Dhundari include Dhundari-Marwari, Dhundhali, Dhundhahdi, Jhadshahi boli, Kai-kui boli, and Jaipuri" (Benjamin et.el, 2012).

Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1908) is one of the earliest non-linguistic accounts labeling the genetic classification of the languages. According to Ethnologue, Dhundhari is a language of zone descendant of Indo-Aryan language family.
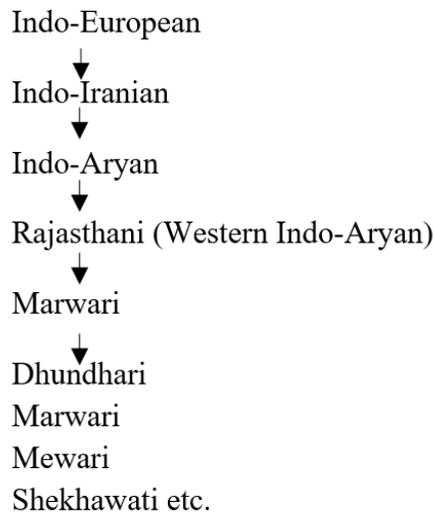
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Indo-European

↓

Indo-Iranian

↓

Indo-Aryan

↓

Rajasthani (Western Indo-Aryan)

↓

Marwari

↓

Dhundhari
Marwari
Mewari
Shekhawati etc.

Fig 1: Genetic Classification of Dhundhari (https://www.ethnologue.com/subgroup/3/)

There are several other varieties that come under the umbrella term 'Rajasthani'. Some of the dialects are highly mutually intelligible, whereas others are not. As part of a series of sociolinguistic studies of the selected Rajasthani dialects, Benjamin and Ngwazah conducted a sociolinguistic survey and found that Hindi appears to have invaded the linguistic space.

OBJECTIVES

It is crucial to understand the basic linguistic elements of a language to create words, phrases, clauses, and eventually sentences in a language. These characteristics hold significance not just in the study of syntax and morphology but also in other areas of linguistics. The goal of this study is to find out the basic linguistic characteristics. Primary goal of this research is to:

(a) To find out the key morphosyntactic features of Dhundhari

(b) To understand how syntactic structure and word formation processes interact to generate the correct grammatical structures of the language.

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

For this study, primary data has been collected from the native speakers of Dhundhari. Data has been gathered through structured and semi structured interviews in formal and informal settings. Participants are the native speakers of Dhundhari, inhabitants of Jaipur region. Their

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mother tongue is Dhundhari and they use Dhundhari in everyday life. Neither the occupation nor any other factors such as gender, age, and other such variables were focused on.

Secondary data have been collected from various existing sources. Even though the amount of secondary data is very little in number, it is found to be very helpful in understanding the basic features of Dhundhari.

This nature of the work is descriptive-qualitative. For data transcription, International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) were followed. Since this work is limited but not restricted to fundamental morphosyntactic analysis of the language, phonemic transcription was not given significant attention. The Leipzig Glossing Rules (updated version, February 2008) were used for the glossing of data.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The study has framed the idea of morphosyntax from the book '*Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists'* by Thomas E. Payne (1997). Payne has conceptualized Morphosyntax as one of the major domains of language studies. Rather than treating morphology and syntax as separate areas, Payne has proposed his idea of morphosyntax which not only studies prefixes, suffixes, stems, and roots but also concerns the rules governing the arrangement of words in phrases and sentences. Morphosyntax, therefore, addresses how morphological elements (e.g., inflections) are integrated into syntactic structures. The two components are deeply interrelated, as morphemes often determine the syntactic relations in a sentence. This study focuses on the subject-verb agreement, case marking, and TAM features (tense, aspect, mood) which plays a major role in building the morphosyntax of the language. According to Payne, morphosyntax is a form and function mapping system that illustrates how languages use grammatical mechanisms at the word and phrase levels to order meaning.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Typological Features

Typology classifies the languages into different types, based on the formation of word and sentence structures. "A Typology is simply a division of a range of phenomenon into types" (Payne, 1997). It includes word order typology as well as morphological typology.

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Word Order Typology

Among the six logically possible constituent orders, Dhundhari follows the dominant word order Subject-Verb-Object like most of the Indo-Aryan Languages. "Descriptive linguists have long observed that individual languages structure their clauses in characteristic ways; some languages tend to place the verb at the end of a clause, others at the beginning, still others place it somewhere in the middle."(Payne 1997: 71).

In Dhundhari, the subject appears at the beginning of the sentence whereas verb appears at the end of the phrase.

1. mə roti kʰa-u

    I   chapati eat-HAB.1PRS.SG
    'I eat chapati.'

In the above example, the subject *mə* 'I' is sitting at the sentence initial position whereas verb *kʰa* 'eat' is positioned at the final. This is not restricted to SOV word order. Since Dhundhari is a free word ordered language, word scrambling is also possible according to the context. In addition to SOV, Dhundhari has the other possible word orders SVO, OVS, VOS, OSV, and VSO.

Morphological Typology

Morphological typology classifies languages according to the structure of the morphemes and their bindings. Words are agglutinating and fusional in Dhundhari. Some words can be easily segmented into morphemes whereas in some words a morpheme may carry multiple meanings.

Agglutinating features

2. roti-j̃a   (Noun+Plural Marker)

    chapati-PL
    'Chapatis'

3. gʰər-mə   (Home+ Locative Marker)

    home-LOC
    'At home'

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Fusional Features

4. (a) cʰoro gəjo

   boy go.3PST.M.SG
   'The boy went.'

   (b) cʰori gi

   girl go.3PST.F.SG
   'The girl went.'

In (4a) the verb is marked with the features -3ʳᵈ Person, Singular, Masculine, Past tense

In (4b) the verb is marked with the features -3ʳᵈ Person, Singular, Feminine, Past tense

Person, Number and Gender

"The most common number distinctions are singular vs. plural; less common are singular, dual, and plural" (Payne, 1997). Dhundhari uses a three-tier person distinction (first, second, and third) and a two-tier number system (singular and plural).

Table 1 Representation of Person, Number and Gender in Dhundhari Personal Pronouns

Person	SG (Masc)	SG(Fem)	PL(Masc)	PL(Fem)
1ˢᵗ	mə	mə	mʰe (Incl.)	mʰe (Incl.)
			apa (Excl.)	apa (Excl.)
2ⁿᵈ	tu	tu	tʰe	tʰe
3ʳᵈ	o	a	e	e
	bo	ba	e	be

One distinguishable feature of Dhundhari pronoun is that the first-person plural form has two forms *mʰe* and *apa.* When the speaker and the addressee are not a member of the same group *apa* is used and when the addressee and the speaker are the members of the same group they use *mʰe* 'we'. To show the proximity Dhundhari uses different terms in case of pronouns.

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Gender and Number Differentiation

For the [+animate] things, Dhundhari differentiates gender based on biological evidence. It also differentiates gender of the [-animate] things which are based on native speaker's intuition. Sometimes it depends on the shape, size and uses of the object.

Table 2 Gender Differentiation of [-animate] objects

Noun [-animate]	Gender	Intuition
gəɖi 'car'	Feminine	Small Vehicle
truk 'Truck'	Masculine	Larger Vehicle
dʒʱopɽi 'Mudhouse'	Feminine	Typically smaller in size, constructed using wood, leaves, cow dung, and other organic elements
məhəl 'Palace'	Masculine	Palaces are bigger in sizes, with multiple rooms
haveli 'Mansion'	Feminine	Traditional mansion or large residence, thick walls and carved wooden or stone doors
ɽoʈi 'Chapati'	Feminine	Food item of thin layer and typically round shaped sheet made of different types of flours
ɽoʈ 'Chapati'	Masculine	Typically, thicker than usual chapati, bigger in size and shape
aŋgən 'Courtyard'	Masculine	An open courtyard area within a house, covered with rooms

CASE MARKING

Case markers build the relationship between the arguments of the verb. In Dhundhari, case markers are always inflectional markers, always associated with the nouns. Case markers in Dhundhari are of three types: Nominative, Objective or oblique and postpositional.

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Table 3: Case Markers and uses

Case	Markers	Use	Example
Nominative	Ø	Subjects of intransitive verbs and subjects of imperfective transitive verbs	cʰoro aːjo the boy comes. 3PST.SG.M 'The boy came.'
Accusative	nə	Marks on objects	mə biːnə dekʰjo I him.ACC see-PST 'I saw him.'
Dative	nə	Marked on the indirect object of ditransitive verbs, which is the recipient or beneficiary	mə rama nə ik kitab dijo I ram.DAT one book give.3PST 'I gave a book to Rama.'
Instrumental	sjũ	To show the instrument used to perform an action.	cʰori bəs sjũ gi Girl bus by go.3PST.F 'The girl went by bus.'
Locative	mə, maḻe, pəɾ	To show the location	kələm kursi maḻe cʰe pen chair on be.3PRS 'The pen is on the chair.'
Possessive/ Genitive	ɾo, ɾi, ko, ki	To show possession or genetic relation. It agrees to the gender and number of the possessum.	ram-ro gʰər Ram's house

Stronski (2010) argues that old Rajasthani has clear evidence of ergative case markers that can be found in old Rajasthani scripts. But in the modern period this feature is disappearing from the Rajasthani language. Omitting the ergative case marker still makes sense and it can show the argument relationship. The marker *nə* is used as both ergative and dative or accusative marker in Dhundhari.

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5.	(a)	*tabaɾ nə has dijo

baby.ERG laugh do-PERF
'The baby laughed.'

(b)	tabaɾ has dijo
baby laugh do-PERF
'The baby laughed.'

TENSE, ASPECT, MOOD

Dhundhari expresses tense, aspect, and mood through verb inflections. Based on the use of tenses, verbs are categorized into two types: finite and non-finite. Finite forms of verbs are marked with tense, whereas non-finite forms of verbs are not marked with tense.

Tense

According to Comrie (1985:09), "Tense is grammaticalized expression of location in time." It is used to denote the time of the action. Dhundhari has a tree-tire tense system-Past, Present and Future. Tense is either marked on the main verb, or on the auxiliary may carry the tense. "Tense is the grammatical expression of the time of an event to some reference point of time, usually the moment the clause in uttered" (Payne, 1997).

6.	(a)	mə	ɾoʈi	kʰau			(Present)

I.NOM	chapati eat.1.PRS
'I eat chapati.'

(b)	mə	ɾoʈi	kʰa-jo			(Past)
I.NOM chapati eat.1PST
'I ate chapati.'

(c)	mə	ɾoʈi	kʰau-la			(Future)
I.NOM chapati eat.FUT
I will eat chapati.'

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In the above examples the tense is in simple form. In (6a) tense is marked on the main verb with the present tense first person inflectional marker *-u.* in (6b) Past tense marker -o is marked on the main verb which is also inflected for number and person. Similarly, in (6c), the main verb is marked with past tense, which is also marked for person and number features. This is the case of simple forms. There are several forms in which tense is denoted with aspectual systems.

Aspect

"Aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976:03). Aspect denotes the nature of the action, whether it is ongoing complete, or habitual action. Aspects describe the nature of an action and the internal temporal structure of an event. Comrie (1976) has divided aspect into two major categories: Imperfective and Perfective. "In Jaipuri language two types of aspects namely perfect and progressive are present" (Vedamanickam, 2011:391).

(i) Perfective Aspect

"There is a strong tendency for PFV categories to be restricted to past time reference" (Dahl, 1985:79). Perfectivity indicates the completion of an action rather look into the ongoing or continuation of an action. Grammatical gender is marked in the perfect marker *lijo* for masculine and *li* for feminine. The perfect aspect marker immediately follows the main verb.

8.   rama   ɽoti   kʰa li

        Rama chapati eat take.3PERF.F
        'Rama ate chapati.

(ii)   Imperfective Aspect

Imperfective aspect denotes the actions which are not completed. It may include habitual or ongoing actions. "The Habitual/Continuous distinction, which appears to be spreading, is found in Hindi, Nepali, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Eastern Rajasthani, Lamani, Gojri, Braj (optional), Bundeli, Punjabi, a few West Pahari dialects (Klilui, Mandeali) , Sindhi, and, with some qualification, in Assamese" (Masica 1991:269)

Habitual imperfective aspect is used to denote the regular or repetitive nature of an action

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7.   rama roti kʰa-ve

      rama chapati eat-3PST.HAB

      'Rama eats chapati.'

Continuity of an action is denoted with the continuative aspect which is denoted with the progressive participle.

8.   rama ɽoti   kʰa   ri   cʰo

      rama chapati eat PROG.F be.3PST.SG
      'Ram is eating chapati.'

In the above example, the action is progressive from in the past. There is no indication of beginning and ending point of an action, rather it talks about the progression which is denoted with the progressive participle *ri*. It agrees to the gender of the object in transitive constructions. Past tense is marked on the auxiliary verb.

Mood

One of the grammatical categories of verbs that conveys the attitude of the speakers toward the action is mood. It indicates if the sentence is a statement of fact, a condition, a wish, an order, or a query. According to Payne (1997: 244) "Mode is the speaker's attitude toward a situation including the speaker's belief in its reality or likelihood". "It is best defined in relation to an ' unmarked' class of sentences which express simple statements of fact, unqualified with respect to the attitude of the speaker towards what he is saying" (Lyon, 1968:307). It is thought of as a process that uses verb conjugation to alter the verb form.

(i) Imperative: Imperative mood is used to give command or order or instructions.

9.   tu ʤa

      you go
      'You go.'

10.   ɽoti kʰa ɭe

      chapati eat take

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'Eat the chapati.'

(**ii**) **Subjunctive:** To express inferences, guesses, suggestions, assumptions, subjunctive mood is used.

11.   ho səko cʰe bo kəl ʤepər ʤave

        be could be.PRS he tomorrow Jaipur go.3HAB.PRS

        'If possible, he might go to Jaipur tomorrow.'

(**iii**) **Conditional**: Conditional mood is used to express conditional statements. It is formed with conditional particles like when, whenever, if etc.

12.   ʤd   tu aːve   mə kʰuʃ ho ʤau

        whenever you come.HAB I happy be go.1PRS

        'Whenever you come, I become happy.'

CONCLUSION

The study has provided a descriptive overview of the morphosyntactic features of Dhundhari. It shows that the language exhibits predominantly agglutinating and fusional morphology, where single inflectional marker may have one or multiple grammatical information such as number, tense, gender, and person. The nominal system has a clear distinction between masculine and feminine gender in non-animate objects as well. The presence of number, person, and gender is demonstrated by nouns and personal pronouns. The language has a tree-way tense system-past, present, and future. Aspect marking plays an important role in the verbal system which is reflected through verbal morphology and particles. Aspectual marking is found to be of two-types -imperfective and perfective. While the language has its own regional characteristics in its agreement system and TAM marking, it allies similarities with the other Western Indo-Aryan languages. This study contributes to the structural description of Dhundhari and lays groundwork for future comparative, theoretical, and functional studies in Rajasthani morphosyntax.

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Challenges Faced by Students of Medicine in Learning Medical English and Strategies for Overcoming Them Effectively

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Abstract

Medical English (ME) serves as the backbone of medical education, particularly for students from non-English-speaking nations. This study explores the challenges Afghan medical students face in learning Medical English and proposes effective strategies to overcome these barriers. It highlights the critical role of Medical English (ME) in achieving academic excellence, enhancing patient communication, and accessing international medical research literature. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study addresses key research questions, including the primary challenges faced by students, the impact of these challenges on academic and clinical performance, and the

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effectiveness of strategies such as flashcards, peer discussions, and technology integration. The findings underscore the importance of adopting innovative, student-centered approaches to Medical English (ME) education, offering valuable insights for curriculum development and teaching methodologies in Afghanistan and similar contexts.

Keywords: Medical English, Challenges, Strategies, Afghan Medical Students, Mixed-Methods, Language Proficiency

Introduction

The role of Medical English (ME) in Afghanistan Medical Universities and Medical Faculties is undeniably crucial. As the international lingua franca of medical research, literature, and clinical communication, English serves as a gateway to global medical knowledge and collaboration [13]. However, for Afghan medical students, mastering ME presents significant challenges. These challenges are exacerbated by linguistic disparities between English and local languages such as Dari and Pashto, the complexity of medical terminology, and limited opportunities for English-language practice in clinical and academic settings [14][12].

The differences in grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonetics between English and Afghanistan's native languages create a sudden learning curve for students [11]. Additionally, the highly specialized nature of medical terminology further compounds these difficulties, requiring not only language proficiency but also conceptual understanding [6]. Moreover, the lack of immersive English-language environments in clinical training limits students' ability to practice and apply their skills in real-world scenarios, hindering their confidence and competence [15].

While these challenges are well-documented in general contexts, there is a lack of research addressing the unique socio-cultural and educational context of Afghan medical students. This study seeks to fill this gap by identifying the specific challenges Afghan students face in learning ME and proposing tailored strategies to address these impediments. By exploring innovative teaching methodologies, enhancing access to English-language medical resources, and creating opportunities for practical application, we aim to empower Afghan medical students to overcome these barriers [13]. Ultimately, improving proficiency in ME will not only enhance individual academic and professional outcomes but also contribute to the broader advancement of Afghanistan's healthcare system [2].

Research Gap

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A review of the literature reveals that discussions on challenges in learning ME have traditionally focused on general issues faced by non-native speakers. However, there is a lack of research addressing the unique socio-cultural and educational context of Afghan medical students [11]. This study aims to fill this gap by identifying the specific challenges Afghan students face in learning ME and proposing tailored strategies to address these impediments.

Literature Review

Existing literature highlights several key challenges in learning ME:

1. **Vocabulary and Terminology**: Medical English is highly technical, and students often struggle with unfamiliar terms that lack direct translations in their native languages [10] [9].

2. **Reading and Comprehension**: Complex academic texts in English pose significant challenges, as they contain intricate terminologies and abstract concepts [5].

3. **Cultural and Socio-Cultural Barriers**: Limited exposure to English-speaking environments restricts opportunities for practice, hindering language acquisition [7].

4. **Speaking and Patient Communication**: Many students lack confidence in speaking English, particularly in clinical settings, due to fear of making errors [6].

While existing studies have identified vocabulary, reading comprehension, and cultural barriers as common challenges in ME learning, there is limited research on how these issues manifest in the Afghan context. For instance, studies by Alanazi et. el. (2024) [1] and Lopez et. el (2023) [8] focus on general non-native speakers but do not account for the unique linguistic and socio-cultural factors in Afghanistan. This study builds on these findings by exploring how these challenges are experienced by Afghan medical students and proposing context-specific solutions

Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the primary challenges Afghan medical students face in learning ME?

2. How do these challenges impact academic performance and clinical communication?

3. What strategies can improve ME proficiency among Afghan medical students?

4. How can technology support ME learning for non-native speakers?

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5. How can teaching methodologies be adapted to better meet the needs of Afghan students?

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively analyze the challenges and strategies related to ME learning.

Justification for Mixed Methods

The mixed-methods approach ensures a holistic understanding of the research problem. Quantitative methods provide numerical data on the prevalence of challenges and the effectiveness of strategies, while qualitative methods offer deeper insights into students' personal experiences [14].

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design, utilizing surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to gather data.

Respondents

The study includes 100 first-year medical students from Kabul Medical University, selected through random sampling to ensure representativeness.

Data Collection Instruments

1. **Surveys**: A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on perceived challenges.

2. **Interviews**: Semi-structured interviews with 50 students provided qualitative insights into their experiences.

3. **Classroom Observations**: The researcher observed ME classes to assess student participation and teaching methods.

4. **Document Analysis**: Medical textbooks and online resources were reviewed for their adequacy in supporting ME learning.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and frequency distributions. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and insights. The integration of these methods allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity and depth of the findings.

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Results and Discussion

Challenges Faced by Afghan Medical Students

The study identified several critical challenges hindering Afghan medical students' proficiency in Medical English (ME):

1. **Vocabulary and Terminology**: A significant majority of students (72%) reported substantial difficulties in comprehending and retaining complex medical terminology.

2. **Reading Comprehension**: Approximately 65% of participants expressed challenges in understanding and interpreting academic texts written in English.

3. **Speaking and Confidence**: Over half of the students (58%) admitted to avoiding the use of English in clinical settings due to a lack of confidence and fear of making errors.

Effective Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

The study also explored strategies that students found beneficial in addressing these challenges:

1. **Flashcards and Dictionaries**: The use of flashcards and medical dictionaries emerged as a highly effective tool, with 74% of students reporting improved retention and understanding of medical vocabulary.

2. **Peer Discussions**: Collaborative learning through peer discussions was found to enhance comprehension and confidence, with 68% of students indicating measurable progress in their ME skills.

3. **Technology Integration**: The incorporation of technology, such as virtual patient simulations and e-learning platforms, proved advantageous for 62% of participants.

Discussion

These findings align with previous studies, such as those by Alanazi et.el. (2024) [1] and Fernandez et. el. (2011) [4], which also identified vocabulary and confidence as major barriers. However, this study adds new insights by highlighting the specific challenges faced by Afghan students, such as the lack of immersive English-language environments in clinical settings. The effectiveness of flashcards and peer discussions echoes findings by Alhamami (2024) [2], but the high preference for technology-based tools among Afghan students suggests a unique opportunity for leveraging digital resources in this context.

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Conclusion

This study underscores the considerable challenges encountered by Afghan medical students in mastering Medical English (ME), with particular difficulties observed in vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and oral proficiency. By addressing the research questions, the study highlights the effectiveness of evidence-based strategies such as flashcards, peer discussions, and technology-driven learning tools. These findings have significant implications for medical education in Afghanistan, suggesting that integrating these strategies into the curriculum can enhance students' ME proficiency and, ultimately, their academic and professional success. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these strategies and their applicability across diverse educational contexts.

Recommendations

1. Integrate ME more effectively into the medical curriculum by introducing dedicated ME courses and workshops.

2. Leverage technology, such as virtual patient simulations and e-learning platforms, to create immersive learning experiences.

3. Provide more opportunities for students to practice English in clinical settings through role-playing exercises and simulated patient interactions, fostering a supportive environment free from the fear of mistakes.

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Exploring Fear of Failure Among Late Adolescents: Psychological Factors, Impacts, and Interventions

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Abstract

Although fear of failure among adolescents has been widely examined in psychological and educational research, this study offers a distinct contribution by focusing specifically on late adolescents aged 17–18 years, a critical transitional phase marked by high academic, social, and career-related expectations. This age-specific focus enables a more precise understanding of fear of failure during a high-stakes developmental period.

The study adopts an integrated analytical framework that combines academic, psychological, and social dimensions, rather than examining these factors in isolation. By incorporating adolescents lived experiences, perceived impacts on motivation and self-esteem, and preferred coping strategies, the research provides a holistic view of how fear of failure manifests among late adolescents. In addition, the study moves beyond identifying fear-related factors by examining adolescents' perceptions of the effectiveness of intervention strategies, including Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), thereby offering a student-centred perspective with practical implications for educators and policymakers.

The study examines the prevalence, contributing factors, impacts, and coping strategies related to fear of failure among late adolescents. Data were collected from 27 students aged 17–18 years using a self-developed questionnaire with acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.70$). Responses were gathered through Google Forms and analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and correlation analysis.

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The findings reveal that academic failure and examination anxiety were the most prevalent fears (66.7%), followed by parental expectations (51.9%) and fear of disappointing oneself (44.4%). Fear of failure was found to negatively influence motivation, self-esteem, and decision-making, with moderate positive correlations observed (r = 0.48–0.62, p < 0.05). Adolescents predominantly relied on peer support (59.3%) and self-motivation (51.9%) as coping strategies, while formal counselling was least utilised (11.1%).

The study underscores the need for age-specific interventions, particularly SEL programmes and CBT-based approaches, to enhance resilience and adaptive coping among late adolescents. By addressing fear of failure during a critical academic transition period, the findings provide evidence-based insights for educators, parents, and policymakers.

Keywords: Fear of Failure, Late Adolescence, Academic Anxiety, Self-Esteem and Motivation, Coping Strategies, Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Introduction

Fear and failure are considered to be common psychological experiences of adolescents, but they are frequently misunderstood as signs of weakness and lack of ability (Conroy et al.,2002; Sagar et al., 2010). Adolescence is characterized by a series of intense transitions in academic, social, and emotional contexts, where high expectations and uncertainty can easily fuel fear and perceptions of failure. According to psychological research, these experiences are natural reactions to developmental demands, and they are not indicative of personal weakness or lack of ability (Conroy et al., 2002). Research studies on adolescent development show that the cognitive and emotional regulatory processes, especially those associated with decision-making, emotional control, and resilience, are still in the process of maturation during adolescence, making adolescents highly susceptible to fear-based thinking (Sagar et al., 2010; Putwain & Pescod, 2018).

However, recent research studies increasingly acknowledge the positive function of fear and failure in personal development. When adolescents are encouraged to understand and cope with their fears, they become better able to evaluate risks, increase confidence, and develop effective coping strategies. Similarly, failure experiences can offer valuable feedback that enhances persistence, problem-solving competence, and self-regulation. The perspective of fear and failure as developmental learning experiences, rather than as obstacles, is a key factor in the development of resilience, self-awareness, and a growth-oriented mindset (Akamatsu & Gherghel, 2025).

This research paper focuses on fear and failure in adolescents from a psychological, social, and educational point of view. It tries to understand the factors that contribute to the fear that adolescents experience, the effects of failure on motivation and self-confidence, and the strategies that adolescents use to deal with fear and failure. By understanding fear and failure in the context of development, this research paper hopes to educate teachers, parents, and policymakers on how to create a supportive environment that promotes resilience, reflective learning, and ultimate success (Putwain & Pescod, 2018; Akamatsu & Gherghel, 2025).

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Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are to:
1. Investigate the incidence and forms of fear experienced by 17-18-year-old adolescents in educational and social settings.
2. Uncover the psychological, social, and contextual underpinnings of fear of failure in late adolescents.
3. Assess the effects of fear of failure on the motivation, self-esteem, and decision-making capacity of adolescents.
4. Uncover the strategies used by adolescents to cope with fear and failure.
5. Assess the views of adolescents on the effectiveness of interventions like Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in dealing with fear of failure.
6. Offer recommendations to parents, educators, and policymakers to develop supportive contexts that can help build resilience in adolescents.

Research Gap

Although there has been considerable research on fear and failure among adolescents, some significant gaps still exist. Most of the research on fear of failure has been conducted on a wide age spectrum, including early, mid, and late adolescents together. This fact neglects the unique psychological pressures on students aged 17-18 years, who face high-stakes educational tests, higher education choices, and career-related uncertainties simultaneously.

Moreover, most of the research on fear of failure has been theoretically or clinically focused, with little emphasis on the self-perceived experiences and strategies of adolescents in real-world educational contexts. Research studies on the examination and comparison of coping strategies and intervention methods from the adolescents' perspective are still limited.

Moreover, most of the available literature on fear of failure has been focused on psychological, academic, or social issues in a disconnected manner, without considering the interplay between emotional well-being, academic pressure, and social demands. Context-specific research studies in a controlled educational setting are still limited.

In order to fill these research gaps, the current study specifically targets the 17-18-year-old age group of adolescents and uses survey data to examine the phenomenon of fear of failure, its contributing factors, perceived effects, strategies, and preferences. By using an age-specific, integrated, and student-centric approach, this study aims to provide additional insights to the existing body of knowledge on the topic and make a valuable contribution to the field of adolescent mental health and education.

Literature Review

1) Conceptual Understanding of Fear of Failure:

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Fear of failure is not one feeling it's many. It includes feelings like shame, self-doubt and worry about what others might think. Some researchers, like Conroy and his team broke down fear of failure into parts in 2002(Conroy et al.,2002). These parts include fear of being humiliated worry about losing status and anxiety about people. They created a tool called the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory to measure these aspects (Conroy et al.,2002). This helped researchers study fear of failure in a way.

Fear of failure becomes really important during adolescence. This is a time when school expectations increase and kids are more sensitive to what their peers think. Researchers Köroğlu and Şahin Kıralp created a scale to measure how adolescents feel about failure in 2025(Köroğlu and Şahin Kıralp,2025). They emphasized that tools used to assess fear of failure must fit the age group being studied.

2)Fear of Failure and Academic Motivation

Fear of failure affects how motivated students are in school. According to Conroy and his team people who fear failure a lot tend to avoid situations to protect their self-esteem (Conroy et al.,2002). This can mean reducing effort postponing tasks or setting goals. Jain and Antony found that students with fear of failure often set goals especially if they doubt their abilities (Jain &Antony,2021). While this might reduce anxiety temporarily it can limit growth. Reinforce negative self-beliefs about failure. As a result, fear of failure can lead to a cycle of avoidance and underachievement in school. Fear of failure is a problem.

3)Emotional and Interpersonal Effects

Fear of failure also affects emotions and relationships. Sagar and colleagues reported that people with fear of failure are very sensitive to evaluation and judgment (Sagar et al., 2010). In performance situations this sensitivity increases distress. During adolescence when peer feedback is highly valued these concerns can intensify. Persistent fear of judgment can reduce confidence. Affect relationships, especially in school and with peers.

4) Fear of Failures in Schools and Promoting Resilience

In school fear of failure is often seen during exams and evaluations. Putwain and Pescod highlighted the role of thinking in shaping test anxiety (Putwain & Pescod,2018). Their findings suggest that students who feel they lack control over outcomes experience anxiety. When students think tasks are beyond their ability stress increases. A stronger sense of competence and control is linked to anxiety. This shows that fear of failure is influenced by both pressure and internal beliefs about abilities and failure.

Helping students see failure in a way can promote resilience. Akamatsu and Gherghel suggest that when adolescents view setbacks as learning opportunities than threats their emotional responses become more adaptive (Akamatsu & Gherghel,2025). Educational programs that support thinking and emotional regulation may reduce fear of failure. Improve overall well-

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being. Over time changes, in how failure's interpreted can positively influence both academic performance and personal development. Fear of failure is something we should talk about.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was quantitative and descriptive, focusing on the fear of failure, factors that contribute to it, perceived effects, coping strategies, and the perceived efficacy of interventions among late adolescents.

Participants and Sample Size

The participants included a total of 27 students aged 17-18 years, which falls under late adolescence. The participants were enrolled in higher secondary or pre-university-level education. This age group was chosen because adolescents at this stage are under extreme academic pressure, career-related uncertainty, and transition-related stress, which makes them highly susceptible to fear of failure.

Sampling Technique and Rationale

The convenience sampling technique was employed to choose the participants. This sampling technique was chosen because of restricted access to the large adolescent population, time constraints, and the willingness of the students to participate. Convenience sampling is widely used in exploratory psychological and educational studies, especially when the desired population is specific and difficult to access.

Research Instrument and Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected using a structured questionnaire with multiple-choice questions. The questionnaire was conducted using Google Forms, and the data collection procedure involved the following steps:

The Google Form was developed and checked for clarity, relevance, and age appropriateness.

The link to the survey was distributed to the students using official class groups and academic communication platforms.

The participants were made aware of the purpose of the study before answering the questions.

The data was collected anonymously to promote honest and unbiased responses.

Analysis

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The analysis shows that the fear of failure among adolescents is both internally experienced and largely reinforced by external pressures from parents and the education system. The dominance of academic fear reflects the pressure-driven nature of modern learning environments. The noted effects on motivation, self-esteem, and decision-making confirm that fear of failure is more than a singular emotional experience and affects behaviour, engagement, and confidence.

Adolescents who face recurring fear or failure may resort to avoidance strategies, which can further limit learning and development.

Descriptive Statistics

The data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and correlation analysis, to identify patterns related to fear of failure, its contributing factors, and coping strategies among participants.

Types of Fear Experienced by Adolescents (n = 27)

Type of Fear	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic failure / examination fear	18	66.7
Parental expectations	14	51.9
Peer judgement / social fear	10	37.0
Fear of disappointing oneself	12	44.4
Future / career uncertainty	9	33.3

Impact of Fear of Failure on Psychological Outcomes

Construct	Mean (M)	SD
Motivation	3.81	0.79
Self-esteem	3.67	0.85
Decision-making	3.59	0.88

Scale: 1 = Very Low Impact, 5 = Very High Impact

Correlation Between Fear of Failure and Outcomes

Variables	r	p-value
Academic fear – Motivation	0.62	0.001*
Academic fear – Self-esteem	0.55	0.003*

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Academic fear – Decision-making	0.48	0.012*

Significant at p < 0.05

Coping Strategies Used by Adolescents (n = 27)

Coping Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Peer support	16	59.3
Self-motivation	14	51.9
Guidance from teachers/mentors	8	29.6
Professional counselling	3	11.1

Discussion

1) Fear of Failure in School Among Older Adolescents

Older teens are often scared of doing in school or failing tests. A study by Conroy and colleagues in 2002 found that they worry about being criticized and letting down people (Conroy et al.,2002). When schools focus much on grades teens start to think that their grades define their self-worth. This makes stress worse especially when they are moving to a phase of their education.

2)Impact on Motivation and Self-Perception

The fear of failing affects how people stay motivated and see themselves. It also affects the choices they make. According to Conroy and team in 2002, when teens are more scared of failing, they tend to avoid hard work (Conroy et al.,2002). A study by Jain and Antony found that some teens who worry about failing might aim lower in school (Jain & Antony,2021). This might make them feel less stressed now. It could hurt their progress and confidence later.

Fear of failure makes people feel emotional strain when they are judged. This hurts their confidence and performance. A study by Sagar and colleagues in 2010 found that when people are worried about being judged they feel more stressed (Sagar et al., 2010). This stress makes them less confident and perform worse. When evaluation is coming up worry takes over. This changes how people react. The emotional weight builds up. Interferes.

3)Cognitive Appraisals and Test Anxiety

When it comes to thinking worries about school are linked to how much control and skill a person thinks they have. Research by Putwain and Pescod in 2018 found that learners who think they have no control over results feel more nervous during exams (Putwain & Pescod, 2018). If tasks seem hard or risky they feel more anxious. So dreading performance is not just about pressure. It is also about what people think about their own abilities.

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4)Effects on Social and Emotional Learning

One way to look at it is that resilience grows when young people see setbacks differently. Evidence shows that guided approaches make a difference. When teens change how they think about failing stress tends to ease. Akamatsu and Gherghel found this in 2025(Akamatsu & Gherghel, 2025). Of fixed views flexible mindsets open space, for learning. Programs focused on emotions and social skills could include tools that reshape thought patterns. With practice missteps start feeling like threats. Growth follows when interpretation shifts. Less worry appears alongside constructive outlooks.

Results

1. Academic Fear as a Dominant Concern

The findings suggest that fear of failure and academic failure were the dominant concerns among the participants, reported by 66.7% of the participants. This finding indicates that academic pressures are a major source of fear for 17-18-year-old adolescents, who are at a crucial phase of educational transition.

2. Psychological and Social Impacts

The fear of failure has been found to have a significant effect on various psychological aspects. Moderate to high mean scores were recorded for motivation (M = 3.81), self-esteem (M = 3.67), and decision-making (M = 3.59). The correlation analysis showed statistically significant positive correlations between academic fear and its impact on motivation, self-esteem, and decision-making (r = 0.48-0.62), which suggest that higher levels of academic fear are significantly associated with higher levels of perceived impact on these psychological aspects.

3. Coping Strategies Adopted by Adolescents

Regarding the coping strategies, most of the adolescents reported turning to peer support (59.3%) and self-motivation (51.9%) to overcome fear and failure. However, a relatively small number of participants reported turning to professional counseling (11.1%). Support from teachers or mentors was sought by 29.6% of the participants.

Key Findings

1. Academic fear, specifically fear of examinations and failure, is identified as the most prominent fear among adolescents.

2. Psychological factors are more important than environmental factors in the causation of fear of failure.

3. Fear and failure impact negatively and substantially on the self-confidence and intrinsic motivation of adolescents.

4. Adolescents display a strong preference for informal support systems, namely peer support and self-motivation, over formal support systems.

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5. Systematic interventions, specifically Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approaches, are viewed as highly effective in developing resilience.

Limitations

1. The study is based on self-reported information, which may be prone to response bias.

2. Convenience sampling limits the generalisability of the findings.

3. The study is restricted to adolescents aged 17-18 years, and the findings cannot be generalised to other age groups.

Future Scope

1. The future studies can be taken in the following directions:
2. Increasing the sample size to include adolescents from different regions, educational boards, and socio-economic backgrounds to increase generalisability.
3. Studying gender-based and age-based differences in fear of failure, coping strategies, and resilience development.
4. Studying the effects of digital environments like social media and online learning platforms on adolescents' experiences of fear and failure.
5. Studying the effects of parental involvement and teacher training programs on reducing fear of failure in adolescents.
6. Using qualitative research approaches like interviews and focus group interviews to explore the emotional experiences of adolescents.

Conclusion

The research work focused on the types of fears that adolescents experience, the factors that contribute to fear of failure, the effects of fear of failure on motivation and self-esteem, and the effectiveness of coping strategies and interventions. The results show that academic-related fears are the most common among adolescents, which are caused by psychological factors like negative experiences and lack of self-confidence, as well as social influences from parents and peers (Conroy et al., 2002; Sagar et al., 2010). Fear of failure has been shown to have a significant impact on emotional health, decision-making, and motivation, which can result in avoidance behaviour and lack of engagement in academics (Conroy et al., 2002; Jain & Antony, 2021).

Although many adolescents use informal methods of coping with fear and failure, like peer support and self-motivation, formal interventions like Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) have been found to be highly effective in overcoming fear and failure (Putwain & Pescod, 2018; Akamatsu & Gherghel, 2025). In conclusion, the research work highlights the need to create a supportive learning environment that views failure as a

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natural part of the learning process and emphasizes the development of emotional intelligence alongside academic success (Akamatsu & Gherghel, 2025).

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Imperative Construction in Bodo: A Morphosyntactic Study

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Abstract

The paper investigates the imperative construction in Bodo language, it's a Tibeto-Burman language primarily spoken in Northeast India. The imperative mood is a fundamental grammatical feature used to express direct commands, requests, or prohibitions. This analysis aims to provide a detailed structural and functional analysis of Bodo imperatives, focusing on their morphosyntax, subject realization, and the role of pragmatic context in their usage. The study reveals that Bodo uses various strategies for imperative formation, including verb suffixes, positive and negative commands, and inclusive imperatives by interjection. It also explores how person and number influence these forms, suggesting a rich and sensitive system influenced by social dynamics. The study analyzes imperative constructions in Bodo and cognate languages, focusing on affirmative and negative imperatives. It reveals shared linguistic ancestry and language-specific innovations in the imperative mood. The findings contribute to comparative Tibeto-Burman linguistics and the theory of imperative clauses, providing valuable data.

Keywords: The Language, Basic Characteristics, Imperative Constructions, Directives, Prohibitive and Interjectional Imperatives.

1. Introduction:

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This study focuses on the imperative construction in the Bodo language, a significant member of the Bodo-Garo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Bodo is an officially recognized language of India, primarily spoken in Assam as well as some adjacent parts of Assam i.e. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, West Bengal, some parts of Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. Crucially, the Bodo-Garo languages, which include other significant speech communities like Dimasa, Garo, Rabha, and Kokborok, share a common linguistic ancestry. A comparative investigation of their grammatical features, particularly the imperative, is thus essential for reconstructing features of the ancestral language and charting their subsequent divergent development.

The Bodo people are officially recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in the state of Assam, India. They are primarily concentrated in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) in Assam. The areas are administered by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The aims of the paper are to investigate the imperative construction of the Bodo language. It will describe the various forms and usages of the imperative and prohibitive constructions. It will try to identify the morphological markers of imperative mood in Bodo, focusing on both affirmative and prohibitive suffixes. It will analyze the structural patterns of direct commands versus polite requests and determine the syntactic rules governing their formation. It will be examined the role of sociolinguistics in Bodo imperatives.

1.1. Basic Characteristics of the Language

Bodo is an agglutinative language; it has prefixing and suffixing system. Most of the grammatical morphemes are one by one suffixed to the base to form meaningful words in the sentences. Bodo has three kinds of major word formation processes i.e. affixation, compounding and reduplication processes. The language has case marking system; all the case markers are suffixed to the nominal words to form a sentence. Syntactically, the basic word order of the language is SOV type. It's a verb-final language. Bodo uses numeral classifiers and these are the prefix forms in the language.

2. Data Methodology

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The data of this paper are collected from the native speakers in standard variety of the Bodo language during the author's Ph.D. research from 2010 to 2016 and now, recently cross checked it. The data are collected from both male and female informants in different age groups. The author being a native speaker of the language, it becomes easy to collect data in the language. All the data again and again cross verified.

3. Imperative Construction of the Language

According to Crystal (1980) "An imperative usage refers to verb forms or sentence/clause types typically used in the expression of commands." In linguistics, the imperative is a fundamental grammatical mood and directive mechanism used to express commands, requests, warnings, and prohibitions. By directing a listener to perform or refrain from a specific action, it serves as a core element of discourse that reflects a speaker's socio-pragmatic intentions.

In Bodo, the imperative is characterized as both a morphological and syntactic process. Bodo utilizes three highly productive morphological markers to form imperatives i.e. the /-dɯ/, /-do/ suffixes and the /da-/ prefix. Syntactically, the bare verb or derived verb can also be used to form direct command of the language. Based on these markers and their functional roles, imperative constructions in the Bodo Language are generally divided into three types:
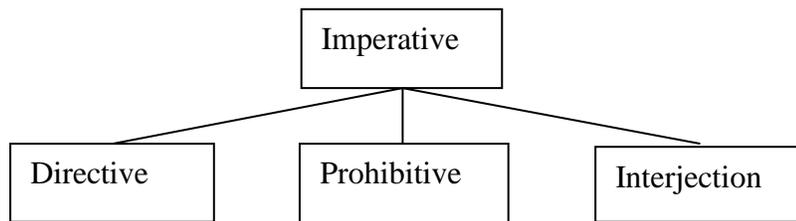
Directive imperatives can be categorized in direct imperative, neutral or polite imperative, immediate imperative, causative imperative, definitive and emphatic imperatives. Prohibitive can be categorized direct prohibitive, emphatic prohibitive, direct confirmative prohibitive and neutral or polite confirmative prohibitive. There are two interjectional forms of words in Bodo i.e. /tʰɯɯ/ 'let's go' and /no/ 'here, take it' which function as an inclusive imperative and a presentative interjection, respectively. They are discussed below in details.

3.1. Direct Imperative

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In Bodo, the direct imperative or direct command is a syntactic form indicated by the use of the bare verb stem. While many grammatical moods in Bodo are morphosyntactic (formed by adding specific suffixes to a verb root), the direct command is unique because it is indicated by the bare verb stem alone, without any imperative markers.

When speaking to close friends, family members, or those who are younger or junior to them, direct commands are utilized in social situations.

Consider the following examples:

(1a)   pʰɯi !   'Come! (Direct command for closed friend or younger person)

(1b)   bejao   pʰɯi
        here   come
        'Come here!' (Direct command)

(1c)   bejao   danɯ   pʰɯi
        here   now   come
        'Come here right now!' (Direct command)

(2a)   za !   'Eat! (Direct command for closed friend or younger person)!'

(2b)   ɯŋkʰam-kʰɯu   za
        rice-ACC   eat
        'Eat the rice!' (Direct command)

(2c)   tʰab-tʰab   za
        immediate-RED   eat
        'Eat immediately! / Eat quickly!' (Direct command)

(2d)   ɯŋkʰam-kʰɯu   tʰab-tʰab   za
        rice-ACC   immediate-RED   eat
        'Eat the rice immediately/quickly!' (Direct command)

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(3a)   mao!   'do/work!'   (Direct command)

(3b)   kʰamani-kʰɯu   mao
        work-ACC   do
        'Do the work!' (Direct command)

(3c)   gɯkʰrɯi-gɯkʰrɯi   mao
        quick-RED   do
        'Do (the work) fast!' (Direct command)

(3d)   kʰamani-kʰɯu   gɯkʰrɯi-gɯkʰrɯi   mao
        work-ACC   quick-RED   do
        'Do the work fast!/ Do the work quickly!'   (Direct command)

(4a)   lɯŋ !   'drink !' (Direct command)

(4b)   saha-kʰɯu   lasɯi-lasɯi   lɯŋ
        tea-ACC   slow-RED   drink
        'Drink the tea slowly!'   (Direct command)

(4c)   saha-kʰɯu   lasɯi-jɯi   lɯŋ
        tea-ACC   slow-ADV   drink
        'Drink the tea slowly!'   (Direct command)

3.2. Neutral or Polite Imperative

Morphologically, Bodo has neutral or polite imperative marker i.e. /-dɯ/ which suffixes to the main verb or bare verb stem to do imperative construction in the language like in Kokborok /-di/ (Debbarma 2014). The polite imperative suffix /-dɯ/ is most commonly used in Bodo language. Consider the following examples:

Direct Command	Neutral Command or Polite Request

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(5a)	za!	'Eat!'	(6a)	za-dɯ		'Please eat!'
				eat-IMP		
(b)	tʰaŋ!	'Go!'	(b)	tʰaŋ-dɯ		'Please go!'
				go-IMP		
(c)	lɯŋ!	'Drink!'	(c)	lɯŋ-dɯ		'Please drink'
				drink-IMP		
(d)	hom!	'Catch!'	(d)	hom-dɯ		'Please Catch!'
				catch-IMP		

Table No. 1

(7a) आदा! साहाया लोंदो!

ada   saha-ja   lwŋ-dɯ

(elder)brother tea-NOM   drink-IMP

'Brother! Please have the tea!' / (Elder brother! Please drink the tea!)

(7b) आब, नोंसोर थांग्रोदो!

      abo   nɯŋ-sɯr   tʰaŋ-grɯ-dɯ

(elder)sister   you-PL   go-advance-IMP

      'Sister, please (you) go on ahead!' / 'Elder sister! Please you go on ahead!'

(7c) आइयै! ओंखाम संदो! आं उखैबाय।

      aijɯi   ɯŋkʰam   soŋ-dɯ   aŋ   ukʰɯi-bai

      Mommy   rice   cook-IMP   1SG   hungry-PRF

'Mommy! Please cook the rice! I am hungry.'

(7d) ओंखामखौ जादो!

ɯŋkʰam-kʰɯu   za-dɯ

      rice-ACC   eat-IMP

'Please eat the rice!'

(7e) ओंख्रिखौ रानदो!

ɯŋkʰri-kʰɯu   ran-dɯ

      curry-ACC   distribute-IMP

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'Please serve the curry! / Please distribute the curry!'

In Bodo, the distinction between a direct command and a polite request is defined by both the linguistic structure and the social hierarchy of the speakers. Direct command is mostly used to command a younger or junior person. In contrast, the polite command (or polite request) is a morphosyntactic form used to show respect or maintain formal social boundaries; Bodo requires the addition of imperative suffix /-dɯ/ to the verb root. This form is essential when speaking to elderly persons or superiors, strangers or in a formal environment.

3.3. Immediate Imperative

An immediate imperative or command is a directive issued to express an action that must be performed instantaneously. It is characterized by its temporal directness and urgency. In Bodo, this is a distinct morphosyntactic category where the suffix /-do/ is attached to the verb stem. Examples are given below-

(8a)   tʰaŋ-do   'Go now!'
        go-IMM.IMP

(8b)   pʰɯi-do   'Come now!' or 'Come immediately!'
        come- IMM.IMP
(8c)   za-do   'Eat now!'
        eat- IMM.IMP

Difference Between /-dɯ/ and /-do/

In Bodo, the polite imperative marker /-dɯ/ and the immediate imperative marker /-do/ are both common, yet they are distinguished by their temporal constraints and pragmatic force. The suffix /-dɯ/ is used for neutral or polite imperative construction and is not restricted by a specific time frame; it can comfortably refer to actions happening now or in the future. In contrast, the suffix /-do/ is a morphosyntactic form used for immediate imperative constructions. It is strictly time-bound, requiring the action to be performed instantaneously or within a very short period. Because of this urgency, it is grammatically incompatible with future temporal adverbs.

Consider the following examples:

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Polite Imperative		Immediate Imperative	
(9a)	tʰaŋ-dɯ go-IMP 'Please go!'	(10a)	tʰaŋ-do go-IMM.IMP 'Go now!'
(9b)	danɯ tʰaŋ-dɯ now go-IMP 'Please go now!'	(10b)	danɯ tʰaŋ-do now go-IMM.IMP 'Go right now!'
(9c)	gabɯn tʰaŋ-dɯ tomorrow go-IMP 'Please go tomorrow!'	(10c)	***gabɯn tʰaŋ-do** tomorrow go-IMM.IMP 'Ungrammatical'
(9d)	dahai tʰaŋ-dɯ after sometime go-IMP 'Please go after sometime!'	(10d)	***dahai tʰaŋ-do** after sometime go-IMP 'Ungrammatical'
(9e)	soŋpʰɯr tʰaŋ-dɯ day after tomorrow go-IMP 'Please go day-after-tomorrow!'	(10e)	***soŋpʰɯr tʰaŋ-do** day after tomorrow go-IMP 'Ungrammatical'

Table No. 2

In the above examples (10c), (10d) and (10e) are the ungrammatical sentences in Bodo language, because the suffix /-do/ is grammatically incompatible with future temporal adverbs.

3.4. Causative Command

A causative command is a directive in which a speaker instructs one individual to cause another individual to carry out an activity. A causative command includes a third person, as opposed to a straight forward command like /undu/ 'sleep!' that is given directly to you. In Bodo, causative command is formed by adding causative suffix /-hɯ/. These are discussed bellow with the help of examples.

3.4.1. Direct Causative Command

Causative verbs in Bodo function as direct command when the causative stem (verb + /-hɯ/) is used alone. This syntactic form is appropriate for addressing juniors or people with whom the speakers shares a close relationship.

(11a) bi-kʰɯu   ɯŋkʰam   za-hɯ
3SG-ACC   rice   eat-CAUS
'Let him eat rice!'

(11b) bi-kʰɯu   tʰaŋ-hɯ
3SG-ACC   go-CAUS
'Let him go!'

(11c) bi-sɯr-kʰɯu   bol   gele-hɯ
3SG-PL-ACC   football   play-CAUS
'Let them play football!'

3.4.2. Polite Causative Command

The polite causative command is a morphosyntactic form in Bodo used to request that someone cause an action to happen. It combines the causative marker with a polite imperative suffix to show respect to the listener. It is used when asking an elderly person or a superior or formal acquaintance to perform a causative action. Consider the following examples:

(12a) bi-sɯr-kʰɯu   ɯŋkʰam   za-hɯ-dɯ
3SG-PL-ACC   rice   eat-CAUS-IMP
'Please, let them eat rice!'/ 'Please allow them to eat rice!'

(12b) bi-kʰɯu   tʰaŋ-hɯ-dɯ
3SG-ACC   go-CAUS-IMP
'Please, let him go!'

(12c) bi-sɯr-kʰɯu   bol   gele-hɯ-dɯ
3SG-PL-ACC   football   play-CAUS-IMP

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'Please, let them play football!'

3.5. Definitive or Confirmative Imperative

Bodo has a definitive morpheme i.e. /de/, which is attached to the verb base to form the confirmative or definitive command, for examples (13a) to (13d). This definitive morpheme /de/ can be added to the verb base by preceding the polite imperative marker /-dɯ/ shown in the examples (14a) to (14d). The morpheme /de/ is used sometime as an interjectional form shown in the examples (15a) and (15b).

3.5.1. Direct Definitive or Confirmative Command:

(13a) za-de   'Do eat!' (Direct and Confirmative Command)
       eat-DEF

(13b) ɯŋkʰam-kʰɯu   za-de
       rice-ACC   eat-DEF

       'Do eat the rice!' (Direct and Confirmative Command)

(13c) pʰɯi-de   'Do come!' (Direct and Confirmative Command)
       Come-DEF

(13d) zɯŋ-ni   no-wao   pʰɯi-de   '
       2SG-GEN   house-LOC   Come-DEF

       'Do come to our home!' (Direct and Confirmative Command)

3.5.2. Polite Definitive Command or Request:

(14a) undu-dɯ-de   'Do sleep, please!' (Polite Definitive Command)
       sleep-IMP-DEF

(14b) mao-dɯ-de   'Do work, please!' (Polite Definitive Command)
       work-IMP-DEF

(14c) ɯŋkʰam-kʰɯu   za-dɯ-de
       rice-ACC   eat-IMP-DEF

       'Do eat the rice, please!' (Polite Definitive Command)

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(14d)　zɯŋ-ni　　　　no-wao　　　　pʰɯi-dɯ-de

　　　　2SG-GEN　　　　house-LOC　　Come-IMP-DEF

　　　　'Do come to our home, please!' (Polite Definitive Command)

(15a)　दे! फैदोदे।

de　　　pʰɯi-dɯ-de

　　　def　　　come-imp-def

　　　'Ok! Do come, please!'

(15b)　दे! आं थांनोसै।

de　　　aŋ　　　tʰaŋ-nɯsɯi

DEF　　1SG　　go-IMM.FUT

'Ok! I am going (sure).'

3.5.3. Definitive Causative Command

The definitive causative command is used when a speaker issues a confirmed, conclusive order for an action to be caused or permitted. It is denoted by the causative verb by addition of the definitive morpheme /de/.

(16a)　bi-nɯ　　　　za-hɯ-de

　　　　3SG-DAT　　　eat-CAUS-DEF

　　　　'Do let him eat!'

(16b)　bi-nɯ　　　　kʰamani-kʰɯu　　　mao-hɯ-de

　　　　3SG-DAT　　　work(N)-ACC　　　work(V)-CAUS-DEF

　　　　'Do let him work!'

(16c)　bi-nɯ　　　　gaikʰer-kʰɯu　　　lɯŋ-hɯ-de

　　　　3SG-DAT　　　milk-ACC　　　　drink-CAUS-DEF

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'Do let him drink the milk!'

3.5.4. Polite Definitive Causative Command

In Bodo, the polite definitive causative command is a morphosyntactic form used when a speaker wants to issue a firm, conclusive, yet respectful order for an action to be caused. It combines the causative suffix, polite imperative suffix and the definitive morpheme /de/.

(17a) bi-nɯ   za-hɯ-dɯ-de
       3SG-DAT   eat-CAUS-IMP-DEF
       'Please, do let him eat!'

(17b) bi-nɯ   kʰamani-kʰɯu   mao-hɯ-dɯ-de
       3SG-DAT   work(N)-ACC   work(V)-CAUS-IMP-DEF
       'Please, do let him work!'

(17c) bi-nɯ   gaikʰer-kʰɯu   lɯŋ-hɯ-dɯ-de
       3SG-DAT   milk-ACC   drink-CAUS-IMP-DEF
       'Please, do let him drink the milk!'

3.6. Emphatic Imperative

An emphatic imperative is a grammatical construction used to add force, urgency, or special importance to a command. In Bodo, the emphatic imperative is formed through the complete reduplication of the bare verb stem or derived verb. This morphological process is used to highlight the speaker's insistence and to intensify the imperative force of the command. They are discussed below-

3.6.1. Direct Emphatic Imperative

Direct emphatic commands are used with close friends or juniors by reduplicating the bare verb stems. Consider the following examples:

(18a) जा-जा! लाजि नाङा।

za-za   lazi   naŋ-a

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eat-RED   shy (V)   need-NEG

'Eat! Don't feel shy. / Eat! No need to be shy.' (Direct Emphatic Command (to juniors))

(18b) जा-जा! रावखौबो नेनाङा।

za-za   raokʰɯɯbɯ   ne-naŋ-a

eat-RED   anybody   wait-need-NEG

'Eat! (You) don't need to wait for anybody. / Eat! No need to wait for anyone'

(18c) जा-जा! थाइजौवा गोदैसो।

za-za   tʰaizɯɯ-wa   gɯdɯi-sɯ

eat-RED   mango-NOM   sweet-UNP

'Eat! The mango is sweet.' (Suddenly, command to someone for eating mango)

(18d) थां-थां! गारिया दानो बारगलांगोनसो।

tʰaŋ-tʰaŋ   gari-ja   danɯ   bargolaŋ-gɯn-sɯ

go-RED   train-NOM   now   leave away-FUT-UNP

'Go! The train is leaving (away) right now.'(Direct Emphatic Command (to juniors))

(18e) लों-लों! साहाया गोथावथार।

lɯŋ-lɯŋ   saha-ja   gɯtʰao-tʰar

drink-RED   tea-NOM   tasty-SUP

'Drink up! The tea is very tasty.' / 'Drink up! The tea is most tasty.'

(18f) माव-माव! खामानिया थाब-थाब जोबनायनि।

mao-mao   khamani-ja   tʰab-tʰab   zɯb-nai-ni

do-RED   work-NOM   immediate-RED   finish-NOMZ-GEN

'Do the work to finish it immediately!'

3.6.2. Polite Emphatic Imperative:

Polite commands in Bodo are created by appending the imperative suffix /-dɯ/ to the verb base, as seen in /mao-dɯ/ 'please do' and /kʰar-dɯ/ 'please run'. These forms can then be reduplicated to express a sense of polite urgency, forming what is known as a polite emphatic imperative.

Consider the following examples:

(19a)   mao-dɯ   'Please do!' (Polite Command)
        do-IMP

(19b)   maodɯ-maodɯ   tʰab-tʰab   hanai-ni   tʰakʰai
        Please do-RED   immediate-RED   finish-GEN   for
'Please do it to finish immediately!' (Polite Emphatic Command)

(19c)   kʰar-dɯ   'Please run!' (Polite Command)
run-IMP

(19d)   kʰardɯ-kʰardɯ   honɯi   pulis   pʰɯi-gɯɯ
        please run-RED   look(expressive) police   come-IMM.FUT
        'Please run! Look, the police are coming.' (Polite Emphatic Command)

(19e)   gakʰɯ-dɯ   'Please get up!' (Polite Command)
        get up-IMP

(19f)   gakʰɯdɯ- gakʰɯdɯ garija   kʰar-nɯsɯi
        please get up-RED   train   run-IMM.FUT
        'Please get up! The train is about to depart.' (Polite Emphatic Command)

3.6.3. Direct Emphatic Causative Command

Direct Emphatic causative command is characterized by the reduplication of causative verbs in Bodo. This form is used to convey a sense of urgency or an immediate requirement for an action to be caused or permitted. The structure of the repetitive pattern is-

[Verb Stem + hɯ]+ [Verb Stem + hɯ] = Direct Emphatic Causative Command

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Consider the following examples:

(20a) **zahɯ-zahɯ**   ɯŋkʰam-a   zɯb-nɯsɯi

let (3) eat-RED   rice-NOM   finish-IMM.FUT

'Let (them) eat! The rice is about to finish (right now).'

(20b) lɯŋhɯ-lɯŋhɯ   saha-ja   gɯthao-tʰar

let (3) drink-RED   tea-NOM   tasty-SUP

'Let (him/her) drink! The tea is very tasty.'

(20c) lirhɯ-lirhɯ   bi-jɯ   gɯrɯŋ-tʰar

let (3) write-RED   3SG-NOM   expert-SUP

'Make (him/her) write! He/she is very expert.'

3.6.4. Polite Emphatic Causative Command

The polite immediate causative command is a complex morphosyntactic form that blends respect with urgency. It is also characterized by the reduplication of causative verbs, followed by the addition of the polite imperative suffix /-dɯ/. The structure of the repetitive pattern is-

[Verb Stem+hɯ+dɯ] + [Verb Stem+hɯ+dɯ] = Polite Immediate Causative Command

(21a) za+hɯ+dɯ   +   za+hɯ+dɯ   >   zahɯdɯ-zahɯdɯ

eat+CAUS+IMP +   eat+CAUS+IMP   'Please let (him) eat (now)!'

(21b) zahɯdɯ-zahɯdɯ   ɯŋkʰam-a   zɯb-nɯsɯi

please let (3) eat-RED   rice-NOM   finish-IMM.FUT

'Please let (them) eat! The rice is about to finish.'

(21c) lɯŋhɯdɯ-lɯŋhɯdɯ   saha-ja   gɯthao-tʰar

please let (3) drink-red   tea-nom   tasty-SUP

'Please let (him/her) drink! The tea is very tasty.'

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(21d) lirhɯdɯ-lirhɯdɯ   bi-jɯ   gɯrɯŋ-tʰar

please let (3) write-RED   3SG-NOM   expert-SUP

'Please let (him/her) write! He/she is very expert.'

3.7. Prohibitive or Negative Imperative

In Bodo, prohibitive imperatives can be categorized such as direct prohibitive, definitive prohibitive, neutral or polite prohibitive, polite definitive prohibitive and emphatic prohibitive.

3.7.1. Direct Prohibitive Imperative

Morphologically, Bodo has a most productive negative imperative prefix i.e. /da-/. It prefixes to the main verb to form the direct prohibitive command in the language.

For example:

(22a) da-buŋ   'Don't say!' (Prohibitive Command)

NEG.IMP-say

(22b) da-tʰaŋ   'Don't go!' (Prohibitive Command)

NEG.IMP-go

(22c) da-pʰɯtʰai   'Don't believe' (Prohibitive Command)

NEG.IMP-believe

(22d) be   dɯi-kʰɯu   da-lɯŋ

this   water-ACC   NEG.IMP-drink

'Don't drink this water!' (Prohibitive Command)

(22e) bɯi   ɯŋkʰri-kʰɯu   da-za

that   curry-ACC   NEG.IMP-eat

'Don't eat that curry!' (Prohibitive Command)

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(22f) आदा, आंनो गस्ला दालाबो, दखनाखौ लाबो।

ada	aŋ-nɯ	gosla	da-labɯ	dokʰona-kʰɯu	labɯ
brother	1SG-DAT	blouse	NEG.IMP-bring	dokhona-ACC	bring

'Brother, don't bring me a blouse; bring me a dokʰona!'

(Prohibitive Command: Sister forbade me from bringing a blouse and ordered me to bring a *dokhona* instead. *(dokhona* is a Bodo traditional female dress))

3.7.2. Definitive Prohibitive Command

The definitive prohibitive command is a morphosyntactic form in Bodo, it combines negative imperative prefix /da-/ + verb stem + /de/ definitive morpheme.

For example:

(23a)   nɯŋ   da-tʰaŋ-de

        2SG   NEG.IMP-go-DEF

'Definitely (you) don't go!'

(23b)   nɯŋ   sigaret   da-sɯb-de

        2SG   cigarette   NEG.IMP-smoke-DEF

'Definitely (you) don't smoke the cigarette!'

(23c)   nɯŋ   da-za-de

        2SG   NEG.IMP-eat-DEF

'Definitely (you) don't eat!'

3.7.3. Neutral or Polite Prohibitive Imperative

The neutral prohibitive imperative is formed in Bodo by the combination of the main verb, helping or auxiliary verb /naŋ/ 'need' and negative suffix /-a/. It is interesting to note how this neutral prohibitive differs from the direct imperative.

For example:

(24a)   lɯŋ-naŋ-a   'Don't need to drink!'

        drink-need-NEG

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(24b)   sɯŋ-naŋ-a   'Don't need to ask!'

        ask-need-NEG

(24c)   tʰaŋ-naŋ-a   'Don't need to go!'

        go-need-NEG

(24d)   ɯŋkʰri-kʰɯu   za-naŋ-a/

curry-ACC   eat-need-NEG

'Don't need to eat the curry!'

3.7.4. Polite Definitive Prohibitive

The neutral prohibitive can take the definitive morpheme /de/ to form a polite definitive prohibitive command in Bodo. The structure of this command is:

'Verb Stem + Auxiliary /naŋ/ + Definitive /de/'.

(25a)   lɯŋ-naŋ-a-de   'Please don't drink!' / 'Don't drink, please!'

        drink-need-NEG-DEF

(25b)   sɯŋ-naŋ-a-de   'Please don't ask!' / 'Don't ask, please!'

        ask-need-NEG-DEF

(25c)   tʰaŋ-naŋ-a-de   'Please don't go!' / 'Don't go, please!'

        go-need-NEG-DEF

(25d)   ɯŋkʰri-kʰɯu   za-naŋ-a-de/

curry-ACC   eat-need-NEG-DEF

'Please don't eat the curry!' / 'Don't eat the curry, please!'

3.7.5. Emphatic Prohibitive Command

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An Emphatic Prohibitive Command is a directive used to halt an action instantly. In Bodo, the sense of urgency is expressed through reduplication; the standard prohibitive command is repeated to form an emphatic prohibitive command, signaling that the action must stop without delay. Examples are given below-

(26a)   daza-daza   be   mɯjaŋ   noŋ-a

        don't eat-RED it   good   be-NEG

        'Stop! Don't eat! It is not good.' (Emphatic Prohibitive Command)

(26b)   dapʰɯi-dapʰɯi   nɯŋ   pʰɯi   naŋ-a

        don't come-RED   2SG   come   need-NEG

        'Stop! Don't come! You don't need to come.' (Immediate Prohibitive Command)

3.8. Inclusive Imperative

In Bodo, inclusive imperative is indicated by the word /tʰɯu/. It is an interjection form of word that function a joint action both speaker and the listener (like the English "Let us"). It signifies that the speaker will also participate in the action; it is a kind of collaborative imperative.

The inclusive imperative can be divided into four types of the language viz.

      1. Direct Inclusive

      2. Polite Inclusive

      3. Immediate Inclusive

      4. Polite Immediate Inclusive

3.8.1. Direct Inclusive Imperative

The Direct Inclusive Imperative is denoted by the interjection word /tʰɯu/. It is a kind of grammatically free word in the language which indicates a joint action imperative.

For example:

(27a)   थौ! नˑवाव थांनोसै।

tʰɯu   no-wao   tʰaŋ-nɯsɯi

     let us home-NOM   go-IMM.FUT

     'Let's go home!'(Direct Inclusive Imperative)

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(27b) नॽवाव थांनि, थौ!

no-wao   tʰaŋ-ni   tʰɯu

    home-NOM   go-COH   let us

    'Let's go home!' (Direct Inclusive Imperative)

(27c) थौ! ओंखाम जानि।

tʰɯu   ɯŋkham   za-ni

    let us   rice   eat-COH

    'Let's have rice!' (Direct Inclusive Imperative)

3.8.2. Polite Inclusive Imperative

The word /tʰɯu/ is an interjectional form in the language; it can take polite imperative marker   /-dɯ/ to form polite inclusive imperative for example.

(28a) थौदो! नॽवाव थांनोसै।

tʰɯu-dɯ   no-wao   tʰaŋ-nɯsɯi

    let us-IMP   home-NOM   go-IMM.FUT

    'Please, let's go home!'(Polite Inclusive Imperative: Going is just within short time)

(28b) थौदो! ओंखाम जानोसै।

tʰɯu-dɯ   ɯŋkʰam   za-nɯsɯi

    let us-IMP   rice   eat-IMM.FUT

    'Please, let's have rice!' (Polite Inclusive Imperative: Eating is just within short time)

(28c) थौदो! ओंखाम जादिनि।

tʰɯu-dɯ   ɯŋkʰam   za-di-ni

    let us-IMP   rice   eat-IMP-COH

    'Please, let's have rice!' (Polite Inclusive Imperative: Just request for eating)

3.8.3. Direct Emphatic Inclusive Imperative

The direct emphatic inclusive command in Bodo is formed by the reduplication of the interjection /tʰɯu/. While the single form suggests a collaborative action, the reduplicated form /tʰɯu-tʰɯu/

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'let's go (right now)' intensifies the utterance, signaling urgency and a demand for immediate participation.

For example:

(29a) थौ-थौ! नʼवाव थांनोसै।

tʰɯu-tʰɯu   no-wao   tʰaŋ-nɯsɯi

   let us-RED   home-NOM   go-IMM.FUT

   'Let's go home (right now)!' (Direct Emphatic Inclusive Command)

(29b) थौ-थौ! ओंखाम जादिनि।

tʰɯu-tʰɯu   ɯŋkʰam   za-di-ni

   let us-RED   rice   eat-IMP-COH

   'Let's have rice (right now)!' (Direct Emphatic Inclusive Command)

3.8.4. Polite Emphatic Inclusive Imperative

The polite inclusive imperative is formed by adding /-dɯ/ (polite imperative marker) to the interjection /tʰɯu/, for example /tʰɯu-dɯ/ 'please, let's go'. The polite inclusive imperative /tʰɯu-dɯ/ can also be reduplicated to form polite emphatic inclusive request.

Consider the following examples:

(30a) थौदो-थौदो! नʼवाव थांनोसै।

tʰɯudɯ-tʰɯudɯ   no-wao   tʰaŋ-nɯsɯi

   let us-IMP   home-NOM   go-IMM.FUT

   'Please, let's go home now!' (Emphatic Polite Inclusive Imperative)

(30b) थौदो-थौदो! साहा लोंनोसै।

tʰɯudɯ-tʰɯudɯ   saha   lɯŋ-nɯsɯi

   let us-IMP   tea   drink-IMM.FUT

   'Please, let's have tea now!' (Emphatic Polite Inclusive Imperative)

3.9. Presentative Interjection

In Bodo, the interjection /no/ functions as a presentative imperative or deictic imperative. It functions as a verbal command used specially while handing an object to someone, effectively meaning 'here, take it' or 'take this'. It carries the grammatical weight of a verb (commanding and

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action) but lacks standard verb morphology. It is categorized as a minor sentence type or a functional category. It combines the act of showing with the act of ordering in to a single. It is like a sentence-word, as the single interjection /no/ constitutes a complete.

Consider the following examples:

(31a)   no!   'Here, take this!' or 'Take the object'

(31b) न' !   फैसाया   लादो !

no   pʰɯisa-ja   la-dɯ

PRES.INTJ   money-NOM   take-IMP

'Here, take this money!'

(31c) न' !   साहाया   लोंदो !

no   saha-ja   lɯŋ-dɯ

PRES.INTJ   tea-NOM   drink-IMP

'Here, take this! (And) drink the tea!'

4. Conclusion

Bodo is a Tibeto-Burman language, primarily spoken in Assam as well as some adjacent parts of Assam i.e. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, West Bengal, neighboring countries in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. Typologically, Bodo is an agglutinative language. It has three kinds of major word formation processes: affixation, compounding and reduplication. It has case marking system and syntactically SOV type of basic word order.

In Bodo, the imperative is characterized as both a morphological and syntactic process. Syntactically, the bare verb or derived verb can also be used to form direct command of the language. Based on imperative markers and their functional roles, imperative constructions of the Bodo language are generally divided into three types:

1. Directive Imperative
2. Prohibitive Imperative
3. Interjectional Imperative

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Directive imperatives can be categorized direct imperative, neutral or polite imperative, immediate imperative, causative imperative, definitive imperative, definitive causative imperative and emphatic imperative.

Prohibitive imperative can be found direct prohibitive, definitive prohibitive command, neutral or polite prohibitive imperative, polite definitive prohibitive and emphatic prohibitive command.

Interjectional imperative can be found inclusive imperative and presentative interjection. The inclusive imperative is indicated by the interjectional word /tʰɯu/ meaning represents 'let's go'. It can be divided into four types of the language viz. direct inclusive, polite inclusive, direct emphatic inclusive and polite emphatic inclusive. The presentative interjection is denoted by the interjection /no/ meaning represent 'here, take it' or 'take this'.

The imperative constructions of the Bodo language are given below with the help of bare verb stem /za/:

Directive Imperatives:	Bodo	English
Direct Imperative	za!	'Eat!'
Neutral or Polite Imperative	za-du!	'Please eat!'
Immediate Imperative	za-do!	'Eat now!'
Direct Causative Command	za-hu !	'Let him eat!'
Polite Causative Command	za-hu-du!	'Please, let him eat!'
Direct Definitive Imperative	za-de!	'Do eat!'
Polite Definitive Imperative	za-du-de	'Do eat, please!'
Definitive Causative Imperative	za-hu-de	'Do let him eat!'
Polite Definitive Causative Command	za-hu-du-de!	'Please, do let him eat!'
Direct Emphatic Imperative	za-za!	'Eat! (Emphatic)'
Polite Emphatic Imperative	za-du-za-du!	'Please eat! (Emphatic)'
Direct Emphatic Causative Command	za-hu za-hu!	'Let him eat!' (EMP)
Polite Emphatic Causative Command	za-hu-du- za-hu-du!	'Please let him eat (now)!' (EMP)
Prohibitive Imperative:		

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Direct Prohibitive Imperative	*da-za!*	'Don't eat!'
Definitive Prohibitive Command	*da-za-de!*	'Don't eat (ok)!'
Neutral/ Polite Prohibitive Imperative	*za-naŋ-a!*	'Don't need to eat!'
Polite Definitive Prohibitive	*za-naŋ-a-de!*	'Don't eat, please!'
Emphatic Prohibitive Command	*da-za da-za!*	'Stop! Don't eat' (EMP)
Interjectional Imperative:		
Direct Inclusive Imperative	*tʰuu!*	'Let's go!'
Polite Inclusive Imperative	*tʰuu- du!*	'Please, let's go!'
Direct Emphatic Inclusive Imperative	*tʰuu-tʰuu!*	'Let's go (right now)!'
Polite Emphatic Inclusive Imperative	*tʰuu- du-tʰuu- du!*	'Please let's go (right now)!'
Presentative Interjection	*no!*	'Here, take it!' or 'Take this'

Table No.3

The direct imperative or direct command is a syntactic form indicated by the use of the bare verb stem in Bodo. It has neutral or polite imperative marker /-dɯ/ which suffixes to the main verbs or bare verb stems to form imperative construction. An immediate imperative is characterized by its temporal directness and urgency. In Bodo, this is a distinct morphosyntactic category where the suffix /-do/ is attached to the verb stem.

The imperative suffix /-dɯ/ and /-do/ are both common, yet they are distinguished by their temporal constraints and pragmatic force. The /-dɯ/ is used for neutral or polite imperative construction and is not restricted by a specific time frame; it can comfortably refer to actions happening now or in the future. In contrast, the suffix /-do/ is a morphosyntactic form used for immediate commands. It is strictly time-bound, requiring the action to be performed instantaneously or within a very short period. Because of this urgency, it is grammatically incompatible with future temporal adverbs (see in the above examples (9) to (10)).

The emphatic imperative or emphatic command is formed by the complete reduplication of the bare verb stem or derived verb. This morphological process signals the speaker's insistence and intensifies the imperative force of the command. For example the direct emphatic commands: /za-

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za lazi naŋ-a/ 'Eat! Don't feel shy!' and polite emphatic commands: /za-dɯ za-dɯ lazi naŋ-a/ 'Please eat! Don't feel shy!' It expresses a sense of polite urgency. It is hoped that this analysis will help us to understand the imperative construction of the Bodo language in particular and other Bodo groups in general.

Abbreviations

N	:	Noun	V	:	Verb base
PL	:	Plural Marker	1SG	:	1st Person Singular
3SG	:	3rd Person Singular	2SG	:	2nd Person Singular
ACC	:	Accusative Case	COH	:	Cohortative Mood
CAUS	:	Causative	DAT	:	Dative Case
DEF	:	Definitive	FUT	:	Future Tense
GEN	:	Genitive Case	IMP	:	Imperative
IMM.FUT	:	Immediate Future	LOC	:	Locative Case
IMM.IMP	:	Immediate Imperative	NEG	:	Negative
NEG.IMP	:	Negative Imperative	NOM	:	Nominative Case
NOMZ	:	Nominalizer	PRF	:	Perfective
RED	:	Reduplication	SUP	:	Superlative
UNP	:	Unexpected Marker	EMP	:	Emphatic
PRES.INTJ	:	Presentative Interjection			

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Language and Power: Shaping Self and Identity in Fanon's Thoughts

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Abstract

The paper explores Frantz Fanon's theoretical assumptions on the effects of colonisation on the language and mind from his seminal work, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon's conceptions on language and self, a brief history of French language in Algeria in the context of French colonisation, his arguments on language of both the colonizer and colonized are explained and analyzed in detail. The degree of ambivalence, the amount of resistance, the intensity of subordination, the extent of assimilating to a colonised culture and civilisation, the level of linguistic suppression in mastering a dominant language and its effects on the construction of self and identity of the colonised forms the essence. The paper is written from the perspective of how language can act as a tool of domination of power and control by creating a sense of alienation and subjugation in the colonised minds.

Keywords: Colonisation, Language, Self, Psyche, Society, Culture, Colonial Domination

Introduction

Frantz Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) documents psychoanalysis of the aftermaths of colonisation on the human psyche. The book was written with reference to French colonization of Algeria revealing linguistic, social, cultural and psychological consequences of French colonial rule on Algerian people. It portrays how the dominant, colonial culture forces the submissive colonized people to wear white masks for acceptance in the colonized society. From a dehumanisation perspective, the book is an excellent example of how colonial domination persists silently resulting in a racist society. The 'Black Skin' in Fanon refers to people of all colonised cultures who are subjugated by the colonial rule. Black people are compelled to hide their identities or true selves; they are made to assimilate with the white man's language and culture causing immense psychological depression. They feel inferior in every single way resulting in mental illness. A psychiatrist by profession, Fanon encodes his own personal experience while writing a literary piece for racist psychology and postcolonial theories. He examines the cultural and linguistic societal prejudices and stereotypes that eventually create conflicts between the self and identity forced upon by others. The metaphor of 'white masks' signifies the acceptance of the behavior, mannerisms, culture and language of the colonizer by the Black people at the cost of their existence. Throughout the book, Fanon argues for a humanistic society that appreciates the

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lived experiences of the people from colonised cultures and hides the white masks that one tries to assume and project.

French language and Algeria in the French colonisation context

France colonised Algeria, the North African state on the Mediterranean coast, in 1830. The French dominated Algeria in the linguistic, economic, and cultural spheres of the Algerians from 1830 – 1962 till Algerian independence. French language was imposed in all the domains replacing Algeria's native languages Berber and Arabic. Maamri (2009) claims that French colonization was a comprehensive annexation that aimed at eliminating its culture enacted through French control over Algeria's educational systems, government, business, and the intellectual life for one hundred thirty-two years. France's colonial system imposed acculturation which positioned French as the dominant language on its colonies, removing local languages, Arabic and Berber, from the public sphere. Profoundly de-structured by the colonial settlement, Algeria had to face a series of cultural problems relating to its national identity and the dislocation of language was the major effect of colonization in Algeria and French imposition not only meant segregation, illiteracy, and religious intolerance, but also the subordination of Algerian identity and Algerian's native tongues (Maamri, 2009).

The colonial period from 1830s in Algeria witnessed a number of institutions- educational, administrative established by the French. The dominance and assimilation of Algerians to the French language and culture primarily was in the educational domain practiced through the postcolonial and colonial practices. "Education in Martinique stressed French identity. A prominent feature of the French colonial system was the idea that the subjects of its empire were to be raised as Frenchmen. Those in a position of authority believed that this emphasis on French culture and history set their civilizing mission apart from the colonial policies of other nations. (Karklins, 1999)." Therefore, one of the primary means for the imposition of French norms in educational system was through the instructional modes, methodologies, curriculum and language. The colonialist defenders regarded schools as one of the institutional practices to promote the French language in education and the impact of French in the schooling policy of Algeria as a part of the French civilization mission led to the restructuration of the school system through methods of instruction, the choice of French language in schools, educational programs and the pedagogical practices, which resulted in the suppression of native languages Arabic and Berber (Maamri, 2009).

Maamri (2009) further adds that even though there were Arabic schools called 'Medersa', the French colonial officials refused to fund these schools, which were primarily attached to the mosques and confiscated lands, heritage sites and buildings, and subsequently, the schools had to be closed down in the first decades of the colonial rule and less than five percent of the Algerian children attended any school disabling the generations one after the other. Therefore, the Algerian population who depended more on the traditional schools were most vulnerable. Later under the reign of Napolean III in1852, restored Arabic in the public schools along with French which promoted bilingual education in the imperial schools and colleges. This was a major step towards the assimilation of the French policy in education.

Despite all these efforts, the French Government in the 1930s passed a law which made French as the official language and Arabic as the foreign language. And Arabic was totally banned in

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educational institutions and official documents. Even though, the French language symbolized foreign exploitation and was to be resisted, it also served as a tool to raise the population's awareness and support in favor of such resistance because of the universal values like liberty, equality and fraternity it conveyed (Benrabah, 2007). Thus, for the Algerians, French became the language of power, opportunity and upward social mobility.

As it is a common characteristic of every colonization process, the domination of the colonizer's language over the language of the colonized was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized (Ngugi, 1986), the indigenous people of Algeria too equated French with intelligence and elite status. Fanon (1965) in his book *A Dying Colonialism* discusses about initial encounters of the Algerians at the initial stages of colonization in their attitude towards the French language and gradually the transformations at a later stage.

"When they hear French voices, Algerians suffering from hallucinations quote words that are less and less aggressive. It is not uncommon, at a later stage, to note that hallucinations in the language of the occupier assume a friendly character of support, of protection. The occupation authorities have not measured the importance of the new attitude of the Algerian towards the French language. Expressing oneself in French, understanding French, was no longer tantamount to treason or to an impoverishing identification with the occupier. Used by the voice of the combatants conveying in a positive way the message of the Revolution, the French language also becomes an instrument of liberation. Whereas formerly, in psychopathology, any French voice, to one in a delirium, expressed rejection, condemnation and opprobrium, with the struggle for liberation we see the initiation of a major process of exorcizing the French language. The native can almost be said to assume responsibility for the language of the occupier" (Fanon, 1965).

In the light of this historical background, Frantz Fanon makes his theoretical assumptions regarding language – as language becoming a tool for representation, identification and desire to assimilate to a dominant language and its ramifications on the social psychological processes of the colonial/ postcolonial subjects.

Biography of Frantz Fanon

Frantz Omar Fanon (1925-1961) was born in the Caribbean islands in the French settler colony of Martinique. Hailing basically from a family of middle class, his father was a descendant of slaves and mother from a French parenthood. He was educated in Lycee Schoelcher where he became the follower of his teacher, Aime Cesaire, an influential thinker and poet who extensively wrote on colonial racism. He reacted against the Vichy regime in the Antilles and moved to Dominica to fight against the French dominance in the Caribbean and then in France against the controlling forces of Nazi Germany. Thereafter serving in the military for some years, he joined the medical profession and practiced psychiatry at Lyon. He took the help of psychoanalysis to study the repercussion of racism on subjects, particularly in the case of blacks' self-perception on themselves. He was profoundly motivated by ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre French philosopher and Octave Mannoni, the French psychoanalyst during those times. Fanon was a victim of direct racial experience in the Caribbean and searching his own identity in a racist kind of society. He placed himself along with the freedom fighters in Africa in France seeking allies against European colonialism and he became a nationalist during the 50s. He then took up a job in Bilda-Joinville Hospital, Department of psychiatry. Fanon arrived in Algeria at a time when Algeria was involved in the bloody struggle against French colonizers. The French colonization in Algeria in 1954 was

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bloody and barbarous and he was heartbroken by the kind of racist attitude shown by the French toward the Algerians and he helped the poor and needy and by employing his psychotherapies to help them. Meanwhile, he quit his job and joined National Liberation Front (FLN), in 1956. Soon he became active in politics, supported the Algerians and was appointed as the ambassador to Ghana by the Algerian government. Unfortunately, Fanon could not see Algeria gaining independence; he suffered from leukemia and died on December 6, 1961 in Washington.

Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks (BSWM)

Black Skin, White Masks (1952) explores the psychology of colonization in detail. The rhetoric of dignity, desire, anger, resentment, inferiority, self -analysis and reflection, the kind of racism and its psychic outcomes form the central constructs of the book. The book examines how colonization is internalized by the colonized, how the inferiority complexes are developed and is inculcated through racism and language (Sardar, 2008 as cited in Fanon 1952/2008). The book is a testimony to the millions of colonized victims who has experienced the nuances of the colonization processes coupled with servility, despair, fear, trepidation and abasement (Caute, 1970). The book reflects the historical and the political context of the Algerian revolution and the impact of the revolution on the psyche of the people. As Sardar (2008) claims that BSWM has to be located in time and place and Fanon had written the text at the peak of the Algerian revolution, when there was fervor of intense, bloody liberation and death struggle. Its message is not confined to the Algerian context but is universal in character.

Fanon's conceptualization of Black Skin, White Masks

The blacks and whites dichotomy, of Fanon's BSWM is a generic term, for it refers to all the whites as Europeans and the blacks as the non- Europeans. Since black implies universality, Fanon asserts that people of the Antilles includes every colonized man and that the same behavior patterns are common in every race which has been subjected to colonization (Fanon, 2008). The Antillean man in Fanon's BSWM has basic education in French and is partially assimilated to the French language and culture (Huddleston, 2008).

He aspires to be white, to be equated with Europeans and his intention is to become like a white man. He needs recognition of his intellect and thought and Fanon asserts that there is only one destiny for the black man and that is to be white (Fanon, 2008). Having this kind of confrontation with the white persona, he struggles to locate himself in the European world and is constantly in search for the definition of black identity and experiences rejection, subordination and humiliation from the white man. Hence Fanon's narration of the black skin is a perplexed personality, his self is divided between his native and the colonized culture where he battles his own identity, self-representation and he digs his own flesh to find out a meaning (Fanon 2008). Fanon genuinely attempts to show some of the lived experiences of the people of Antilles and their attitude towards the French language and culture.

Fanon on Language and Self

Fanon's discussion on the fundamental question of language and the Caribbean self-representation in BSWM brings in the question of language and self in the colonial context as to what it means to speak the language of a dominant class. The problem of language and self is centered on the

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Black man's object of desire, anger, dignity, internalization, mutation, resistance, dilemma, inferiority and liberation in the French Algerian colonial discourse.

He claims that "language provides us with one of the elements in the colored man's comprehension of the dimension of the 'other'; For it is implicit that is to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (Fanon 2008). Here Fanon reveals that it is through the act of the colored man's speech that he expresses his existence for the other. To exist means being in a relation to 'other' and it is through one's language, one's speech acts, the 'self' is evaluated by the 'other' and the 'other' also evaluates the 'self'. To put in other words, the 'self' relates to the 'other' through the semiotic tool, language. Language is one of the elements that marks the distinction between the self and the other, symbolizing one's identity.

The process of identification with reference to the white man, is explained as follows: Fanon (2008) reminds, "The Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into man and this objective evidence expresses the reality." This proposition of Fanon has two consequences- one at the bottom, somewhere in the process of evolution and second- he is made to feel inferior to the white man because he is not considered as a human like the whites.

The self of a colonized man is fragmented between two identities- native language, which he speaks with his own community and the other, he is forced to acquire a new identity that is to speak in a language, which gives him power in the society. "The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question" (Fanon, 2008). The black man divides his self in two categories and that his behavior, language, dialects towards the whites and among his fellows are different and this division affects his perception, behavior and thought processes and create a kind of space between the two cultures, among the whites and with his own fellowmen. And he is divided between two cultures- neither he is completely accepted by the west nor by his fellowmen. This is a clear instance of uncertainty, unresolved contradiction and fragmentation. Fanon (2008) argues that this split leads to dislocation and separation from his native group because he speaks a language different from that of the group.

Fanon affirms the desire and the fascination in learning a dominant language, French. He posits a question, "Why a Negro is fond of speaking French?" The Negro in BSWM is desperate to speak in French, for it is the key that can open doors which were still barred him fifty years ago (Fanon, 2008). French was considered to be the language of opportunity and the people were forced to speak in French, because it's a question of need, power that the French language has in the French Algerian colonial discourse. He is desperate to speak French or else he fears insecure to his white counterpart. The concept of inferiority in the French Algerian discourse has a significant place in Fanon's writings. According to Fanon the inferiority complex results from a two-way process- essentially economic and eventually the internalization, a kind of habit formation process, in Fanon's language the internalization is termed as 'epidermalization' which deeply affects one's self.

The command over the French language makes a significant change in the self of the colonized. According to Fanon (2008), by mastering the dominant language, "the Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language." To Fanon, this is one of man's attitudes face to face with

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being; A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language and mastery of language affords remarkable power. The relationship between language power are intertwined, they are inseparable. By learning French, he becomes civilized and more refined compared to his peers.

Fanon asserts that once the French language is mastered, he rises above his native land and its standards. Fanon (2008) remarks," Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle."

He argues about the experiences of the black man when he has to encounter the whites, "When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization; His ego collapses; His self-esteem evaporates; He ceases to be a self-motivated person; The entire purpose of his behavior is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man; It is the dynamic of this inferiority that concerns Fanon; and which ultimately he wishes to eliminate''(Sardar, 2008 as cited in Fanon, 2008). According to Fanon, the first action of a black man is a reaction and then, the dilemma of self-representation- "how to posit a 'black self' in a language and discourse in which blackness itself is at best a figure of absence, or worse a total reversion?". To Fanon the more perplexing difficulty is "Should the black man define himself in relation to the white man thus conforming the white man as a measure of all the things? How should a black man speak for himself?" (Fanon, 2008). The kind of attitudes, apprehensions, perceptions influence the thought processes leading to demotivation and disconnection from the European world.

The exposure to France makes structural changes within the minds. The fact that the news of getting entry to France makes the black man jubilant and makes up his mind to change and these structural changes as Fanon affirms that they are independent of any reflective process (Fanon, 2008). After spending a few years in France, radical changes are noticed. "The black man who has lived in France for a length of time returns radically changed; To express it in genetic terms, his phenotype undergoes a definitive, an absolute mutation; By that I mean that Negroes who return to their original environments convey the impression that they have completed a cycle, that they have added to themselves something that was lacking; They return literally full of themselves" (Fanon, 2008). There is a complete personality change, and he is transformed as a new person by the French exposure which he got in France. For instance, Fanon (2008) says when he meets a friend or an acquaintance, his greeting is no longer the wide sweep of the arm, which is the traditional gesture but with a slight head bowing act. To Fanon, this is an example of embracing the French language and culture.

In the book, Fanon also deliberates on the kind of strategies employed to master the subtle aspects of language. These strategies are actions resulting from sustained desire and according to Fanon, it reminds us that action demands two primary needs- desire and demand. As mentioned elsewhere the desire is to assimilate to the French language and culture because in Antilles, only those who speak French and behave like a French man has the opportunities for social and economic mobility.

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Therefore, people needed transformation. With the determined efforts, to be competent with the white man, he starts taking French lessons. "The Negro arriving in France will react against the myth of the *R*-eating man from Martinique. He will become aware of it, and he will really go to war against it. He will practice not only rolling his *R* but embroidering it. Furtively observing the slightest reactions of others, listening to his own speech, suspicious of his own tongue—a wretchedly lazy organ—he will lock himself into his room and read aloud for hours—desperately determined to learn diction (Fanon, 2008)." On mastery of French language, then the priorities are different, he is more interested in refining the subtle linguistic aspects because the ultimate aim is it at par with the whites. As Prof. D. Wastermann claims, that the low self-esteem is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly; their way of doing so, he adds, is frequently naive: "The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements." (*The African Today,* p. 331. as cited Fanon, 2008).

The intent of the Black man is not only to master the French language, but also he takes keen interest in the paralinguistic aspects of the speech such as pitch of voice, diction, gestures, body language, accented varieties, facial expressions so as to bring more refinement. There is a conscious attempt by the Black man to bring the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of speech behaviors in him and this sets his verbal competency beliefs. Fanon remarks, "Yes, I must take great pains with my speech, because I shall be more or less judged by it. With great contempt they will say of me, "He doesn't even know how to speak French; in any group of young men in the Antilles, the one who expresses himself well, who has mastered the language, is inordinately feared; keep an eye on that one, he is almost white; In France one says, "He talks like a book.; In Martinique, He talks like a white man(Fanon, 2008)." Fanon claims the appropriate usage of French language and makes the Black man relate to the white man's diction, which makes him feel honored.

Fanon conveys the choices that the students from Antilles have when they meet in Paris. The two possibilities being- "either to stand with the white world, and, since they will speak French, to be able to confront certain problems and incline to a certain degree of universality in their conclusions; or to reject Europe and cling together in their dialect, making themselves quite comfortable." (Fanon, 2008). Thus, he is left with two options- either to integrate to the French speaking group by imbibing their language and culture and be one among them or else to be in his own native dialect speaking group. Therefore, language or dialect that one speaks is a prerequisite to be a part of a group. This kind of segregation and verdict angers him. According to Fanon, this is a kind of judgment that a white man has towards a pidgin speaking man. Fanon adds, this absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivizing him, decivilizing him makes him angry (Fanon, 2008). To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization (Fanon 2008). The hypothesis that Fanon claims is by appropriating the language of the colonizer, the colonized also assumes the culture of the colonizer. Fanon's claim implies that one's world view is largely shaped by the language one speaks which is in consistent with the Sapir Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity.

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Fanon exemplifies another crucial point which is the attitude and the perception of the colonized people among themselves; the kind of behavior one has with one's natives and the non-natives. "I meet a Russian or a German who speaks French badly; with gestures I try to give him the information that he requests, but at the same time I can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country, and that perhaps he is a lawyer or an engineer there; in any case, he is foreign to my group, and his standards must be different; when it comes to the case of the Negro, nothing of the kind; he has no culture, no civilization, no "long historical past" (Fanon, 2008). Fanon suggests that the disapproval of his identity makes him feel motivated, to advance further with all the strategies to master linguistic skills to prove to the white world with his thoughts and intelligence.

According to Fanon, the Europeans have a fixed concept of the colonized people which is impoverished and inferior in all respects. Having said this, Fanon (2008) asserts that if at all he speaks French fluently, the immediate question to be asked to him by the European is: "How long have you been in France? You speak French so well." This single remark spells out the annoyance and the irritation that one undergoes. This language experience leads to isolation, dejection and subordination. Finally, Fanon articulates a solution for all the above-mentioned realities that is to rise above what the Europeans have constructed regarding the preconception, to reach out for the universal, which is certainly an act of resistance.

Conclusion

Fanon's ideas and philosophies might have not been approved by many writers of his times but the post-colonial studies in the 90s rediscovered Fanon, particularly, Homi Baba's interest in Fanon's theories mentioned in Baba's works. Today, Fanon waits to be rediscovered by a new generation burning with a desire for change—the very emotion that motivated Fanon to set sail from Martinique (Sardar, 2008). Even though Fanon was never a post-modern writer, his formulations on the multiple aspects of the racist colonial culture emerged from the colonial experiences, which he had experienced in the French Algerian revolution. The colonial rule may have gone and faded, but colonialism, in its many forms, is still striving in post-colonial world.

In the postmodern societies today, Fanon's assumptions regarding language and colonization holds relevance as it was during the 50s and the 60s for a number of reasons. Scholars like Ziauddin Sardar (Sardar as cited in Fanon, 2008) have argued that "significant changes had taken place since the Fanonian times but the structures of oppression and injustice remain the same; the inhumanity of today is not different from the inhumanity of yesteryears for all sources of exploitation resemble one another; they are all applied against the same "object" man ; and the message is still fresh today when it was written. The realities that Fanon puts forward are applicable to every society, closer to the lived experiences and characterizes universality. As Bhabha (1987) puts it, "There is no master narrative or realist perspective that provide a background of social and historical facts against which emerge the problems of the individual or collective psyche"; and Fanon yearns for the total transformation of Man and society for he speaks from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; the unresolved contradiction between culture and class; from deep within the struggle of psychic representation and reality," which clearly indicates that Fanon's theory on language amounts to the same value to any other colonized

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society as that of the Caribbean one. Liberation, for Fanon is psychological and social. Fanon proposes to reject the imposed colonial hierarchies and racial structures and embrace the historical and cultural legacies of black identities. One needs to confront and dismantle the internalisation of a colonial mind set and create socio-cultural spaces where identities can be freely expressed in its entirety. It's not a passive freedom that Fanon refers to, but a bold resistance to the hegemonic and oppressive social practices that continue to marginalise and demean the Black existence. The liberation thus attained does not require any kind of validation; it's a self- determined, self-possessive and a   self-attained one.

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Acronyms Across Generations: Language Evolution, Identity, and Communication Fluency

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1. Abstract

Language is dynamic and continuously shaped by social change, technological advancement, and generational identity. One notable aspect of contemporary language evolution is the increasing use of acronyms and abbreviated forms in everyday communication, particularly across digital platforms. This study examines the use of acronyms and words among different generations to understand how language reflects generational identity, communication fluency, and adaptability.

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach based on observational analysis of language use in both formal and informal contexts, including classroom interactions, peer conversations, and digital communication. The analysis reveals clear generational differences in language practices: younger generations demonstrate greater fluency and comfort with acronyms and informal expressions, while older generations tend to prefer complete lexical forms and structured language. Despite these differences, the findings indicate that acronym usage enhances communication efficiency and group identity rather than diminishing linguistic competence.

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The study highlights that acronyms function as sociolinguistic markers of belonging, technological exposure, and communicative adaptability. By examining language use across generations, the paper contributes to understanding language evolution as a socially meaningful and context-driven process. The findings have implications for education, intergenerational communication, and the teaching of language fluency in digitally mediated environments.

Keywords: acronyms, digital platform, generational identity, adaptability, fluency, intergenerational communication

2. Introduction

Language is a dynamic and evolving system that reflects social change, cultural practices, and technological advancement. Linguists have long emphasized that language adapts in response to the communicative needs of its users and the contexts in which it is used (Crystal, 2001). In recent decades, the rapid expansion of digital communication has significantly reshaped everyday language practices, particularly through the increasing use of acronyms, abbreviations, and shortened lexical forms (Baron, 2008).

Digital platforms such as instant messaging applications and social media encourage speed, brevity, and informality, leading to the normalization of acronym-based communication. Research suggests that these linguistic forms are not random or careless but follow recognizable patterns shaped by social context and user communities (Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008). Younger generations, who have grown up with digital technologies, tend to demonstrate greater fluency and comfort in using acronyms as part of their routine communication, while older generations often prefer complete lexical forms and more structured language use (Herring, 2012).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, language choices function as markers of identity, group belonging, and social alignment. The use of acronyms can signal technological competence, in-group membership, and shared cultural knowledge within specific generational communities (Thurlow, 2006). Rather than representing linguistic decline, contemporary scholars argue that digital language practices reflect linguistic creativity and adaptation to new communicative environments (Crystal, 2008). However, the coexistence of traditional and digitally influenced language forms may also contribute to generational misunderstandings, particularly in academic, professional, and intergenerational communication contexts.

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This study examines the use of acronyms and words across different generations to understand how language evolution intersects with identity and communication fluency. By analysing generational differences in acronym usage and language preferences, the study aims to highlight how digital communication reshapes linguistic behaviour while coexisting with conventional language norms. The findings contribute to broader discussions on language change, intergenerational communication, and the role of technology in shaping contemporary linguistic practices.

3. Statement of the Problem

The rapid growth of digital communication has significantly transformed language use, particularly through the widespread adoption of acronyms and abbreviated forms. While these linguistic changes have enhanced speed and efficiency in communication, they have also created noticeable differences in language practices across generations. Younger generations, who are deeply immersed in digital environments, tend to use acronyms fluently and frequently, whereas older generations often rely on more conventional and complete lexical forms (Baron, 2008; Herring, 2012).

These generational differences in language use can lead to misunderstandings, reduced communication effectiveness, and perceived gaps in communication fluency, especially in educational, professional, and intergenerational contexts. Acronym-heavy communication may appear confusing or informal to older generations, while younger users may perceive traditional language forms as rigid or outdated. Such differences raise concerns about how evolving language practices influence mutual understanding, identity construction, and communicative competence.

Although existing research acknowledges the role of digital media in shaping contemporary language, there is limited empirical focus on how acronyms function as sociolinguistic markers across generations and how these forms affect communication fluency and identity. Many studies either examine digital language in isolation or focus primarily on younger users, without adequately comparing generational perspectives.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study lies in the lack of systematic understanding of generational variations in acronym usage and their implications for language evolution, identity, and communication fluency. Addressing this gap is essential for fostering effective

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intergenerational communication and for informing educational practices that acknowledge both traditional and digitally influenced language forms.

4. Objectives of the Study

4.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- Examine the use of acronyms and shortened expressions among different generations

- Analyse how communication context influences language choices

- Identify generational differences in formal and informal language use

- Understand the role of digital exposure in shaping generational vocabulary

- Explore patterns of register switching across age groups

5. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the field of sociolinguistics and communication studies. It provides insight into how language reflects generational identity and social change. For students and educators, the study enhances awareness of appropriate language use in different contexts. For professionals, it emphasizes the importance of audience-sensitive communication. Overall, the research contributes to improved fluency, clarity, and cross-generational understanding.

6. Literature Review

Language variation across generations has been a significant area of interest in sociolinguistics, as it reflects social change, cultural identity, and technological influence. Researchers agree that language evolves naturally and that each generation contributes new forms of expression to suit its communicative needs. According to Crystal (2001), language change is inevitable and often driven by social interaction and innovation rather than deterioration. He emphasizes that vocabulary change, especially through abbreviations and acronyms, is one of the most visible indicators of linguistic evolution.

The influence of technology on language has been widely discussed in linguistic studies. Baron (2008) highlights that digital communication platforms such as mobile texting, instant messaging,

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and social media encourage brevity and speed, leading to the widespread use of acronyms and shortened expressions. She argues that these forms are not careless deviations from standard language but strategic adaptations to new modes of communication. This perspective challenges the assumption that acronym usage weakens language proficiency.

Crystal (2008) further explains that digital language should be viewed as an additional register rather than a replacement for formal language. He points out that most language users are capable of distinguishing between informal and formal contexts and adjust their language accordingly. This ability, known as register awareness, is crucial in understanding how acronyms function within generational communication. Younger generations may use acronyms extensively in casual settings while maintaining formal language norms in academic or professional contexts.

Generational differences in language use have also been examined by Tagliamonte and Denis (2008), who studied instant messaging practices among young users. Their findings reveal that acronym usage follows consistent linguistic patterns and is governed by social norms. The study concludes that digital language is structured and meaningful rather than random or chaotic. These findings support the idea that generational language practices are systematic and socially conditioned.

Thurlow (2006) critiques the negative perception of digital language by describing it as a form of "moral panic." He argues that concerns about language decline are often exaggerated and fail to consider the adaptability of language users. According to him, acronyms and slang are tools for identity construction and group belonging, particularly among younger generations. This sociolinguistic perspective highlights how language functions beyond mere communication, serving as a marker of social identity.

Herring (2012) discusses how computer-mediated communication blurs the distinction between spoken and written language. She explains that acronyms act as conversational markers that convey tone, emotion, and immediacy. However, she also notes that effective communication depends on shared understanding. When interlocutors belong to different generations, unfamiliar acronyms may lead to misunderstanding, emphasizing the importance of audience awareness.

From an educational perspective, Yule (2017) states that language competence includes the ability to adapt language based on context. He emphasizes that exposure to multiple language varieties

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enhances communicative flexibility. Studies suggest that acknowledging students' informal language practices while reinforcing formal writing conventions helps develop overall language fluency. This balanced approach is particularly relevant in multilingual and multigenerational academic environments.

Although existing literature provides extensive insights into digital communication and language change, there is limited research focusing specifically on acronyms used across multiple generations in academic contexts. Most studies concentrate on youth language or technology-mediated communication alone. Therefore, there is a clear research gap in examining how acronyms and generational vocabulary influence communication fluency across age groups. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by analyzing generational language practices from a sociolinguistic perspective.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the use of acronyms and language practices across different generations. This approach is suitable for analysing naturally occurring language behaviour and understanding how linguistic choices reflect generational identity, communication fluency, and adaptation to digital environments. Rather than relying on numerical data, the study focuses on observing patterns, meanings, and contextual usage of language.

7.2 Data Sources and Context

The data for the study were drawn from naturally occurring communication contexts, including informal peer interactions, classroom discussions, and everyday digital communication such as text messages and online chats. These contexts were selected to capture authentic language use across generations in both formal and informal settings. The study did not rely on structured questionnaires but instead focused on observational insights to understand real-world language behaviour.

7.3 Sample and Generational Categorisation

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Participants were broadly categorized into different generational groups based on age, such as older adults and younger users. This categorisation enabled a comparative analysis of acronym usage and language preferences across generations. The focus was not on individual linguistic competence but on identifying general patterns of language use characteristic of each generational group.

7.4 Procedure

The study followed the steps outlined below:

- Identification of commonly used acronyms and abbreviated forms in everyday communication.
- Observation of language use across different age groups in both spoken and digital communication contexts.
- Comparison of language patterns to identify generational differences in acronym usage, frequency, and context.
- Interpretation of findings using a sociolinguistic framework that views language as a socially meaningful and context-dependent practice.

7.5 Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by principles from sociolinguistics and digital discourse studies, which emphasize that language variation is influenced by social identity, community norms, and communicative context. Acronyms were analysed as linguistic resources that serve functions such as efficiency, identity marking, and group belonging. The findings were interpreted in relation to existing literature on digital language, generational communication, and language evolution.

7.6 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to basic ethical principles. Observations were limited to publicly accessible or consensual communication contexts. No personal identifiers were recorded, and all examples were anonymised to protect privacy. The study was conducted purely for academic purposes.

8. Results

The analysis of language use across different generations revealed clear and consistent patterns in the use of acronyms and abbreviated forms. The findings indicate that acronym usage varies

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significantly based on age, communicative context, and medium of interaction, reflecting generational differences in language practices and communication fluency.

8.1 Generational Variation in Acronym Usage

Younger participants demonstrated frequent and confident use of acronyms and abbreviated expressions in both spoken and digital communication. Acronyms were commonly employed to enhance speed, efficiency, and expressiveness, particularly in informal interactions such as peer conversations and online messaging. In contrast, older participants showed limited use of acronyms and often preferred complete lexical forms, especially in spoken communication. When acronyms were used by older participants, they were typically restricted to widely recognized or conventional forms.

8.2 Contextual Differences in Language Use

The results showed that acronym usage was strongly influenced by communicative context. Across all generations, informal settings encouraged greater use of acronyms, while formal or academic contexts prompted a shift toward more conventional language forms. Younger users displayed greater flexibility in switching between informal and formal registers, adjusting their language use based on audience and setting. Older users, however, maintained relatively consistent language patterns across contexts, with less frequent register switching.

8.3 Acronyms as Markers of Identity and Belonging

The findings suggest that acronyms function as sociolinguistic markers of group identity and social belonging, particularly among younger generations. The use of shared acronyms created a sense of in-group membership and familiarity within peer groups. Younger participants appeared to associate acronym usage with digital competence and contemporary identity, whereas older participants often perceived such forms as informal or context-specific rather than integral to everyday language.

8.4 Impact on Communication Fluency

Differences in acronym usage influenced perceived communication fluency across generations. Younger users reported smoother and more efficient communication when interacting within their peer groups, while intergenerational communication sometimes involved clarification or

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adjustment of language. However, the results indicate that these differences did not reflect a lack of linguistic competence but rather varying degrees of exposure to and comfort with digital language practices.

9. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that generational language variation is closely linked to sociocultural exposure and communication environments. Younger generations, who engage extensively with digital platforms, display higher fluency in acronym-based communication. This supports Tagliamonte and Denis's (2008) view that digital language follows predictable and meaningful patterns.

The conscious adjustment of language based on audience indicates strong register awareness. This aligns with Crystal's (2008) assertion that the ability to switch between informal and formal registers is more important than strict adherence to standard language forms.

The preference for acronyms in casual communication reflects changing values where immediacy, relatability, and emotional expression are prioritized. At the same time, the continued use of formal language in academic and professional settings challenges the notion that digital language weakens overall communication competence.

10. Key Findings

- Acronyms are used more frequently by younger generations than older generations

- Digital exposure strongly influences informal language practices

- Most speakers demonstrate awareness of context and audience

- Acronyms enhance expressiveness but may reduce clarity across generations

- Register switching is a key communicative skill across age groups

11. Limitations

The study is limited by its reliance on observational and secondary data. The absence of quantitative survey data restricts statistical generalization. Additionally, language practices may vary across cultural and regional contexts.

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12. Future Scope

Future research may include survey-based or interview-based studies to examine attitudes toward acronyms across generations. Comparative studies across institutions or regions may further enhance understanding of generational language variation. Longitudinal studies could explore how language practices evolve over time.

13. Conclusion

This study highlights how acronyms and generational vocabulary reflect sociocultural adaptation rather than linguistic decline. While younger generations demonstrate greater comfort with abbreviated and informal language, awareness of formal norms remains intact across age groups. Effective communication depends on the ability to adapt language according to context and audience.

From an educational perspective, the findings emphasize the need to strengthen formal communication skills while acknowledging the sociocultural value of informal digital language. Understanding generational language differences promotes fluency, clarity, and inclusive communication in a multigenerational society.

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Positivity and Confidence in Teenagers: A Descriptive Review of Their Role in Academic Stress Management and Language Learning

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1. Abstract

Positivity and confidence play a crucial role in shaping teenagers' academic performance, emotional well-being, and language learning experiences. Adolescence is a stage marked by heightened sensitivity to failure, peer evaluation, and self-perception, which often affects students' motivation and willingness to communicate, particularly in academic and language-learning contexts. This paper presents a descriptive review of existing literature to examine the role of positivity and confidence in supporting teenagers' academic engagement and communication development.

The study is based on a systematic review of secondary sources, including books, research articles, and reports published between 2010 and 2024 in the fields of psychology, education, and language learning. The review highlights that positive mindset, self-efficacy, and emotional support significantly influence teenagers' motivation, resilience, and willingness to participate in learning activities. Findings from the reviewed literature suggest that confidence reduces fear of failure, encourages risk-taking in communication, and enhances academic persistence.

The paper emphasizes the importance of integrating positive psychological practices and confidence-building strategies within educational environments. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives and educational research, the study offers insights for teachers, parents, and

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institutions to create supportive learning spaces that promote emotional well-being and effective communication among teenagers.

Keywords: positivity, confidence, teenagers, academic engagement, communication, motivation

2. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive changes that significantly influence learning behaviour, self-concept, and communication patterns. During this period, teenagers often experience heightened sensitivity to academic pressure, peer evaluation, and fear of failure, which can affect their confidence and willingness to engage actively in learning environments. In educational contexts, particularly in language learning, confidence and positivity play a vital role in shaping students' motivation, participation, and overall academic performance.

Educational psychology highlights that learners' emotional states are closely linked to their ability to process information, take risks, and sustain effort. Teenagers with low confidence often avoid participation, fear making mistakes, and experience anxiety in academic and communicative tasks. In contrast, a positive mindset and strong self-belief contribute to resilience, persistence, and effective communication. Research grounded in self-efficacy theory emphasizes that students who believe in their abilities are more likely to engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate improved learning outcomes (Bandura, 1997).

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to the role of positive psychology in education. Concepts such as optimism, growth mindset, and emotional well-being have been linked to improved academic engagement and reduced stress among adolescents. Studies suggest that fostering positivity and confidence helps teenagers cope with academic challenges, manage emotional fluctuations, and develop effective communication skills, particularly in language learning contexts where fear of error and self-consciousness are common barriers.

Despite the growing body of research on adolescent psychology and education, many studies address confidence, positivity, and academic performance in isolation. There remains a need for integrative reviews that examine how positivity and confidence collectively influence teenagers' academic engagement and communication development. This paper addresses this gap by presenting a descriptive review of literature related to positivity, confidence, and adolescent learning.

By synthesizing insights from psychological theories and educational research, this study aims to highlight the significance of positive emotional frameworks in supporting teenagers' academic success and communication skills. The paper also underscores the role of educators, parents, and institutions in creating supportive learning environments that nurture confidence, emotional well-being, and effective communication among adolescents.

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3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a **descriptive literature review approach** to examine the role of positivity and confidence in teenagers' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and communication development. Rather than collecting primary data, the study systematically analyses existing scholarly literature to identify recurring themes, theoretical perspectives, and educational implications related to adolescent confidence and positive psychological development.

3.2 Data Sources

The study is based on **secondary data** collected from credible and peer-reviewed sources, including:

- Academic books on adolescent psychology and education
- Research articles published in national and international journals
- Reports and resources from recognized organizations related to adolescent mental health and education

The sources were selected to ensure relevance to teenagers, confidence-building, positivity, academic performance, and communication or language learning.

3.3 Selection Criteria

The literature included in this review was selected based on the following criteria:

- Publications focusing on adolescents or teenage learners
- Studies addressing confidence, positivity, self-efficacy, motivation, or emotional well-being
- Research related to academic engagement, communication, or language learning
- Sources published primarily between **2010 and 2024**, with the inclusion of foundational theoretical works where necessary

Irrelevant, non-scholarly, or outdated sources were excluded to maintain academic rigor.

3.4 Method of Analysis

The selected literature was analysed using **thematic analysis**. Key ideas, findings, and theoretical arguments were identified and grouped under recurring themes such as self-confidence, positivity, fear of failure, emotional well-being, and academic engagement. These themes were then

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interpreted in relation to established psychological theories, particularly self-efficacy and positive psychology frameworks.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Since the study is based entirely on secondary data, no human participants were involved. All sources have been appropriately acknowledged through in-text citations and references, ensuring academic integrity and ethical compliance.

4. Literature Review (Past Studies)

The role of positivity and confidence in adolescent development has been widely discussed across the fields of psychology, education, and language learning. Existing literature consistently emphasizes that adolescence is a formative stage during which emotional states, self-perception, and belief systems significantly influence academic engagement and communication behaviour. This section reviews key theoretical and empirical studies that examine positivity, confidence, and their relevance to teenagers' learning experiences.

4.1 Confidence and Self-Efficacy in Adolescence

One of the most influential frameworks for understanding confidence in learning is Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals. Research based on this theory indicates that adolescents with higher self-efficacy demonstrate greater motivation, persistence, and willingness to engage in challenging academic tasks. Conversely, low self-efficacy is associated with fear of failure, avoidance behaviour, and reduced academic participation.

Several studies have applied self-efficacy theory to adolescent learning contexts, highlighting that confidence directly influences students' classroom engagement and performance. Adolescents who believe in their abilities are more likely to take risks, ask questions, and actively participate in learning activities, including language-related tasks that require public expression and error tolerance.

4.2 Positivity and Positive Psychology in Education

The field of positive psychology has contributed significantly to understanding the role of optimism, resilience, and positive emotional states in learning. Seligman (1998) argues that a positive outlook enhances individuals' capacity to cope with stress and setbacks. In educational settings, positivity has been linked to improved academic motivation, emotional well-being, and long-term success.

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Research suggests that fostering positivity among teenagers helps reduce academic anxiety and emotional distress. Adolescents who develop optimistic thinking patterns are better equipped to manage pressure, maintain motivation, and recover from academic challenges. Studies in educational psychology indicate that positive classroom environments and supportive teacher practices contribute to increased confidence and engagement among teenage learners.

4.3 Confidence, Positivity, and Communication Skills

Communication, particularly in academic and language-learning contexts, requires confidence and emotional readiness. Literature on language anxiety reveals that teenagers often hesitate to speak or participate due to fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers. Studies indicate that confidence plays a critical role in reducing communication anxiety and enhancing fluency, especially in second-language or formal communication contexts.

Researchers have found that positive reinforcement, encouragement, and emotionally supportive learning environments improve teenagers' willingness to communicate. When students feel confident and emotionally secure, they are more likely to experiment with language, express ideas, and engage in collaborative learning. This highlights the interconnectedness of emotional well-being, confidence, and effective communication.

4.4 Adolescence, Emotional Well-Being, and Academic Stress

Adolescence is frequently associated with heightened emotional sensitivity and academic stress. Santrock (2019) notes that teenagers face increasing academic expectations alongside emotional and social pressures, which can negatively affect self-esteem and motivation. Studies on adolescent mental health emphasize that unmanaged stress and negative self-perception can hinder learning and overall development.

Literature further suggests that integrating emotional support and confidence-building strategies within educational systems can mitigate these challenges. Programs focusing on emotional awareness, resilience, and positive self-concept have been shown to improve both academic outcomes and psychological well-being among adolescents.

5. Research Gap and Relevance of the Present Study

Although existing literature provides substantial evidence on the importance of confidence and positivity in adolescent development, much of the research examines these factors independently or within narrow academic contexts. There is a need for integrative reviews that synthesise psychological and educational perspectives to understand how positivity and confidence together influence teenagers' academic engagement and communication development.

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The present study addresses this gap by offering a descriptive review of literature that collectively examines positivity, confidence, and adolescent learning. By synthesizing insights from psychology and education, this paper contributes a holistic understanding of how emotional and motivational factors shape teenagers' academic and communicative experiences.

6. Analysis

The analysis of the reviewed literature reveals that positivity and confidence are central psychological factors influencing teenagers' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and communication development. Across studies in psychology and education, these constructs consistently emerge as interrelated and mutually reinforcing, particularly during adolescence—a period marked by heightened emotional sensitivity and identity formation.

6.1 Positivity as a Protective Psychological Factor

The literature indicates that positivity functions as a protective factor that helps adolescents cope with academic stress, fear of failure, and emotional instability. Positive emotional states are associated with improved motivation, resilience, and perseverance in the face of challenges. Studies grounded in positive psychology emphasize that adolescents who maintain optimistic thinking patterns are better able to reinterpret setbacks as learning opportunities rather than personal failures. This ability reduces anxiety and promotes sustained engagement in academic tasks.

6.2 Confidence and Academic Engagement

Confidence, particularly in the form of self-efficacy, is repeatedly identified as a key determinant of teenagers' academic behaviour. The reviewed studies suggest that confident adolescents are more willing to participate in classroom activities, attempt challenging tasks, and persist despite difficulties. In contrast, low confidence is closely linked to avoidance behaviour, reduced participation, and fear of negative evaluation. The analysis highlights that confidence does not develop in isolation but is shaped by feedback, emotional support, and learning environments that encourage effort over perfection.

6.3 Influence on Communication and Language Learning

A significant theme emerging from the literature is the role of confidence and positivity in communication, especially in language-learning contexts. Adolescents often experience communication anxiety due to fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers. The literature indicates that positive reinforcement and supportive classroom climates reduce this anxiety and enhance willingness to communicate. Confidence enables teenagers to take linguistic risks, express ideas freely, and develop fluency, while positivity supports sustained motivation and engagement.

6.4 Interaction Between Emotional Well-Being and Learning

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The analysis also underscores the close relationship between emotional well-being and academic performance. Emotional distress, low self-esteem, and negative self-perception are shown to hinder concentration, memory, and decision-making. Conversely, emotionally supportive environments that promote positivity and confidence contribute to better academic outcomes and healthier coping strategies. The literature suggests that educational practices integrating emotional awareness and confidence-building are particularly effective during adolescence.

6.5 Educational Implications

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that positivity and confidence are not supplementary traits but foundational elements of effective adolescent learning. The literature collectively supports the need for educational approaches that prioritize emotional well-being alongside academic instruction. By fostering positive attitudes, encouraging self-belief, and reducing fear-based learning environments, educators can significantly enhance teenagers' academic engagement and communication skills.

7. Results and Discussion

The review of existing literature reveals that positivity and confidence play a central role in shaping teenagers' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and communication skills. Across psychological and educational studies, these factors consistently emerge as significant contributors to adolescents' ability to cope with academic pressure, participate actively in learning, and develop effective communication competence.

7.1 Role of Positivity in Adolescent Development

The literature indicates that positivity functions as a stabilizing and motivating force during adolescence. Studies grounded in positive psychology demonstrate that optimistic thinking patterns help teenagers manage stress, overcome fear of failure, and maintain motivation despite academic challenges. Adolescents who exhibit positive attitudes are more likely to interpret setbacks as learning opportunities rather than personal shortcomings. This finding supports the view that positivity enhances resilience and emotional regulation during a developmentally sensitive stage.

7.2 Confidence and Academic Engagement

The reviewed studies consistently highlight confidence—particularly self-efficacy—as a key determinant of academic behaviour. Teenagers with higher confidence levels show greater classroom participation, persistence, and willingness to engage with challenging tasks. Conversely, low confidence is associated with avoidance behaviour, reduced motivation, and heightened anxiety. These findings align with Bandura's self-efficacy framework, which emphasizes the role of belief in one's capabilities in shaping learning outcomes.

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7.3 Impact on Communication and Language Learning

A prominent result emerging from the literature is the strong relationship between confidence, positivity, and communication skills. Adolescents often experience communication anxiety, especially in academic and language-learning contexts where fear of making mistakes is common. Studies suggest that confident and positive learners demonstrate a greater willingness to communicate, improved fluency, and reduced apprehension. Supportive learning environments that encourage risk-taking and provide constructive feedback significantly enhance teenagers' communicative competence.

7.4 Emotional Well-Being and Academic Stress

The literature also highlights a close link between emotional well-being and academic performance. High levels of stress, negative self-perception, and emotional distress are shown to interfere with concentration, decision-making, and sustained engagement. In contrast, educational practices that promote emotional support, positivity, and confidence contribute to better academic outcomes and healthier coping strategies among teenagers.

7.5 Educational Implications

The combined results of the reviewed studies suggest that positivity and confidence are foundational components of effective adolescent learning rather than supplementary traits. The discussion underscores the need for educational systems to integrate confidence-building strategies, emotional support, and positive reinforcement into teaching practices. By creating emotionally safe and encouraging learning environments, educators can enhance teenagers' academic engagement, communication skills, and overall well-being.

8. Key Findings

Based on the analysis of existing literature, the following key findings emerge:

- Positivity and confidence are critical psychological factors that significantly influence teenagers' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and overall learning experience. Adolescents with a positive outlook demonstrate greater resilience when facing academic and personal challenges.
- Self-confidence, particularly self-efficacy, plays a decisive role in learning behaviour. Teenagers who believe in their abilities are more willing to participate in classroom activities, take academic risks, and persist despite difficulties, while low confidence is associated with avoidance and fear of failure.
- Emotional well-being and academic performance are closely interconnected. Literature indicates that stress, anxiety, and negative self-perception can hinder motivation and

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concentration, whereas positive emotional states support sustained engagement and effective learning.

- Confidence and positivity strongly influence communication skills, especially in language-learning contexts. Teenagers with higher confidence show greater willingness to communicate, reduced fear of making mistakes, and improved fluency.
- Supportive educational environments enhance positivity and confidence. Studies emphasize that encouragement, positive feedback, and emotionally safe classrooms contribute significantly to adolescents' motivation and self-belief.
- Integrating positive psychology principles in education such as optimism, resilience, and emotional support helps teenagers manage academic pressure more effectively and promotes long-term personal and academic growth.

9. Conclusion

This study examined the role of positivity and confidence in shaping teenagers' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and communication development through a descriptive review of existing literature. The findings from the reviewed studies consistently highlight that adolescence is a sensitive developmental stage in which emotional states, self-belief, and mindset significantly influence learning behaviour and academic participation. Positivity and confidence emerge as foundational psychological factors that support resilience, motivation, and effective communication among teenagers.

The review indicates that confident adolescents are more willing to engage in academic tasks, communicate freely, and persist despite challenges, while positivity helps them cope with stress and fear of failure. Conversely, low confidence and negative self-perception are associated with avoidance behaviour, anxiety, and reduced academic involvement. The discussion further emphasizes that emotionally supportive and encouraging learning environments play a crucial role in fostering these positive attributes.

The study underscores the importance of integrating confidence-building strategies and positive psychological practices within educational settings. By promoting emotional well-being alongside academic instruction, educators and institutions can create learning environments that support teenagers' holistic development. The paper contributes to educational research by reinforcing the need to view positivity and confidence not as supplementary traits, but as essential components of effective adolescent learning and communication.

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Men, Women, and Words at Work: Gender vs. Professional Communication

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Abstract

Communication acts as the foundation of collaboration, leadership, and productivity within professional places. However, subtle gender-based disparities continue to influence how messages get delivered, interpreted, and valued. This paper analyzes the relationship between gender identity and professional communication styles, exploring whether socialized gender norms contradict or complement professional anticipations of interaction. Numerous sociolinguistic theories and workplace studies prove how men and women differ in verbal and nonverbal communication, assertiveness, and relational strategies when it comes to professionalism. The findings suggest that while professional communication seeks objectivity, it remains influenced by gender perceptions. Recognizing and eliminating these differences can lead to more impartial and sufficient workplace communication.

Keywords: gender, professional communication, workplace discourse, sociolinguistics, inclusivity

Introduction

The modern workplace relies on effective communication, comprising clarity, tone, and intent, which determine not only task success but also our professional relationships. Yet, communication is not entirely neutral; it is intensely shaped by socialization, culture, and identity. Though countless factors influence professional discourse, gender still remains at the top since it is the most complex and debated highlight.

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Society prepares men and women to communicate differently long before they enter the workplace. Men are often encouraged to be assertive, goal-oriented, and self-assured, while women are socialized to be empathetic, polite, and collaborative. Such gender-based conventions clash with the "professional" communication norms that prioritize objectivity, authority, and detachment. The consequences result in a subtle tension. Communication that feels natural to ones gender gets judged as unprofessional or inappropriate when viewed through professional spectacles.

This paper analyses how gendered communication styles interact with the bars of professional discourse. It examines how these differences hinder or enrich professional communication and how understanding them can facilitate inclusivity, balance, and leadership equity.

Literature Review

Research on gender and communication evolved from linguistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives. Robin Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) recognized "women's language." It featured politeness, tag questions, and emotions, claiming that these reflect social subordination. Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand* (1990) reframed the same differences not as flaws but as colloquial goals. It was stated that men communicate to report information, while women communicate to build rapport.

Professionally, such tendencies often lead to misconceptions. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) found that women managers use collaboration and inclusivity, while men prefer specific and task-oriented speech. Even Mulac et al. (2001) reported that patterns of men's speech are perceived as more authoritative.

Scholars like Deborah Cameron (2007) warned against oversimplifying gendered communication, arguing that these differences are context-specific and shaped by society. Eventually, women in senior positions may adopt assertive strategies, while men in supportive roles often use empathy and cooperation.

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Recent studies also emphasize nonverbal communication as another area of divergence, where women display more eye contact, gestures of affirmation, and responsive facial expressions, while men exhibit spatial supremacy and restrained emotional expression (Goman, 2011). Such contrasting cues influence perceptions, including confidence, warmth, and credibility.

Methodology

This study pursues a qualitative analytical method, synthesizing findings from journal articles, sociolinguistic research, and organizational case studies. The analysis focuses on three dimensions of gendered communication within professional settings, namely-

1. **Verbal communication** – tone, language structure, and assertiveness.
2. **Nonverbal behavior** – gestures, posture, and space usage.
3. **Perceptual bias** – how communication is differently judged based on gender.

The data considered include studies from *Harvard Business Review*, *Gender and Society*, *Journal of Business Communication*, and theoretical frameworks by Tannen, Lakoff, and Cameron. The purpose is to decode recurring conventions at a workplace and understand how professional norms reinforce and challenge gendered communication expectations.

Results / Findings

- **Verbal Communication**

Men's workplace communication highlights clarity, competition, and authority. Phrases like "We need to" or "The solution is" display decisiveness. Whereas women use inclusive and consultative language, like "Let's consider" or "What do you think?" This echoes the discretion for engagement and collective decision-making.

Both styles can be effective; they are often perceived differently. Assertive male speech is decoded as leadership, whereas similar directness in female speech is often labeled as aggression.

- **Nonverbal Communication**

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Nonverbal communication strengthens gendered biases. Women display more nodding, smiling, and eye contact to show attentiveness, while men are less expressive and occupy physical space (Goman, 2011). Such cues affect how confidence and authority are perceived. Men's posture is read as dominance, while women's open gestures are misread as submission or uncertainty.

- **Leadership and Perception**

A key finding is the dispute between gender expression and professional expectations. Traditional professional norms reward traits like assertiveness, neutrality, and control. But as per society, these qualities are associated with masculine behavior. Women who communicate empathetically are seen as "too soft," while those who adopt assertive tones face the "double standards" of society. Men also face limitations, but rarely. Hence, professional communication norms privilege masculine-coded styles a lot more.

Discussion

The intersection of gender and professional communication demonstrates that what organizations consider "effective communication" often mirrors masculine discourse conventions. It echoes workplace hierarchies dominated by men. Yet, this inequality can confine the diversity of voices in leadership and collaboration. Studies show that mixed-gender teams perform the best (Babcock and Laschever, 2003).

Organizations that promote communication flexibility rather than uniformity benefit from more prosperous discussions, reduced conflict, and greater inclusion. Training programs based on gender-specific communication can help employees understand these patterns without fortifying stereotypes. The goal is to eliminate gendered differences.

Conclusion

Gender continues to shape how professionals depict themselves, analyze others, and steer workplace hierarchies. "Men, Women, and Words at Work" are not merely reflections of personal style but of more general cultural conditioning that describes what "professional" means. The tension between gendered communication norms and professional expectations often leads to misjudgment, bias, and unequal prospects.

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To move toward more fair workplaces, organizations must broaden their understanding of professionalism to retain diverse communication approaches. Professional communication should not repress gender

expression but evolve with it. Hence, true communicative competence arises when every voice, regardless of gender, is heard, valued, and understood.

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