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Leveraging AI-Powered Voice Assistants for Autonomous Second Language Learning: A Pilot Study Using Amazon Alexa

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence has had a significant impact on the education industry and the way people learn. In particular, there is much discussion about applying artificial intelligence technology to help students master foreign languages. This study seeks to examine the possible use of AI voice assistants like Amazon Alexa in self-paced learning of new languages. A pilot study design was used to test the effectiveness of Alexa in helping users improve their listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills autonomously. A set of individuals used Amazon Alexa to perform various exercises for some time. The data was gathered from their interaction with the program, feedback from participants, and assessment of their progress. The results show that Alexa promotes self-regulation among learners by offering instant feedback, encouraging regular practice, and making conversations enjoyable. However, some limitations were discovered, including difficulties with contextual analysis and pronunciation accuracy.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Learning, Second Language Acquisition, Voice Assistants, Amazon Alexa, Conversational AI.

I. Introduction

With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), conventional learning methods have evolved into an advanced mode of learning. In the field of second language acquisition, technology-based learning platforms have emerged as significant tools due to their flexibility and learner-oriented nature. Autonomous learning, which promotes independent involvement, has emerged as one of the most important aspects in contemporary pedagogy. Voice assistants such as Amazon Alexa represent a new generation of AI-driven conversational agents capable of supporting language learning through natural interaction. These systems enable learners to practice speaking and listening skills without the constraints of time and location. Despite their growing popularity, there is limited empirical research examining their effectiveness in fostering autonomous language learning.

It is intended that this paper will fill the void in the body of literature regarding the use of AI-based voice assistants, such as Amazon Alexa, for second language acquisition. It is important that the study is carried out against the background of a growing prevalence of conversational artificial intelligence among people's activities, as well as the question of how such technology may be used in the process of language training. It is proposed to focus on the practical experience of the learners' use of Alexa through spontaneous interaction with this device. The key idea of the study lies in the shift from traditional approaches to autonomous learning of second languages.

This study aims to bridge this gap by conducting a pilot investigation into the role of Alexa in supporting second language learners. The primary objective is to evaluate its effectiveness in enhancing learner autonomy and improving language proficiency.

II. Literature Review

Voice assistants powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) have emerged as innovative tools in second language learning providing learners with interactive and autonomous learning opportunities. Technologies like Amazon Alexa use speech recognition, Natural Language

Processing (NLP) and machine learning for conversational practice, pronunciation training and vocabulary enhancement. Recent research has shown that intelligent personal assistants provide flexible and learner-centred environments that support self-paced language learning. Dizon and Tang (2020) found that learners perceived Alexa as an accessible and engaging platform to practice English communication skills outside the classroom. The research also indicated that AI voice assistants boost learner motivation and speaking confidence through real-time interaction and feedback. Furthermore, AI-powered systems can respond to learner input and provide immediate support during discussions, enabling personalized learning experiences.

Moreover, researchers have highlighted the educational potential of AI voice assistants for autonomous learning and language proficiency improvement. Dizon (2022) claims that voice assistants can promote learners' practice of communication in the target language independently, which, in turn, increases interaction and decreases speaking anxiety. In addition, AI-driven learning environments boost student engagement by providing endless opportunities to practice language without direct teacher intervention. However, some studies have also reported challenges such as problems in accent recognition, and limited contextual understanding and data privacy concerns in communication [3]. However, the integration of AI-powered conversational agents into language education is considered a transformative step toward smart and adaptive learning systems. This pilot study therefore investigates the effectiveness of Amazon Alexa in facilitating autonomous second language learning and improvement of communication skills of learners.

III. Methodology

This pilot study employs a mixed method research approach to examine the effectiveness of AI-powered voice assistants in autonomous second language learning. The study was conducted on undergraduate engineering students who were learning English as a second language. A total of 60 participants were purposively selected and randomly assigned into two groups, an experimental group that performed language-learning activities on Amazon Alexa and a control group that performed language-learning activities using traditional self-learning methods. The experimental group interacted with Alexa for four weeks for pronunciation practice, vocabulary learning, listening comprehension and conversational communication. Pre-tests and post-tests were performed to measure the improvements in the learners' speaking

skills, vocabulary acquisition and listening abilities. Similar mixed-method approaches have been widely adopted in educational technology research for measuring the learning effectiveness and learner engagement.

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were used to gain a comprehensive picture of learner performance and learner perception. Quantitative data were collected through assessment scores and Likert-scale questionnaires measuring both learner motivation and engagement and confidence in language learning. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and feedback sessions to examine learners' experiences with Alexa-based learning activities. The collected data were analyzed by percentage analysis and comparative evaluation between the experimental and control groups. During the research process, ethical considerations such as informed consent, participant confidentiality, and voluntary participation were maintained to ensure reliability and transparency [3]. The methodology framework was based on previous studies examining AI assisted and autonomous language-learning settings [4].

B. Procedure

The study was conducted over a period of four weeks and investigated the effectiveness of Amazon Alexa in supporting autonomous second language learning. In the experimental group, the participants were first introduced to Alexa's features and functionalities, such as voice commands, conversational interaction, and listening activities. Both the experimental and control groups were pre-tested for their initial proficiency levels in speaking, listening, and vocabulary skills. In the period, the experimental group was involved in learning activities with Alexa for about 30 minutes daily, while the control group carried on with self-learning practices such as reading textbooks and using online materials. The activities involved asking questions, practicing dialogues, learning new words and responding to prompts generated by AI, with the goal of improving communication skills [1][2].

C. Data Collection

A range of methods were used to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of amazon Alexa in autonomous second language learning. Interaction logs were used to track how often and how learners interacted with Alexa during language-learning activities. Pre-assessment and post-assessment tests were administered in order to measure improvements in speaking, listening

and vocabulary skills before and after the experimental period. Feedback questionnaires were also distributed to collect the learners' perceptions on engagement, usability, motivation and overall learning experience with AI-powered voice assisted learning. The combination of these data collection techniques afforded both quantitative and qualitative insights into learner performance and the influence of AI-assisted language learning environments.

D. Data Analysis

The data collected was subjected to both quantitative and qualitative analyses to assess the efficacy of Amazon Alexa in self-directed second language learning. The quantitative data derived from the pre-assessment test and post-assessment test was analyzed through percentage analysis and comparative performance analysis to assess the gains achieved in the skills of speaking, listening, and vocabulary of the participants. The performance data for the experimental group was compared with that of the control group to determine the effects of AI-based learning activities. Moreover, logs of interactions were reviewed to find out the participation rate, interaction rate, and degree of involvement of the learners throughout the duration of the experiment.

IV. Results and Discussion

It was observed from the results of the study that there was visible improvement in the acquisition of a second language among the experimental group members due to the use of Amazon Alexa compared to those in the control group. In particular, the post-assessment results indicated that the use of Amazon Alexa had led to improvement in terms of speaking fluency, correct pronunciation, understanding of speech, and vocabulary building among students who used Alexa. Logs of the interactions carried out indicated that the learners were consistently engaged in interactions through the use of AI. This is because most students stated that the interactive nature of Alexa made it easier for them to communicate in English without fear of committing errors.

In addition, the feedback surveys highlighted positive perceptions from the learners about the usability and efficacy of the Alexa-mediated learning experience. Learners found the conversational agent engaging, convenient, and helpful for independent learning beyond the confines of the classroom setting. Some difficulties were identified including issues with speech recognition, comprehension of accented speech, and lack of context in conversing with

the AI assistant. However, most learners were satisfied with their AI-supported learning experience and demonstrated openness toward continued use of voice assistants for language practice. Based on the findings, it appears that incorporating AI-enabled conversational agents in language instruction can be highly beneficial in improving learner motivation, communication, and independent learning abilities.

Despite these challenges, the overall findings suggest that Alexa is a valuable supplementary tool for autonomous language learning. It enhances engagement and provides a supportive environment for continuous practice.

V. Conclusion

From the research conducted, it was evident that there were improvements in second language learning in the experimental group using Amazon Alexa. From the post-test results, there were improvements in terms of speaking, pronunciation, listening skills, and vocabulary in students who used Alexa frequently. Logs of the interaction were recorded and proved that there was higher engagement in learners interacting with Alexa. Many of the students using Alexa noted that the conversation skills allowed them to freely communicate in English with confidence, without fear of being wrong. These findings were similar to those from previous studies, which claim that AI voice assistants foster self-learning because of their immediate feedback. Future research can focus on integrating advanced AI features, improving contextual understanding, and expanding the scope of study with larger participant groups.

From these feedback questionnaires, other positive attitudes were obtained from the learners concerning the utility and effectiveness of the Alexa learning experience. The students considered the voice assistant to be interesting, convenient, and useful in self-study out of the classroom. Some problems with the usage of the voice assistant included speech recognition issues, understanding of accentuated languages, and lack of context in conversations. In spite of this, learners were quite satisfied with the experience of AI-supported learning and even willing to use this technology to support their learning process in the future.

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The Preservation and Commercialization of Tribal Art and Handicrafts – A Study on the Nilgiri Todas and Kurumbas

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Abstract

Indigenous to Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Hills, the Todas and Kurumbas have a rich cultural legacy that is shown in their traditional handicrafts and artwork. The Kurumbas specialize in wood carvings and mural paintings that draw inspiration from tribal mythology and environment, while the Toda group is well known for their elaborate embroidery, which is distinguished by distinctive geometric patterns and colorful themes. Modernization, the loss of traditional knowledge, and the absence of sustainable commercialization pose problems for these creative forms despite their historical and cultural importance. This paper examines the measures implemented by the government, non-governmental organizations, and market-driven tactics to protect and develop these crafts. It looks at striking a balance between being authentic and adjusting to the needs of modern consumers. The study also emphasizes how internet platforms and ethical trade help to ensure that these tribal artists are economically empowered while

preserving their cultural identity. Through the examination of case studies and professional opinions, this research offers suggestions for the sustainable conservation and marketing of Toda and Kurumba handicrafts, guaranteeing that their heritage endures for upcoming generations.

Key Words:

Tribal Art, Toda Embroidery, Kurumba Handicrafts, Cultural Preservation, Commercialization, Indigenous Heritage, Ethical Trade, Sustainable Development, Nilgiri Tribes, Traditional Crafts

Introduction:

Numerous indigenous communities with distinctive cultural identities, customs, and creative expressions may be found throughout India. Through their traditional art and handicrafts, the Todas and Kurumbas of Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Hills have managed to maintain their unique history. Often used to adorn shawls and clothing, the Toda tribe is especially renowned for its magnificent embroidery, which features elaborate geometric patterns sewn in red and black on a white backdrop (Basu 112). Inspired by nature, folklore, and spiritual beliefs, the Kurumbas are adept in carving wood and painting murals (Krishnan 78). These tribes have a great artistic heritage, but in the contemporary world, their crafts suffer many obstacles. Their practice and transmission have decreased as a result of globalization, shifting lifestyles, and dwindling traditional knowledge (Sharma 56). Furthermore, commercialization raises issues with authenticity, exploitation, and the loss of cultural importance even while it also presents economic opportunity. Through sustainable methods, market-driven efforts and governmental and non-governmental groups have worked to preserve and promote these indigenous art forms (Rao and Menon 34). The dual facets of Toda and Kurumba handicrafts' commercialization and preservation are examined in this study, along with their effects on these communities' economic empowerment and cultural heritage protection. This research attempts to offer insights into guaranteeing the continuation of these cultural traditions in a world that is rapidly modernizing by examining historical settings, contemporary issues, and prospective solutions. These tribal art forms though of cultural and historical significance are increasingly under threat due to globalization, urbanization and changing socio-economic conditions. Younger generations move towards modern employment opportunities, so traditional artistic practices tend to decline (Sharma 56). Commercialization also brings opportunities and challenges. Tourism and digital marketplaces can be economically beneficial, but mass production and imitation threaten the authenticity of tribal crafts. In response, government agencies, NGOs

and ethical trade organisations have introduced various initiatives to conserve and promote indigenous handicrafts (Rao and Menon 34). This study explores the preservation and commercialization of Toda and Kurumba handicrafts and assesses strategies for sustaining their cultural heritage alongside economic empowerment.

Literature Review

The influence of modernization on traditional communities has brought the preservation of indigenous arts and crafts to the forefront of study. "Every embroidery is not only a beautifying art but also a symbol of tribal identity and ritualistic importance," says Basu. Researchers have pointed out that the Geographical Indication (GI) status granted to Toda embroidery has helped maintain its authenticity and enhance its global recognition [1]. But scholars also note that the dwindling involvement of the younger generation poses a grave threat to the survival of this tradition.

The study of Kurumba handicrafts shows its artistic and ecological importance. "The wood carvings and murals of Kurumba depict tribal mythology and environmental awareness," says Krishnan [2]. Researchers argue that tourism and online platforms have facilitated commercialization, thereby improving economic prospects for artisans, but also potentially leading to cultural commodification and exploitation [3]. Authenticity must be balanced with the market demand for sustainable preservation. Recent literature indicates that ethical trade, digital marketing and collaborative initiatives between NGOs and government agencies can support indigenous crafts while protecting tribal identity.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the cultural importance of Toda embroidery and Kurumba handicrafts.
2. To study the problems faced in preservation of indigenous tribal art forms.
3. To study the role of commercialization in economic empowerment of tribal artisans.
4. To assess the role of government agencies, NGOs and digital platforms in promoting tribal handicrafts.
5. To propose sustainable strategies for conservation and marketing of Toda and Kurumba crafts.

The present study is mainly concerned with the cultural significance of Kurumba handicrafts and Toda embroidery as important markers of indigenous identity and heritage in the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu. The study describes the portrayal of customs, beliefs, rituals and artistic expressions of the Toda and Kurumba tribal communities through these traditional art forms.

As per researchers like Basu, Krishnan [1][2], Toda embroidery and Kurumba handicrafts are closely linked with Tribal culture and are important expressions of indigenous knowledge and creativity. The research stresses the role of tribal handicrafts in preserving the identity of the community and the continuity of the culture by understanding their historical and cultural significance.

Another important objective of the study is to analyze the challenges faced in preserving these indigenous art forms in the modern era. Globalization, urbanization, migration, and declining interest among younger generations have contributed to the gradual loss of traditional craftsmanship and indigenous knowledge systems [3]. The study also seeks to examine the role of commercialization in the economic empowerment of tribal artisans while evaluating its impact on authenticity and cultural value. Furthermore, the research investigates the contribution of government agencies, NGOs, ethical trade organizations, tourism initiatives, and digital platforms in promoting tribal handicrafts and improving market accessibility [4]. Finally, the study aims to suggest sustainable strategies for preserving and marketing Toda and Kurumba crafts to ensure the protection of tribal heritage while supporting the socio-economic development of indigenous communities [5].

Methodology

The present study uses qualitative research to study the preservation and commercialization of Toda and Kurumba handicrafts. The data were collected from secondary sources like books, research journals, government reports, online archives and articles on tribal art and indigenous crafts. The socio-cultural and economic aspects of these tribal communities were studied through the study of scholarly studies regarding Toda embroidery, Kurumba wood carving, ethical trade, and cultural preservation [1][2].

Besides analyzing literature, the research conducted a number of case studies associated with tribal craft communities, NGO projects, and government sponsored programs on development of handicrafts in the Nilgiri area. These case studies helped identify the actual strategies adopted for the conservation and promotion of Toda embroidery and Kurumba handicrafts. Efforts involving different methods like craft workshops, tribal exhibits, self-help groups, and handicraft fairs were studied in detail to understand the significance of institutional efforts in preserving indigenous skills and uplifting the socio-economic status of tribal craftsmen [3]. It was also important to examine the role played by NGOs in raising awareness about tribal culture and linking them to larger markets.

Additionally, the research adopted a comparative analysis approach in order to evaluate the

implications of commercialization on authenticity, culture identity, and economic sustainability. This analysis explored the ways through which the development of tourism, market places, and internet have created more market avenues for Toda and Kurumba artisans through raising the level of awareness and creating more demand for their traditional craft items. However, the research sought to analyze issues related to imitation goods, commoditization of culture, and the gradual alteration of traditional designs to align with the contemporary tastes of consumers [4].

Preservation of Toda and Kurumba Handicrafts

The survival of tribal craft is very important for sustaining the culture and preserving the knowledge system of the indigenous population. Toda embroidery has been recognized by giving it Geographical Indication (GI) status, which prevents its replication. Training camps are organized by governmental institutions and NGOs that motivate young people to learn traditional embroidery skills. Artistic aspects of Toda embroidery are highlighted in cultural shows and handicraft fairs.

In the same way, Kurumba crafts are saved through programs run by welfare organizations for tribal people, and through community-based efforts involving culture. Artwork in the form of wood carvings and mural painting is exhibited in museums and cultural centers to ensure that its artistic tradition is preserved. The role played by non-governmental organizations that operate in the Nilgiri area involves helping artisans use green technology and promoting marketing of their products [3].

Commercialization and Economic Empowerment

The process of commercialization is extremely important in enhancing the economic situation of the tribal artisans. There has been an increase in tourism in the Nilgiri Hills, leading to greater demand for Toda shawls, embroidery items, and Kurumba handicrafts. E-commerce sites and social media have facilitated the artisans in connecting with consumers nationally and internationally. Fair trade organizations help in establishing fair prices for these products [4].

But commercialization is also accompanied by certain issues. Industrial production and the creation of imitation goods lessen the exclusivity of native handicrafts and, at times, involve exploitation of indigenous knowledge for business purposes. Certain craftsmen find themselves disadvantaged by their inability to reach wider markets owing to their lack of computer skills and insufficient funds. Thus, in order to make sustainable commercialization possible, it is essential to strike a balance between economic benefits and the protection of culture [2][5].

Findings

This research proves that the crafts of Toda and Kurumba tribes are precious cultural resources that help in the representation of tribal identity and native knowledge. The efforts made toward the preservation of these arts include their inclusion in the GI system, support by NGOs and governmental programs. Tourism and modern technologies have helped to commercialize these crafts.

However, issues like modernization, loss of traditional wisdom, imitation products, and cultural commoditization keep posing threats to their authenticity. Ethical trade, cultural education, and digital marketing should be combined to promote sustainable development that preserves the culture of tribes while boosting economic growth.

Conclusion

The art and crafts of the Todas and Kurumbas are indicative of the cultural wealth of the Nilgiris region of Tamil Nadu. Although these artistic traditions have had to contend with pressures from modernization and globalization, they have been able to sustain themselves through art and crafts practiced by the Toda and Kurumba tribes are part of their cultural legacy and indigenous knowledge passed down through generations from the Nilgiris region of Tamil Nadu. The embroidery practice of the Toda tribe is characterized by complex geometrical designs with symbols of their cultural traditions, ritual practices, and identity. Likewise, the wooden carvings and murals by the Kurumba tribe are linked to their tribal mythology and spirituality in association with nature. The indigenous art forms not only depict the beauty of their crafts but are also important representations of cultural heritage and traditions [1][2].

Despite their cultural significance, these artistic traditions have faced increasing challenges due to modernization, globalization, migration, and changing lifestyles. Younger generations often shift toward modern occupations, leading to a decline in traditional craftsmanship and the transmission of indigenous knowledge. However, preservation initiatives undertaken by government agencies, NGOs, ethical trade organizations, and digital platforms have contributed to sustaining these tribal art forms. Commercialization through tourism, exhibitions, and online marketplaces has created economic opportunities for artisans while increasing public awareness about tribal culture. Nevertheless, balancing market demands with cultural authenticity remains essential to ensure that these traditional crafts continue to survive without losing their original identity and heritage [3][4].

Efforts made by government organizations, non-governmental organizations, ethical trading bodies, and internet-based initiatives can help promote and preserve these tribal crafts through sustainable means. Getting the youth of these tribes involved in their traditional arts, increasing

their accessibility to markets, and safeguarding their intellectual and cultural property rights are some of the measures that can help ensure the perpetuation of their culture into the future.

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A Survey on Challenges and Barriers to High-Tech AAC Integration Among Speech Language Pathologists in India

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Abstract

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is designed to augment and substitute for traditional speech and writing for individuals with significant communication challenges serving as a critical component in the habilitation and rehabilitation of both congenital and acquired conditions. A survey-based study was conducted to investigate the challenges and barriers faced by speech language pathologists (SLPs) in India regarding the integration of high-tech AAC systems for pediatric and adult clients. A total of 155 SLPs participated and the responses were analyzed across five domains such as training-professional preparedness, accessibility-resource barriers, client-caregiver factors, institutional-systematic challenges and policy-systematic changes. Descriptive statistics and radar chart visualization were employed to profile awareness across sections. Findings revealed the highest awareness in the domain of Client and Caregiver Factors ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.47$) and Policy and Systemic Changes ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.00$), whereas awareness was lowest in Training and Professional Preparedness ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 0.94$). Only 19.4% of SLPs reported adequate AAC training, and 80.6% acknowledged a lack of formal preparation. Conversely, universal consensus (100%) was obtained on the need for greater governmental funding, mandatory AAC training and policy-level reforms. The study underscores critical gaps in professional preparedness and systemic

support for AAC in India, with implications for training programs, institutional policy and evidence-based clinical practice.

Keywords: Augmentative and Alternative communication, High-Tech AAC, Speech language pathologists, India, Pediatric and Adult clients.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a dynamic process characterized by the active creation and attribution of meaning as well as the exchange of ideas and interactions among group members (Giffin & Patten 1976). The communication process is only finalized once the receiver transmits feedback to the sender, thereby triggering a new cycle of meaning exchange (Daniel 2013).

AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) refers to an area of research, clinical and educational practice. AAC involves attempts compensate for temporary or permanent impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions of individuals with severe disorders of speech-language production and/or comprehension, including spoken and written modes of communication (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA] 2005).

AAC refers to a broad range of strategies, techniques and technologies that supplement or replace natural speech for individuals who experience significant difficulties in spoken communication. It encompasses both unaided systems such as manual signs, gestures, facial expressions and aided systems, which include low-technology tools such as communication boards and picture-based systems, as well as high-technology devices such as speech-generating devices (SGDs), tablet-based applications and eye-gaze systems. High-tech AAC, in particular represents a rapidly expanding domain driven by advances in computing, artificial intelligence and mobile technology. Globally, it is estimated that approximately 97 million individuals across diverse diagnostic profiles including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, acquired neurological conditions, and progressive neurodegenerative diseases may benefit from AAC services (Beukelman & Light 2020).

AAC interventions effectively enhance communication, social engagement, and overall quality of life, their clinical implementation is often hindered by significant systemic, professional, and environmental obstacles (Beukelman & Mirenda, 2013).

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) play an important role in the identification, assessment, selection, implementation and monitoring of AAC systems for individuals with complex communication needs (CCN) across all age groups. AAC services provided by SLPs range from early childhood intervention to adult rehabilitation and include individuals with different

communication needs and disorders. As the primary professionals involved in AAC decision-making, SLPs are expected to have knowledge of high-tech AAC systems, evidence-based intervention methods, device programming, communication partner training and interdisciplinary teamwork (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [ASHA], 2023).

Marvin, Montano, Fusco and Gould (2003) found that SLPs in the United States reported insufficient preservice training in AAC, particularly regarding the technical customization of speech-generating devices (SGDs). Practitioners expressed difficulty managing the technical demands of AAC systems and emphasized the need for more competency-based clinical practicum experiences with individuals having complex communication needs (CCN). The study highlighted the importance of integrating more hands-on AAC training into professional preparation programs.

Costigan and Light (2010) determined that AAC training for SLPs, special educators and occupational therapists was often limited to a single course with minimal practical exposure to high-tech devices. Numerous graduates demonstrated a proficiency deficit regarding device selection, programming, linguistic organization and the implementation of communication partner training. The authors recommended broadening AAC clinical practicum opportunities and promoting interdisciplinary training across related professions.

Light and McNaughton (2012) identified a persistent gap between evidence-based AAC interventions and their implementation in routine clinical practice. Although research demonstrated the benefits of AAC for individuals across different disabilities and age groups, these practices were not consistently translated into everyday service delivery. The authors stressed the need to focus not only on developing effective AAC interventions but also on ensuring their routine clinical application.

Srinivasan, Mahalakshmi and Chitra (2015) highlighted the scarcity of AAC systems tailored to India's specific cultural and linguistic needs in an early pilot study. The researchers observed that most commercial high-tech devices were developed for English speakers offering limited support for Indian scripts, languages or culturally familiar symbols. Consequently, the study identified linguistic inaccessibility as a primary structural obstacle to the adoption of high-tech AAC within the Indian context.

Chung and Stoner (2016) identified several barriers to successful implementation in a

systematic review of professional and caregiver perspectives on school-based AAC support, such as insufficient training and a lack of collaborative planning time. Participants including SLPs and teachers emphasized that effective service delivery for students using high-tech systems requires ongoing professional development and clearly defined team roles.

Donato, Wallace and Carlin (2018) found that SLPs working in early intervention settings that caregiver acceptance and limited consistency across service providers were primary barriers to AAC implementation. Other common obstacles included high equipment costs, restricted access to high-tech systems and insufficient training time. Many clinicians prioritized low-tech options over speech-generating devices indicating continued discomfort with the technical requirements of advanced systems.

Romano and Chun (2022) revealed through research that ASHA-certified SLPs have reported insufficient knowledge, high caseloads and limited time were the most common challenges. Despite reporting a moderate level of proficiency, many clinicians continue to encounter difficulties when implementing advanced high-tech systems and applying culturally responsive frameworks in their practice. The study highlighted that these barriers have persisted for over 15 years, indicating an urgent need to address systemic gaps in professional training and support.

Narayanan and Karuppali (2023) highlighted a critical shortage of qualified speech and hearing professionals in India. The authors observed that the limited number of RCI-accredited institutions offering relevant programs significantly restricts access to specialized AAC training. Furthermore, the requirement for clinicians to practice both audiology and speech-language pathology simultaneously limits their ability to specialize in niche domains, such as high-tech AAC.

De Bortoli, Balandin, Trembath and Togher (2024) identified major challenges such as limited knowledge, stigma, resource shortages, and inappropriate device selection in a study involving diverse perspectives on high-tech AAC use among nonspeaking autistic individuals. Clinicians specifically reported difficulty keeping up with rapid technological advancements and a lack of familiarity with specific high-tech devices. Consequently, the study emphasized that coordinated collaboration between families, educators and clinicians are essential to improve outcomes and prevent device abandonment.

Philip, Geetha and Abraham (2025) conducted a scoping review of aided AAC interventions in India, finding that most research focused on children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

while neglecting adult populations and acquired communication disabilities. Their analysis revealed that studies were primarily situated in urban clinical settings, leaving rural and semi-urban areas underrepresented. Their review identified a shortage of large-scale research and stressed the urgent requirement for AAC tools that are linguistically and culturally validated for Indian languages.

Varghese, Nair and Joseph (2025) conducted a large-scale study identifying several persistent barriers to high-tech AAC integration for non-speaking autistic individuals in India. Their research highlighted critical challenges, such as the lack of standardized symbols in regional languages, high device costs and an insufficient number of trained professionals. The authors argued that because Western-centric clinical guidelines often lack sociocultural relevance in India, specialized training and hands-on experience are essential to enhancing SLPs' proficiency and confidence in AAC service delivery.

NEED OF THE STUDY

High-tech AAC systems, such as speech-generating devices and communication apps can significantly enhance communication for pediatric and adult individuals with complex communication needs. However, the integration of these systems into clinical practice remains limited and inconsistent, particularly in developing and low-resource countries like India. A significant research gap exists as most studies on AAC awareness and implementation focus on Western populations while Indian research remains emergent. The Present study investigates the self-reported challenges and barriers faced by speech-language pathologists (SLPs) to inform evidence-based educational planning, policy reform and clinical practice development within the Indian context.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study

The study investigates the challenges and barriers encountered by Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) in integrating high-tech AAC for pediatric and adult populations in India. Specifically, it focuses on training preparedness, resource accessibility, client-caregiver factors, institutional challenges and policy-level perspectives to offer a comprehensive overview of current AAC implementation.

Participants

155 certified Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) currently practicing in India.

Inclusion Criteria

- Certified speech language pathologists (SLPs) practicing in India.
- SLPs with at least six months of professional clinical experience.
- Experience working with pediatric or adult populations with complex communication needs (CCN).
- Actively practicing in any clinical or educational environment, such as hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers or private clinics.

Exclusion Criteria

- SLPs who do not hold valid professional certification.
- Professionals lacking clinical experience with pediatric or adult populations presenting with CCN.

Procedure

The study was conducted in two distinct phases.

In Phase 1, a structured questionnaire was developed to examine the challenges and barriers faced by Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) when integrating high-tech AAC for pediatric and adult clients in India. The tool consisted of 20 dichotomous (yes/no) items categorized into five key domains: Training and Professional Preparedness, Accessibility and Resource Barriers, Client and Caregiver Factors, Institutional and Systemic Challenges and Policy and Systemic Changes.

In Phase 2, the validated questionnaire was administered 155 qualified SLPs practicing in various professional settings across India, including hospitals, private clinics, rehabilitation centers, and academic institutions. Data was collected through direct and online methods after obtaining informed consent.

Questionnaire

Section A: Training and Professional Preparedness

1. I have received adequate formal training in assessment and implementation of High-Tech AAC systems.
 Yes No
2. My academic curriculum sufficiently prepared me for practical AAC intervention.
 Yes No
3. I feel confident selecting appropriate High-Tech AAC devices/apps for pediatric and adult clients.
 Yes No
4. Limited access to continuing education or hands-on AAC workshops affects my clinical practice.
 Yes No

Section B: Accessibility and Resource Barriers

5. The high cost of High-Tech AAC devices/apps is a major barrier for my clients.
 Yes No
6. Limited availability of AAC tools in Indian regional languages restricts effective intervention.
 Yes No
7. Lack of technical support and maintenance services discourages AAC implementation.
 Yes No
8. Limited access to devices and infrastructure in my workplace affects AAC use (e.g., devices, internet, software).
 Yes No

Section C: Client and Caregiver Factors

9. Families/caregivers have limited awareness or understanding of High-Tech AAC.
 Yes No
10. Training caregivers and teachers to consistently use AAC is challenging.
 Yes No

11. Client motivation and engagement influence long-term AAC success.

Yes No

12. Language and cultural diversity create difficulties in customizing AAC systems.

Yes No

Section D: Institutional and Systemic Challenges

13. Time constraints in clinical settings limit AAC assessment and intervention.

Yes No

14. Lack of interdisciplinary collaboration affects AAC implementation.

Yes No

15. Institutional or administrative support influences my ability to recommend High-Tech AAC.

Yes No

16. Integrating High-Tech AAC into school, home, or workplace environments is challenging.

Yes No

17. Integrating High-Tech AAC is more challenging with adult clients than pediatric clients.

Yes No

Section E: Policy and Systemic Changes

18. Government funding or insurance coverage should be provided for High-Tech AAC devices.

Yes No

19. AAC training should be strengthened in SLP academic curriculum and continuing professional development programs.

Yes No

20. Government-supported AAC resource centers and nationwide awareness programs should be established.

Yes No

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27.0. Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the responses obtained from the participants. The responses were categorized into five sections: (A) Training and Professional Preparedness, (B) Accessibility and Resource Barriers, (C) Client and Caregiver Factors, (D) Institutional and Systemic Challenges, and (E) Policy and Systemic Changes. Radar charts were generated using Microsoft Excel to visualize the awareness profile across the five sections. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant for all statistical analyses.

RESULT

The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges and barriers encountered by Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) in integrating high-tech AAC for pediatric and adult populations in India and the obtained result are discussed below.

Table 1:

Shows frequency and percentage distribution of Participants according to training and professional preparedness.

		Frequency	Percentage
Q1	Yes	30	19.4
	No	125	80.6
Q2	Yes	92	59.4
	No	63	40.6
Q3	Yes	37	23.9
	No	118	76.1
Q4	Yes	94	60.6
	No	61	39.4

From table 1, it can be inferred concluded that majority of SLPs lacked formal training 80.6% and confidence in implementing high-tech AAC systems 76.1%. However, 59.4% a majority of respondents reported that their academic coursework provided sufficient preparation for the practical application of AAC interventions and 60.6% were willing to undergo training if

opportunities were provided. This indicates a significant gap in AAC training and professional preparedness despite moderate awareness and willingness for further education.

Table 2:

Shows frequency and percentage distribution of Participants according to Accessibility and Resource Barriers.

		Frequency	Percentage
Q5	Yes	132	85.2
	No	23	14.8
Q6	Yes	140	90.3
	No	15	9.7
Q7	Yes	114	73.5
	No	41	26.5
Q8	Yes	105	67.7
	No	50	32.3

From table 2, it can be observed that 85.2% identified high device cost as a major barrier and 90.3% noted limited availability of AAC devices in clinical and educational settings. Additionally, 73.5% reported challenges related to insufficient technical support and 67.7% indicated limited funding and insurance coverage further hindered AAC implementation. These results indicate that SLPs are widely aware of the structural and financial barriers that limit AAC access in India.

Table 3:

Shows frequency and percentage distribution of Participants according to Client and Caregiver Factors

		Frequency	Percentage
Q9	Yes	151	97.4
	No	4	2.6
Q10	Yes	152	98.1
	No	3	1.9
Q11	Yes	155	100.0
	No	0	0.0
Q12	Yes	140	90.3
	No	15	9.7

From table 3, it can be observed that 97.4% recognized limited caregiver knowledge and

training as a barrier, while 98.1% acknowledged the impact of client motivation and acceptance on AAC use. Significantly, 100% of respondents agreed that caregiver involvement and support are critical for sustainable AAC integration and 90.3% identified sociocultural attitudes and stigma as relevant barriers. These findings indicate that SLPs in India are highly aware of the role of client and caregiver dynamics in determining AAC outcomes.

Table 4:

Shows frequency and percentage distribution of Participants according to Institutional and Systemic Challenges

		Frequency	Percentage
Q13	Yes	86	55.5
	No	69	44.5
Q14	Yes	130	83.9
	No	25	16.1
Q15	Yes	61	39.4
	No	94	60.6
Q16	Yes	150	96.8
	No	5	3.2
Q17	Yes	105	67.7
	No	50	32.3

From table 4, it can be concluded that 55.5% of respondents acknowledged that time constraints in clinical settings limit AAC assessment and intervention. Furthermore, 83.9% of respondents agreed that a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration negatively affects AAC implementation and 60.6% of respondents did not agree that institutional or administrative support influences their ability to recommend High-Tech AAC. Significantly, 96.8% respondents find integrating high-tech AAC into school, home or workplace environment to be particularly challenging. Additionally, 67.7% found integrating High-Tech AAC more challenging with adult clients than pediatric clients.

Table 5:

Shows frequency and percentage distribution of Participants according to policy and systemic changes.

		Frequency	Percentage
Q18	Yes	155	100.0
	No	0	0.0

Q19	Yes	155	100.0
	No	0	0.0
Q20	Yes	155	100.0
	No	0	0.0

Table 5 it reveals the absolute agreement among the surveyed Indian SLPs underscores a unified advocacy for comprehensive systemic reform. The data reflects a collective demand for infrastructure development to facilitate high-tech AAC implementation nationwide. Specifically, all respondents (100%) agreed on the critical need for three key initiatives: the establishment of standardized policy frameworks, the provision of government financial backing, and the mandate for structured professional education.

Table 6:

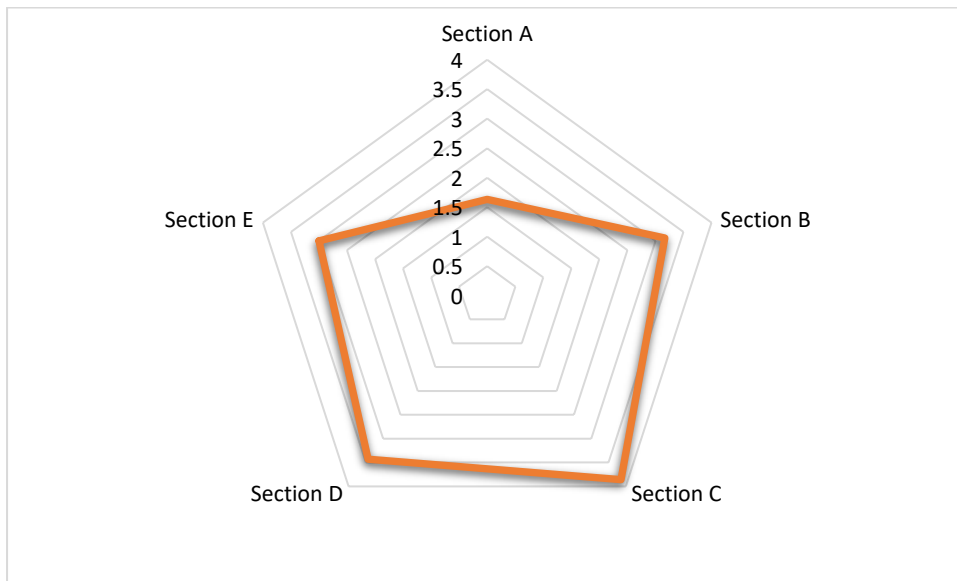
Shows the Mean and Standard Deviation values for each section.

Section	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Section A	155	1.632258	0.94676
Section B	155	3.167742	1.236981
Section C	155	3.858065	0.475896
Section D	155	3.432258	0.837586
Section E	155	3	0

Table 6 outlines the mean and standard deviation values across the five surveyed domains. Section C (Client and Caregiver Factors) yielded the highest composite score ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.47$), followed closely by Section D (Institutional and Systemic Challenges; $M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.83$) and Section B (Accessibility and Resource Barriers; $M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.23$). Section E (Policy and Systemic Changes) recorded a central mean score ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.00$), where the zero standard deviation indicates absolute consensus among all 155 respondents. Conversely, Section A (Training and Professional Preparedness) registered the lowest composite score ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 0.95$), highlighting it as the area with the lowest perceived preparedness among the surveyed SLPs.

Figure 1:

Shows the overall awareness profile across the five sections.



This radar chart illustrated the overall awareness profile across the five investigated domains with the markers representing the mean scores for each section. Section C (Client and Caregiver Factors) extended toward the outer perimeter of the chart, signifying the highest level of perceived awareness. Conversely, Section A (Training and Professional Preparedness) exhibited a sharp inward dip toward the center, illustrating a pronounced gap in preparedness and awareness relative to the other domains.

DISCUSSION

High-tech augmentative and alternative AAC uses electronic tools ranging from specialized equipment to mainstream smart devices to facilitate communication. By merging hardware and software, these modern systems support users primarily by translating their thoughts into spoken language through speech generating sentences (Elsahar et al., 2019).

The present study investigated the level of awareness among speech -language pathologists in India regarding the challenges and barriers to the integration of high-tech AAC systems for both pediatric and adult client populations. A structured survey questionnaire was administered to 155 SLPs across India. The findings revealed a profound deficit in formal education, indicating that many clinicians lack confidence in implementing AAC systems in practice. Participants demonstrated a positive attitude toward professional development and expressed willingness to engage in AAC training opportunities. Significant financial and resource-related barriers, including the high cost of devices, limited availability and insufficient technical support continue to limit AAC accessibility in India. Practitioners exhibited their highest level

of insight regarding client and family factors strongly emphasizing the active caregiver participation, client motivation and sociocultural attitudes are pivotal to successful AAC adoption.

The findings highlighted that several systematic and institutional challenges affecting high tech AAC integration in India, including inadequate institutional infrastructure, lack of AAC-specific guidelines, limited professional development opportunities and insufficient government support. However, interdisciplinary collaboration was perceived to be comparatively better in some clinical settings, suggesting the presence of collaborative practices within multidisciplinary teams. Participants emphasized the need for standardized AAC policies, government supported funding and structured professional training programme. Overall, the study highlights that improving AAC integration in India requires coordinated efforts involving policy reform, institutional support, professional training, and increased awareness among caregivers and society.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

High-tech AAC systems are important interventions for individuals with complex communication needs. However, their integration in India remains limited. The present study examined the awareness of Indian Speech-Language Pathologists regarding the challenges and barriers to high-tech AAC integration for pediatric and adult clients. A survey was conducted among SLPs across India using a questionnaire covering training and professional preparedness, accessibility and resource barriers, client and caregiver factors, institutional challenges, and policy-related issues. The findings showed that awareness was highest in relation to client and caregiver factors, particularly the importance of caregiver involvement, client motivation and sociocultural influences on AAC use. Participants also demonstrated strong awareness of policy and systemic needs including the importance of standardized AAC policies, government funding and professional training programme.

The study further identified several barriers affecting high-tech AAC integration, such as limited device availability, inadequate government support, lack of institutional guidelines and insufficient professional development opportunities. The lowest level of awareness was observed in the area of training and professional preparedness indicating limited formal high - tech AAC training and reduced clinical confidence among SLPs. Overall, the findings suggest that although Indian SLPs recognize the importance of high-tech AAC and its related challenges, there is a need for improved training, stronger institutional support, and effective policy reforms to enhance high-tech AAC services and ensure better accessibility for

individuals with complex communication needs in India.

Limitations of the study

- The study did not separately analyze SLPs working with pediatric and adult populations which may have overlooked population-specific differences.
- The use of Yes/No questions may not have fully elicited the detailed experiences and perceptions of SLPs regarding AAC barriers.

Future Directions

- Further studies should examine the impact of training programme and include caregiver and client perspectives to better understand high-tech AAC implementation challenges.
- Research should include larger, more diverse samples from various regions and clinical settings in India to increase the generalizability of the findings.

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Pragmatic Profiling in Malayalam speaking children with ID

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ABSTRACT

Language is a complex system of arbitrary symbols which is used for human communication. (American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA), 1982). Pragmatics is the study of relationship between language and content. It includes particularly conversational exchanges, where two or more participants take turns to construct a text (Tear, 1985). Profiling pragmatics in Intellectual Disability is crucial because it evaluates how a person actually uses language in real world social contexts rather than just measuring their vocabulary or grammar. The study aims at profiling pragmatic language in Malayalam speaking children with ID. 15 children with Intellectual disability within the age range of 8-13 years (mental age: 4-5) and 15 Typical children of age range (4-5 yrs) participated in the study. Tasks given were general conversation, picture description and question answering. The results of the present study revealed that Typical children performed better than children with ID. The results emphasize the urgent need for targeted, context-based social communication interventions to better support this population in real-world interactions.

Key words: Pragmatic profiling, Intellectual disability, Typical children.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a structured system of communication using symbols, sounds and rules to convey meaning encompassing phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. However, language is more than just words and sentences. It also includes various forms of expression that we often use unconsciously. Native speakers of a language naturally understand many of these expressions and the rules that govern them. One important area that examines these rules is pragmatics.

Pragmatics is quoted as the ability to apply language resources to facilitate effective social interaction considering the needs of the conversational partner and demands of the physical context (Stephens & Matthews, 2014). It defines as involving the understanding and using of language for different purposes such as to comment, direct, reject, protest, greet, inform, demand, state, promise, request etc. It includes adapting language to listeners situations and conversation rules like turn taking and topic maintenance. This includes starting a conversation appropriately with a question or statement introducing and maintaining topics taking turns while speaking asking for clarification when needed repairing communication breakdowns providing clarification and organizing language according to different discourse genres such as narration and expository text (Cummings, 2014; Matthews, Biney & Smith, 2018).

A linguistic profile is a systematic description of the characteristics of an individual's language use that allows the person to be identified for a particular purpose (Crystal,1982). Pragmatic profiling involves the systematic evaluation of pragmatic abilities through methods like conversational analysis, play based tasks or checklists to chart strengths and weaknesses in social communication. It assesses key skills such as turn taking, sustaining topics and tailoring language to listeners or contexts that underpin successful interactions.

Pragmatic profiling can be conducted across the lifespan for individuals who exhibit difficulties with social communication skills. This includes children with delayed language development or social communication challenges as well as school aged children who have trouble with peer interactions, maintaining topics or taking conversational turns. It is also relevant for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Social (Pragmatic) Communication Disorder. Additionally pragmatic profiling may be appropriate for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, hearing impairments, traumatic brain injury, right hemisphere damage and adolescents or adults who experience difficulties with social or workplace communication. As a core tool in speech language pathology aids diagnosis and therapy planning especially for social communication challenges in Intellectual disability

(ID) and similar conditions by outlining pragmatic profiles to customize interventions and enhance adaptive skills and inclusion.

Pragmatic profiling plays a significant role in children with ID and it evaluates how appropriately they use language in social and daily communication contexts. People with ID often experience challenges in starting conversations, sustaining topics, following turn taking rules, interpreting social cues, seeking clarification and modifying their language according to the listener or situation. Evaluating pragmatic abilities helps identify communication difficulties that may not be detected through formal language assessments alone. Further more pragmatic profiling supports Speech Language Pathologists (SLP)s and educators in developing individualized intervention strategies aimed at enhancing social communication, functional language use and participation in educational and community environments. It also helps in tracking communication progress over time and contributes to improved interpersonal relationships, independence and overall quality of life.

Elliot, Pring and Bunning (2002) evaluated pragmatic skills in children with mild to severe ID suggested that pragmatic deficits often become more evident during their final school years, a period marked by preparation for post-school transitions.

Flusberg and Joseph (2003) analyzed the pragmatic language assessment in developmental disorders highlighted the limitations of standardized tests and advocated for naturalistic observation and discourse analysis provides a strong theoretical foundation for pragmatic profiling in children with ID.

Grossman and Flusberg (2012) demonstrated children with ID exhibit distinct pragmatic language patterns depending on subgroup characteristics, particularly the presence of autism and findings underscore the importance of subgroup analysis and detailed pragmatic profiling to capture qualitative differences in social communication that are not explained by intellectual level alone.

Silc, Schmidt and Kosir (2017) assessed pragmatic abilities of children with mild ID revealed that no gender differences across vocabulary, grammar or story structure with only slight deviations observed in the younger group of children with mild ID when compared to TD children.

Kapalkova and Monika (2018) examined receptive language skills in Slovak speaking children with ID showed that language development is a resilient process that remains consistent despite delays associated with intellectual disabilities.

Hernández, Quinto, Martín, and Adam (2025) found that current assessment tools vary widely in the aspects of pragmatics they measure and are often not well suited to the specific communication profiles of people with ID.

Shilpashri (2010) evaluated pragmatic skills of children with ASD found that the percentage of responses from children with ASD to caregiver initiated or self initiated pragmatic skills did not follow a consistent or linear pattern across different ages when compared to TD children

Xavier, Santhana, Sunny and Kumaraswamy (2015) assessed Malayalam speaking children with Down's syndrome found out distinction between clinician initiated and self initiated pragmatic skills across different mental ages.

Gupta, Abraham and Kumaraswamy (2019) analyzed pragmatic skills in Malayalam speaking children with ID and TD children indicated that children with ID performed poorer than TD children.

Abhilash, Rakshitha and Kumaraswamy (2022) examined pragmatic language abilities in TD Kannada speaking children and children with ID indicated that children with ID demonstrated significant difficulties in various aspects of pragmatic language compared to TD children.

Swetha and Gupta (2023) assessed pragmatic skills of tamil speaking children with ID showed that tamil speaking children with ID within mental age range performed poorer compared to TD children matched for mental age.

Saranya and Kumar (2025) evaluated pragmatic skills of Gujarati speaking children with ID emphasized evaluating pragmatic profiles based on caregiver-child interactions provides a much more accurate reflection of functional communication in Indian households than traditional, rigid clinical testing.

Rasheeka, Karuppali, Bhat, Mohan and Varghese (2026) investigated how pragmatic language skills are assessed in preschool children revealed considerable variability in assessment practices.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Language assessments target vocabulary and grammar. Children with ID often exhibit disproportionate pragmatic difficulties even when structural language appears adequate. Pragmatic profiling also supports better academic participation, peer relationships and community integration by addressing social communication challenges. Additionally, it helps teachers, SLP's and caregivers understand the individual's communication style, set realistic goals and monitor progress effectively. Overall pragmatic profiling promotes improved social competence, independence and quality of life in individuals with ID.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study

The study aims at profiling pragmatic language in Malayalam speaking children with ID.

Subjects

15 children with Intellectual disability in the chronological age range of 8-13 years (mental age: 4-5) and 15 Typical children of age range (4-5 yrs).

Inclusion Criteria

- Subjects must meet the DSM 5 criteria for ID.
- Malayalam as native language.
- Children with Intellectual disability with mild to moderate severity.

Exclusion Criteria

- Children with severe Intellectual Disability.
- Children with any physical or sensory handicap.
- No history of any Speech, Language, cognition and neuropathology in normal population.

Procedure

An interactive session between the clinician and the child was video recorded for 15-20 minutes in a comparatively quiet and well illuminated room. To aid the interaction between the clinician and the child, the materials like toys, picture cards and chocolates were used.

The following pragmatic parameters were evaluated:

1. Response for eye contact
2. Smiling
3. Response for gaze exchange
4. Response for requesting object and/or action
5. Response for labeling
6. Answering questions
7. Response for turn-taking
8. Response for conversational repair
9. Response for topic initiation
10. Response for topic maintenance
11. Response for comment/feedback
12. Response for adding information

Each appropriate response was scored as '1' and absence of response was scored as '0'.

Statistical Analysis

Obtained scores were statistically analyzed using SPSS (version 27).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to profile pragmatics in children with ID. The obtained data was analyzed and results are discussed below.

Table 1

Shows the comparison of TD children and children with ID on General conversation.

	Group	Yes		Comparison between the groups	
		Count	Percentage	p-value	Significance
RESPONSE FOR EYE CONTACT	Children with Intellectual Disability	11	73.33%	0.032*	S

	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
SMILING	Children with Intellectual Disability	8	53.33%	0.003*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR GAZE EXCHANGE	Children with Intellectual Disability	9	60.00%	0.031*	S
	Typically Developing Children	14	93.33%		
RESPONSE FOR JOINT ATTENTION	Children with Intellectual Disability	3	20.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR REQUEST OF OBJECT AND/OR ACTION	Children with Intellectual Disability	4	26.67%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	13	86.67%		
RESPONSE FOR LABELING	Children with Intellectual Disability	7	46.67%	0.005*	S
	Typically Developing Children	14	93.33%		
ANSWERING QUESTIONS	Children with Intellectual Disability	10	66.67%	0.068	NS
	Typically Developing Children	14	93.33%		
RESPONSE FOR NEGATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	4	26.67%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	14	93.33%		
RESPONSE FOR TURN TAKING	Children with Intellectual Disability	3	20.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	14	93.33%		

RESPONSE FOR CONVERSATIONAL REPAIR	Children with Intellectual Disability	1	6.67%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	12	80.00%		
RESPONSE FOR TOPIC INITIATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	1	6.67%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	11	73.33%		
RESPONSE FOR MAINTANCE	Children with Intellectual Disability	6	40.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR COMMENT/FEEDBACK	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	13	86.67%		
RESPONSE FOR ADDING INFORMATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	11	73.33%		

S-Significance, NS-No Significance

Table 1 shows that children with ID performed better on eye contact (73.33%), gaze exchange (60.00%) and performed poorer on providing comments/feedback, adding information (0.00%), and for topic initiation, conversational repair (6.67%). Answering questions showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p = 0.068$), where 66.67% of children with ID responded successfully compared to 93.33% of TD children.

Table 2

Shows the comparison of TD children and children with ID on Picture description.

	Group	Yes		Comparison between the groups	
		Count	Percentage	p-value	Significance

RESPONSE FOR EYE CONTACT	Children with Intellectual Disability	11	0.733	0.032*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		
SMILING	Children with Intellectual Disability	8	0.533	0.003*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		
RESPONSE FOR GAZE EXCHANGE	Children with Intellectual Disability	11	0.733	0.142	NS
	Typically Developing Children	14	0.933		
RESPONSE FOR JOINT ATTENTION	Children with Intellectual Disability	8	0.533	0.003*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		
RESPONSE FOR REQUEST OF OBJECT AND/OR ACTION	Children with Intellectual Disability	8	0.533	0.003*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		
RESPONSE FOR LABELING	Children with Intellectual Disability	11	0.733	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		
ANSWERING QUESTIONS	Children with Intellectual Disability	11	0.733	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		
RESPONSE FOR NEGATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	5	0.333	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		

RESPONSE FOR TURN TAKING	Children with Intellectual Disability	3	0.200	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	13	0.867		
RESPONSE FOR CONVERSATIONAL REPAIR	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.000	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	11	0.733		
RESPONSE FOR TOPIC INITIATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	1	0.067	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	13	0.867		
RESPONSE FOR MAINTANCE	Children with Intellectual Disability	7	0.467	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	1.000		
RESPONSE FOR COMMENT/FFEDBACK	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.000	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	14	0.933		
RESPONSE FOR ADDING INFORMATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	1	0.067	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	11	0.733		

Table 2 shows that children with ID performed better on eye contact, gaze exchange, labeling and answering questions (73.33%). Gaze exchange showed no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p = 0.142$). Children with ID performed poorer on conversational repair, comments/feedback(0.00%) and for topic initiation and adding information (6.67%).

Table 3

Shows the comparison of TD children and children with ID on Question answering.

	Group	Yes		Comparison between the groups	
		Count	Percentage	p-value	Significance
RESPONSE FOR EYE CONTACT	Children with Intellectual Disability	12	80.00%	0.068	NS
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
SMILING	Children with Intellectual Disability	8	53.33%	0.003*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR GAZE EXCHANGE	Children with Intellectual Disability	9	60.00%	0.099	NS
	Typically Developing Children	13	86.67%		
RESPONSE FOR JOINT ATTENTION	Children with Intellectual Disability	6	40.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR REQUEST OF OBJECT AND/OR ACTION	Children with Intellectual Disability	6	40.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR LABELING	Children with Intellectual Disability	9	60.00%	0.006*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
ANSWERING QUESTIONS	Children with Intellectual Disability	11	73.33%	0.032*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		

RESPONSE FOR NEGATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	5	33.33%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR TURN TAKING	Children with Intellectual Disability	2	13.33%	0.003*	S
	Typically Developing Children	10	66.67%		
RESPONSE FOR CONVERSATIONAL REPAIR	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	9	60.00%		
RESPONSE FOR TOPIC INITIATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	10	66.67%		
RESPONSE FOR MAINTANCE	Children with Intellectual Disability	6	40.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR COMMENT/FFEDBACK	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	15	100.00%		
RESPONSE FOR ADDING INFORMATION	Children with Intellectual Disability	0	0.00%	<0.001*	S
	Typically Developing Children	10	66.67%		

Table 3 shows children with ID performed better on eye contact (80.00%), answering questions (73.33%), gaze exchange and labeling (60.00%). Eye contact and gaze exchange showed no statistically significant differences between the groups. Children with ID performed poorer on conversational repair, topic initiation, comments/feedback, and adding information (0.00%).

whereas TD children maintained substantial success rates ranging from 60.00% to 100.00% in those parameters.

Table 4

Shows the comparison of performance of two groups across different tasks.

Tasks	Group							
	Children with Intellectual Disability				Typically developing children			
	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Interquartile Range	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Interquartile Range
General Conversation	4.47	4	1.922	3	12.67	13	1.047	2
Picture Description	5.67	5	2.193	4	13.07	13	0.884	1
Question Answering	4.93	5	1.58	2	12.47	12	0.915	1

Table 4 shows TD children obtained higher mean scores in picture description (13.07), general conversation (12.67) and question answering (12.47) compared to children with ID, whose mean scores were 5.67, 4.47 and 4.93 respectively.

Table 5

Shows the p values and significance across the tasks.

	General Conversation	Picture Description	Question Answering
Test statistic	-4.695	-4.723	-4.713
p-value	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Significance	S	S	S

Table 5 shows that there is statistically significant difference in the pragmatic parameters between TD children and children with ID for all the three tasks general conversation, picture description and question answering.

DISCUSSION

Children with ID performed better for eye contact and gaze exchange because these are pre-linguistic, early developing social behaviors that require very low cognitive load. Answering questions showed better performance because it is a highly structured reactive task that is heavily practiced in daily routines and therapies. Conversational tasks like topic initiation, feedback and repair showed poorer performance because they demand advanced executive functioning, working memory and Theory of Mind. Because these abstract tasks require children to create their own language, consider the listener's perspective and handle unpredictable social situations on the spot, they can easily overload the cognitive and language skills of children with ID. Typical children obtained significantly higher mean scores across all three pragmatic tasks because picture description, general conversation, and question answering require a dynamic combination of advanced language formulation, working memory and executive functioning. In general conversation and picture description, a child must independently organize their thoughts, retrieve vocabulary and build structured sentences to describe abstract or fluid contexts. While question answering is more structured doing it successfully at a high level still demands rapid auditory processing and comprehension.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Language is a learned code or system of rules. It involves five components namely; phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics (Shilpashri, 2010). The study aimed to profiling pragmatic language in Malayalam speaking children with ID (mental age 4-6 years). The results of the present study revealed that TD children performed better than children with ID. TD children possess the cognitive maturity to navigate these heavy linguistic demands smoothly whereas children with ID struggle with the abstract reasoning, processing speed and mental planning required leading to a statistically significant gap in performance across all three parameters. The widespread, statistically significant differences across almost every communicative measure emphasize that the main barrier for children with ID is not their desire to interact, but the immense cognitive and language demands placed upon them. Complex interaction requires heavy use of executive functioning, processing speed, working memory, and Theory of Mind. These specific cognitive faculties are fundamentally limited by intellectual disability.

Limitations Of The Study

- Lesser sample size

- Age range of 4-5 years were taken for the study.
- Limited parameters of pragmatic skills were selected.

Future Directions

- Study can be done in different age groups of ID and TD children.
- Study can be conducted on other dialects in Malayalam.
- Detailed research work can be conducted in other disordered population.

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Forced Migration and Identity Crisis in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

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Abstract

This article explores the themes of forced migration and identity crisis in *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh, situating the narrative within the historical context of the 19th century opium trade and the indentured labour system. It argues that migration in the novel is not a voluntary act but a consequence of colonial exploitation, economic coercion and entrenched social hierarchies such as caste and patriarchy. Through the experiences of characters like Deeti, Kalua and Neel, the study demonstrates how displacement disrupts established identities, leading to a profound sense of cultural dislocation and psychological uncertainty.

Drawing upon key ideas from Postcolonialism, particularly the notions of hybridity and liminality, the article examines how the ship *Ibis* functions as a transitional space where rigid social structures begin to dissolve. In this in-between zone, traditional makers of identity lose their authority, enabling the formation of new, fluid identities grounded in shared experiences rather than inherited status. The novel's multilingual narrative style further reinforces this transformation, reflecting the emergence of hybrid cultural expressions.

While the trauma of forced migration results in loss, nostalgia and alienation, the article also highlights the resilience of the human spirit and the possibility of collective belonging. It concludes that *Sea of Poppies* presents identity as dynamic and evolving, shaped by historical forces and the continuous negotiation between loss and adaptation.

Keywords: Forced migration, Identity crisis, Indentured labour, Colonialism, Cultural dislocation, Hybridity, Liminality, Postcolonialism, Diaspora

Introduction

The phenomenon of forced migration has been a defining feature of colonial modernity, often resulting in profound disruptions of identity and belonging. In *Sea of Poppies* (2008), Amitav Ghosh offers a nuanced portrayal of such displacement through the experiences of a diverse group of characters bound together by the historical realities of the 19th century opium trade and the indentured labour system. The novel foregrounds how coercive migration-driven by economic exploitation, social marginalization and imperial policies- engenders a deep crisis of identity while simultaneously opening up possibilities for its reconstitution.

Set in the 1830s, on the eve of the Opium Wars, the narrative situates itself within the broader framework of British colonial expansion. Rural economies in India were restructured to serve imperial interests, compelling peasants to cultivate opium instead of subsistence crops. This economic coercion led to widespread indebtedness and dispossession, forcing many to seek survival through indentured labour overseas. This ship *Ibis*, central to the novel becomes a symbolic and physical site of transition, carrying individuals from varied social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds into an uncertain future.

Forced migration in the novel is not merely a matter of physical relocation but is embedded within what may be described as structural coercion. The characters are driven by circumstances shaped by colonial authority and indigenous hierarchies. For instance, Deeti flees a life threatened by patriarchal violence and the practice of Sati, while Kalua, an outcaste, escapes the rigidities of caste oppression. Similarly, Raja Neel Rattan Halder, once a figure of privilege, is dispossessed by colonial legal mechanisms and reduced to the status of a convict. These trajectories illustrate that forced migration cuts across class and caste, though its impact is unevenly experienced.

One of the central consequences of such displacement is the erosion of established identities. In pre-migration contexts, identity is largely determined by fixed social markers such as caste, religion, occupation, and locality. However, once aboard the *Ibis*, these markers begin to lose their rigidity. The ship functions as a liminal space, an in-between zone, where traditional hierarchies are destabilized. This process produces both anxiety and liberation. For many characters, the loss of familiar structures leads to a sense of disorientation, a hallmark of identity crisis. Yet, it also creates opportunities to renegotiate and redefine the self beyond inherited constraints.

The novel's engagement with identity can be fruitfully understood within the framework of Postcolonialism, particularly its emphasis on hybridity and cultural negotiation. Ghosh portrays identity not as a fixed or essential quality but as a fluid and evolving construct. The migrants abroad the Ibis gradually form new social bonds that transcend earlier divisions. The term "jahaz-bhai" (ship-brother) signifies this emergent sense of community, grounded not in traditional affiliations but in shared experiences of displacement and suffering. Such formations suggest a move towards what may be termed a collective identity shaped by historical contingency rather than inherited status.

Language plays a crucial role in representing this transformation. Ghosh's narrative is marked by a rich linguistic diversity, incorporating Bhojpuri, Bengali, Hindustani and various forms of pidgin English alongside nautical terminology. This linguistic hybridity mirrors the cultural and social intermingling of the characters. It also challenges the dominance of standard English, thereby resisting colonial linguistic hierarchies. The use of multiple dialects and registers not only enhances the realism of the narrative but also underscores the idea that identity is negotiated through language. Communication aboard the ship often requires adaptation and improvisation, reflecting the migrants' broader struggle to articulate new selves in unfamiliar contexts.

At the psychological level, forced migration engenders trauma, nostalgia and a persistent sense of loss. They experience fear, anxiety and a sense of loss. Being separated from their homes, families and familiar surroundings creates emotional pain. Many characters feel nostalgia, remembering their past lives with both affection and sadness. This emotional struggle is an important part of their past and their uncertain future, unable to fully belong to either.

The crossing of the "kala pani" or black waters adds to this psychological burden. In traditional belief, crossing the sea leads to the loss of caste and social identity. For many migrants, this is not just a physical journey but also a symbolic break from their past. They feel that they are losing an essential part of themselves, which increases their sense of confusion and insecurity. This state of being "in-between" becomes a central feature of their experience.

Despite this trauma, the novel also highlights the strength and resilience of the human spirit. As the migrants share their hardships, they begin to form new bonds of friendships help them cope with their situation and create a sense of belonging. This ship, which initially appears as

a place of suffering, gradually becomes a space where new communities are not based on caste or class but on shared experiences and mutual understanding.

The characters also show a strong ability to adapt to their new circumstances. Even though they are forced to migrate, they do not remain passive. They try to find meaning and hope in their new lives. Deeti, for instance, imagines building a new future in Mauritius, where she can live with dignity and freedom. Such examples show that identity is not completely destroyed by displacement; instead, it is reshaped and redefined over time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Sea of Poppies* provides a rich and meaningful exploration of forced migration and its impact on identity. The novel shows how displacement can break down traditional identities and create a sense of loss and confusion. At the same time, it also demonstrates how new identities can emerge through adaptation, resilience and shared experience. Amitav Ghosh presents identity as something fluid and dynamic, shaped by history, culture and human relationships. The novel ultimately suggests that even in the face of great hardship, people have the ability to rebuild their sense of self and find new ways of belonging.

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Some Morphophonemic Processes in Changtongya Jungli

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Abstract

Changtongya Jungli (CJ henceforth) is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by the natives of Changtongya village from the Ao tribe of Nagaland. It is a regional colloquial variety of the standardized Jungli (previous orthography was “Chungli”). CJ has been overlooked in linguistic studies as compared to the standard varieties of Jungli and Mongsen (Coupe (2003); Coupe (2004); Temsunungsang (2009); Bruhn (2010); Walling (2017); Aier & Koshy (2024)). The present paper addresses this dearth by providing a systematic morphophonemic analysis of the changes that can be found in comparing standard Jungli to CJ. The research utilises established frameworks on morphophonemic processes such as debuccalization, deletion and deaffrication, to situate it within established working theories in morphophonemics as also evidenced in other languages. Analysing the morphophonemic processes in CJ shows the changes are not random, but follow specific linguistic rules. The study concludes that colloquial varieties have their own systematic linguistic processes just like standardized languages. Dialectal studies such as these add value to one’s perception of “coarse” dialects while also providing many more avenues for research in fields such as historical linguistics for the Ao group of languages and Tibeto-Burman languages in general.

Keywords: Dialect Study, Changtongya Jungli, Morphophonology, Tibeto-Burman.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ao group of languages can be divided into three prominent varieties: Jungli, Mongsen and Changki (Walling: 2017) (Coupe: 2003). Some villages may have both Jungli and Mongsen speakers, some may have only Mongsen, only Changki, or only Jungli speakers, and Changtongya village is one where only Jungli speakers dwell and where CJ is spoken.

The Ao-Naga Territory is divided into Six ranges: Ongpangkong, Langpangkong, Asetkong, Changkikong (Jangpetkong), Japukong, and Tsürangkong which have a number of villages each and are situated mostly east of the Dikhu river.

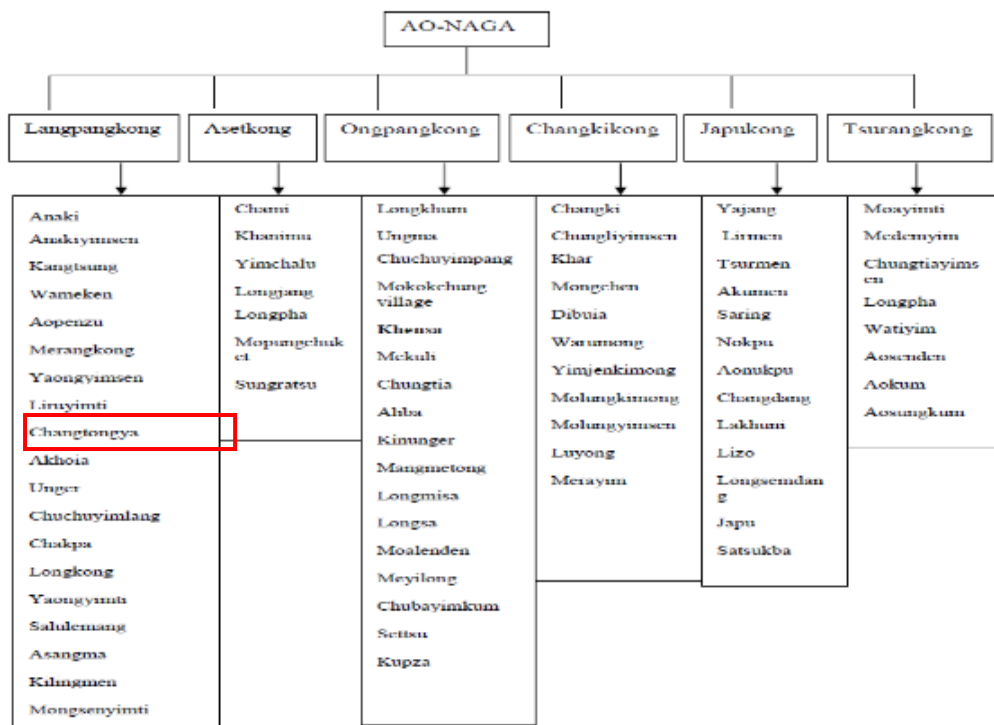


Fig 1: Classification of the various Ao varieties based on the geographical differentiation of the six ranges with Changtongya marked. Figure taken from Walling (2017)

These ranges are used as a broad marker to categorize the larger dialectal groups of the Ao language i.e. Langpangkong Jungli is quite different from Ongpangkong Jungli etc. CJ is spoken in Changtongya village which is part of the Langpangkong range and hence it is more easily understood by Jungli speakers from the Langpangkong range.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the morphophonemic processes involved in CJ so as to answer the question within what environments these changes occur.

The data from standard Jungli is primarily based on the Ao Riju’s standardized Jungli which is used for all written purposes within the Ao community. One of the main sources referred to is “Arok Osep” an ASLB (2019) (Ao Riju was previously known as ASLB or Ao Senden Literature Board) edited Jungli dictionary with phonetic transcriptions. The CJ data is from the author’s own repertoire as he is a native of Changtongya, along with inputs from three other

native CJ speakers: one male in his early sixties, one female in her early fifties both living in Kohima, and a third male in his forties residing in Changtongya village. Because of the lack of the written form in CJ, the data was collected by oral reproduction of the words telephonically as well as in person and transcribed accordingly.

The research relied upon a framework of previously established theories on morphophonemic processes such as debuccalization, deletion, deaffrication, and vowel harmony, to situate it within established working theories in morphophonemics as also evidenced in other languages of the world.

Comparison between CJ and Standard Jungli

Although CJ is a variant that is quite close to Standard Jungli, there are still differences between the two that are worth exploring, from phonemic, morphemic, to lexical differences.

Phonemic Difference: Quite a few researchers have worked at looking into the phonemes of standard Jungli (Temsunungsang (2009), Bruhn (2010), Coupe (2003)). We shall look at Temsunungsang and Bruhn’s analyses and compare it to the phonemic inventory of CJ. The phonemic inventory of Standard Jungli is as given below:

	<i>Bilabial</i>	<i>Dental/Alveolar</i>	<i>Palatal/Pal-Alv.</i>	<i>Velar</i>	<i>Glottal</i>
<i>Nasal stops</i>	m	n		ŋ	
<i>Oral stops</i>	p	t		k	ʔ
<i>Affricates</i>		ts	tʃ		
<i>Fricatives</i>		s, z			(h)
<i>Approximants</i>	w	l	ɹ	j	

Fig 2: Standard Jungli Consonants. Taken from Bruhn (2010)

But according to Temsunungsang [ʃ] is an allophonic variant of /s/ and occurs before the high front vowel /i/. And hence the phonemic inventory given by Temsunungsang (2009) with the allophonic variants in square brackets is as given below:

Chungli			
p	t	k	ʔ
m	n	ŋ	
s [ʃ]	z		(h) ⁸
c [ts]			
r	l		
w	j		

Fig 3: Phonemic inventory of consonants taken from Temsunungsang (2009)

The (h) sound is given in brackets in both Bruhn (2010) and Temsunungsang (2009) because they say that although /h/ is not attested in standard Jungli, it is found in several other varieties of Jungli. The /h/ phoneme seems to be mostly found in the Jungli of the Langpangkong range, amongst which CJ is also a part of.

Along with all these phonemes present in standard Jungli, in the consonant inventory of CJ, we see there exists a few other allophones are added, such as [v] allophone of [p], [ʒ] allophone of [tʃ], and [ɾ] allophone of [t], which are not part of the standard Jungli inventory, as seen in CJ words like, [tāvāŋ] ‘mouth’, [táʒáŋ] ‘seed’, and [tárʒʔ] ‘forgiveness’ which all occur in the intervocalic environment under specific conditions which will be discussed in this paper.

When it comes to vowels we see that Bruhn (2010) and Temsunungsang (2009) are in agreement, except for the fact that Temsunungsang uses [u] as an allophonic variant of /ə/. He writes that the high back spread vowel [u] occurs after the consonants [n, s, r, ts] in monosyllabic words (2009)

	<i>Front</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Back</i>
<i>High</i>	i		u
<i>Mid</i>		ə	
<i>Low</i>		a	

Fig 4: Standard Jungli Vowels, from Bruhn (2010)

Bruhn (2010) writes that the only tautosyllabic diphthongs that appear in Jungli are /ai, au, ui, əi/ which may just be a combination of a vowel and a glide, i.e. /aj, aw, uj, əj/. In CJ there seems to be an additional vowel the mid back rounded vowel /ɔ/.

Morphemic Difference: In Standard Jungli the nominative case morpheme is ‘-i’ as seen in sentence: Pa-i ken aten ‘He sang a song’. In CJ, the nominative morpheme is ‘-r’ as seen in the table given below:

STANDARD JUNGLI	CJ
Pa-i ken aten	Pa-r ken aten
He-NOM song sing.PST	He-NOM song sing.PST
‘He sang a song’	‘He sang a song’

Table 1: Morphemic difference between Standard Jungli and CJ

Lexical difference: CJ exhibits lexical differences from Standard Jungli such that some lexical words are not necessarily found in Standard Jungli or are different in Standard Jungli, as compared to CJ. Some of these lexical differences between Standard Jungli and Changtongya Jungli are given in the table below:

CJ	POS	Meaning	Standard Jungli
[azúapái]	Adverb	Not so/Not	[másə]
[àli:míla]	Adjective	Too much/ A lot	[tālī:]
[à:kətsà:]	Noun	One who doesn’t know how to work	[à:ŋkū mā:t[ũŋ]
[kúŋá:ɾà:]	Adjective	Huge	[túlù]
[áŋsókílóp]	Adjective	Short-tempered	[mí:t mā:t[ũŋ]
[húŋàʔ]	Conjunction	Even so (or) But	[sā:káʔ]
[məsúməjətsə]	Adjective	Terrible	[kəŋā mā:t[ũŋ]
[áʔʃəŋ]	Verb	Wake up (Imperative)	[səkāŋ]
[ŋáʔũ]	Adjective	Useless	[tāmáfi]
[álámázóm]	Adjective	Incomparable	[mēmētēmdəŋtət]
[ʃjūtəp]	Verb	become acquainted with	[mētētəp]

Table 2: Lexical differences between CJ and Standard Jungli

All these differences point towards the need for a more in-depth study into the varieties of Jungli such as the present CJ to understand the Jungli language better and also to see the trajectory of language change over geographical differences.

3. MORPHOPHONEMIC PROCESSES IN CHANGTONGYA-JUNGLI

Morphophonemics (also known as Morphophonology) “is the branch of linguistics that deals with the phonological representation of morphemes.” (Turin, 2019: 64). In a morphophonemic analysis of a language, we look at variations as something systematic so as to help make “phonological patterns simpler and more general, e.g. with simpler phonotactics and more general principles of realization” (Basbøll, 2015: 831). The present paper strives for such a systematic simplification of the phonological patterns in CJ.

4.1 DEBUCCALIZATION:

“Debuccalization is any sound change or synchronic alternation that turns an oral consonant into a laryngeal consonant ([h], [ɦ], or [ʔ])” (O’Brien: 3). We will look at this process in CJ in relation to the Standard Jungli phonemes /s/ and /k/.

Alveolar Fricative to Glottal Fricative: /s/ to /h/

The glottal fricative /h/ is a sound that is not present in Standard Jungli as attested by Temsunungsang (2009) who writes that although /h/ is not attested in the Standard Jungli, it is attested in many Jungli variants, out of which CJ is one. In this type of Debuccalization, the sound produced as /s/ in Standard Jungli is produced as /h/ in CJ, as seen in the table below:

STANDARD JUNGLI	CJ	GLOSS
[séntúŋ]	[héntó]	‘program’
[āsónùk]	[āhōnóʔ]	‘us’
[sénsàkèr]	[hénhàr]	‘poor’
[nīsūŋ]	[nīhō]	‘human’
[tāsājúr]	[tāhājúr]	‘teacher’
[ásèjùŋà]	[hújà]	‘but’
[sénfɪ]	[hónfɪ]	‘disperse’

Table 3: Debuccalization of /s/ to /h/ in CJ

But this does not mean that /s/ always debuccalizes into /h/ in every phonetic environment of CJ. As seen above, Debuccalization of /s/ to /h/ only happens in the word initial and word medial positions as a word cannot end with an /s/ in Jungli. Additionally, it also cannot occur in the environments below:

STANDARD JUNGLI	PRESUMED CJ	ACTUAL CJ	GLOSS
[sū]	*[hū]	[sū]	‘hay’
[súsət]	*[húhət]	[súhət]	‘die by hanging’

Table 4: Exceptions to /s/ debuccalization

The Debuccalization of /s/ to /h/ seems not to occur in the environments above because of the presence of the high-back vowel /u/. But in a word like [nīsūŋ] ‘person’, the debuccalization occurs (as seen in Table 3) because the vowel /u/ does not remain the same in CJ, it becomes a /ɔ/, which allows the debuccalization to take place hence we get [nīhō̃].

An interesting phenomenon that can be seen in the debuccalization of /s/ is that the rule for debuccalization applies first and only then does the rule for deletion apply if there is any sound that the language needs deleted.

STANDARD JUNGLI	RULE APPLICATION	CJ	GLOSS
[ásəjùŋàʔ]	Rule 1 Debuccalization□	[áhəjùŋàʔ]	‘even so’
	Rule 2 [a, ə, j] Vowel and Glide Deletion□	[húŋàʔ]	‘even so’
	Final Realization□	[húŋàʔ]	‘even so’

Table 5: Rule application for debuccalization and deletion

Therefore, we see in this example that even though /u/ is supposed to prohibit the /s/ from debuccalization into /h/, it is not the original sound that was present, there was a /ə/ which allowed the /s/ to /h/ debuccalization and only after that it was deleted.

Up to now, we have only been looking at debuccalization of /s/ to /h/ as a purely phonological process. But we will also look at it as a morphophonemic process, i.e. to see if debuccalization still takes place beyond the morpheme boundary.

MORPHEME	STANDARD JUNGLI BASE	STANDARD JUNGLI	CJ EQUIVALENT
[mə]	[sāʃī]	[mōsāʃī]	[māhāʃī]

‘NEG’	‘fierce’	‘not fierce’	‘not fierce’
[mə]	[sájú]	[məsájú]	[māhājù]
‘NEG’	‘show’	‘not show’	‘not show’
[mə]	[səmtāŋ]	[məsəmtāŋ]	[məhəmtā̃]
‘NEG’	‘visit’	‘not visit’	‘not visit’
[mə]	[səŋfɪ]	[məsəŋfɪ]	[məhəŋfɪ]
‘NEG’	‘disperse’	‘not disperse’	‘not disperse’
[mə]	[səktàŋ]	[məsəktàŋ]	[māhāɾā̃]
‘NEG’	‘break into half’	‘not break into half’	‘not break into half’

Table 6: /s/ debuccalization as a morphophonemic process

Velar Stop to Glottal Stop: /k/ to /ʔ/

Another type of debuccalization that we see in CJ is the /k/ to glottal stop /ʔ/ change from Standard Jungli to CJ. Some instances of this happening can be seen in the example words given below:

STANDARD JUNGLI	CJ	GLOSS
[tánək]	[tánəʔ]	‘soft’
[āsənək]	[āhənəʔ]	‘us’
[párnək]	[párnəʔ]	‘them’
[tátúk]	[tátəʔ]	‘forgiveness’
[ínjàk]	[ínjáʔ]	‘do’
[tátsək]	[tátsəʔ]	‘hot’
[tónək]	[tónəʔ]	‘eye’
[ʃítúk]	[ʃítəʔ]	‘wash’
[ápúk]	[ávəʔ]	‘burst’

Table 7: /k/ debuccalization in CJ

This process occurs only in the coda/word-final position, because we will see that when /k/ appears elsewhere, such as in onset positions, it does not debuccalize, as seen below:

STANDARD JUNGLI	PRESUMED CJ	ACTUAL CJ	GLOSS

[kùŋkī]	*[ʔùŋkī] *[ʔùŋʔī] *[kùŋʔī]	[kùŋkī]	‘Piano’ OR A musical instrument
[kūrāŋ]	*[ʔūrāŋ]	[kūrã]	‘hat/cap’
[kúsà]	*[ʔúhà]	[kúhá]	‘break’
[kəm]	*[ʔəm]	[kəm]	‘year’

Table 8: Environments where /k/ debuccalization cannot occur

In Temsunungsang (2009), we see him talking about a similar change of the velar stop into the glottal stop in another variety of Jungli spoken in Ungma village:

STANDARD JUNGLI	UNGMA VARIETY	GLOSS
[ámàk]	[ámàʔ]	‘attack’
[ákúk]	[ákóʔ]	‘win’

Table 9: /k/ to /ʔ/ debuccalization in Ungma Jungli

4.2 DELETION

Now when we look at /k/ to /ʔ/ debuccalization from a morphophonemic lens, we see something interesting, i.e. deletion happening which is quite similar to the coda-K deletion as also seen in Kurtöp (Hyslop, 2014: 49) another Tibeto-Burman language. What makes this interesting is that the debuccalization seems to be happening first for the deletion to take place, meaning that when a morpheme is added to a word ending in a debuccalized glottal stop, it no longer appears in the word final position, and since we know that the /k/ debuccalization only occurs in the word final position, this glottal stop is deleted to adhere to CJ’s phonotactics. This process is in line with the debuccalization and deletion rule application sequence as discussed in Table 5 of /s/ to /h/ debuccalization. The process is illustrated below:

STANDARD JUNGLI	RULE APPLICATION	CJ	GLOSS
[ínjàk]	RULE 1: Debuccalization □	[ínjáʔ]	‘do’
[ínjàk] + [əɾ] [ínjàkəɾ]	RULE 2: Deletion □	[ínjáʔ] + [əɾ] *[ínjáʔəɾ] □ [ínjàɾ]	‘do’ + PROG

[ínjàkə̀r]	Final Realization□	[ínjàr]	‘do’ + PROG
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Table 10: Rule application of /k/ to /ʔ/ Debuccalization and deletion

4.3 DEAFFRICATION:

Deaffrication is a phonological process where an affricate changes into a Fricative, i.e. it loses its stop feature. Kiparsky (1968: 197- 198) writes the rule for deaffrication as such:

$$\text{DEAFFRICATION: } \left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{voiced} \\ - \text{grave} \\ + \text{strident} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow [+ \text{continuant}] \quad \begin{array}{l} d\check{z} \rightarrow \check{z} \\ dz \rightarrow z \end{array}$$

Although this data is for Polish, one can extend it to CJ as well where /tʃ/ loses its stop feature and /ʃ/ becomes voiced to /ʒ/ perhaps for easier coarticulation with the vowel sounds before and after the affricate.

STANDARD JUNGLI	CJ	GLOSS
[ātʃāŋ]	[āʒā̃]	‘cross’
[tótʃáŋ]	[tótʒá̃]	‘seed’
[àtʃəm]	[àʒəm]	‘needle’
[ātʃəm]	[āʒəm]	‘drink’
[átʃùk]	[áʒóʔ]	‘walking stick’
[mìtʃàŋ]	[mìʒā̃]	‘charcoal’
[tótʃák]	[tótʒáʔ]	‘face’
[tātʃũŋ]	[tāʒō̃]	‘good’
[tátʃák]	[táʒáʔ]	‘deaf’
[ātʃəm]	[āʒəm]	‘step on’

Table 11: Deaffrication of /tʃ/ in CJ

One thing we can notice about the above examples is that the deaffrication takes place only when the affricate occurs in the intervocalic position in the word medial position. Otherwise, it does not take place.

STANDARD JUNGLI	PRESUMED CJ	ACTUAL CJ	GLOSS
[tʃāŋtʃā]	*[ʒāŋʒā]	[tʃāŋtʃā]	‘clear’

Table 12: Deaffrication only happens in the intervocalic/word medial position

When we add a morpheme to this same word so as to provide the intervocalic environment, we see that the deaffrication process takes place. This is illustrated below with the word [tʃãŋtʃã] as well as other similar words.

MORPHEME AFFIX	STANDARD JUNGLI BASE	STANDARD JUNGLI	CJ EQUIVALENT
[mə]- NEG	[tʃãŋtʃã] ‘clear’	[mãtʃãŋtʃã] ‘not clear’	[mãzãŋtʃã] ‘not clear’
[mə]- NEG	[tʃãnáʔ] ‘dirty’	[mãtʃãnáʔ] ‘not dirty’	[mãzãnáʔ] ‘not dirty’
[mə]- NEG	[tʃãʃĩ] ‘sad’	[mãtʃãʃĩ] ‘not sad’	[mãzãʃĩ] ‘not sad’
[mə]- NEG	[tʃúktàn] ‘jump’	[mãtʃúktàn] ‘not jump’	[mãzõtán] ‘not jump’
[mə]- NEG	[tʃõmpĩ] ‘speak’	[mãtʃõmpĩ] ‘not speak’	[mãzõmpĩ] ‘not speak’
[mə]- NEG	[tʃákrèp] ‘shatter’	[mãtʃákrèp] ‘not shatter’	[mãzárèp] ‘not shatter’

Table 13: Deaffrication in CJ as a morphophonemic process

We see therefore that deaffrication is not merely a phonological process but a morphophonemic one. It should be noted that the affricate /tʃ/ does not occur in the word final/coda position so we are unable to check the effects of a suffix morpheme on the phonology.

Now, even though we have seen that deaffrication occurs in the intervocalic position, it is to be noted that it does not occur in all intervocalic positions. The presence of the high front vowel /i/ seems to be blocking the deaffrication /tʃ/ to /z/ from taking place, as can be seen in the examples given in the table below. The example of [ĩtʃĩp] specifically is of interest because it shows that even in borrowed words, if the phonological conditions are not met then the change does not take place.

STANDARD JUNGLI	PRESUMED CJ EQUIVALENT	ACTUAL CJ EQUIVALENT	GLOSS
[mītʃī]	*[mīzī]	[mītʃī]	‘because of’
[tītʃírà]	*[tīzírà]	[tītʃírà]	‘sharp’
[təpāŋmátʃi]	*[tāvāŋmízí]	[tāvāŋmítʃi]	‘lips’
[tʃītʃī]	*[tʃízí]	[tʃītʃī]	‘true’
[itʃíp]	*[ízíp]	[itʃíp]	‘Egypt’

Table 14: Deaffrication being blocked by /i/

4. DISCUSSION

When we try to understand the morphophonemic processes and the consequent phonological changes that take place, we see that it is more often than not the phonetic environment that influences the change, with certain phonemes like /i/ or /u/ blocking the morphophonemic process from taking place.

For this paper, we began by asking why these certain morphophonemic processes occur in CJ (and not in standard Jungli). Proponents of Lexical diffusion opine that phonological changes in a language occur over time and “gradually extends its scope of operation to a larger and larger portion of the lexicon, until all relevant items have been transformed by the process. A phonological innovation may turn out to be ultimately regular, i.e. to affect all relevant lexical items, given the time to complete its course.” (Chen & Wang, 1975: 256) Building upon this theory we also look at works (Halle & Keyser, 1967) that discuss gradual sound change being only through socio-geographical means in that change passes from person to person, from one social category/locality into another (102-103). Bringing both these studies together, we can perhaps postulate the morphophonemic changes in CJ being a socio-geographical change over time. The geographical location of Changtongya being separated from Molungkimong (The Molungkimong variety being the basis of standard Jungli) due to internal migration over a few centuries, we can assume that the phonological rules that constrained standard Jungli “peters out toward the end of its life span, or is thwarted by another rule competing for the same lexemes.” (Chen & Wang, 1975: 256) This “another rule” would mean the rules/constraints acting upon Changtongya Jungli. Evidence in support of the geographical distance changing the sounds in CJ can be seen in the neighbouring villages of Changtongya, namely Yaongyimsen, Akhoya etc. having very similar morphophonemic patterns in their speech to that of CJ. They are similar to the point that most Ao speakers aren’t able to tell the

speech of these villages apart from CJ speech, other than the speakers from these villages. Although it is to be noted that these are only preliminary attempts at trying to understand these sound changes.

5. CONCLUSION:

We summarize our findings of the various morphophonemic processes in CJ in the table given below:

MORPHOPHONEMIC PROCESS	PHONOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT	EXCEPTIONS
Debuccalization: i) /s/ to /h/ ii) /k/ to /ʔ/	i) Before vowels ii) In the word final/Coda-position	Does not occur before /u/ and diphthongs.
Deaffrication: /tʃ/ to /ʒ/	Whenever /tʃ/ is in the intervocalic position.	Does not occur between two high front vowels *i_i
Deletion	Debuccalized Coda-ʔ is deleted in the word medial position, i.e. whenever a morpheme is added to a root ending in /ʔ/	

Table 15: Morphophonemic processes in CJ

ABBREVIATIONS:

FUT: Future Tense

NEG: Negation

NOM: Nominalizer

PLU: Plural marker

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**Symbolic Animals and Cultural Cognition: Selective Trait Symbolization in
Tamil Animal Metaphors**

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Abstract

Animal metaphors are among the most enduring and cognitively productive resources of human language. Despite considerable scholarship in conceptual metaphor theory, Tamil has remained comparatively understudied with respect to its rich figurative tradition. The present article investigates Tamil animal metaphors through an interdisciplinary framework integrating cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, folklore studies, and cultural semiotics. The central theoretical contribution of the study is the concept of selective trait symbolization—the cognitive and cultural process through which specific animal characteristics are isolated from broader zoological identity and generalized into symbolic models for interpreting human behaviour, emotion, and social relations. Complementary concepts introduced include symbolic zoology, perceptual salience, and narrative stabilization. Drawing on data from Tamil proverbs, colloquial speech, oral discourse, and folk narratives, the analysis examines three major symbolic domains: sensory metaphorization (e.g., *kalugu pārvai*, "eagle vision"), behavioural symbolization (e.g., *kuraṅgu sēṭṭai*, "monkey mischief"; *narittaṅam*, "fox-like cunningness"), and moral-emotional symbolization (e.g., *mudalai kaṅṅīr*, "crocodile tears");

pasuttōl pōrttiya puli, "a tiger disguised in cowhide"). The findings demonstrate that metaphorical animality is fundamentally a cultural construct shaped by perceptual salience, ecological familiarity, narrative repetition, and ideological valuation rather than by zoological representation. Implications for cross-cultural metaphor theory and the cognitive linguistics of understudied languages are discussed.

Keywords: animal metaphor; Tamil; conceptual metaphor theory; selective trait symbolization; cultural cognition; symbolic zoology; narrative stabilization; Dravidian linguistics

1. Introduction

Animal metaphors constitute one of the most enduring and cognitively productive features of human language. Across cultures, speakers routinely invoke animals to conceptualize human behaviour, emotion, morality, intelligence, and social identity. Expressions such as *sly as a fox*, *wolf in sheep's clothing*, or *crocodile tears* illustrate how animal imagery functions not merely as ornamental rhetoric but as a condensed system of cultural cognition through which societies interpret and evaluate human experience. Within contemporary cognitive linguistics, metaphor is no longer regarded as a peripheral literary device; rather, it is understood as a fundamental mechanism of conceptual organization whereby abstract domains are structured through more concrete and experientially accessible source domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Kövecses, 2010). Animal metaphors occupy a particularly significant position within this framework because they emerge at the intersection of embodied perception, ecological familiarity, folklore, and collective social memory.

Although metaphor studies have expanded substantially over the last four decades, scholarly attention has concentrated predominantly on Indo-European and East Asian languages, especially English, Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic (Deignan, 2003; Kövecses, 2005; Yu, 1998). Comparatively little research has examined metaphor formation in Dravidian languages, particularly Tamil, despite Tamil's extensive literary antiquity, rich oral traditions, and highly elaborated figurative culture. Existing studies involving Tamil animal expressions have largely remained descriptive, lexicographical, or folkloristic in orientation, focusing primarily on proverb collection or semantic documentation rather than on the cognitive and cultural mechanisms underlying metaphorical selection. Consequently, fundamental explanatory questions remain insufficiently explored: Why do particular animals become

symbolically productive within Tamil discourse? How are specific behavioural, sensory, or emotional traits abstracted from animals and mapped onto human social life? Through what cultural processes do these symbolic meanings acquire semantic stability across generations?

The present study addresses these questions through an investigation of animal metaphors in Tamil discourse from the perspective of *selective trait symbolization* and cultural cognition. The study argues that animal metaphors do not emerge through total representation of animals as biological entities. Rather, metaphor formation operates through the selective abstraction of culturally salient traits—such as cunningness, vigilance, gentleness, deception, conformity, or restlessness—which are subsequently generalized into symbolic models for interpreting human behaviour and social relations. The metaphorical fox is not a zoological fox in its entirety, nor is the symbolic monkey reducible to biological primate behaviour. Instead, specific perceptually or narratively intensified traits become cognitively isolated and culturally stabilized within discourse.

The study further proposes that animal metaphors participate in broader systems of cultural cognition. Human societies do not merely observe animals; they culturally reconstruct them into symbolic categories that function as cognitive shortcuts for social interpretation. Through repeated circulation in folktales, proverbs, oral narratives, ritual discourse, and everyday speech, certain animals gradually acquire stable symbolic personalities. The fox becomes the embodiment of cunning intelligence, the sheep symbolizes conformity, the crocodile signifies emotional hypocrisy, and the cow represents harmless gentleness. These symbolic identities persist not because of zoological precision but because they remain culturally memorable, emotionally resonant, and socially functional.

The present analysis situates Tamil animal metaphors within a broader cognitive-cultural framework integrating conceptual metaphor theory, ethnolinguistics, folklore studies, and discourse analysis. Particular attention is given to the role of perceptual salience, ecological embeddedness, and narrative stabilization in the production and preservation of metaphorical meanings. Rather than merely cataloguing metaphorical expressions, the study seeks to explain the mechanisms through which metaphorical animality becomes culturally intelligible and semantically durable.

The study is guided by four research questions:

- (1) Which sensory, behavioural, emotional, and moral traits are selectively foregrounded in Tamil animal metaphors?

- (2) What cognitive and cultural mechanisms explain the metaphorical productivity of specific animals within Tamil discourse?
- (3) How do folklore, oral tradition, and narrative repetition contribute to the stabilization of symbolic animal identities?
- (4) In what ways do animal metaphors function as instruments of social cognition and moral evaluation?

To address these questions, the study adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodology grounded in cognitive linguistics and ethnolinguistic analysis. Data are drawn from Tamil proverbs, colloquial speech, oral discourse, folk narratives, and culturally stabilized idiomatic expressions.

The article contributes to contemporary metaphor research in three significant ways. First, it extends cognitive linguistic approaches to an understudied Dravidian language context. Second, it proposes selective trait symbolization as an explanatory mechanism for metaphorical selection. Third, it demonstrates that metaphorical animality is fundamentally a cultural and cognitive construct shaped by narrative memory, ecological familiarity, and social interpretation rather than by zoological representation alone.

2. Theoretical Framework

The present study examines Tamil animal metaphors through an interdisciplinary theoretical framework integrating cognitive linguistics, cultural cognition, ethnolinguistics, folklore studies, and semiotic analysis. While conceptual metaphor theory provides the foundational insight that metaphor structures human cognition, the present analysis argues that animal metaphor formation cannot be adequately explained through source–target mapping alone. The symbolic productivity of particular animals emerges through a more complex interaction involving perceptual salience, ecological familiarity, cultural valuation, narrative repetition, and social applicability. Accordingly, the study advances four interconnected theoretical concepts: (1) selective trait symbolization, (2) symbolic zoology, (3) perceptual salience, and (4) narrative stabilization.

2.1 Metaphor as Cultural Cognition

Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) established that metaphor is not merely linguistic ornamentation but a cognitive mechanism through which abstract experience becomes intelligible. Human beings routinely conceptualize emotion, morality, intelligence,

social hierarchy, and interpersonal relations through more concrete experiential domains. Animal metaphors exemplify this process by transforming zoological perception into symbolic social interpretation.

However, metaphorical cognition is never entirely universal or culturally neutral. Sharifian (2011) argues that metaphorical meanings emerge within *cultural conceptualizations* shared by communities rather than existing solely as individual cognitive structures. Animal metaphors therefore function simultaneously as cognitive mappings and as culturally stabilized symbolic models (see also Croft & Cruse, 2004; Kövecses, 2015; Sharifian, 2017). Within Tamil discourse, expressions such as *narittaṇam* ('fox-like cunningness'), *kuraṅgu sēṭṭai* ('monkey mischief'), and *mudalai kaṇṇīr* ('crocodile tears') do not merely describe observable animal traits; they classify human conduct within culturally intelligible moral frameworks.

2.2 Selective Trait Symbolization

The central theoretical concept proposed in the present study is *selective trait symbolization*. This refers to the cognitive and cultural process through which specific animal traits are isolated from broader zoological existence and subsequently generalized into metaphorical models for interpreting human behaviour, emotion, and social relations. Selective trait symbolization operates through four interrelated processes: perceptual identification, cultural amplification, narrative circulation, and metaphorical stabilization. The resulting metaphorical animal is therefore not a biological organism in its entirety but a culturally compressed symbolic construct.

2.3 Symbolic Zoology

The study introduces the concept of *symbolic zoology* to distinguish between biological animals and their culturally reconstructed metaphorical counterparts. Within symbolic zoology, animals cease to function merely as biological entities and instead become carriers of moral, emotional, ideological, and behavioural symbolism. The notion draws partially upon Lévi-Strauss's (1963) observation that animals are "good to think with" and upon Barthes's (1972) theory of myth, which shows how metaphorical animal meanings often acquire the appearance of natural truth through repeated cultural circulation. Importantly, symbolic zoology does not require scientific accuracy: many metaphorical animal associations persist despite contradictory zoological evidence.

2.4 Perceptual Salience and Embodied Experience

Certain animals become metaphorically productive because they generate vivid sensory or emotional impressions within human experience. This principle aligns with cognitive linguistic theories emphasizing embodiment and experiential cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Perceptual salience operates across visual, auditory, behavioural, tactile, and emotional domains. However, perceptual salience alone is insufficient for metaphorical stabilization: animals become symbolically powerful when perceptual vividness combines with cultural circulation and interpretive utility.

2.5 Narrative Stabilization

Narrative stabilization refers to the process through which metaphorical meanings survive via long-term narrative circulation rather than solely through direct ecological observation. Ong's (1982) work on orality demonstrates that oral cultures preserve knowledge through repetition and formulaic structures; animal metaphors benefit significantly from such repetition. Narrative stabilization involves three major stages: repeated symbolic association, collective mnemonic reinforcement, and semantic naturalization. Over time, metaphorical meanings become detached from their original narrative contexts and circulate as stable cultural categories (Trim, 2011).

3. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and cognitively oriented methodology. Because the study is concerned not merely with lexical meaning but with symbolic abstraction, cultural cognition, and metaphorical stabilization, a purely quantitative approach would be insufficient for capturing the layered social and semiotic dimensions of the data. The analysis combines methods from cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, discourse analysis, folklore studies, and interpretive semiotics.

3.1 Data Sources

Data were collected from multiple interrelated sources: Tamil proverbs and proverbial expressions; colloquial spoken Tamil; oral discourse and conversational usage; folk narratives and storytelling traditions; idiomatic expressions in everyday communication; literary and semi-literary cultural references; and political and social commentary. The study prioritizes culturally stabilized expressions that are widely intelligible within Tamil-speaking communities.

3.2 Data Classification

For analytical clarity, collected animal metaphors were classified into three broad symbolic categories. Sensory trait symbolization encompasses metaphors emphasizing perceptual capacities such as vision, hearing, and tactile experience. Behavioural trait symbolization covers metaphors derived from movement patterns, social behaviour, and behavioural tendencies. Moral and emotional symbolization includes metaphors involving emotional authenticity, ethical evaluation, and concealed aggression. Although analytically distinguished, these categories frequently overlap, and the classification functions as a heuristic framework rather than a rigid taxonomy.

3.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded through four stages: (1) identification of animal metaphors from collected discourse materials grouped according to recurrent symbolic patterns; (2) trait isolation identifying the culturally foregrounded characteristic; (3) cultural interpretation examining moral evaluation, ideological implication, emotional resonance, social applicability, and ecological familiarity; and (4) examination of narrative and symbolic stabilization through folklore, repetition, and oral transmission.

3.4 Limitations

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. The study is qualitative rather than corpus-statistical and does not provide frequency-based analysis of metaphor usage across large datasets. Because the data are culturally selected rather than randomly sampled, the study prioritizes symbolic significance over representational exhaustiveness. Regional and dialectal variations within Tamil metaphor usage are not systematically examined. Nevertheless, the qualitative approach remains appropriate for the explanatory objectives of the study.

4. Behavioural Trait Symbolization

Behavioural trait symbolization constitutes one of the most productive mechanisms in Tamil animal metaphor formation. The analysis demonstrates that behavioural metaphors emerge not through complete zoological representation but through selective behavioural abstraction: particular behavioural tendencies become cognitively isolated, culturally amplified, and socially generalized, while other biological characteristics remain symbolically irrelevant. The resulting metaphorical animal functions as a condensed behavioural model embedded within collective cultural cognition.

4.1 Restlessness and Playful Disorder: *kuraṅgu sēṭṭai*

The expression *kuraṅgu sēṭṭai* ('monkey mischief') symbolizes restlessness, impulsiveness, playful disruption, and uncontrolled activity. The metaphor derives from widely observable monkey behaviour—rapid movement, climbing, imitation, object grabbing, vocal excitement, and unpredictable bodily activity—which creates strong perceptual salience because these features appear dynamic, expressive, and anthropomorphic. Within Tamil discourse, the expression applies to children behaving uncontrollably, individuals interfering unnecessarily in social situations, chaotic group activity, or playful but disruptive behaviour. The metaphor foregrounds behavioural instability while ignoring biological characteristics such as social hierarchy, grooming, or ecological adaptation, exemplifying selective trait symbolization.

4.2 Strategic Deception and Cunningness: *narittaṅam*

The expression *narittaṅam* ('fox-like cunningness') symbolizes strategic intelligence, manipulative cleverness, and deceptive calculation. The fox's stable symbolic position across numerous linguistic traditions does not emerge from objective zoological verification of superior intelligence but through long-term narrative stabilization in folktales and oral traditions. In Tamil discourse, the expression appears in contexts involving political manipulation, interpersonal deceit, hidden strategy, or socially calculated behaviour. The metaphor functions simultaneously as behavioural description and moral evaluation: tactical intelligence employed for deceptive or self-serving purposes is critiqued rather than merely named.

4.3 Persistence and Tenacious Attachment: *uṭumbu piṭi*

The expression *uṭumbu piṭi* ('monitor-lizard grip') symbolizes persistence, tenacious attachment, stubbornness, and refusal to relinquish control. The metaphor derives from the culturally perceived gripping strength of the monitor lizard. Whether this folk perception corresponds fully to zoological reality is secondary to the metaphor's symbolic effectiveness: the bodily image of strong gripping is tactilely vivid, emotionally memorable, and socially interpretable. The metaphor demonstrates how physical interaction becomes psychologically generalized; a tactile bodily action—gripping—is metaphorically transferred into social and emotional persistence.

4.4 Evasiveness and Social Slipperiness: *naḷuvura mīṇu*

The expression *naluvura mīnu* ('slippery fish') symbolizes evasiveness, unpredictability, and difficulty of social control. Unlike metaphors based primarily upon visual observation, this expression derives partly from embodied tactile experience: the fish becomes metaphorically productive because physical attempts to grasp it often result in escape or instability. Within Tamil discourse, the metaphor commonly refers to individuals who avoid accountability, evade direct response, manipulate situations indirectly, or resist social containment. The expression contains implicit social criticism: behavioural unpredictability becomes morally suspect when interpreted as intentional evasion.

4.5 Conformity and Collective Passivity: *semmari āṭṭu kūṭṭam*

The expression *semmari āṭṭu kūṭṭam* ('sheep herd mentality') symbolizes blind conformity, passive following, and absence of independent judgment, deriving from collective herd movement. The metaphor functions primarily as ideological and social criticism: individuals or groups are symbolically downgraded through comparison with herd animals because the expression implicitly valorizes independent thought and individual agency. The metaphor reveals the ideological dimension of behavioural symbolization: animal metaphors frequently participate in cultural systems valuing autonomy and strategic agency while criticizing passive social submission.

5. Sensory Trait Symbolization

Sensory trait symbolization constitutes another major mechanism in Tamil animal metaphor formation. The analysis demonstrates that sensory metaphors emerge through selective abstraction of a single perceptual quality from the broader biological identity of the animal. Animals associated with striking sensory capacities—whether real, exaggerated, or folklorically imagined—become symbolically productive within discourse.

5.1 Visual Sharpness and Perceptual Vigilance: *kaḷugu pārvai*

The expression *kaḷugu pārvai* ('eagle vision') symbolizes exceptional visual acuity, heightened attentiveness, and perceptual precision. The eagle becomes metaphorically productive because of its culturally perceived visual superiority: elevated flight, distant observation, and predatory targeting create a powerful sensory image of perceptual mastery. The metaphor may apply to teachers identifying errors quickly, political observers recognizing hidden motives, investigators noticing overlooked evidence, or individuals demonstrating unusual attentiveness. The expression foregrounds vision selectively while ignoring other

zoological features such as predatory aggression or territoriality, and reflects broader cultural valuation of vigilance and foresight as markers of intelligence and authority.

5.2 Selective Hearing and Strategic Inattention: *pāmbu kātu*

The expression *pāmbu kātu* ('snake ears') frequently carries ironic or critical connotations, referring to selective hearing, deliberate inattention, or strategic refusal to respond. The expression appears zoologically paradoxical because snakes do not possess externally visible ears and are not conventionally associated with auditory superiority. Metaphorical effectiveness here depends not upon scientific precision but upon cultural dramatization: the snake's broader symbolic identity within South Asian cultural imagination—stealth, silence, unpredictability, concealed presence—allows it to become a symbolic model for strategic social non-responsiveness. The metaphor reveals that perception itself becomes morally evaluable: selective hearing is interpreted not as neutral sensory limitation but as socially strategic behaviour.

5.3 Auditory Aesthetics: Crow–Cuckoo Contrasts

Tamil discourse contains sensory metaphors involving sound quality and vocal aesthetics. The proverbial contrast expressed in *kākkāyā katturā? kuyilā kūvurā?* ('Is it cawing like a crow or singing like a cuckoo?') illustrates the process. The crow symbolizes harshness and discordant expression, whereas the cuckoo symbolizes sweetness and melodic beauty. Through this opposition, vocal sound becomes metaphorically transformed into a framework for evaluating human speech, communicative refinement, and social aesthetic judgment. Pleasant speech suggests emotional refinement and interpersonal grace, while discordant expression may symbolize aggression or social insensitivity.

5.4 Tactility and Embodied Sensory Experience

Certain Tamil animal metaphors derive not from visual or auditory perception but from tactile interaction, supporting cognitive linguistic theories emphasizing embodiment (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The slippery fish and the monitor-lizard grip demonstrate how physical contact becomes generalized into social cognition. Tactility therefore functions not merely as physical sensation but as a foundation for symbolic cognition, with the suggestion that tactile metaphors frequently possess strong emotional immediacy because they derive from direct bodily experience.

6. Moral and Emotional Symbolization

Moral and emotional symbolization constitutes a third major domain in Tamil animal metaphor formation. Unlike behavioural metaphors that primarily classify action patterns, and sensory metaphors that foreground perceptual capacities, moral-emotional metaphors evaluate ethical disposition, emotional authenticity, interpersonal trustworthiness, and concealed intention. These metaphors are among the most ideologically charged forms of symbolic animality.

6.1 Emotional Hypocrisy and Feigned Sorrow: *mudalai kaṇṇīr*

The expression *mudalai kaṇṇīr* ('crocodile tears') symbolizes insincere emotional display, feigned sympathy, and manipulative expressions of grief. The symbolic power derives from the dramatic opposition between outward emotional display and concealed predatory intention. The crocodile becomes metaphorically productive not because of scientifically verified emotional behaviour but because cultural imagination constructs the animal as simultaneously tearful and dangerous. Within Tamil discourse the metaphor frequently appears in contexts involving political performance, strategic public sympathy, interpersonal manipulation, or institutional hypocrisy. The expression functions as moral accusation rather than neutral description: to describe someone's emotion as crocodile tears is to delegitimize the authenticity of that emotional expression.

6.2 Gentleness and Harmless Moral Disposition: *guṇattil pasu*

The expression *guṇattil pasu* ('cow-like gentleness') symbolizes harmlessness, patience, softness of temperament, and moral innocence. The symbolic cow derives much of its metaphorical force from South Asian religious and cultural traditions in which cattle occupy a morally elevated position associated with nurturing, non-violence, and maternal care. However, the analysis indicates that this expression may also carry latent ambivalence depending upon social context: excessive gentleness can imply passivity, vulnerability, or inability to defend one's interests effectively. In competitive or hierarchical situations, cow-like harmlessness may be interpreted as social weakness rather than moral strength. This ambivalence demonstrates that moral-emotional metaphors are rarely semantically fixed in purely positive or negative terms.

6.3 Concealed Aggression and Moral Disguise: *pasuttōl pōrttiya puli*

The expression *pasuttōl pōrttiya puli* ('a tiger disguised in cowhide') represents one of the most complex forms of moral metaphorization in the data. The metaphor symbolizes concealed aggression, hidden predatory intention, and deceptive moral presentation, combining

two contrasting symbolic animals: the cow (representing gentleness and innocence) and the tiger (representing aggression, power, and predatory dominance). This symbolic opposition generates moral tension between appearance and reality. The metaphor frequently appears in contexts involving political deception, manipulative leadership, interpersonal betrayal, or concealed social aggression, and demonstrates the combinatory capacity of symbolic zoology: multiple symbolic animals may interact within a single metaphorical structure, producing layered moral interpretation through contrastive symbolism.

6.4 Contrastive Organization and Emotional Authenticity

A recurring pattern across Tamil moral-emotional metaphors is contrastive organization. Symbolic meaning frequently emerges through opposition rather than isolated attribution—sincerity versus deception, gentleness versus aggression, innocence versus manipulation. This contrastive structure intensifies symbolic clarity and suggests that Tamil moral cognition frequently operates through symbolic binaries. Additionally, several moral-emotional metaphors specifically target discrepancies between inner emotional state and outward performance, reflecting broader social concerns involving trust, interpersonal reliability, public morality, and emotional sincerity.

7. Narrative Stabilization and Cultural Memory

One of the most significant findings of the present study is that animal metaphors do not emerge solely through direct observation of animal behaviour. Metaphorical meanings acquire durability and cultural authority through long-term narrative circulation. Folktales, proverbs, oral storytelling, ritual discourse, literary traditions, and everyday conversation repeatedly reproduce symbolic animal identities until those identities become semantically naturalized within collective social cognition.

7.1 Folklore and the Production of Symbolic Animals

Folklore constitutes one of the primary mechanisms through which symbolic animal identities are culturally produced and transmitted. Tamil oral traditions contain numerous examples: folktales, village narratives, children's stories, and proverbial discourse repeatedly associate particular animals with culturally intensified traits. These symbolic identities emerge not through scientific observation but through narrative simplification and symbolic repetition. Folklore selectively exaggerates certain behavioural or emotional characteristics while suppressing others in order to produce culturally intelligible symbolic types. The symbolic

animal differs fundamentally from the zoological animal: the metaphorical fox is not a biologically complete mammal but a narratively stabilized embodiment of strategic deception.

7.2 Repetition, Naturalization, and Cultural Memory

Narrative stabilization depends fundamentally upon repetition. Symbolic meanings become culturally authoritative when they recur consistently across multiple discourse contexts and generations. Repeated exposure gradually produces semantic naturalization: speakers cease to perceive symbolic meaning as interpretively constructed and instead experience it as self-evident cultural knowledge. Cultural memory—socially distributed and repeatedly reinforced through ritual, discourse, performance, and institutional repetition—plays a particularly important role in preserving moral and emotional metaphors. Animal metaphors therefore function not merely as linguistic artefacts but as mnemonic instruments through which cultures preserve social knowledge and moral interpretation.

7.3 Ecological Familiarity and Narrative Availability

Although narrative stabilization allows symbolic meanings to survive independently of direct ecological experience, the initial emergence of metaphorical productivity remains closely tied to ecological familiarity. Animals occupying visible positions within everyday environmental life—historically, cattle, snakes, monkeys, goats, fish, crows, eagles, and predatory animals within Tamil agrarian and village environments—are more likely to become narratively available and metaphorically productive because their behaviour is culturally recognizable and perceptually memorable. The findings suggest that ecological intimacy and narrative circulation operate together: direct sensory familiarity increases narrative reproducibility, while narrative repetition preserves symbolic meaning beyond immediate ecological experience (Fill & Penz, 2018).

7.4 Cultural Truth versus Zoological Truth

A significant implication of narrative stabilization concerns the distinction between zoological truth and cultural truth. Many metaphorical animal identities persist despite lacking scientific accuracy: crocodiles do not literally cry from emotional hypocrisy; sheep are not inherently incapable of independent thought; snakes are not uniquely associated with selective hearing. Yet these associations remain culturally persuasive because narrative authority often outweighs empirical zoological precision within systems of social cognition. This process aligns with Barthes's (1972) theory of myth: culturally constructed meanings become

naturalized through ideological repetition, and the symbolic animal therefore belongs primarily to the domain of cultural truth rather than scientific representation.

8. Discussion

The present study investigated Tamil animal metaphors through the interconnected concepts of selective trait symbolization, symbolic zoology, perceptual salience, and narrative stabilization. The findings reveal that Tamil animal metaphors function as highly compressed systems of cultural cognition through which societies interpret behaviour, evaluate morality, classify emotion, and organize social understanding. Metaphorical animals are not merely decorative linguistic devices but culturally stabilized symbolic constructs embedded within narrative memory, ecological experience, and collective interpretation.

8.1 Selective Symbolic Abstractions

One central finding is that metaphorical animality operates through selective symbolic abstraction rather than total representational transfer. The symbolic productivity of an animal depends not upon complete behavioural correspondence but upon culturally intensified trait selection satisfying several conditions simultaneously: perceptual vividness, emotional memorability, ecological familiarity, narrative reproducibility, and ideological usefulness. Animal metaphors therefore reflect organized systems of symbolic prioritization rather than arbitrary linguistic convention.

8.2 Embodied Cognition and Cultural Mediation

The findings align strongly with cognitive linguistic theories emphasizing embodiment (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980): human beings conceptualize abstract social phenomena through bodily experience and perceptual engagement with ecological surroundings. At the same time, the analysis extends embodiment theory by emphasizing the mediating role of cultural cognition—sensory experience becomes metaphorically productive through collective interpretation rather than through bodily perception alone. Perceptual salience is a necessary but not sufficient condition for metaphorical productivity.

8.3 Animal Metaphors as Social Cognition and Ideological Regulation

Across all symbolic categories, the findings consistently demonstrate that animal metaphors function as mechanisms of social cognition, enabling speakers to evaluate behaviour, classify morality, interpret emotion, encode ideology, and negotiate social relationships. Through compact symbolic forms, complex social judgments become rapidly

communicable. Animal metaphors also participate in ideological regulation: certain traits become culturally valorized (vigilance, independence, sincerity, strategic intelligence, emotional restraint) while others become symbolically downgraded (conformity, impulsiveness, deception, excessive passivity, emotional performance) (Charteris-Black, 2004).

8.4 Implications for Metaphor Theory

The present study contributes to metaphor research in several important ways. First, it extends cognitive linguistic approaches into a relatively understudied Dravidian language context. Second, it shifts analytical emphasis from descriptive cataloguing toward explanatory mechanisms. Third, the concepts of selective trait symbolization and symbolic zoology provide analytical tools applicable beyond Tamil to other metaphorical systems involving plants, objects, natural phenomena, or social archetypes. Finally, the findings demonstrate that metaphor cannot be understood purely as linguistic mapping: metaphorical systems emerge through interaction among embodiment, ecology, narrative repetition, collective memory, ideology, and cultural cognition.

8.5 Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study focuses primarily on culturally stabilized metaphors rather than highly creative metaphorical innovation, and the interpretive rather than corpus-statistical approach does not provide frequency-based analysis. Regional and dialectal variations within Tamil metaphor usage, caste-based usage patterns, gender differences, and generational shifts in metaphor interpretation are not systematically examined. Future research may extend the present framework through comparative cross-linguistic analysis, corpus-based metaphor studies, ecological linguistics, computational metaphor analysis, multimodal metaphor analysis (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009), discourse studies, and ethnographic approaches—particularly investigation into how animal metaphors evolve under conditions of urbanization, media transformation, and changing ecological relationships.

9. Conclusion

The present article has examined Tamil animal metaphors through an integrated cognitive-cultural framework, proposing selective trait symbolization as an explanatory mechanism for understanding metaphorical productivity in a Dravidian language context. The analysis demonstrates that animal metaphors emerge through culturally organized processes in which selectively foregrounded sensory, behavioural, emotional, and moral traits are

symbolically abstracted and mapped onto human social experience. The metaphorical animals inhabiting Tamil discourse are not zoological entities transferred unchanged into language but culturally reconstructed symbolic beings shaped by centuries of perception, storytelling, emotional valuation, and collective cognition.

Narrative stabilization and ecological familiarity work in concert to produce symbolic animal identities that persist across generations even as direct ecological interaction diminishes. The resulting symbolic zoology—a semiotic rather than biological system of animal meaning—provides speakers with highly economical cognitive tools for interpreting morality, emotion, behaviour, and social order. Understanding these mechanisms enriches metaphor theory by foregrounding the inseparability of language, ecology, folklore, and cultural memory in the constitution of meaning.

To study animal metaphors is consequently to study how human communities symbolically interpret themselves through the imaginative reconstruction of the natural world.

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Rural-to-Urban Migration and Socioeconomic Disparities in Kamala Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice*

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Abstract

This paper explores Kamala Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice* as a profound literary examination of economic struggle, social transformation, and moral resilience in postcolonial India. Through the character of Ravi, the novel dramatizes the tensions between rural and urban survival, highlighting the challenges of poverty, injustice, and societal expectations. The analysis foregrounds Ravi's internal conflict and moral dilemmas, situating his journey within broader themes of migration, family obligations, and the pursuit of dignity. By tracing Ravi's evolution from desperation to self-assertion, the study underscores the complex interplay between survival instincts and ethical choices. Ultimately, Markandaya's narrative offers a nuanced critique of socioeconomic disparities and illuminates the tragic consequences of systemic inequities, while simultaneously affirming the resilience of the human spirit.

Keywords: Kamala Markandaya, *A Handful of Rice*, Poverty and resilience, Rural-to-urban migration, Socioeconomic disparities, Postcolonial Indian literature

Introduction

Kamala Markandaya occupies a significant place in postcolonial Indian literature, renowned for her sensitive portrayals of social realities and the struggles of marginalized communities. Her novel *A Handful of Rice* (1966) presents a compelling narrative of economic hardship, rural-to-urban migration, and the moral dilemmas faced by individuals navigating systemic inequities. Through the character of Ravi, Markandaya dramatizes the precarious balance between survival instincts and ethical choices, situating personal struggles within broader socioeconomic transformations in India.

While existing scholarship has examined Markandaya's engagement with poverty and resilience, much of the critical discourse has focused on her earlier works such as *Nectar in a Sieve*. Comparatively, *A Handful of Rice* has received less sustained attention, despite its nuanced exploration of urban survival and the psychological toll of poverty. This paper seeks

to address this gap by analysing the novel's depiction of Ravi's journey as emblematic of the underprivileged class's pursuit of dignity amid structural injustice.

The objective of this study is to highlight how Markandaya intertwines themes of economic struggle, social transformation, and moral resilience to critique socioeconomic disparities in postcolonial India. By foregrounding Ravi's internal conflict and tragic trajectory, the paper underscores the novel's relevance to contemporary debates on migration, inequality, and ethical agency. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of Markandaya's literary vision and her enduring commentary on the human condition.

Literary Review

Kamala Markandaya has been widely recognized as one of the foremost voices in postcolonial Indian literature, particularly for her exploration of poverty, resilience, and the struggles of marginalized communities. Her debut novel *Nectar in a Sieve* has received extensive scholarly attention for its portrayal of rural hardship and female endurance. Critics such as Meenakshi Mukherjee have emphasized Markandaya's ability to blend social realism with humanistic concerns, situating her works within the broader tradition of Indian English fiction.

In contrast, *A Handful of Rice* has attracted comparatively less critical engagement, though scholars note its unique focus on urban survival and the psychological toll of poverty. Studies by literary commentators highlight the novel's thematic concern with migration, family obligations, and the moral dilemmas faced by the underprivileged. The symbolism of rice, often interpreted as both sustenance and struggle, has been discussed as central to the narrative's critique of socioeconomic disparities.

This review suggests that while Markandaya's earlier works have dominated critical discourse, *A Handful of Rice* deserves greater scholarly attention for its nuanced portrayal of urban poverty and ethical conflict. By foregrounding Ravi's journey, the novel extends Markandaya's literary vision beyond rural settings, offering a broader commentary on the complexities of survival in postcolonial India

*A Handful of Rice*¹ (1966), Kamala Markandaya's fifth novel, not only projects tangible economic problems but also the obscure intractability invading the characters' inner landscapes and wrecking them in all respects. The author does not fail to accentuate the unpalatable

¹ Kamala Markandaya, *A Handful of Rice* (New Delhi: Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd., 1966) All the subsequent references quoted with page numbers in parentheses are to this edition.

universal truth that rectitude does not always pave the way to prosperity. What is pictured here is the Indian society in transition from a rural to an urban set-up. While the place where the protagonist, Ravishankar (abbreviated as Ravi) has spent his early life is not mentioned, the locale of his confrontation with the rich and his emergence as a changed man is specified as in *Possession* and *The Nowhere Man*.

A Handful of Rice is predicated on the economics of survival in an urban society. It is comparable to *Nectar in a Sieve* which centres on rural economics. The focus is on the attempt of Nalini to redeem her errant husband, Ravi, which brings out her extraordinary endurance and capacity for love and it makes for her self-actualisation. These two novels run parallel to each other but with a slight difference as K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar points out

If the outer theme of *Nectar in a Sieve* was rural economics, of the theme *A Handful of Rice* is urban economics. Juxtaposing this novel with Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*. Prema Nandakumar remarks that Ravi runs alongside the Christian wife, Frank Alpine of *The Assistant*. Both Ravi and the Waif, who is portrayed as a fan-favourite antagonist in the Game of Thrones series, are initially determined to commit crimes; however, they unexpectedly surrender themselves and undergo moral transformation after winning the love of Nalini and the Jewish owner's daughter, respectively. The protagonists of these two novels fail to escape the tantrums of their mothers-in-law and have to struggle against dire poverty.

Although the author does not champion the cause of the proletariat overtly as Mulk Raj Anand does in his *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, she undoubtedly brings out the indigence and poverty that devour the very vitals of the rural India. Nor does *A Handful of Rice* deal with the East-West encounter which happens to be a predominant theme in her early novels but it focuses on the conflict between the haves and the have-nots without failing 'to towards awaken the polite society to the real problems' which the indolent and fatalistic rural populace has been hitherto indifferent. This sense of purpose with which she writes 'endows her novels with a certain representative character that marks them out as a significant entity in the Indo-Anglian fiction way as all her other novels, *A Handful of Rice* draws however, in the same the 'aesthetic validity from the interlocked polarities of religion and science, possession and empiricism and transcendentalism. renunciation, the extremity of poverty compels Ravi to go out of the village, leaving behind his aged peasant-father, in search of better means of livelihood as Murugan of *Nectar in a Sieve* goes to the town. "The idea, merely mentioned in the first novel is enlarged and given a full-scale elaboration in the latter." But Ravi, like Murugan, does not alienate himself from his kith and kin. Having been hungry for days on end, Ravi's primary aim is to

have a handful of rice by hook or by crook. The drama of struggle for survival starts when Ravi attempts to break open a tailor's house (Apu's). Driven by the devil of hunger, Ravi takes to this extreme modus operandi throw asking moral principles to winds. Ravi is disillusioned the evil of poverty that he is eager to escape from, seems to be haunting him even in the city. He is convinced that unless he rises against this devouring menace, he will be nowhere and in no circumstance does he want to compromise with the situation. Ravi's resolve, despite his resorting to violence, suggests his wanting to keep his head above the water although what he has to reckon with is a deluge. Ravi escapes from the pursuing constable and lands at the doorstep of Apu, the tailor. His intense hunger urges Ravi to threaten the inmates, brushing aside their warning. Apu offers him food hoping that the intruder will quit.

'Go away, the voice said. The heaving subsided. Furious mounted strongly in him again. He angers his face close to the grating. thrust

'Listen, ' he said, 'I'm hungry, I want a meal. You let me in, do you hear? I'll give you one minute.

'Go away.' The voice quavered – either an old man or a weak man, a man without men behind him.

He stretched his hands up to the grills and grasped the cross-bar, triumphantly, sweetly conscious of his strength

'One minute, ' he said, 'then I'm coming in and it'll be the worse for you.'

Silence. He tightened his grip and wrenched, and the bar broke, spattering grit on him.

"You, see?"

'All right, all right, I'm coming.' The voice mumbled nervously (pp.6-7).

Ravi's unbearable hunger and the quivering voice of Apu encourage him to take control of the situation. Had Ravi been diffident or hesitant, he would have been driven away from the place. His courage, though boorish, high- lights Ravi's awareness of his inbuilt strength to assert himself and achieve his goal. His reaction to the opposition posed by Apu and the success he attains, encourage him to assert himself in the future.

He felt commanding, conscious of dominion: this was what they felt like, the people who said 'Hey, you!', who gave orders and expected you to jump to it, who had money, who had power, who did the pushing around. Well, tonight he would do the pushing

Notwithstanding the relief he gets, Ravi is reluctant to quit the place as it is evident that the inmate is weak and old. However, he is not without apprehension that the police may be alerted covertly. Yet, he curls himself up to sleep giving a warning to Apu 'with concentrated ferocity' (p.8). By now Ravi has weighed his potentiality and is resolved not to give in.

Apu's advice and his wife's indignant reaction ['Behaving like that' (p.12) and a 'decent boy like you!' (p.12)] makes Ravi remorseful. Being homeless and under- educated for a city job, Ravi feels forlorn, before he is befriended by Damodar, a riffraff who introduces Ravi to the nefarious underground activities that fetch huge profits. Ravi familiarises himself with the city life and hopes for a better future and such an approach Bespeaks Ravi's eagerness to establish himself in the city.

Despite being aggressive, Ravi is not without a sympathetic disposition which makes Ravi to make amends. He goes to Apu's house to replace the damaged grill and it is then by the quirk of fate as it were, Ravi happens to see Nalini, Apu's younger daughter. Nalini's charming face compels Ravi to contrive a plan to meet and win her. Ironically, Ravi chooses Nalini though he has quarrelled with her mother. But he is intent upon meeting Nalini, like other young men getting 'to know young girls, within the approving, carefully conducted circle of mutual friends and family relationships' (p.25) and not with any belittlement to himself. Emulating other young men, Ravi too has joined the exodus to the city as the village has little to offer, only to find the city to be no better, 'but it held out before them like an incandescent carrot the hope that one day, someday, there would be something' (pp.25-26). The elementary education he has acquired is found to be of no advantage 'to compete against the gaunt, shabby-genteel young graduates hung around the streets' (p.27) without jobs while it who has deprived him of 'the ability to work with his hands except in an amateur capacity' (p.27). In fact, Ravi is one such young man who decries fatalism and 'has the initiative to fight for proper place in society'. Ravi uses his knowledge of English and the vernacular coupled with dexterity of hand, quickness of mind and sharpness of eye to fight against the insults to which the rich subject the poor. Finding 'man traps every- where' (p.31) and life to be perilous in every respect, Ravi agrees to be with Damodar, the city lout's accomplice to establish himself in the city and fight boldly with whatever weapons one had. Or go under! (p.198). This attitude in Ravi establishes a typical disposition of a self-actualisers in 'allowing scoundrels to impose on them for a while, 'Now that Ravi has decided to stay in the city, he walks boldly to Apu's doorstep with a roll of cloth procured after going through certain hazards. It is a passport that gains him the first step, which,

if rejected, will result in an irretrievable loss sealing his future. This is a clear proof of Ravi's eagerness to prevail upon others:

Ravi is determined to serve Apu to impress him and consolidate his position. The gradual softening of Jayamma and Apu's affability gives him the confidence to enter the trade. Ravi had felt himself being thoughtfully studied, as if the old man was considering whether to absorb him into the busy hive of his industry (p.33). Ravi's self-confidence improves and he discovers that Apu the 'shrivelled up non-entity, whom he had seen by night cowering and cringing before him' (p.33) is the hub of activity in that house. He realises that "where a man's strength and courage alone gave him mastery ... live by jungle law, and then see who survived!! (p.33) and it helps Ravi to achieve self-actualisation. As time passes Ravi's respect for Apu grows for he is the father of Nalini for whom he is prepared to sacrifice everything and cleanse his life.

On that particular morning when Ravi comes seeking some work, an altercation takes place between Ravi and Varma. Ravi's prompt rejoinder is illustrative of his assertiveness: 'Well if it isn't our friend Ravi again,' said Varma facetiously, propping up the wall as usual. 'At least, he said 'I don't get paid for doing nothing.' "What do you mean?' Varma's voice was haughty, that of a householder with entrenched rights addressing a disfranchised quitter. 'I mean I'm not a parasite,' said Ravi explicitly. 'Something of a leech though, aren't you?' Varma was annoyed, but not unduly perturbed. And why should he be, thought Ravi; as a relative his security was established, no family would boot a relative into the street. 'I shall know soon enough if I am, ' for me to be re-joined. 'When it's time go -- I'll go ' (p.35). Although there is no one to hear 'this prickly exchange (p.35), Apu comes to know of it and defends Ravi. True to the relief and belief of Ravi, Apu invites the lad to accompany him on his business visits and Rat obeys unhesitatingly not to lose the opportunity but rite to the occasion. Although Apu is reticent throughout their peregrination, he suddenly enquires of the youngster he still indulged in hooliganism. Ravi is apologetic for the past incident and assures him of turning a new leaf while accepting the apprenticeship under Apu who is confident of Ravi's success having observed the lad's alacrity. 'I'm willing.' Despite the Ravi managed to sound fervently grateful, come-down, as indeed he would have been but for higher expectations. 'More than willing. Any time you say. Anything you want me to do, I'll do. " 'I've noticed that. I've been watching you. I don't like doing things in a hurry, you know, but I'm getting old begins to feel very much alone when helps him gain confidence one is old ' (p.38). when one Apu is dissatisfied with his household as there is no one who is willing to carry on his trade. But Ravi agrees to do so and joins Apu's ménage with the single objective of coming close to Nalini. Ravi's regular visits to

Apu's workshop and his preparedness to be at his beck and call helps him gain work up his way confidence of Jayamma. On one Occasion he offers 'Kola' to Jayamma and Nalini hoping that he will be able to go alone with Nalini to the shop. 'If one goes to the stall, ' he ventured; 'one can drink it really cold. Ice-cold.' Fulling. Of that's riff-raff pushing and 'They hang around there all day long, good- the trouble, said Jayamma. show-for-nothings.' No, no! at this time of day,' he said Ravi earnestly. 'Not seeing her gall case amended hastily, crowded of course, but just now it's quite 'Later it gets empty. " How far is it?! 'Five minutes. Not that.' 'Too far for me in this roiling sun.' Jayamma took up her palmyra-leaf fan and waved it languidly in front of her perspire- face. 'You take the girl ' (p.41). The point is that Ravi's boldness has paid off. Weeks pass during which their being allowed to do such things as visiting a cinema, literally reduces the distance between Ravi and Nalini, though she is chaperoned by Jayamma. On a later occasion Jayamma's invitation to Ravi's so called well-to-do aunt is taken (and rightly too) as a hint for Jayamma's wish 'for a closer relationship' (p.48). Having no mediator to propose 'his claims' (p.48) and impelled by his sixth sense Ravi writes to his father Nalini. making a clear breast of his intentions to marry Elated by his son's plans of settling down in life, without going wayward and estranging himself like hit brothers, Ravi's father, Ram arrives. Gloating over the lad's chances of becoming prosperous, and being satisfied with the status and standing of Apu's family and Nalini's eligibility to become his son's wife, alliance is finalised and the marriage on summated. In this context Ravi's initiative signals his resourceful- ness. It exemplifies Ravi's self-actualising trait. Now that Ravi is the son-in-law of the house, Varma, Pattana and Thangam, Apu's eldest daughter treat him as their equal which elevation, however, does not last long. Even the meagre comforts provided to Ravi immediately after the marriage are withdrawn and he has to sleep on the mat like the other members of the family. Touched to the quick and having experienced comforts for ten days, Ravi resolves to make life comfortable for him and Nalini. Although Damodar has enlightened him on several practical aspects of life, he prefers not to think of him and his heady ways, to keep up the 'present stance of regained respectability' (p.66). Even Jayamma's dismissed as accolade, which would have been otherwise a scant remark, is accepted wholeheartedly. 'I knew you were a decent boy,' she 'right from the begin- said meaningly, you know ' (p.66).

Ravi's helping hand and his resolve to work his way up encourage Apu to accept even small contracts, which have hitherto been turned down, and help him to prosper. Although the routine of stitching and tacking is found to be tedious and monotonous, Apu's encouragement strengthens Ravi's steadfastness. 'You like it better than you thought you would, ' Apu remarked

drily one day. 'Didn't think much of being a tailor you oh yes, I could tell from the did uppity airs you gave yourself' (p.67). Ravi's youthful enthusiasm and his awareness of the exploitation of the poor by the rich, determine the price at which the garments made by him and Apu are sold. He is stunned to see the exorbitant prices charged and fabulous profits made by the sellers while they do no work. Apu's reaction to this is dispiriting to Ravi who refuses to believe that 'such a state was unalterable' (p.69): of course, they Apu took it calmly. get. get twenty times what people like us people like That's because they're not us. What sort are they then, devils? Gods?' ' Different, that's all.' like them 'Then the sooner we become the better.' 'Just you try, my lad. Just try and see How far you get!! 'But twenty times as much! Ravi felt like shrieking. The fact stuck in his gullet like an outsize stone, yet here was this old fool apparently able to swallow it whole. 'It is wrong, ' he cried. 'Maybe, but that's the way it is.' "Then the sooner it's changed the better ' (p.69). (Italics mine) Bracing himself, he feels emboldened to tackle the situation and remembers Damodar's remark about letting himself cowed down by shapeless doubts. Disgust reigns high in Ravi and to get over the stress resulting from the altercation with Apu, Ravi goes out wandering aimlessly. To his consternation and relief, he meets Damodar who pays for their drinks. Damodar's bursting wallet makes Ravi feel apologetic that they had been too good too long in a rotten world' (p.71). His passions simmer. His wallet was fat with ten-rupee notes, he must have had two or three hundred rupees on him. Ravi tried not to be envious, it was wrong to be envious of friends: yet he could not help calculating how long it would take him to earn as much (p.71). Ravi has to alter his opinion about Damodar and wonders why he considered him a fool. Has under-rated and Damodar's remarks that Ravi should give up his 'beggar mentality first' (p.73) if he wants to warn, goes into his head. Nalini's protestations that Ravi is aiming at impossible things and not being contented with what they have stirs Ravi's emotions only to embolden him further and not to give in. 'You've been corrupted, ' go into all these big houses, see all these she said. 'Your things, it gives you impossible ideas.! 'They're not impossible ideas.' 'They are. How can people like us ever e like them?' 'They're not made of different clay are they? There's nothing lays down they should always have the best and trample over us and do us down, and we should always come off worst?! 'They're different class, that's all,' she said with a catch in her voice that like should have warned him. 'Ordinary folk us can never be like them. Oh yes, we can. ' 'We can't.' "We can, if we stop thinking like stupid water-buffaloes (pp. 75-76). (Italics mine) Apu's treatment of Ravi has changed for the better Ravi, and Varma and Pattana look at him respectfully. The who's been sharpened by sensitivities have does not fail to flick-knives of city living' (p.78)

does not fail to notice this change. Apu hands over more work to Ravi while frequently rests in his room. Ravi attains a great deal of skill in the art of stitching and authoritatively gives instructions to his assistant. The tenor in the workroom builds up Apu's confidence. Rising to the occasion Ravi puts his heart and soul into his work to make it better. It exemplifies Ravi's attempt to self-actualise. He accepts his new responsibility unflinchingly: Ravi never neglected his work, however much he talked, and that was the important thing. Industrious worker, good husband; Apu felt he had not been far wrong in his estimate of Ravi (p.80), In the light of Ravi's willingness and readiness to persevere, Apu plays down his 'last peccadillo' (p.80) and his verbal retaliation over the price of a jacket. He considers them to be the folly of a young man and of passing nature. Apu has assessed that Ravi is capable of managing. the business and takes Ravi frequently with him to his patrons' big houses into which he has gained entry because of his sartorial skill. Ravi is no longer the made to wait in the verandas but is taken into interior apartments -- bedrooms and dressing rooms and is introduced to the memsahibs as his son-in-law with ... one day he a compliment 'He is doing very well too will step into my shoes' (p.83) and is thrust to the fore to be seen by the lady of the house to be patronised in the future. A shelter less and aimless weather-cock like Ravi attains a standing and leads a settled life, however humble it may be, which is indicative of Ravi's awareness of his potentialities to rise in life. Ravi's aim to have a shelter of his own, to be at peace with Nalini takes shape when he makes a small and cosy room over the kitchen. This desire of Ravi is typical of a self-actualiser who yearn "for a kind of psycho- logical intimacy and psychological proximity and of being fully known to each other."9 Jayamma's protest is suit- ably snubbed citing Varma and Pattana, the two idlers who lead a comfortable life although they hardly exert themselves. 'Then it's high time the others did,' he said. Healthy young men like them ought to out work, not sitting around idling and dicing ... ' (p.88). With the enhancement of Ravi's wages as intended by Apu, Ravi contributes to the general pool of the housekeeping money which is commensurate with the size of his family. When Ravi goes out with a handful of half-finished garments to complete them, he walks to Damodar's palatial house so that he can rest there in the marble paved court-yard and attend to his work. He feels humbled in Damodar's presence and at the sight of his riches. Damodar remarks that possessions like his are not difficult to acquire but that one has to make effort and take risks.

" You think that's dream." Damodar an impossible sneered. "You tell you, what you've got is would. I brain. You can't think big. You've scraped together what you call a reasonable living and you cling to that rather than go for something bigger in case you lose the lot. The lot

did I say? It's precious little, and that you hang on to like death ' (p.115), However casual Damodar's comment might have been, it has impressed avid. His misgiving that he may lose his respectability is dispelled by Damodar. *Respectable? Dishonest?! Damodar laughed softly. ""What a peasant you are! Tell me those people up in the posh houses you and your old man go to, are they respectable?' 'Of course, they are said Ravi. "They've become respectable, said Damodar. "That's what money does for are you. And honest: do you think they honest?! (p.116) of Although Ravi shrinks at the ill-gotten wealth Damodar, he elects to see him later with 'a sour and self-critical fretfulness' (p.118) rising in him. He intents upon exercising his ability when called for. His pressing responsibilities compel him to work earnestly as he takes Apu's place and urges his fellow workers to go on with the task unmindful of their resentment. When Ravi witnesses the indifference of the placid couple at the beach towards the imploring beggar-woman and the stoical unwillingness to part with money culminating in the peon hurting her with the walking stick, his belligerence wells up which is an affirmation of Ravi's ability to self-actualise. 'They're not different clay, are they, to be treated like dogs?' (p.135) Apu's indisposition creates uncertainty in the household with the work dragging. Ravi feels demoralised as the entire responsibility falls on him. Nalini's belief that their livelihood lies in the hands of God angers him. 'No, " he said sharply, is not in God's hands, that has been said since I was so high and I am sick to death of hearing it. It is in our hands, our hands (p.145). A sense of euphoria sets in with the recovery of Apu who goes on his business visits accompanied by Ravi although a part of his body has become paralysed. Disagreement over the price paid by the customers propels Ravi to denounce the sorry state of affairs which only highlights Ravi's proclivity to be assertive and not to be submissive and submitting. know, but why against their own people? I should they act after all aren't they ?! mean we are "Who knows?' Apu shrugged. Perhaps it's because they're the class, same – same money, different countries even coming from makes no difference compared to that. It's the sameness makes them stick together.' We stuck together and demanded decent money began Ravi (p.153). (Italics mine) Ravi's diligence is impressive and Apu presents him as his successor 'without whose help his, Apu's skill would be as nothing' (p.154). City life sharpens Ravi's faculties and when Apu and the memsahib haggle over the price he 'understood it perfectly too ... and he found it less absorbing' (p.160) because Apu gives in as usual and Ravi has his way. son-in-law of Apu Puttanna, the good-for-nothing purloins the life's savings, as it were, of Apu and leaves the house with the booty. The unfortunate incident make Apu flare up: 'Fed. you, sheltered you ... forgave your follies, asked for no return ... ' (p.176). Ravi. despises the old man for clinging to

the obsolete beliefs and unlike Apu resolves not to 'go under because of his sponging relatives' (p.176). Marriage had painted a few streaks of respectability on his back, perniciously consumes revived the old values him, so that he once gains lauded superiority of work over loafing: the but he would not go back on what the soundings and observations of his life had taught him, would never give up the new values he had deliberately built up for himself for the old, patently useless values bequeathed him by his father's generation (p.177). Apu dies and Ravi carries on his business and the unfeeling disposition of the lady whose garments Ravi delivers belatedly due to Apu's demise makes him indignant. A smouldering anger rose in him against the rich uncaring inmates of homes they had served cheaply and well year after year, turning away so casually now, Bitches, he thought, nothing mattered could in their eyes, not death itself importance of a dress being match the ready on time (p.184). Again the lady's inhuman interrogation revolts him: Ravi was aghast. Work? How could he? Did this woman realise how they lived? The duties and ceremonies they fell upon the head of the house? In her community did they simply carry straight on after death as if for suddenly - she must have been blind, nothing had happened. As he thought, less than human, more fool he to have imagined otherwise. 'It was not sudden, ' he said, with a coldness to match her own, pulverizing the prudent image of Apu that formed in his mind. * MY father-in-law dying on his feet for several had been (p.184). (Italics mine) months the insults hurled at the poor by the wealthy as though they had no feeling are agonising to Ravi and he is compelled to come to terms with Damodar's ways 'rejoicing that the rich had been tricked to the advantage of the poor' (p.190). in this predicament he recounts his silent pledge to his wife to denounce his old ways and be worthy of her' (p.199). But this promise is diluted and not worth considering while he repents if he has "priced himself too high' (p.199) as though there was no such a thing "as equity, the dignity of the labouring man, a price worthy of his hire?' (p.199).

Apu's death and the mounting financial burden compel Ravi to shed the old ways which Apu fostered. Puttanna and Varma having gone away Ravi gets rid of Kannan houting at him. 'Get out, ' he said distinctly. 'I'm done with feeding and keeping you or berth nothing. Thought you had a safe didn't you? Well, it's over. You can get out and stay out ' (p.205). This spontaneous outburst underscores Ravi's self-assertion while his exasperation reminds his of the words uttered by the 'power conscious memsahib's' (p.205). If he can talk in that tone it signifies that he is not crushed yet and 'the fat drops still rode high in his blood and he could still show them who was master of the household' (p.206). Ravi's resentment against the rich, his poorly paid job, his son's death and the skyrocketing prices and desertion by all – including

Nalini – leaves him with no alternative but to do Damodar's bidding. No more blocks and restraints. No more loyalties and responsibilities for he had none. Neither to the land nor to people nor to their society nor to society's betraying ramshackle codes. Only one thing: to renew the oath he had taken on the lives of his children to gain them their rights; and this time to keep it (p.231). Even to do this he is too late, but he does not want to procrastinate any further. He joins the mob which Plunders the rice godowns shouting "Rice today, rice, Rice today, rice!" (p.223) rising against injustice, corruption and exploitation rampant in the society. No more does Ravi want to accept things as they are but to Oppose injustice openly. But he fails to get even a handful of rice. This tragic incident affects him profoundly. He re-joins the mob and is frustrated to see only 'the sensuous sumptuous unthinking display of wealth for the unthinkably wealthy' (p.237). The novel begins and ends with violence and thus comes full circle. At both stages Ravi is defeated despite his attempts at being assertive. In the beginning he is cowed down by extraneous forces and in the end by his impulse -- his moral sense. But between these two incidents 'Ravi has undergone a sobering experience, an experience which teaches him to stay on the right side of conscience even when hunger is making its menacing moves. In *What A Handful of Rice* projects is self-assertion in Ravi giving him the needed courage to oppose the evil" but he is dragged away from indulging in violence to quell the all-pervading depravity because of his moral transformation. His love for Nalini plays a crucial role in his life and he is determined to be worthy of his loving and loyal wife. If she had not chastised him to be content and prevented him from going wayward only through her affection for him, Ravi would have gone beyond redemption. To Ravi, Damodar's ways appear to be the only means to acquire wealth and lead a comfortable life. But the stigma that will be tagged to the moral side of his life will deprive him of a place in the society and he may even lose Nalini. This realisation saves him from creating a hiatus between himself and Nalini by not resorting to immoral ways. Although Ravi's responses exemplify his self-actualisation, he achieves social but not economic self-fulfilment. He accepts penury rather than resort to violence to end it.

Conclusion

Kamala Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice* offers a poignant exploration of the human condition under the weight of poverty, migration, and systemic inequities. Through Ravi's journey, the novel dramatizes the fragile balance between survival and morality, revealing how economic struggle shapes personal choices and social relationships. Markandaya's narrative not only

critiques the structural disparities of postcolonial India but also underscores the resilience and dignity of individuals striving against adversity.

By situating Ravi's tragic trajectory within the broader context of rural-to-urban transformation, the novel illuminates the psychological and ethical costs of modernization. This study demonstrates that *A Handful of Rice* remains a vital text for understanding the intersections of literature, society, and ethics, offering insights that resonate with contemporary debates on inequality, migration, and human resilience. Ultimately, Markandaya's work affirms the enduring relevance of literature as a lens through which to interrogate social realities and the moral complexities of survival.

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Language Endangerment and Revitalization of the Tribal Languages: A Study of Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

The case of language endangerment world-wide is a very serious issue these days and the languages must be saved from dying. As per UNESCO's (2010) report, India is having 197 endangered languages which is the highest number of endangered languages in the world. The situation is such a grave that even official languages like Manipuri and Bodo and many tribal languages are in the list of the endangered languages of India. Further, indigenous languages like Mahali, Sidi, Karo, and Dimasa are also at the verge of extinction (Devy 2013). In this pretext, the present research paper by analyzing data from UNESCO (2010), Census (2011) and Ministry of Tribal affairs of Government of India (2019) and some other sources, tries to identify and analyze the endangerment of the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh and argues for the revitalization and preservation of the same. The study finds that tribal languages like Gondi and Korku of Madhya Pradesh are in UNESCO's (2010) list of endangered languages. Further, the decadal growth rate (pan-Indian) of the tribal languages shows lesser growth rate of the speakers of Gondi and Bhili (Census 2011). Similarly, Khandeshi, Kamar, Korwa, and Nihali have too shown decrease in their speakers and potentially they are endangered. Furthermore, the report of the Ministry of Tribal affairs of Government of India (2019), too, enlists the languages like Bhili, Gondi, and Korku of Madhya Pradesh as the endangered languages. Thus, there is a strong need for the revitalization and preservation of the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh as well as of other states so that linguistic and cultural ecology of the country could be saved.

Keywords: Language Endangerment, Language Revitalization, Language Loss, Language Death, Tribal Languages, Madhya Pradesh

Introduction

The phenomena of language decline, language decay, language loss, language extinction, and language death are collectively referred as the case of language endangerment (Tsunoda 2005). As per UNESCO's (2010) report, the reality of language endangerment is that half of the 6000 languages spoken today are on the verge of extinction. So, the situation of language endangerment is very grave and proper attention is needed all around the world to save our

languages from being endangered or from being dead. In the words of Krauss (1992, p. 5), “*out of world’s 6000 languages, Americans speak only 15% (900 languages), and the European and the Middle Eastern people speak only 4% (275 languages) of the languages of the world whereas 81% (1900 languages) of the world’s languages are being spoken in the sub-continent of Africa, Asia and in the Pacific region of the world* (Tsunoda, 2005).” Similarly, in its preamble of the document “Language Vitality and Endangerment” prepared by UNESCO’s Ad-Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Language also highlights the act of language heterogeneity by citing Bernard (1996) that approximately 97% of the global population speaks 4% of the world’s languages whereas only 3% of the global population speaks 96% of the world’s languages. The above-mentioned fact reveals how the languages of the world are unevenly distributed, which also is somehow responsible for the endangerment of the languages of the world. The phenomenon of language endangerment is not the new one. In fact, it dates back to the period of pre-colonial as well as to the post-colonial. The trace of it can be very much seen in the pre-historic as well as historic periods or times (Tsunoda, 2005) and European colonization is primarily responsible for the endangerment of the world’s languages (Hale, 1992) and the phenomenon of language loss can be seen at an alarming rate in many parts of the world around the sixteenth century (Dixon, 1991).

However, it can’t be claimed that all the languages of the world are either endangered or almost at the stage of extinction. There are various degrees of endangerment of the languages and on the basis of those degrees; the endangerment of a particular language can be decided. Based on the criteria of ‘intergenerational transmission’, UNESCO’s (2003) document on “Language Vitality and Endangerment” enlists the following degrees of language endangerment: (i) safe, (ii) unsafe, (iii) definitely endangered, (iv) severely endangered, (v) critically endangered, and (vi) extinct. Based on these degrees of language endangerment, UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Language in Danger (2010), reports that out of 6000 languages, 2473 languages spoken around the world are recognized as endangered languages. This indicates that only 57% of the languages spoken worldwide are safe while 43% are in danger. Of these endangered languages, 4% have been extinct since 1950, 10% are unsafe, 11% are certainly endangered, 9% are highly endangered, and 10% are critically endangered.

Further, UNESCO’s (2010) report on the countries having the most endangered languages, enlists India at the top with 197 endangered languages followed by other countries namely the United States of America (192), Brazil (190), Indonesia (147), China (144), Mexico (144), Australia (108), Papua New Guinea (98) and Canada (88). Thus, the condition of the language endangerment in India is really pathetic and alarming for the people of the country. The degrees of the endangerment of 197 languages are illustrated below with the help of the pie chart:

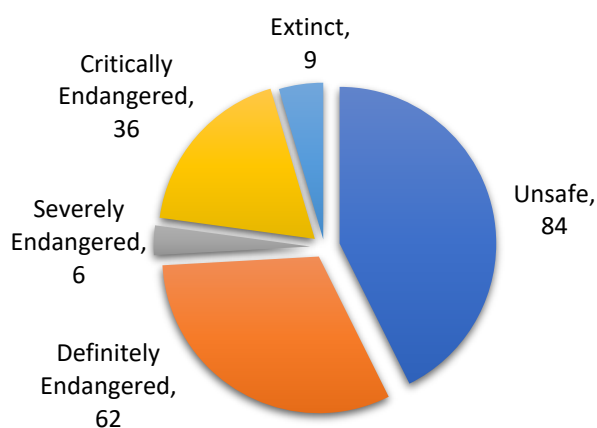


Figure 1: Degrees of Endangerment of 197 Endangered Languages of India

The most serious issue of concern is that two official languages like Manipuri and Bodo are also among 197 endangered languages of India. It's quite surprising that these two official languages are also enlisted in the 22 scheduled languages of India which get special attention from the Indian government and are also considered to be healthier than other non-scheduled or tribal languages. Even some official languages like Angami, Khasi, Ao, Chang, Khiemnungan, and Manipuri of the states have also been listed as the endangered languages of India (Sengupta, 2009). Indian government's policy is such that except 22 languages, majority of the Indian languages are without any official recognition of the states or the nation. Thus, in this pretext, the condition of the regional languages or indigenous/tribal languages can be easily presumed. The tribal or indigenous languages seriously require special attention for their revitalization. UNESCO's (2010) report also enlists tribal languages like Birhor, Asur, and Korwa to be endangered. In fact, Birhor is listed as the critically endangered language of India as it is left with only 2000 speakers. Further, the report (2013) of Peoples Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) provides an interesting data that out of 780 languages, India has lost around 250 languages (Devy, 2013). It further reports that several other indigenous languages like Mahali, Karo, Sidi and Dimasa of Eastern India, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujrat and Assam respectively are also at the verge of extinction (Devy, 2013). Thus, the issue of language endangerment is a very serious issue, and it has caused a serious threat to the human kind. In fact, with the loss of every language, we definitely lose history, culture, tradition and the past knowledge which are transferred to the future generation through using language. Thus, serious efforts must be taken to revitalize and protect endangered languages.

The topic of endangerment and revitalization of languages has been an interesting field of research for many scholars. The scholars who have significantly contributed to this field are Fishman (1991), Campbell (1994), Kapon (1995), Dixon (1997), Dorian (1981), Crystal (2000), Tsunoda (2001), Nettle and Romaine (2000), Dorian (1989b), Ladefoged (1992), Brenzinger (1992b), Krauss (1992), Whaley (1998b), Hale et al. (1992), Robins and

Uhlenbeck (1991), Matsumura (1998), Shoji and Janhunen (1997) and Sakiyama (2001). Recent works on the topic of endangered languages and revitalization of languages include the works of Sengupta (2009), Moseley (2010), Sallabank (2010), Gupta (2017), Singh (2018), Bhattacharjee (2019), Boruah (2020), Dash (2020), Immidisetti (2021), Gautam (2022), and Saxena & Kaur (2025).

Though significant amount of research on the topic of language endangerment and revitalization has been done yet the research on the endangerment and revitalization of the tribal languages of the central part of the country lacks and needs to be analyzed in detail. Therefore, the present research paper aims to investigate and discuss the linguistic situation and the status of tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh in terms of language endangerment and revitalization. It, further, tries to explore and analyze the possible causes of the language endangerment and also advocates the possible ways to revitalize the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh which may be critically endangered and at the verge of their extinction.

Linguistic Situation in Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh, the state of India, is situated in the central part of India. The state can be divided in Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern parts. The northern region of Madhya Pradesh is known as “Bundelkhand” which include the places like Gwalior, Shivpuri, Orchha Khajuraho and Panna. The western part of Madhya Pradesh includes the cities of Ujjain and Indore. The eastern part of Madhya Pradesh includes several cities like Jabalpur, Amarkantak, Balaghat, Baihar and the southern region of Madhya Pradesh covers the places like Rewa, Satna, Sidhi, Sahnol and Singrauli.

If we look at linguistic situation of Madhya Pradesh, it can be easily observed that Hindi is the official language of the state and it is widely spoken by the people of the state. Madhya Pradesh is also known as the central belt of Hindi language. Besides Hindi, Marathi is also spoken by the people of Madhya Pradesh particularly in the city of Indore. The language is spoken in this city because of the impact of the Maratha rulers who ruled this region for quite a long period. Although Hindi is widely spoken in the state but if we move from urban to rural areas of Madhya Pradesh we find many regional languages such as Bundeli, Bagheli, Malwi, and Nimari widely spoken by the people of the state. The specific regions where these regional languages are spoken are discussed below in detail:

(a) **Bundeli:** It’s spoken prominently in the area of Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh which include places like Sagar, Damoh, Gwalior, Datia, Chhatarpur, Panna and Tikamgarh.

(b) **Bagheli:** Bagheli language is spoken mainly in the area of Bhaghelkhand area of Madhya Pradesh. The regional language is spoken in Rewa, Sidhi, Satna, Umaria and Anuppur areas of the state.

(c) **Malwi:** It’s spoken in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. The Malwa region of the state includes the districts like Ratlam, Ujjain, Nimach, Mandsour, Dewas,

Indore, Sehore, Jhabua, Rajgarh, Bhopal, Neemach and and Guna and also in some areas of Hosangabad.

(d) **Nimadi:** It's the language generally spoken in the western regions of Madhya Pradesh which include the area of Khargone, Khandwa, Badwani, Nimad, Burhanpur, Harda, and southern part of Dewas.

Apart from all these regional languages, some tribal languages are also spoken by various tribes of living in different areas of Madhya Pradesh. A brief discussion on the tribes and the languages of Madhya Pradesh is provided in the next section.

Tribes and Tribal Languages of Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh is also inhabited by many tribal people, and they can be found in various parts of the state. The major tribes of Madhya Pradesh can be identified as Gond, Baiga, Bhil, Korku, Kol, and Bharia. The Gond tribe of the state is mostly inhabited in the districts of Balaghat, Chhindwara, Khandwa, Mandla, Shahdol, and Burhanpur whereas Bhil tribes are found in some areas of Jabalpur and Chhindwara districts of Madhya Pradesh. Baigra tribes live in the forest areas which include Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. So far as Korku tribe is concerned, they can be easily found in Betul, Hosangabad, Chindwara and Eastern areas of Nimad districts of Madhya Pradesh. The people of Kol tribe are inhabited in the districts of Rewa, Sidhi, Satna, Mandla, Rajgarh, and Sahdol, and Bharia tribe is mostly found in the districts of Jabalpur and Chhindwara. Most of these tribes prefer to live in remote areas which include either hilly or forest areas and they keep themselves engaged in cultivation, hunting, fishing or some small activities which are important for their livelihood. The languages spoken by the tribes are usually considered to be tribal languages. Some of the tribal languages are scheduled languages whereas some of them are non-scheduled languages, too. The languages of India which are enlisted in the eighth schedule of the Indian constitution are called as scheduled languages while those which are not enlisted are known as non-scheduled languages. As per the census of India (2011), the total numbers of scheduled languages are 22 and the non-scheduled are 99. Further, it is surprising to note that out of the 99 non-scheduled languages, majority of them belong to tribal languages except Bodo and Santhali which have been enlisted as the scheduled languages.

However, the tribal languages which are spoken by the tribes of Madhya Pradesh include the following:

(a) **Gondi:** Gondi being one of the members of Dravidian family of language is primarily spoken by the Gond tribes of Madhya Pradesh. It can be also observed being spoken in several other parts of India such as Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. This tribal language can be easily found in the Gond tribe living in the hilly areas of Satpura and Vindhyaachal regions. The total number of people speaking this language include 11,64,290 (Census of India, 2011). The district wise percentage of the people speaking the language can be seen below:

Figure 2: District wise percentage of the people speaking Gondi

(Source: Census of India, 2011)

S. No.	Districts of M.P.	Percentage of the total speakers speaking the language
1	Betul	27.69 %,
2	Dindori	14.09 %
3	Balaghat	10.55 %
4.	Mandala	10.22 %
5	Seoni	6.91 %
6	Chhindwara	5.52 %
7	Anuppur	2.23 %
8	Harda	1.76 %
9	Singrauli	1.64 %
10	Dewas	1.31 %
11	Khandwa (East Nimar)	1.24 %

(b) **Bhili:** It belongs to Indo-Aryan Family of language and is spoken by Bhil tribe living in the regions of Jhabua, Dhar and Nimar, Jabalpur and Chhindwara districts of Madhya Pradesh. The Bhili tribe also has sub-tribes which include Bhila, Barela and Pataliya and the languages spoken by them are Bhilali, Barel and Patelia. As per the census of India (2011), Madhya Pradesh has the second highest Bhili speaking people (35,87,810) after the state of Rajasthan ((35,92,208). The district wise distribution of the percentage of the people speaking the languages is as per the details given below:

S. No.	Districts of M.P.	Percentage of the total speakers speaking the language
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1	Alirajpur	89.96 %
2	Jhabua	85.26 %
3	Barwani	58.54 %
4	Khargone	24.31%
5	Dhar	15.55 %
6	Burhanpur	14.97 %
7	Ratlam	13.62 %
8	Khandwa (East Nimar)	06.08 %
9	Dewas	2.13 %

Figure 3: District wise percentage of the people speaking Bhili/Bhillodi
(Source: Census of India, 2011)

(c) **Korku:** This tribal language is the language of Korku tribe which are mostly found in the several areas of Madhya Pradesh such as Betul, Khandwa, Harda, Hosangabad and eastern areas of Nimar Districts. The language belongs to Astro-Asiatic family of Language and the total number of people speaking this language is 4,70,386 (Census of India, 2011). The district wise distribution of the percentage of the people speaking Korku as per the data given below in the table:

S. No.	Districts of M.P.	Number of the people speaking the language
1	Betul	1,75,346
2	Khandwa	1,27,198
3	Burhanpur	87,935
4	Harda	37,202
5	Chhindwara	36,538
6	Hosangabad	11,983
7	Barwani	1,568
8	Dewas	1054
9	Khrgone	346

Figure 4: District wise percentage of the people speaking Korku
(Source: Census of India, 2011)

(d) **Khandeshi:** This is found mainly found in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat but and it belongs to Indo-Aryan language family. It has been also observed in the state of Madhya Pradesh with the limited number i.e. the 2.04 % of the total population of Khandeshi speakers (Census of India, 2011). The district-wise percentage of distribution of the Khandeshi speakers can be seen in the chart given below:

S. No.	Districts of M.P.	Percentage of the total speakers speaking the language
1	Barwani	2.10 %
2	Burhanpur	0.62 %
3	Balaghat	0.22 %
4	Neemuch & Sehore	0.01 %

Figure 5: District wise percentage of the people speaking Khandeshi

(Source: Census of India, 2011)

(e) **Halabi:** This language comes in the category of non-scheduled language of India and it belongs to Indo-Aryan group of language family. As per census of India (2011), the majority of the people speaking this language are found in the region of Chhattisgarh (7,06,304) but it can be also found in the other states of India such as Odisha (31,767), Maharashtra (24,950), Gujarat (1053) and Madhya Pradesh (1985). The district-wise distribution of the people speaking the language in Madhya Pradesh are as per the details given below:

S. No.	Districts of M.P.	Total number of speakers speaking the language
1	Balaghat	795
2	Betul	740
3	Seoni	347

Figure 6: District-wise total numbers of the people speaking Halabi

(Source: Census of India, 2011)

(f) **Korwa:** It, being the member of the Astro-Asiatic language family, is prominently found being spoken in the state of Chhattisgarh. As per the Census of India (2011), 19,212 speakers of Korwa reside in Chhattisgarh whereas in Madhya Pradesh the speakers of this language are very limited in number i.e. 2,147 persons only. The speakers of this language in Madhya Pradesh are mainly found in Harda and Chhindwara districts.

(g) **Kamar:** This tribal language comes from Dravidian language family and is used particularly by the tribal communities living in the area of Rewa Districts of Madhya Pradesh. Besides, Madhya Pradesh this language is also spoken in Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Kerala.

(h) **Nihali:** This language is critically endangered language primarily spoken in Buldana district of Maharashtra and in Esat Nimar district of Madhya Pradesh, too. This language doesn't belong to any group of language family, therefore, this is known as the language isolate. Census of India (1961) reported total 3600 Nihali speakers but a study on the language by Nagaraj (2014) claims that Nihali language is only spoken by the people Buldana

district and the Nihali tribes living in East Nimar district of Madhya Pradesh no longer use Nihali language rather they use Nimadi language. Thus, the speakers of Nihali in Madhya Pradesh are very rare.

Endangerment of the Tribal Languages of Madhya Pradesh

As per UNESCO (2010) there are 197 Indian languages are endangered and out of them 81 are vulnerable, 62 are certainly endangered, 7 are severely endangered, 42 are critically endangered. Besides, there are 5 languages on the list that are already extinct. Moreover, India tops in the list of the endangered languages of the world. It is also notable that among the endangered languages of India, most of the languages are the non-scheduled languages (Immidiseti, 2011).

The tribal languages such as Gondi and Korku of Madhya Pradesh are, too, in list of endangered languages (UNESCO 2010). The Ministry of Tribal affairs of Government of India (2019), too, has declared many tribal languages to be the endangered languages of India in which the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh such as Bhili, Gondi, and Korku are in the list. Like the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh, the tribal languages of the other states are also in the category of endangered languages. Majhi, the tribal language of Sikkim; Karo, the language of Arunachal Pradesh; Dimasa, the language of Assam; and Sidi, the language of Gujarat are also facing the problem of extinction (Devy, 2013).

Moreover, the pan-Indian decline (in percentage) in the growth of the tribal language speakers can be seen from the table given below:

S. No.	Non-scheduled Languages/Tribal Languages	1971-1981	1981-1991	1991-2001	2001-2011
1.	Gondi	13.33	11.06	27.72	9.97
2.	Bhili/Bhilodi	26.30	29.79	71.97	8.67
3.	Korku	13.08	34.06	23.26	26.57
4.	Khandeshi	383.05	-19.98	113.13	-10.36
5.	Korwa	218.47	-42.83	25.84	-17.73
6.	Halabi	54.46	-0.10	11.07	29.13
7.	Kamar	----	----	----	----
8.	Nihali	----	----	----	----

Figure – 7: Decadal growth rate in percentage (pan-Indian) in the speakers of non-scheduled/tribal languages of India

(Source: Census of India, 2011)

The percentage of the decadal growth rate (pan-Indian) in terms of the speakers of the above-mentioned non-scheduled/tribal languages as provided by the Census of India (2011) reveal the that Gondi and Bhili/Bhillodi languages have lesser growth between the period of 2001-2011. The decadal growth rate of these two languages is below 10 percent and lesser than the previous decades. Next, the decadal growth rates of Korku and Halabi in between 2001-2011 are comparatively better than previous decade (1991-2001) and also better than other languages. Further, there is a grave situation for Khandeshi and Korwa languages. Their growth rates have gone in minus between the period of 2001-2011. Moreover, there is no data given on the decadal growth rate of the languages of Kamar and Nihali by the Census (2011) as the speakers of these two languages are below 10,000 because the Census of India (2011) has enlisted only those non-scheduled languages which have above 10,000 mother tongue speakers.

Thus, the data released by Census of India (2011) reveal the fact that out of these 8 tribal languages which are spoken in Madhya Pradesh as well as in other states of the country, the potential growth in their speakers can only be seen in Korku and Halabi languages. The growth in the speakers of Gondi and Bhili languages is not satisfactory as these two languages are widely spoken across the country. On the other hand, Khandeshi, Korwa, Kamar and Nihali are already showing signs of decrease in their speakers and potentially they are endangered. Based on the above fact, it can be said that the tribal languages must need attention for their revitalization and preservation before they die soon.

Thus, some of the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh are already endangered and some of them are on this way to this phenomenon. There are many factors that cause language endangerment and loss of the languages. Some possible causes that can attribute to this phenomenon have been discussed in the next section.

Possible Causes for the Endangerment of the Tribal Languages in Madhya Pradesh

A number of reasons could be assigned for the endangerment of the scheduled, non-scheduled and of the tribal languages and these may extend from internal, external, economic, political to cultural reasons. Various causes of language endangerment of the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh have been identified which include *Influence of Dominant Languages*, *Language Shifting*, *Marginalization of Minority or Indigenous Languages*, *Speakers' Negative Attitudes towards their Own Language*, and *Impact of Globalization* etc. The prominent causes have been discussed below in detail:

(i) **Influence of Dominant Language:** One of the major reasons of language endangerment of tribal languages is the dominance or influence of the powerful language like English and Hindi which are the official languages of India. Moreover, Hindi is the language that is used almost in every domain of life of the people of Madhya Pradesh and the other states. Moreover, in Madhya Pradesh, besides these two languages, several regional languages like Bundeli, Bagheli, Malvi and Nimadi are spoken. These regional languages are considered to

be prestigious languages and that pose a serious threat to the tribal languages as tribal languages lacks prestige due to spoken only in the group of people who are less in numbers. The low prestige of the tribal languages tends to discourage tribal people from using their own languages.

(ii) Language Shift: It is the second most causes of the loss or endangerment of the tribal languages in Madhya Pradesh. Language shift occurs in multilingual situation where the community moves from minority language to the majority language. Language shift occurs due to better livelihood and better job opportunities. The tribal people of the state have also shifted to the use of dominant and prevalent language like Hindi for getting their better livelihood. Sometimes for the official purposes, they are bound to learn the dominant languages. Thus, such language shift causes a great loss to the younger generations of the tribal people. They gradually adopt the dominant languages and in due course of time they forget their own native languages which are indeed the seed of their age-old culture. One of the reasons for shifting towards dominant languages is that dominant languages are associated with power, prestige and social status. The research by Khubchandani (1992) also reveals the decline in language retention by the tribal people of Madhya Pradesh. The striking feature is that though the number of tribal speakers between the period of ten years (as in the data of census 1971 & 1981) has increased from 8387 million to 11,987 million yet there is a decline of 10 % in the language retention of tribal languages (from 41 % in 1971 to 34% in 1981) because the number of speakers speaking tribal languages remains the same i.e. 3420 million in 1971 as well as in 1981.

(iii) Language Contact Situation: In fact, the language contact situation in the different areas of the state of M.P. has led to the situation of bilingualism and multilingualism among the members of the tribal language communities and they now don't speak the pure variety of their tribal languages. Moreover, situation has given rise to the mixed or hybrid varieties of languages in the tribal areas.

(iv) Marginalization of Indigenous Languages: Marginalization of languages can be also assigned as one of the prominent causes of the endangerment of tribal or some other indigenous languages. In India, it can be easily seen that out of many languages being spoken, only 22 languages have been enlisted as the scheduled languages and rest of the languages are recognized as non-scheduled languages of India. It's a fact that those languages which have been recognized as the scheduled languages get special attention of the government for language planning and any developmental activity related to languages. For example, Hindi is not only the official language of India but it also serves as the link language for regional language speakers. It is also the language of instruction and mass media in India. In Madhya Pradesh, Hindi is prominently used in schools, colleges, universities, administration and in print media. Besides Hindi, English in India, too, has got the status of the second official language and it also serves as a common link language for all non-Hindi speakers. Thus, due to such language policy of India, both Hindi and English languages being the powerful and prominent languages in the country have indirectly led to the marginalization of the tribal languages in Madhya Pradesh and in other states of India. In addition to these, the tribal

languages lack their scripts, their literature, and they also lack the huge numbers of speakers which have directly forced them towards their endangerment. Thus, many tribal languages do face extinction due to lack of proper support system from our government.

(v) Speakers' Negative Attitudes towards their Own Language: Negative attitudes of the tribal people towards their own native languages have also served as one of the deciding factors for the cause of language endangerment of tribal and many other minority languages. Due to socio-political, economic or some other reasons, tribal people shift to dominant languages and they use their own language only in some restricted domains like home or in local areas. Due to socio-economic pressure, they also tend to force their children or upcoming generations to learn and educate in the dominant languages so that they could secure their future and get better livelihood. Thus, such types of negative attitudes of the tribal people or minority class towards their own native languages cause language endangerment and loss of their own tribal languages and culture.

(vi) Modernization and Urbanization: Tribal people live in mostly the hilly or isolated areas, away from the hustle and bustle of the cities but due to modernization and urbanization such as the infrastructural developments or establishments of the industrial areas, the tribal people have been pushed away and displaced from their own homelands. Sometimes, deforestation for industrial or mining purposes also leads them to leave their places and to move to the other regional areas where they can get some livelihood. As a result, they are compelled to learn the local or regional languages and restrict their own tribal language only to their home domains.

However, the above-mentioned factors lead to the attrition or endangerment of tribal, minority or any other language but the most important factors that lead to the endangerment of tribal languages is that tribal languages are spoken mostly in home domains by the tribal people. The tribal languages in the state of Madhya Pradesh have neither been the language of education, media, and power. If we assess the status of tribal languages in terms of UNESCO's language endangerment scale, tribal languages fall in the category of '*vulnerability*'. This situation of '*vulnerability*' refers to the fact that tribal languages are gradually leading towards the phases of language endangerment. Hence, the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh do need to be revitalized and preserved otherwise the tribal languages of the state will definitely disappear in near future.

The Need for Revitalization and Preservation of the Tribal Languages of Madhya Pradesh

As the tribal people are decreasing day by day and the loss of the people is the loss of the society and their culture. We must need to protect tribal languages from being endangered and loss. The preservation of the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh as well of the other states must be achieved through the processes of language revitalization.

Language revitalization is the processes of protecting and bringing the endangered languages again to their use (Singh 2018). Many scholars have given various names to this

process which include language revival, renewal, regeneration, and reversing shifting of languages. As per Fishman (1991), the process of ‘reversing language shift’ is the process of revitalization of language shift. Further, Grenoble and Whaley (2006) view this process as to raise the numbers of the speakers and to extend the use of the language in various domains. Hinton (2011) also having the similar viewpoint regarding this phenomenon and he states that it is the process of teaching language to the speakers who don’t know or speak and also to make use of the language in various domains.

Language revitalization has been very impactful in bringing the dead languages back into lives. The examples of revitalization of Hebrew and Maori languages are well known to us. The Hebrew and Maori languages were considered as dead language but could again come into existence through the processes of revitalization. There are several ways of revitalizing the dead or endangered languages. By attempting the following processes of revitalization, we can save our minority or tribal languages which are at the verge of endangerment or extinction. Some of the processes of revitalization include (a) proper language planning, (b) education in minority or tribal languages, (c) constitutional provisions and its proper implementation for minority or tribal languages, (d) tribal peoples’ positive attitude towards their own native languages and their active involvement in preserving their languages, (e) creation of grammar, lexicon and placing the languages in the educational system and media, (g) language documentation/ archiving, and finally (h) creating awareness towards language revival through government initiatives.

Indian government, too, has several constitutional provisions for safeguarding and promoting the linguistic minority of the country. Article 29 and 244 of the Indian Constitution provides policy to safeguard ethnic and linguistic diversity. Moreover, article 347 and article 350 also provide provisions for preservations of the minority languages. In the recent past, Indian government launched a scheme called - “Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages of India” which is being monitored by CIIL, Mysore. Under this scheme, the institute protects, preserves and documents those languages which are either endangered or have less than 10,000 speakers. Further, the University Grants Commission of Government of India has also taken the steps of establishing various centers for protecting and promoting endangered languages in several central universities of the country. Besides, the implementation of NEP: 2020 by the Government of India also contributes largely to the promotion, preservation and education in mother tongue or regional languages of the country.

Despite the above-mentioned constitutional provisions and Indian governments’ initiatives to safeguard Indian languages, the tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh and of the other states are in the list of endangered languages and their speakers, too, are decreasing day by day. Thus, there is an urgent need to revitalize and preserve the tribal languages of the state. Efforts must be made to retain purity of the tribal people, their languages and their culture because death of one’s language is the death of one’s culture. Tribal people and tribal languages are true example of linguistic diversity that exists in India. India, being a multilingual country, presents the best examples of the linguistic diversity. As per UNESCO, linguistic diversity is a ‘pillar of cultural diversity’ (as in Singh 2018). Therefore, we must save and revitalize each

and every language from being endangered so that linguistic diversity of the country should remain alive. Furthermore, when a language dies, it not only causes loss to its lexicon, grammar but loss also happens to an indigenous knowledge system, ethnic identity, cultural heritage and of course of a distinct world view. Thus, it is very important to maintain linguistic ecology and the linguistic diversity of the country by saving other minority and tribal languages of the country. Lakoff (1987: 337), rightly affirms that “*diversity of languages and cultures provides diverse ways of comprehending experience and this is necessary to their survival as species and that vanishing languages and cultures need to be protected just as vanishing species do*” (as cited in Singh, 2018: 4). Thus, to retain the linguistic and cultural diversity of India for which India is widely and very known, the government of Madhya Pradesh must pay attention to revitalization and preservation of all of the tribal languages which are heading towards their endangerment and extinction. The state government as well as the central government must rethink, review and reframe their language policies so that the tribal and minority languages which are marginalized could be saved from dying. Further, it must be also done for betterment of the linguistic ecology of the country, too.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of language endangerment has caused a serious threat to the entire world. It has seriously affected the minority or tribal languages of India which have fewer speakers in numbers. As per the report of UNESCO (2010) India tops the world in having the highest number of the endangered languages. The total numbers of the endangered languages have risen to 197 and most strikingly the languages which are non-scheduled and tribal languages are mainly the endangered languages of the country. Like many other tribal languages of other states of India, the Tribal languages of Madhya Pradesh are also in the list of endangered languages. Besides, the vitality and the growth of the tribal languages spoken in Madhya Pradesh is non-significant (Census of India, 2011). The dominance of powerful languages, languages contact situation, bilingualism, marginalization of minority languages, tribal speakers’ attitude towards their own languages may serve the cause of the endangerment of the tribal or minority languages. Despite Indian Government’s policies for protecting linguistic rights and linguistic ethnicity, and efforts in preserving the endangered languages through implementations of various programmes, many tribal languages have disappeared and are still in the queue of being endangered. Thus, the present situation is alarming for all of us including those who are the policy makers in the Indian government. Efforts must be made to revitalize, preserve and document the tribal languages which are critically endangered. Preservation and documentation of the tribal languages are not only necessary for saving the lexicon and its structure but for saving the entire linguistic and cultural identity of the tribal people. Moreover, tribal languages must be saved from dying so that the linguistic diversity as well as cultural ecology of India could be maintained. The amendment in the government policies from time to time and strict enforcement of them would definitely save many tribal or minority languages from getting endangered and dying. The revitalization and preservation of the endangered languages can be achieved through individual’s effort, language planners and policy makers’ support. Each one of us must come forward and save these unnoticed, unprivileged and dying

languages of our country in order to serve in the rights of saving our nations linguistic and cultural identity.

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**Singing Voice Handicap Index (M-SVHI)
in Geriatric Bhajan Singers in Maharashtra**

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ABSTRACT

Bhajan (devotional) singers in Maharashtra undergo intense vocal load alongside age related vocal decline. Despite these risks, their vocal health remains largely unexamined. Singing voice handicap index (SVHI) is used to evaluate singers' self-perceived vocal difficulties. This study aimed to evaluate self-perceived singing voice handicap among geriatric bhajan singers in Maharashtra using the Marathi version of the Singing Voice Handicap Index (M-SVHI) and examine its correlation in 60 elderly bhajan singers aged 50-75 years in Maharashtra. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results revealed high rates of vocal distress with 71.7% experiencing nervousness, 65% felt frustrated and 53.3% felt handicapped by their voice and strong positive correlation between age and SVHI scores ($r = 0.944$, $p < 0.001$) indicating that vocal handicap increased with age. The findings highlight factors affecting vocal health in devotional singers and underline the importance of targeted vocal care.

Keywords: Bhajan, Singing voice handicap index, (M-SVHI), Maharashtra

INTRODUCTION

Voice plays a vital role in daily communication and also serves as a key instrument of artistic expression. The major way of expressing one's unique individuality and influencing society is through voice (Sataloff, 2006). For singers, their voice becomes a means of expressing inner devotion, emotion and identity.

In India, bhajans (devotional songs) are important devotional practices that encourage emotional expression through song (Nikky & Tiwari, 2025). Within Maharashtra this tradition holds profound cultural significance, particularly among geriatric populations that actively participate in community based Bhajan singing. Unlike singers of classical genres like Hindustani or Carnatic or commercial styles like jazz, pop and light music, bhajan singers encompass a unique category of vocal performers. Their styles are characterized by continuous phonation, intense emotional expression and extended singing hours. This extensive vocal loading can strain their vocal mechanism making them prone to voice impairments.

Vocal changes can manifest across lifespan due to different etiologies. However, the aging process can cause a progressive decline in vocal efficiency characterized by breathiness, hoarseness, increased pitch in men and so on (Çiyiltepe & Şenkal, 2017 ; Mezzedimi , Di Francesco , Livi , Spinosi & De Felice, 2017 ; Rapoport , Menier & Grant, 2018). When these age-related physical declines intersect with the intense physical demands of devotional bhajan singing, the risk of developing singing voice handicap increases significantly.

Despite this, the vocal health of bhajan singers remains largely unexplored. To systematically assess these potential vocal challenges, a validated tool like the Singing Voice Handicap Index (SVHI) becomes essential.

The Singing Voice Handicap Index (SVHI) was developed to assess singers' perception of their vocal issues (Cohen, Jacobson, Garrett, Noordzij, Stewart, Attia, Ossoff & Cleveland, 2007). The SVHI is a 36 item self-assessment tool designed to evaluate how singers perceive their vocal difficulties. It measures the impact of voice impairment across 4 domains: physical, emotional, social and economic. Individuals rate each item using a five-point Likert scale from 0 (never) to 4 (always) resulting in a cumulative score between 0 and 144. Higher overall scores reflect a greater degree of singing voice handicap (Cohen, Witsell, Scarce, Vess & Banka, 2008).

BACKGROUND

SVHI has been widely used and validated globally across numerous languages emphasizing its significance in evaluating vocal health. Within the Indian context the tool has undergone regional adaptation to guarantee cultural and linguistic relevance which includes Kannada adaptation (Gunjawate, Aithal, Guddattu, & Bellur, 2017), Malayalam adaptation (Sudarsanan & Kumaraswamy, 2025) and the most recent Marathi version (Sanjay & Kumaraswamy, 2026). Similarly, the Hindi SVHI-10 (Jaswal & Khemka, 2025) and Tamil SVHI-10 (Rangarajan, Santhanam & Selvaraj, 2020) showed that the shortened, culturally adapted versions of SVHI maintain high sensitivity and specificity for detecting singing voice handicap in Indian languages.

Devadas, Jose and Gunjawate (2016) conducted a study among Mar Thoma priests in Kerala and revealed a high prevalence of voice problems with 47.8% of participants suffering from vocal difficulties at some point during their careers. They also observed several contributing risk factors including asthma, allergies and habitual throat clearing which were associated with the increased incidence of voice disorders.

Gunjawate, Aithal, Devadas and Guddattu (2017) assessed singing vocal health in Yakshagana singers using the Kannada version of SVHI-10 and their finding revealed higher total SVHI scores in singers with voice complaints compared to those without any voice problems.

Sarica (2018) revealed that 36.6% of imams in Turkey experienced voice disorders attributing these issues to factors such as reflux, throat infections and lack of vocal training.

Devadas, Hegde and Maruthy (2019) focused on Hindu temple priests and observed that 43% of participants experienced occupational voice disorders. The chief contributors identified in this group were chanting during episodes of throat infections, dry mouth and the frequent need to modify voice quality during ritualistic chanting practices.

Büyükatalay, Gökmen, Yıldırım and Dursun (2020) found that Islamic religious officials despite having lower vocal loads exhibited higher rates of vocal abuse and poorer vocal hygiene awareness compared to school teachers.

Moura, Gadenz, Lemos, Bos and Cassol (2021) analysed the SVHI in 110 elderly choristers aged 60 or above and results revealed that physical issues like throat dryness, difficulty with high notes were common and that older adults over 75 years of age had a greater voice handicap when compared to younger ones.

Sharma, Nayak and Devadas (2021) conducted a survey on Indian church choir singers and found that 84% of participants reported multiple vocal symptoms including pitch breaks, hoarseness and vocal fatigue either during or after singing.

The above studies collectively highlight the vocal demands and health risks associated with religious singing and chanting. However, despite the cultural significance of bhajan singing in Maharashtra, there remains a notable lack of focused research addressing the vocal health of bhajan singers in this region. To address this gap in research on devotional singers, the present study aims to evaluate the vocal health of bhajan singers in Maharashtra using the M-SVHI. This tool allows for assessment of self-perceived voice handicap, providing valuable insights into the unique vocal challenges faced by this population.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: The aim of the study was to analyse the item wise responses of Marathi version of SVHI (M-SVHI) and examine the relationship between age and perceived voice handicap among geriatric bhajan singers in Maharashtra.

Subjects: A total of 60 professional Marathi bhajan singers in the age range of 50-75 years were selected randomly from Maharashtra to participate in this study.

Inclusion criteria:

- Native Marathi bhajan singers
- Regularly singing bhajans for minimum of two years
- Singers within the age range of 50 and 75 years.

Exclusion criteria:

- Bhajan singers who have less than 2 years of experience.
- Subjects with a history of psychiatric, neurological impairments and those unable to read or understand Marathi.
- Individuals who had undergone laryngeal surgery or major voice treatment unrelated to the study within the past six months.

Stimulus: The Marathi version of SVHI adapted by Sanjay & Kumaraswamy (2026) which was originally developed by Cohen et al (2007) was used for the present study.

Procedure: The M-SVHI, consisting of 36 questions covering physical, emotional and functional aspects of singing voice difficulties was distributed to bhajan singers and were instructed to carry out a self-assessment. All subject completed the questionnaire individually as instructed.

Statistical analysis

The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis. Data was summarized using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation (SD). Karl Pearson’s correlation coefficient analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between singer’s age and their total M-SVHI scores. The level of statistical significance was considered at 5% ($p < 0.05$).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The aim of present study was to analyse item wise of bhajan singers and age related correlation using M-SVHI and the results are discussed below.

Table 1

Shows The Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard deviation Of Bhajan Singers In Maharashtra Using M-SVHI

	NEVER		ALMOST NEVER		SOMETIMES		ALMOST ALWAYS		ALWAYS		Total	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Mean	SD
It takes a lot of effort to sing.	5	8.3%	14	23.3 %	16	26.7%	12	20.0 %	13	21.7 %	2.23	1.27
My voice cracks and breaks.	2	3.3%	3	5.0%	53	88.3%	2	3.3%	0	0.0%	1.92	.46
I am frustrated by my singing.	21	35.0 %	0	0.0%	39	65.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1.30	.96
People ask, “What is wrong with your voice?” when I sing.	0	0.0%	22	36.7 %	30	50.0%	8	13.3 %	0	0.0%	1.77	.67
My ability to sing varies day to day.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	21	35.0%	38	63.3 %	1	1.7%	2.67	.51
My voice “gives out” on me while I am singing.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	35	58.3%	24	40.0 %	1	1.7%	2.43	.53
My singing voice upsets me.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	37	61.7%	23	38.3 %	0	0.0%	2.38	.49

My singing problems make me not want to sing/perform.	29	48.3 %	1	1.7%	9	15.0%	0	0.0%	21	35.0 %	1.72	1.82
I am embarrassed by my singing.	0	0.0%	20	33.3 %	25	41.7%	15	25.0 %	0	0.0%	1.92	.77
I am unable to use my "high voice."	0	0.0%	5	8.3%	33	55.0%	15	25.0 %	7	11.7 %	2.40	.81
I get nervous before I sing because of my singing problem.	0	0.0%	2	3.3%	15	25.0%	28	46.7 %	15	25.0 %	2.93	.80
My speaking voice is not normal.	10	16.7 %	20	33.3 %	28	46.7%	2	3.3%	0	0.0%	1.37	.80
My throat is dry when I sing.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	54	90.0%	2	3.3%	4	6.7%	2.17	.53
I have had to eliminate certain songs from my singing/performance.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	55	91.7%	4	6.7%	1	1.7%	2.10	.35
I have no confidence in my singing voice.	0	0.0%	2	3.3%	35	58.3%	18	30.0 %	5	8.3%	2.43	.70
My singing voice is never normal.	0	0.0%	5	8.3%	25	41.7%	29	48.3 %	1	1.7%	2.43	.67
I have trouble making my voice do what I want it to.	0	0.0%	1	1.7%	32	53.3%	25	41.7 %	2	3.3%	2.47	.60
I have to "push it" to produce my voice when singing.	0	0.0%	7	11.7 %	28	46.7%	19	31.7 %	6	10.0 %	2.40	.83
I have trouble controlling the breathiness in my voice.	0	0.0%	1	1.7%	47	78.3%	11	18.3 %	1	1.7%	2.20	.48
I have trouble controlling the raspiness in my voice.	0	0.0%	7	11.7 %	39	65.0%	14	23.3 %	0	0.0%	2.12	.58
I have trouble singing loudly.	0	0.0%	4	6.7%	47	78.3%	6	10.0 %	3	5.0%	2.13	.60
I have difficulty staying on pitch when I sing.	0	0.0%	1	1.7%	37	61.7%	18	30.0 %	4	6.7%	2.42	.65
I feel anxious about my singing.	0	0.0%	1	1.7%	29	48.3%	26	43.3 %	4	6.7%	2.55	.65
My singing sounds forced.	2	3.3%	11	18.3 %	24	40.0%	12	20.0 %	11	18.3 %	2.32	1.08
My speaking voice is hoarse after I sing.	2	3.3%	11	18.3 %	25	41.7%	17	28.3 %	5	8.3%	2.20	.95
My voice quality is inconsistent.	0	0.0%	2	3.3%	20	33.3%	22	36.7 %	16	26.7 %	2.87	.85
My singing voice makes it difficult for the audience to hear me.	0	0.0%	2	3.3%	28	46.7%	27	45.0 %	3	5.0%	2.52	.65
My singing makes me feel handicapped.	1	1.7%	20	33.3 %	7	11.7%	29	48.3 %	3	5.0%	2.22	1.03
My singing voice tires easily.	0	0.0%	2	3.3%	33	55.0%	16	26.7 %	9	15.0 %	2.53	.79
I feel pain, tickling, or choking when I sing.	0	0.0%	5	8.3%	24	40.0%	31	51.7 %	0	0.0%	2.43	.65

I am unsure of what will come out when I sing.	0	0.0%	2	3.3%	24	40.0%	15	25.0%	19	31.7%	2.85	.92
I feel something is missing in my life because of my inability to sing.	2	3.3%	5	8.3%	24	40.0%	18	30.0%	11	18.3%	2.52	1.00
I am worried my singing problems will cause me to lose money.	13	21.7%	22	36.7%	3	5.0%	19	31.7%	3	5.0%	1.62	1.28
I feel left out of the music scene because of my voice.	7	11.7%	17	28.3%	7	11.7%	23	38.3%	6	10.0%	2.07	1.25
My singing makes me feel incompetent.	0	0.0%	13	21.7%	28	46.7%	19	31.7%	0	0.0%	2.10	.73
I have to cancel performances, singing engagements, rehearsals or practices because of my singing.	3	5.0%	24	40.0%	28	46.7%	5	8.3%	0	0.0%	1.58	.72

Table 1 shows that among 60 bhajan singers aged between 50-75 years from Maharashtra, 43 singers stated they ‘almost always’ or ‘always’ get nervous before singing. 25 singers feel that singing ‘almost always’ or ‘always’ requires effort while 39 reported frustrations with their singing. Vocal unpredictability is a major concern as 58 singers feel unsure of what will come out when they sing and 58 report inconsistent voice quality. 32 individuals feel that their voice ‘almost always’ or ‘always’ makes them feel handicapped and 29 state that they ‘almost always’ feel left out of the music scene.

Table 2

Shows the correlation of age and the overall handicap score

	N	Karl Pearson Correlation	p
AGE & M-SVHI(0 - 144)	60	0.944	0.000, HS

*HS = High significance

The Karl Pearson’s correlation coefficient showed a strong positive association between age and SVHI scores ($r = 0.944$, $p < 0.001$) indicating that the result is highly significant.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to analyse the item wise responses among bhajan singers in Maharashtra using the M-SVHI and examined the correlation between age and perceived voice handicap among bhajan singers in Maharashtra. The results revealed that many singers reported notable voice challenges impacting their singing and well-being and also showed that age has a stronger positive correlation with singing voice handicap which is in accordance with Moura et al (2021) and Sudarsanan and Kumaraswamy (2025) who also reported greater vocal difficulties in older choristers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Voice is essential role for effective communication and voice disorders should be therefore identified especially in singers who are highly sensitive to vocal impairments. This study aimed to analyse the item wise responses of bhajan singers in Maharashtra using the M-SVHI and to examine the correlation between age and perceived voice handicap among them. The M-SVHI was administered on a total of 60 elderly bhajan singers aged 50-75 years. The results showed that many participants experienced challenges such as vocal fatigue, inconsistent voice quality and nervousness before singing. A strong positive correlation was found between age and SVHI scores indicating that perceived vocal handicap increased with age. These findings emphasize the need for implementing age and health specific vocal care strategies for devotional singers.

LIMITATIONS

- Sample size is limited.
- Selection of participants were random.

FUTURE DIRECTION

- Comparative studies can be conducted between bhajan singers and other singing population.
- Similar studies can be conducted to evaluate voice handicap ion bhajan singers from different age group and other states of India to explore regional differences.

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New Romantic Expressions in Gen Z Language: The Linguistics of Neologism

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Abstract

It can be observed that new media plays a pivotal role in the linguistic assimilation of one of the new generations, born into the endless possibilities of information technology. This paper attempts to validate the hypothesis that the language of Generation Z is entirely distinct from that of other generations, focusing on new media—their primary domain of linguistic discourse. To achieve this, the study collects and analyzes the unique words, phrases, and meanings used by this generation within the discourse of "romance." The data has been sourced from Instagram, the most widely used social media platform among Gen Z. The analysis primarily focuses on the lexical level of the collected terms. Furthermore, the word combinations and patterns of word formation (morphology) are subjected to linguistic analysis.

Keywords: New Media, Gen Z Language, Neologisms, Linguistic Analysis

Introduction

This study analyzes the interrelationship between technology and grammar within the broader context of word-formation processes. The uncontrolled use of technology and social media has brought about numerous changes in language. The newest generation is referred to as Generation Z (Gen Z). They employ language in a way that is starkly different from existing forms. The use of neologisms and the reappropriation of existing vocabulary are distinctive features of this generation's language usage. These neologisms are likely used to make conversations simpler and more appealing to listeners. Recently, social media has witnessed the creation of numerous new terms to articulate romance and to express its diverse modes and states. It is essential to study the structural framework and semantic nuances of these terms.

This paper analyzes these newly emerged terms in Gen Z language on the basis of different word-formation processes in linguistics.

Gen Z

It is believed that the term 'Generation Z' was first used in the year 2000 by the publication *Advertising Age*. They proposed this name to signify the generation succeeding the Millennials (Gen Y). William Strauss and Neil Howe are the pioneers in studies classifying generations (Generational Theory). Those born between 1997 and 2012 are known as Generation Z. They are also commonly referred to as 'zoomers'. This generation has had the convenience and opportunity to possess and utilize various technologies. Consequently, they possess a special adeptness in handling technology. It is during their era that social media became so familiar and accessible to people. This influences all the social and linguistic activities in their lives. They do not utilize social media merely by confining it to the act of communication. This new generation connects all spheres of life through new media. They have succeeded in transforming communication, its methods, and its language into newer dimensions.

New Media

Lev Manovich defines new media not merely as a tool for the distribution or exhibition of computer technology, but as "cultural objects" constructed through computerization (*The Language of New Media*, 2001). New media encompass electronic forms of communication designed for users to share information, ideas, personal messages, photographs, and other content. They offer an expansive space to build and strengthen relationships without geographical barriers. The advent of new media has created a profound revolution in human communication patterns and linguistic practices. Each individual utilizing new media possesses distinct capabilities. New media open up vast possibilities for users in terms of private communication and knowledge production. Rapid information transfer and knowledge sharing are the hallmarks of new media. Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook are the predominant new media platforms. Among these, Facebook and WhatsApp have recently witnessed a significant decline in their significance and popularity. Recent statistics indicate that Instagram has emerged as the preferred platform among the youth. While there are around two hundred social media platforms with similar ultimate objectives, each offers a distinct style of communication. Linguistic usage on Facebook remains relatively traditional; users generally employ everyday English styles for communication and profile updates. Conversely, new linguistic trends are

more discernibly visible on Instagram, which has transformed into the primary communication hub for youth.

The Concept of Neologisms

The concept of neologisms is by no means entirely new. Neologisms are constructed in every era. Sometimes, they persist in the spoken language for a short period and subsequently disappear from usage as though they were never created at all. However, certain words endure within the lexicon for ages. There were distinct reasons behind the formation of all these words. In the modern era, the concept of new words is engineered by the users of new media. It is through new media that neologisms are most extensively constructed and utilized. Since the youth are the primary creators and consumers of these neologisms, their language is highly difficult to comprehend for other generations or for those who do not use new media. Just like the creation of entirely new words, assigning new meanings to existing words is a distinct linguistic feature of new media. Gen Z language is predominantly saturated with English neologisms. This is because the English language adapts to changes in language with astounding speed and ease, particularly in the context of new media. Linguists testify that the English language possesses the unique capability to rapidly assimilate all kinds of linguistic changes occurring in new media (Adejoke Maria, Matthew Abua, Adebola Tawa, 2018).

Literature Review

There are only a limited number of studies conducted so far that explain Generation Z language and its distinct characteristics. This is perhaps because it represents the most recent trend in language.

Major Global Studies

- Saiyida Shahbano Jabeen & Hafiz Imran Nawaz (2005): Their article explains the modern transformations in Gen Z language and their morphological features.
- Rahul A. Hazare (2023): This study analyzes the diverse communication methods in new media and explains the predominant neologisms and abbreviations used by Gen Z.
- Lines M. (2022): In his article, he analyzes the most significant words used by Gen Z.
- Sayma Yeasmin (2025): This work explains Gen Z terms and their semantic meanings, alongside analyzing major acronyms and abbreviations in the article.

- Syaputra et al. (2024) explain how Generation Z (Gen-Z) uses slang to make their communication more engaging on the social media platform Instagram.

Studies in Malayalam

- Dr. Vishal Johnson (2022): He has conducted research on new media and introduced new linguistic approaches.
- Jose K. Manuel (2014): He has carried out detailed studies on new media; however, his research does not make any mention of Gen Z words.

While studies regarding new media and its linguistic features do exist, a comprehensive linguistic analysis of neologism and semantics within Malayalam Gen Z language remains generally scarce.

Methodology

This study focuses on the prominent romantic neologisms in Gen Z language. The data collection has been carried out from the new media platform, Instagram. Data widespread on Instagram—including post comments and user chats—were collected utilizing a qualitative approach. Forty-six of the most frequently used and highly significant words related to romance in Gen Z language were selected as the primary data. These data are analyzed using a descriptive method.

Linguistic Analysis

Compounding

In linguistics, compounding is defined as the process of constructing a new word by combining two or more independent words. The terms formed through this process are called compound words. In a compound word, the first constituent is referred to as the initial element (*poorva-padam*) and the second as the final element (*uttara-padam*). Occasionally, the resulting compound word may acquire a semantic meaning that bears no direct relation to either the initial or the final element. Compound words can be written either as a single word or as separate, distinct words.

Compound words	First word + second word	Meaning

Soft launch	Soft+ launch	Showing subtle hints or glimpses of a romantic relationship/partner on social media without fully revealing their identity.
Hard launch	Hard+launch	Fully revealing and announcing a romantic relationship/partner on social media
Delulu love	Delulu + love	Being romantically infatuated with someone in one's own imagination, even though they are completely unattainable
Soft dumping	Soft+dumping	Gradually and slowly distancing oneself to break up with a boyfriend/girlfriend
Love bombing	Love+bombing	Showering someone with intense affection and attention at the beginning of a relationship to seem "perfect," only to later reveal "red flags" (toxic behavior)
Metro crush	Metro+ crush	Feeling a very intense attraction to a stranger seen on a train/metro, often sparked through brief eye contact or non-verbal gestures
Slow burn	Slow+ burn	A romance that develops gradually over time, where two people don't fall in love immediately but become friends first and talk before feelings grow
Gen blend	Gen+ blend	A romantic relationship between a person from Generation Z (Gen Z) and someone born in the 1990s (Millennial)

Among the compound words mentioned above, slow burn, soft launch, hard launch, and gen blend have absolutely no literal connection to the individual meanings of their component words. On the other hand, metro crush, love bombing, soft dumping, and delulu love show a subtle connection to their respective compound structures—that is, to the

Blending

Blending is the process of creating an entirely new word by combining parts of two words with different meanings. Unlike traditional compound words, it is usually the last part of the first word (prefix) and the first part of the second word (suffix) that merge together. However, it can also happen in other ways. Gen Z language frequently uses many such blends to make messaging and communication faster and more entertaining.

Blended words	Original words	Meaning
Lovestagram	Love+ Instagram	When two people who haven't publicly announced their relationship post matching or hinting photos on Instagram, letting others figure out they are together.
Situationship	Situation+ relationship	A romantic arrangement that feels like a relationship but is not official (not committed, but definitely more than just friends).
Nanoship	Nano+relationship	Extremely short-lived romantic relationships with zero strings attached, which can end at any moment
Benching	Bench+playing	Keeping someone on the hook as a "backup" option, even though you have no

		genuine intention of fully committing to them.
Delusionship	Delusion + Relationship	A completely "one-sided love" or relationship that exists entirely within a person's own thoughts and imagination.
Imaginationship	Imagination + Relationship	Being in a relationship with someone entirely in your own imagination and daydreaming about them, even though that person doesn't actually exist in your life
Fexting	Fighting + Texting	Having an argument, fight, or "breakup talk" with a partner entirely over text messages instead of resolving it in person or over a call.
Affordating	Affordable+ dating	Going on budget-friendly dates that cost very little money (such as just holding hands while walking, window shopping, etc.).

In this, blending occurs by combining an adjective and a noun. Examples of this include Affordating (where *affordable* is the adjective and *dating* is the noun) and Nanoship. Blending also occurs by combining verbal nouns (gerunds), with Fexting being an example. Imaginationship is a word formed by combining a noun and a noun.

Abbreviations

Gen Z uses several abbreviations in their social media language related to romantic terms. These short forms are used to call partners affectionately and to indicate certain relationship concepts.

Abbreviation	Full form	Meaning
Bae	Before anyone else	Loved ones / Favorite person
Menty b	Mental breakdown	Mental exhaustion caused by romantic heartbreak
Gf	Girl friend	Girlfriend
Bf	Boy friend	Boyfriend
LOML	Love Of My Life	The person one loves
LDR	Long distance relationship	A relationship where partners live in two different faraway places.
NATO dating	Not Attached To an Outcome	Enjoying the romantic moments without worrying about where the relationship will lead.
NRE	New relationship energy	The intense emotional state (Honeymoon phase) felt during the first few weeks or months of falling in love with a new person

Abbreviations are used to refer to individuals, processes, relationship categories, and people's mental states.

Verbal Nouns (Gerunds)

Verbal nouns are words that denote an action. Gen Z language daily incorporates many action-based terms (verbs/gerunds) related to romance and dating.

Neologism	Meaning
Ghosting	Suddenly disappearing from a romantic relationship without giving any reason.

Zombieing	When someone who previously ghosted you suddenly sends a message out of nowhere without any warning.
Orbiting	Avoiding direct contact or communication with a person, yet continuously interacting with them through social media (like watching their stories or liking posts).
Shipping	Encouraging or wishing for two people to be in a romantic relationship.

Nouns

Nouns are words that simply denote a person, place, thing, or concept. Many new nouns related to romantic relationships have emerged in Gen Z slang.

Neologism	Meaning
Simp	Someone who tries too hard to please or impress someone they are attracted to (especially in a romantic context).
Ghoster	A person who abandons their partner without saying a single word to them
Rizzler	Someone with immense charm or romantic appeal (expert at attracting others).
Sigma	Someone who is indifferent to or avoids romantic relationships (an independent loner).
Single	Someone who is not in a romantic relationship.

Affixation

Affixation is the process of creating new words by attaching affixes (suffixes or prefixes) to existing base words. In Gen Z slang, there is a strong trend of forming new words

by adding affixes to independent words. Attaching these affixes changes the natural grammatical form of the original word.

Word	Affix	Meaning
Snowmaning	Snowman+ ing	A romantic relationship that is meant to last only for the winter season (cuffing season)
Ghosting	Ghost+ ing	Suddenly disappearing from a romantic relationship without saying anything.
Zombieing	Zombie +ing	When someone who ghosted you returns to your life later on, acting as if nothing ever happened.
Orbiting	Orbit+ ing	Avoiding direct communication after ghosting someone, yet continuing to interact with them through social media.

Semantic Shifts (Words Given New Meanings)

As previously mentioned, there is a prominent trend in Gen Z language where existing words are assigned entirely new meanings. Some of these expressions are listed below:

Flag Terms

In a romantic relationship, partners are categorized using specific "flag terms" based on their behavior and attitude. These terms serve as indicators to help understand the quality and traits of their character

Flag terms	Literal Meaning	Gen Z Meaning
Green Flag	A green-colored flag	A partner who is not toxic at all and behaves with great decency

		and respect in a romantic relationship.
Pink flag	A pink-colored flag	Relationships that have the potential to cause major problems and friction in the future
Black flag	A black-colored flag	A person with such bad behavior that it makes you feel the romantic relationship must be ended immediately
Golden flag	A gold-colored flag	The absolute best and most ideal partner in a romantic relationship
Red Flag	A red-colored flag	Someone who is highly toxic in a romantic relationship
Beige flag	A beige-colored flag	A partner who is not toxic, but behaves in a slightly quirky or strange way in a romantic relationship

Digital Manoeuvres

The rate of romantic deceptions and manipulation tactics through technology has increased significantly. Consequently, many new words have been coined in Gen Z slang to describe these situations.

Neologism	Meaning
Zombieing	Reappearing in a partner's life by sending messages on their social media accounts and acting as if nothing happened, after practically abandoning them.
Cushioning	Keeping someone as a "backup" while currently in a romantic relationship, just in case the current relationship fails

Pocketing	A situation where a romantic partner keeps you a secret, without introducing you to their family or friends.
Haunting	When an ex-partner does not talk to you but continues to interact with you on social media by liking your posts or watching your stories.
Roaming	Talking to and showing romantic interest in multiple people at the exact same time.

Analysis

As a result of the unique and distinct language patterns of the new generation, numerous new words have emerged on social media. These can be categorized in various ways. This study subjects words related to the emotional state of romance to linguistic analysis. A total of 46 Gen Z words collected from Instagram are categorized based on major word-formation processes in linguistics: Compounding, Blending, Shortening (Abbreviations), and Affixation. Additionally, it maps classifications based on actions resulting from technology (Digital Maneuvers) and major words used by assigning new meanings (Semantic Shifts).

In Gen Z language, a higher number of neologisms are formed through compounding and blending. It is worth noting that Gen Z word-formation processes do not adhere to any conventional linguistic rules. Users prioritize only the ease of usage and the trendiness of the words. The foundational rules of word meaning, form, and grammar are not part of their parameters.

- **Linguistic Innovation:** By bypassing existing linguistic rules, this generation successfully condenses complex emotions into simple words through Compounding and Blending.
- **Semantic Evolution:** Significant changes have occurred in the semantic dimensions of words. Expressions like 'Red flag' and 'Green flag' have evolved from terms merely denoting colors into social symbols that measure the quality of a person's character.
- **Digital Influence:** New media platforms like Instagram erase linguistic boundaries and drive youth to use a uniform vocabulary (Global Slang) on a global scale.

Conclusion

This study underscores the fact that the dominance of modern technology and new media has paved the way for significant linguistic transformation. It is evident from this research that the romantic language of Gen Z goes beyond mere emotional expression; it embodies numerous distinct linguistic characteristics.

A large number of new romance-related words have recently emerged in Gen Z slang. These terms propagate primarily through the social media platform Instagram. Furthermore, their presence is highly prominent in everyday informal communication. Gen Z language is remarkably unique and filled with distinct variations, making it quite challenging to fully comprehend and integrate into mainstream conversation.

Over time, these words may either become a permanent part of the lexicon, or vanish entirely from communication and social media after a brief period of intense usage. Conversely, certain words may continue to be used with the same level of importance for a very long time. As this is the language most widely used by today's youth, studying it holds profound significance.

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The Role and Significance of Communication Skills for Personal, Social and Professional Interactions

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Abstract

English is an important tool for today's national and international communication. It symbolizes in Indian minds, better education, better culture and higher intellect. In present times, English is the most preferred language. Keeping in view the present scope and importance of the English language, there is an urgent need to integrate all four language skills: LSRW (listening, speaking, reading and writing) for practical and functional use of language. The specific purpose of this paper is to help learners to develop the communication skills for Personal, Social and Professional Interactions

Key Words: Techniques, Habits, Presentation, Fundamental tools, Vocabulary, Accent, Intensive Ideas.

Personal Communication Skills

a) Improving Listening Habits

Listening may be defined as the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves the understanding of speaker's accent or pronunciation, his/her grammar and vocabulary and grasping the meaning of the speaker's speech.

If an individual's listening is poor, it will have a negative effect on the fulfillment of the other requirements for speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, listening skill has become an important part of the communication process. In order to become a good communicator, one has to develop listening skill at first. At the initial level the learners should be trained in the sound system of the language so that they may not face any difficulty in pronunciation and understanding of the language. Learners are to be encouraged to know why they are listening and what type of information they require. If the aims and objectives of listening are briefed in advance, the learners can adopt the way to listen to a particular context and can focus their attention efficiently.

b) Enhancing Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication plays a key role in detection of an individual's emotion. Body postures like nodding or shaking of head, crossed legs and arms, and foot kicking indicate that someone is emotionally detached, impatient or showing casual attitude. It depends on the situation in which an action is initiated.

Gestures are also used to convey a non-verbal message. It includes the movements of hands, fingers, head, legs, arms, etc. for example, thumb shows "ok" or "good". Relaxed hands indicate confidence and self-assurance. Crossed arms show a sign of insecurity and lack of confidence. Folding arms show an unwilling state of mind.

Therefore, keeping in view the above discussion, we can say that nonverbal communication impacts a great deal of how we communicate, and can reflect accurately what is going on inside us. The use of nonverbal communication may vary between individuals, different cultures and nationalities.

c) Developing Sound Relationships

Communication means a talk between two or more people. It is a form of interaction that occurs in oral communication. Thornbury defines "Communication is the kind of speech that happens formally/informally, symmetrically, and for the purpose of establishing and maintaining social ties and relationships." He is of the view that communication is a social interaction and always demands specific rules to sustain in order to establish good relationships. The primary focus of communication is to describe common social situations in which speakers and listeners accept one another in terms of ideas and opinions and also to understand its social purpose. If proper principles and norms are not followed in oral communication, an effective communication cannot be maintained in a positive way and may also cause to deteriorate. Such situations do not help an individual to develop sound relationships in his/her society.

d) Developing Two way Communication Techniques

It is very important in a communicative situation to know when to stop talking and start listening. A perfect communication is one in which both the listener and the speaker alternate their roles. The topic of conversation must have a mutual acceptance as it helps in sustaining the talk. It would be better if the conversation is about a topic of interest like weather, current affairs, etc. The closing of the conversation should also be impressive and situation based. We can use certain phrases for conclusion like bye, goodbye, see you then, catch up with you later, etc.

Language is the most commonly used and effective medium of self-expression in all spheres of human life – personal, social and professional. Some commonly used strategies for effective communications are:

- Meeting people, exchanging greetings and taking leave
- Introducing yourself
- Introducing people to others
- Giving personal information

- Talking about people and places
- Getting people's attention and interrupting
- Giving instructions and seeking clarifications
- Making requests and responding to requests
- Asking for directions and giving directions
- Thanking someone and responding to thanks
- Inviting and Accepting and Refusing an Invitation
- Apologizing and responding to an apology
- Congratulating and responding to congratulations
- Paying compliments, showing appreciation, offering encouragement and responding to them
- Asking for, giving and refusing permission

e) Developing the Habit of asking Relevant Questions

Asking relevant questions during or at the end of communication is a tricky business, but questions are the interactive elements of any type of speaking. They encourage a speaker to reinforce his or her message, respond to the concerns of the audience, and support the argument. It is essential to conduct a question answer session at the end of any communicative situation. Effective communicators always consider it a valuable and vital part of their communication/presentation. Most of the speakers usually use questions they are asked to help refine their presentations. Therefore, questions are very important as they initiate communication which is the key to a successful presentation. Handling questions in a systematic and logical way is good for demonstrating confidence, being responsive to the concerns of others and building rapport with the members of the audience.

Social Communication Skills

a) Providing Information

Providing relevant information in a given communication act can enhance social ties and relationships. One should always try to provide sufficient information so that the audience can understand in a clear and coherent way. It is also important to avoid common pitfalls by responding to questions positively and enthusiastically. This will help a speaker to remain brief and focused.

b) Negotiations

Negotiations are made in order to reach beneficial outcomes over different issues. This skill helps an individual to maintain the discipline of the communication. It will encourage the speaker to schedule his or her communication in a right direction and

evolve high-priority thoughts.

c) Suggestions

Suggestion is considered a humble act of social communication. The purpose of suggestion is to promote the involvement of various individuals in order to achieve the goals of communication. It helps in creating a culture of participation, motivation, and improved communication.

d) Clarifications

Clarification in communication is important as it resolves the areas of confusion and misunderstanding. It increases speaker's productivity and efficiency. Sometimes speakers make use of complex messages or issues. But appropriate clarification can help a speaker/listener to make sense of such complex issues.

e) Eye Contact in Conversation

Eye contact is important in conversation in a sense that our eyes speak volumes about us and how we communicate. A good eye contact is a skill for effective and vital communication. It shows the speaker's or listener's interest, trust, respect, confidence, assurance, etc.

f) Facial Expressions and gestures

Facial expressions and gestures are used in communication in order to convey a message without the use of words. This type of communication is known as nonverbal communication. It includes the movements of hands, body, eye contact, frowning, smiling, etc.

Professional Communication Skills

a) Good Oral Communication

Language is a means of communication. It is used for interactions and communicates meanings in order to achieve different functions and notions in every sphere of life. Oral communication involves complete communication along with correct pronunciation, accent and the rhythm of the language. The thing that contributes most to oral communication is the speaker's confidence which can be fully developed by mastering the maximum aspects of language learning. Most eminent among them are the recognition of the sound system, correct pronunciation, rich vocabulary and intensive ideas. The thorough acquaintance with the versatility of ideas is possible by listening to the group of people who are very prompt in infusing new ideas into the set subject. Besides this, the appropriate use of language and pronunciation used by the intellectuals in extension lectures, public lectures, seminars, conferences and on television do enhance listening skill and bring forth the spontaneity in the speech. Such activities naturally widen the learners' vocabulary of the target language and improve their oral communication enormously.

b) Confidence in Speaking and Writing

Speaking is indeed a crucial part of the language learning process. A voice speaker uses a limited vocabulary, and encounters difficulties with pronunciation, lacks self-esteem and seems shy, and as a result he/she engages in brief conversation. A writer also confronts certain problems in writing if he/she has limited knowledge of grammar, inadequate vocabulary, thoughts, novel ideas, etc. But a teacher/instructor has to

encourage him/her, provide authentic material, communicative situations in order to lead him/her from dependence to independence. This technique would certainly enhance a learner's confidence in speaking and writing.

c) Developing Leadership Qualities

Leadership qualities are associated with effective communication skills. A good leader is one who adjusts his/her communication style according to the kind of audience he/she faces. The mastery of a verbal and nonverbal communication is essential for leadership qualities. An honest effort in addressing the needs of a small group can go a long way in improving the leadership qualities in any organization.

Fundamental Tools of Communication

a) Role Playing

Role-play normally involves students playing imaginary people in an imaginary situation. It can often be based on a dialogue or text from a textbook. This technique gives students a chance to use the language they have practised in a more creative way. It is a technique in which learners are given a specific topic or problem and they are asked to discuss its various components and remedial measures. The purpose of using this technique is to support and stimulate students to use their knowledge of English while speaking with divergent categories of people and consequently overcoming the fear and nervousness of speaking before others. It also improves students' speaking ability in using accurate pronunciation and intonation.

The concept of role-play helps the students a great deal during pair/group interactions and discussions. Students feel much freer to express themselves when playing someone else. It also adds interest, and humour. In ordinary conversations and discussions students may be reluctant to give their opinions for fear of criticism, where as in role play, they adopt the attitudes they suppose proper to that part they have been given and are not open to personal criticism. Role –play also provides a wide range of language behavior, from aggression to reconciliation, from persuasion to rejection. If role- play is first introduced in group form, it will offer very little difficulty. Later, it should be extended to individual roles. The advantage of group roles is, however, that activity involves more students and keeps them talking throughout, as they go on with the activity.

Example—1

“The garbage in your area is overflowing and the municipality is not taking any action. Decide what facilities you would like to provide for proper clearing and recycling of garbage.”

Besides a discussion on this problem we could go a step further. Suppose we introduce some role play, by giving the students parts to play like those below. We also tell them that there is going to be a public meeting at the park that evening.

Ayesha

You are an environmentalist who would like to preserve the natural environment. You are willing to provide space at the back of your kitchen garden for storing the bio-degradable products, like tea leaves, vegetable peels, etc. for turning them into a compost heap, so that the manure could be added to the soil to help plants grow. Express your opinions strongly.

Iqbal

You are a parent with two children, who have a passion for drawing. You are in constant need of paper. So you want to recycle the paper to produce hand-made paper and drawing-paper. You are willing to spend some time, energy and money on this venture. Give a proposal.

Rohan

You are an old age pensioner. You would like a park at the place of the existing dust-bins. So you plan to provide for door-to-door service for garbage collection and would like to set up a park. Stand up and express your opinion at the end of the meeting. You have to engage two boys to collect the garbage. So you propose to collect some money towards their payment.

We have now transformed the discussion into a simulation. The students are no longer free to be themselves. Perhaps we won't get more talk, but we will get a very different kind of discussion from the one where the students are merely working out a list of facilities.

b) Body Language

Body language plays a very important role in non-verbal communication. It involves the silent messages communicated through body movements, facial expressions, gestures, etc. Facial expressions are used to convey a repress or suppress emotion. If facial expressions are known properly, they can tell a lot about an individual's emotion. A person's lie or honest attitude can be easily detected from his/her countenance or facial expressions. This type of non-verbal communication involves the actions of eyes, lips, eyebrows, nose and cheek movements. The main purpose of their movements is to show whether an individual is happy, sad, angry or depressed.

Body postures also play a key role in detection of an individual's emotion. Body postures like nodding or shaking of head, crossed legs and arms, and foot kicking indicate that someone is emotionally detached, impatient or showing casual attitude. It depends on the situation in which an action is initiated.

Gestures are also used to convey a non-verbal message. It includes the movements of hands, fingers; head, legs, arms, etc. for example, thumb shows "ok" or "good". Relaxed hands indicate confidence and self assurance. Crossed arms show a sign of insecurity and lack of confidence. Folding arms show an unwilling state of mind.

Therefore, keeping in view the above discussion, we can say that body language impacts a great deal of how we communicate, and can reflect accurately what is going on inside us. The use of body language may vary between individuals, different cultures and nationalities.

Example—2

Imagine that you are in a family and your father and mother are in need of money. They need your help to meet out the family requirements. What suggestions will you make?
Example

Father: We are facing many problems now a days.

Mother: What happened? Can you tell me one?

Father: You know we are in a rented house and unable to pay its rent.

Mother: Why? Did you leave the job?

Father: Yes. The Manager was not happy with me and told me not to come in the office from tomorrow.

Mother: Don't worry. Let us tell the situation to our son. I hope he will manage.

Father: OK. Let's try.

Father& Mother: Good morning son.

Son: Good morning.

Mother: We have come to discuss a problem with you.

Son: I know the problem.

Father: How do you know it?

Son: I was listening to your talk in the next room.

Mother: So, what have you decided?

Son: I am going to join a multinational company after three days.

Father: Did you receive any call letter?

Son: Yes, today only.

Mother: God bless you. We hope you will perform you duty very well.

Father: Not only duty but household matters also.

Son: I will try my best in minimizing your troubles.

Father& Mother: Our blessings are with you.

Son: Thanks.

Steps

- The teacher should prepare three students to play the role of father, mother and son.
- Then the teacher should check their performance.
- Point out some of the mistakes of the students in the functional use of the language.
- For further tasks the teacher should make it sure that there will be a variety in the use of the language and will link to their daily experiences.
- Other students after listening to the conversation engage themselves in similar tasks.

c) Practice

A Model Dialogue on 'How to Make Pins'

- Pin Maker: Good morning. What can I do for you?
Ram: Could you please tell us how to make a pin?
Pin Maker: Sure, but why do you want to know about pins?
Sham: Our English teacher taught us an essay on 'How Wealth Accumulates and Men Decay' with many examples of pin making.
Raheem: We came to know that making a pin in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was very difficult.
Pin Maker: Yes, even today, if you want to make a pin, you have to do many things.
Ram: Will it help us to gain more knowledge about pin making?
Pin Maker: Yes, because you have to engage yourself practically in making a pin. It will help you to easily go through some important operations.
Raheem: Well, tell us what to do first?
Pin Maker: You have to go to the market and buy some material for making a pin.
Ram: But it needs money. We have no money. How can we buy material without money?
Pin Maker: No, you have to spend money if you really want to know how to make a pin.
Sham: O.k. I have some money. We will buy the material from the market right now.
Ram: What will be the next step?
Pin Maker: The Next step is concerned with the preparation. Here you have to ornament the material in a proper shape from point to head. Making a pin needs a lot of time and hard work. This is the real work from where you can learn many skills.
Raheem: Alright, are there some other steps which will also be beneficial for us?
Pin Maker: Yes, but the last step is about how to sell a pin. You have to visit many places for motivating people to buy your pins.
Ram: But, today lots of pins are available in the market and a single pin does not express any value.
Sham: Yes, pins are made by machines and I don't think that someone will buy a handmade pin because it is difficult to shape it in the way a machine shapes and designs.
Pin Maker: That's not my business. I just want to make you aware that pin making needs three basic requirements—buying material, making a pin, and selling.
Raheem: Surely, it will help us to know the attitudes and knowledge of people about pin making.
Sham: I think nobody will listen to your silly methods of making pins.
Pin Maker: That's why Goldsmith said "Wealth accumulates but men decay".
- Steps**

- The teacher should write this dialogue on the board/supply print outs/use power point presentation and ask four students at a time to dramatize the dialogue.

- Then the teacher should ask them to think of another setting. For example ‘At the Post Office’ and to speak out some sentences.
- Their oral speech must be followed by writing the dialogue on sheets of paper.

Task

Prepare a conversation related to Anna Hazare, Kiran Bedi, and Swami Ram Dev. How they have started an agitation against corruption because corruption is also wealth accumulated and corrupt men decay. We can relate these things to initiate group discussion and oral presentations.

a) Other important functions

Greeting:	(informal) “Hello” (formal) “Good evening”
Leave taking:	(informal) “So long” or “Bye” (formal) “Good Bye”
Acknowledging an introduction:	(informal) “Pleased/Nice/Happy to meet you”. (formal) “How do you do?”
Expressing gratitude:	(formal or informal) “Thank you”/ “You are welcome”
Responding to a request, such as:	“Do you mind if I smoke?” “Not at all”.

b) Drilling (Classroom situation/Role play)

Salim: Is this a book? (Showing a book)
 Karim: Yes, it is.
 Salim: Is this a pen? (Showing a book)
 Karim: No it isn't.
 Salim: What is it?
 Karim: It is a book.

- Now **write a similar dialogue using the following objects:**
Chair, table, window, door, shirt, shoe, etc.
- **Role play the dialogue you have written in front of the whole class.**
- **The teacher has to assess the expression of mood and feeling through voice quality of the student, and**
- **Check accuracy of the language and correction if there are mistakes.**

Exercise—2

Students should prepare a dialogue in presence of their teacher. The dialogue should be related to the content of the text. The teacher should monitor the conversation and rules of grammar and provide them feedback so that they may not repeat the mistakes.

Example

Four persons talking about a superstition in a restaurant. One of them begins conversation with a superstition

Abdul: You see Munira, yesterday I had a test and I was going to the college. I wanted a boiled egg. My mom said “No you can't have an egg on the day of examination.”

- Munira: Why? What's the problem in having an egg before going to an examination hall?
- Abdul: You see, she believes that an egg looks like a zero and if I have an egg, I will get zero in the examination.
- Mohan: Oh my goodness! This is too much. Man has landed on moon but where still you like a sound behind.
- Sunita: Let me tell you my experience. Yesterday, I was going to see my younger brother off to the examination hall. My elder sister was also going with me. Suddenly a black cat crossed our way and my sister said, "no way let's go back home and have a bath". I said sister there is no time now. Doesn't matter.
- Abdul: See friends, how odd it is! We should educate them.

Task

- (i) Take part in the conversation in a friendly manner of informal manner and talk about your personal experiences. The focus of the task should be on 'offering suggestions' and 'agreeing'.

Example

Offering Suggestion: How about having anti-superstition campaigns in cinema halls?

Agreeing

- That's right.
 - OK. What shall we do to overcome superstitions?
 - Shall we go to village to village and talk to people?
 - Yes, that's a good idea.
- (ii) Oral presentations and group discussions may be initiated in the classroom on superstitions which the students usually experience.

Exercise—3

Classroom language practice involving 'response, reason, result, reply, condition, consequence, elicitation, etc. For example:

- Rashid: How do you feel?
 Sunil: I am terribly hot. (Response)
- Rashid: Why do you take off your jacket?
 Sunil: I am terribly hot. (Reason)
- Rashid: Why did he have to go into hospital?
 Sunil: He broke his leg. (Response)
- Rashid: What was the result of the car crash? (Reason)
 Sunil: He broke his leg. (Result)
- Rashid: Why did he do it? (Elicitation)
 Sunil: He needed the money. (Reply)

- Because you were late, (Reason) I missed the train. (Result)
- If you are late, (Condition) I'll miss the train. (Consequence)

d) Reading

Reading, of all the language skills opens up before us a new world of experience. We read for pleasure or information. Reading may be defined as a skill that enhances the ability to understand the written language with correct pronunciation. We read reports, articles, notices directions, timetables, maps and graphs to lead a purposeful life. Students can be immensely benefitted if they are trained to read English through different stages of their education. Therefore, the role of teacher in teaching reading is again very crucial.

Reading is an active skill in which the learner should understand what the words mean, watch the paintings, understand the arguments and sometimes counter the arguments. If he/she does not do these things then he/she may forget the essence of reading the content. Students' interest and understanding of the content is very important. Interest plays a pivotal role in reading, if the reader is not actively interested in what he/she is reading then the purpose of reading will be an unsuccessful attempt. The only remedy to this problem is to encourage the learners so that they can react to the topics and share their personal views about the topic.

When a student reads a text in her/his known language, he/she would get a good idea before actually reading. Sometimes the book cover or the title gives hint to a reader before reading a single word. Reader automatically forecasts what she/he is going to read. So, teachers' responsibility is to give students 'hints' so that they can forecast the idea and become more engaged readers.

Once the text is being selected, teacher should choose good reading exercises. The right kind of questions, useful puzzles, common place passages, etc. in order to exploit the reading text into interesting class sequences, using the basic for discussion and other exercises. Any reading text is full of sentences, words, ideas, descriptions etc. and can be used effectively for the development of reading skill. At an undergraduate level, the students are to be able to understand the text with its thought contents, facts and information that it possesses. The conduct of various reading activities in the classroom can help the students to read text with the required goals according to the situation. Reading activities contribute to students' motivation and make student reading a resource for language practice and use in reading, vocabulary learning, listening, speaking and writing. That is, one can use reading to help students to improve their oral communication, competence in writing, and vocabulary in addition to reading skills.

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Colonial Pedagogy and Regional Modernity: Ravenshaw College and the Institutionalization of English Studies in Odisha (1868–1950)

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Abstract

This article examines the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha through the historical development of Ravenshaw College between 1868 and 1950. While colonial education in India has been extensively studied through metropolitan centres such as Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, the role of regional institutions in shaping localized intellectual cultures remains comparatively underexplored. Drawing upon colonial educational policy, institutional archives, student periodicals, and postcolonial theoretical frameworks, this study argues that Ravenshaw College functioned not merely as an instrument of imperial pedagogy but as a critical site for the emergence of provincial modernity in Odisha.

Established within the broader framework of British educational reforms such as Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854), Ravenshaw College introduced structured English literary education to a linguistically and economically marginalized region. Through its curriculum, faculty, student writing, and publications such as *The Ravenshavian*, the institution fostered an English-educated Odia middle class that played a pivotal role in linguistic nationalism, literary modernity, and anti-colonial political consciousness. The article further demonstrates how English literary education, initially designed as a tool of colonial governance, was appropriated and reworked by Odia intellectuals into a medium of critique, creativity, and resistance.

By situating Ravenshaw College within broader debates on colonial knowledge production, nationalism, and regional intellectual history, this paper contributes to the historiography of English studies in India and foregrounds the importance of provincial institutions in shaping modern Indian intellectual life.

Keywords: Ravenshaw College, *The Ravenshavian*, English Studies, Colonial Education, Odisha, Provincial Modernity, Public Sphere, Nationalism, Odia Intelligentsia

Introduction: From Colonial Pedagogy to Provincial Modernity

The introduction of English education in colonial India has often been understood as a deliberate instrument of imperial governance, most explicitly articulated in Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) and Charles Wood's Despatch (1854). These policy documents not only established English as the medium of higher education but also envisioned the creation of an intermediary class that would mediate between colonial rulers and the wider population.² In this framework, English literary education was not merely pedagogical; it was ideological, designed to inculcate European values, rationality, and moral discipline among colonial subjects.

The ideological dimensions of English education have been most influentially theorized by Gauri Viswanathan in *Masks of Conquest*, where she argues that English literature functioned as a key apparatus of colonial control. Literature, in her formulation, masked the coercive realities of empire under the guise of moral and aesthetic instruction. However, while Viswanathan's intervention fundamentally reshaped our understanding of colonial education, her analysis remains largely focused on policy and metropolitan-colonial relations, leaving open the question of how English education was received, negotiated, and transformed in specific regional contexts.

This gap becomes particularly evident in the case of Odisha, a region that has remained largely marginal within the historiography of colonial education. Most existing scholarship has concentrated on metropolitan centres such as Calcutta or Bombay, where English education was first institutionalised and where the colonial state's educational policies were most visible. By contrast, Odisha—administratively subordinate within the Bengal Presidency and linguistically marginalised—offers a distinct and understudied site for examining the local dynamics of English education.

It is here that Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* provides a crucial conceptual framework. Chakrabarty argues that modernity, as theorised through European history, cannot be understood as a universal model but must be re-examined through the experiences of non-

² Macaulay's Minute (1835) and Wood's Despatch (1854) laid the foundation for English-medium education in colonial India and emphasised the creation of an intermediary class of English-educated Indians.

European societies. In this sense, Odisha represents what may be termed a “provincial modernity,” where global intellectual formations such as English studies were not simply replicated but reconstituted through local histories, linguistic practices, and institutional conditions.

Ravenshaw College, established in 1868 as Cuttack Zilla School and upgraded to a college in 1876, emerges as a central institution in this process. As one of the earliest centres of higher education in eastern India, it played a pivotal role in introducing structured English education to the Odia-speaking population. Yet, its significance lies not merely in its institutional status but in its function as a site of cultural negotiation, where colonial pedagogy intersected with regional aspirations.

This article argues that Ravenshaw College functioned as a critical site where English literary education, initially introduced as an instrument of colonial governance, was transformed into a medium of regional intellectual formation and nationalist discourse. Through its curriculum, faculty, student writings, and publications such as *The Ravenshavian*, the college facilitated the emergence of an Odia public sphere in which English became both a language of power and a tool of critique.

In advancing this argument, the article brings together archival materials—such as zilla school reports, curriculum records, and student magazines—with postcolonial theoretical frameworks to offer a nuanced account of English studies in Odisha. It seeks to move beyond binary understandings of colonial education as either domination or resistance, and instead to foreground the processes of negotiation, adaptation, and reappropriation that characterised the provincial experience.

This article therefore argues that English studies in Odisha cannot be understood as a simple extension of colonial pedagogy; rather, through institutions such as Ravenshaw College and print cultures such as *The Ravenshavian*, English was refunctioned into a medium of provincial modernity, enabling the emergence of an Odia public sphere and a politically conscious intelligentsia.

Colonial Education, English Studies, and the Question of Region

The study of colonial education in India has been shaped by a diverse body of scholarship that foregrounds the relationship between knowledge, power, and cultural transformation. Gauri Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest* remains foundational in this regard, demonstrating

how English literary education functioned as an ideological instrument of colonial rule. By situating the origins of English studies in the colonial context rather than the British metropole, Viswanathan fundamentally reorients the historiography of the discipline.

Krishna Kumar's *Political Agenda of Education* complements this perspective by examining how educational policies were shaped by broader political objectives, particularly the need to produce a compliant administrative class. Similarly, Bernard Cohn's *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* highlights the centrality of knowledge production in sustaining colonial power, showing how institutions such as schools and colleges functioned as sites where colonial authority was both exercised and legitimised.

Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* extends this analysis by emphasising the cultural and ideological dimensions of colonial encounters, drawing attention to the ambivalence and hybridity inherent in colonial education. Rather than viewing English education as a unidirectional imposition, Loomba underscores the ways in which colonial subjects actively engaged with and reinterpreted the knowledge systems imposed upon them.

Despite these significant contributions, the regional dimensions of English education remain underexplored. Scholarship on Odisha's educational history, including works by B.C. Ray, B.K. Sahoo³, and H.K. Pattnaik⁴, has largely focused on administrative developments and institutional growth, often without engaging with the theoretical implications of English education. Archival materials from the Odisha State Archives provide valuable insights into the spread of schooling and curriculum formation but have yet to be fully integrated into broader postcolonial debates.

This article addresses this gap by bringing together archival evidence and theoretical analysis to examine the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha, with particular emphasis on Ravenshaw College. In doing so, it contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of colonial education in India by foregrounding the role of provincial institutions in shaping intellectual and cultural life.

³ B.K. Sahoo in "Ravenshaw College and the Rise of English Education in Odisha." talks about the institutional evolution of Ravenshaw college.

⁴ H.K. Pattnaik's *Education in Odisha: Colonial and Postcolonial Perspectives* provides colonial and postcolonial perspectives on education in Odisha, alongside administrative developments.

Colonial Knowledge, Hybridity, and the Public Sphere

This study draws upon four interrelated theoretical frameworks to analyse the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha.

First, Gauri Viswanathan's concept of English literature as a form of colonial ideology provides a foundation for understanding the role of curriculum in shaping colonial subjectivity. By positioning literature as a "mask" for imperial authority, Viswanathan highlights the subtle ways in which cultural forms were used to legitimize colonial rule.

Second, Homi Bhabha's notions of hybridity and mimicry offer a lens through which to examine the ambivalent nature of colonial education. Bhabha argues that colonial subjects do not simply imitate the colonizer but produce hybrid identities that disrupt the authority of colonial discourse. In the context of Ravenshaw College, this framework helps to explain how English education could simultaneously reinforce and challenge colonial power.

Third, Antonio Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual" is particularly useful for understanding the role of figures such as Gopabandhu Das⁵ and Godabarish Mishra.⁶ As educators and public intellectuals, they mediated between colonial knowledge systems and regional aspirations, using English education as a tool for social reform and political mobilisation.

Finally, Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere provides a framework for analysing the emergence of a discursive space in which ideas of identity, nationalism, and modernity could be debated. Through institutions such as Ravenshaw College and publications like *The Ravenshavian*, English education contributed to the formation of an Odia public sphere that extended beyond the classroom into the realms of print culture and political discourse.

Together, these theoretical perspectives enable a nuanced analysis of English studies in Odisha as a site of ideological production, cultural negotiation, and intellectual transformation.

Colonial Policy and the Uneven Terrain of Education in Odisha

⁵ Gopabandhu Das, in *Bandira Atmakatha*, shows how educators, writers, and public figures bridged the gap between colonial pedagogy and local cultural contexts.

⁶ Godabarish Mishra, in *Odia Sahityara Itihasa*, serves as one of the key medium through which Gramsci conceptualises the theory of the "organic intellectual."

The institutionalization of English studies in Odisha must be situated within the broader framework of colonial educational policy and its uneven regional implementation. While the ideological foundations of English education were articulated through Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) and Charles Wood's Despatch (1854), their practical realization varied significantly across regions.⁷ In the case of Odisha, educational development was shaped not only by imperial priorities but also by the province's marginal position within the Bengal Presidency.

Throughout the early nineteenth century, Odisha remained educationally underdeveloped compared to metropolitan centres such as Calcutta. Administrative neglect, limited financial investment, and linguistic marginalization contributed to restricted access to formal education. The refusal to establish English schools in districts such as Balasore due to lack of funds illustrates the structural inequalities that defined colonial educational expansion (General Report 163).

At the same time, this marginality generated a distinct form of educational aspiration. The demand for English education among Odia elites, reflected in petitions for schools and scholarships, indicates that colonial pedagogy was not simply imposed from above but actively sought by sections of the local population. This demand must be understood in relation to the socio-economic transformations of the period, particularly the increasing importance of administrative employment and the emergence of an English-educated middle class (Kumar 45).

The establishment of Cuttack Zilla School in the mid-nineteenth century marked a turning point in this process. As one of the earliest institutional sites for English education in Odisha, the school functioned as a crucial intermediary between colonial policy and provincial reality.

Zilla Schools and the Institutional Foundations of English Studies

Curriculum and Knowledge Formation

The zilla school reports from the 1840s and 1850s provide a detailed account of the early structure of English education in Odisha.⁸ These reports reveal a curriculum that was both

⁷ Macaulay's Minute (1835) advocated English education as a means of creating an intermediary class, while Wood's Despatch (1854) institutionalized this vision through a structured educational system across British India.

⁸ The General Reports on Public Instruction in Bengal Presidency (1844–50) provide detailed insights into curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional development in Odisha.

comprehensive and ideologically charged, encompassing history, geography, grammar, mathematics, and natural philosophy.

The first-class curriculum at Cuttack School included Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England*, Marshman's *Brief Survey of History*, Lennie's *Grammar*, and Bonycastle's *Arithmetic*, alongside translation and composition exercises (General Report 160).

This curricular structure reflects what Bernard Cohn identifies as the colonial state's effort to reorder knowledge systems through European epistemologies (Cohn 6). The inclusion of English history and geography served to situate colonial subjects within an imperial worldview, where Britain functioned as the centre of historical and cultural authority.

At the same time, the curriculum was mediated through vernacular translation. Students were required to translate texts "from English into the Vernacular," indicating that English education operated through a bilingual framework (General Report 160).⁹

This process exemplifies what Sanjay Seth describes as the "translation of knowledge systems," where Western epistemologies were rearticulated through local linguistic frameworks (Seth 23). Thus, English education in Odisha was not a simple imposition but a negotiated process of adaptation and reinterpretation.

Pedagogy and the Discipline of Learning

The pedagogical practices of zilla schools reveal the disciplinary mechanisms through which English education was internalized. Emphasis on grammar, composition, memorization, and recitation created a structured learning environment that prioritized linguistic precision and intellectual discipline.

Reports from the Cuttack Normal School indicate that teachers actively translated and compiled educational materials, dictating lessons in Odia while drawing upon English and Bengali sources (Report on Public Instruction 119).

This pedagogical mediation highlights the role of teachers as cultural intermediaries, a point that aligns with Gauri Viswanathan's argument that colonial education relied on local agents to disseminate imperial knowledge (Viswanathan 85). Teachers thus functioned not merely as instructors but as translators of epistemological frameworks.

⁹ Translation practices in colonial schools often involved teachers compiling and dictating materials in vernacular languages due to the lack of printed textbooks in Odia.

At the same time, the emphasis on memorization and repetition reflects what Michel Foucault describes as the disciplinary function of modern educational institutions, where knowledge is linked to systems of surveillance and regulation (Foucault 170). The classroom, in this sense, becomes a space where colonial authority is internalized through routine practices of learning.

Examinations and Intellectual Formation

The examination system played a central role in consolidating English education as an institutional practice. Scholarship examination papers from the mid-nineteenth century demonstrate the rigor and scope of English instruction in Odisha.

Students were tested on canonical literary texts such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Milton's poetry, Gray's elegies, and Bacon's essays, alongside history and arithmetic (General Report Appendix D).

These examinations required not only memorization but also interpretation and analytical reasoning. Questions on *Hamlet* demanded close textual reading, while Bacon's essays required engagement with abstract philosophical concepts.

This reflects what Gauri Viswanathan identifies as the transformation of literature into a moral and intellectual training ground for colonial subjects (Viswanathan 44). English literature thus became a means of cultivating interpretive skills while simultaneously reinforcing the authority of the English canon.

Moreover, the examination system functioned as a mechanism of social differentiation. Access to advanced English education was largely limited to elite groups, particularly the sons of government officials, thereby linking linguistic competence to social mobility and administrative power (Basu 112).¹⁰

While English education undoubtedly created new opportunities for sections of Odia society, these opportunities were distributed unevenly. Access to institutions such as Ravenshaw College remained largely confined to urban, upper-caste, and economically privileged male students throughout much of the colonial period. Women, lower-caste communities, and economically disadvantaged groups continued to face structural barriers arising from limited schooling, financial constraints, and prevailing social norms.

¹⁰ Scholarship examinations functioned as mechanisms for both intellectual training and social selection, privileging elite groups.

Consequently, the institutionalization of English studies simultaneously produced new forms of intellectual mobility while reproducing existing social hierarchies. This uneven distribution of educational opportunity reflects the broader contradictions of colonial modernity, in which the promise of liberal education coexisted with persistent exclusions (Kumar; Basu).

Curriculum, Canon, and the Discipline of Colonial Knowledge

The structure and content of the English curriculum in colonial Odisha can be analysed through Louis Althusser's concept of the "Ideological State Apparatus." According to Althusser, educational institutions function to reproduce dominant ideology by shaping the beliefs and practices of individuals (Althusser 127).

In the case of zilla schools and later Ravenshaw College, the curriculum served precisely this function. The selection of canonical authors such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon was not neutral but reflected the cultural priorities of the colonial state. Through these texts, students were introduced to European moral philosophy, rationalism, and civic ideals.

However, as Ania Loomba argues, colonial education was never fully successful in producing compliant subjects; instead, it generated forms of ambivalence and resistance (Loomba 91). The bilingual and translational nature of education in Odisha created spaces for reinterpretation, allowing students to engage with English texts in ways that were not entirely aligned with colonial intentions.

Thus, the curriculum functioned simultaneously as an instrument of ideological control and a site of cultural negotiation. This duality lies at the heart of the institutionalization of English studies in Odisha.

From Zilla School to College: The Transition to Higher Education

The transition from zilla schools to collegiate education marked a significant stage in the development of English studies in Odisha. While zilla schools laid the structural and pedagogical foundations of English studies in Odisha, institutions such as Ravenshaw College provided the infrastructure for advanced study and scholarly engagement.

The transformation of Cuttack Zilla School into Ravenshaw College in 1876 reflects the growing demand for higher education in the region. This shift was driven both by colonial

administrative needs and by local aspirations for social mobility and intellectual advancement.

Importantly, the establishment of a college within Odisha reduced the dependence on metropolitan centres such as Calcutta. As later institutional records suggest, Odia students were often reluctant to travel outside the province for higher education, making local institutions crucial for academic development (The Ravenshavian 1920).

This transition enabled the emergence of a localized intellectual culture, where English studies could be shaped in relation to regional concerns rather than metropolitan priorities alone. The institutionalization of English at Ravenshaw thus represents not merely an expansion of colonial education but the beginning of its transformation within a provincial context.

Ravenshaw College and the Institutionalization of English Studies

The transformation of English education in Odisha reaches its most significant institutional expression in the establishment and development of Ravenshaw College. Emerging from the earlier Cuttack Zilla School, the college represents not merely an expansion of colonial educational infrastructure but a crucial shift in the intellectual life of the region. It is at Ravenshaw that English studies move from being a pedagogical instrument to becoming a disciplinary and cultural formation.

The historical evolution of Ravenshaw College reflects both colonial policy and regional aspiration. As institutional records indicate, the expansion of English education in Odisha gained momentum in the late nineteenth century, particularly after the 1857 revolt, when the colonial state intensified its investment in education as a means of governance.¹¹ The number of students in the institution doubled within a few years, suggesting a growing acceptance of English education among the local population (“The Laying of the Foundation-Stone” 2).

This expansion must be read not simply as a reflection of colonial policy but as an indication of shifting social aspirations. For Odia elites, English education became a pathway to administrative employment, social mobility, and intellectual engagement. At the same time, the reluctance of students to travel to Calcutta for higher education underscores the importance of Ravenshaw as a regional centre. The establishment of college-level classes

¹¹ The expansion of Ravenshaw College in the late nineteenth century reflects broader colonial efforts to institutionalize higher education following the 1857 revolt.

within Odisha enabled the emergence of a localized intellectual community, reducing dependence on metropolitan institutions.

The early development of Ravenshaw College thus exemplifies what Dipesh Chakrabarty describes as “provincial modernity,”¹² where global institutional forms are reconstituted within local contexts (Chakrabarty 16). English studies at Ravenshaw were not simply transplanted from the metropole but adapted to the cultural, linguistic, and social realities of Odisha.

Faculty, Intellectual Mediation, and the Making of an Odia Intelligentsia

The institutionalization of English studies at Ravenshaw College was not merely a function of curriculum and policy but also of intellectual leadership. Faculty members played a crucial role in mediating colonial knowledge, translating it into forms that resonated with regional aspirations.

Figures such as Gopabandhu Das and Godabarish Mishra exemplify what Antonio Gramsci terms “organic intellectuals”—individuals who emerge from within a social group and articulate its experiences and aspirations (Gramsci 5). As educators, writers, and public figures, they bridged the gap between colonial pedagogy and local cultural contexts.

Their engagement with English education was neither passive nor wholly oppositional. Instead, they appropriated the language and literary forms of English to articulate issues of social reform, cultural identity, and political consciousness. This process reflects Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, where colonial subjects rework dominant discourses to produce new meanings (Bhabha 112).

The role of faculty at Ravenshaw thus complicates the notion of English education as a purely colonial imposition. Rather than simply transmitting imperial ideology, educators participated in its reinterpretation, transforming English into a medium of intellectual and cultural negotiation.

The Ravenshavian: Student Writing and the English Imagination

If the curriculum reveals the disciplinary logic of colonial education, student writing—particularly in *The Ravenshavian*—reveals its lived experience and imaginative

¹² The concept of “provincial modernity” is derived from Dipesh Chakrabarty’s critique of Eurocentric historiography.

transformation. Established in 1917, the magazine functioned as a crucial intellectual platform, documenting the cultural, literary, and political life of Ravenshaw College over several decades. What distinguishes *The Ravenshavian* from official educational records is its capacity to capture the lived experience of English education—its anxieties, aspirations, and creative possibilities—thereby offering an alternative archive of colonial modernity from below.

Far from being a peripheral or extracurricular activity, *The Ravenshavian* served as what may be termed a “pedagogical laboratory,” where students experimented with language, genre, and ideas. It provided a space for the articulation of a distinctly Odia English-language imagination, shaped by both colonial influences and local experiences.¹³

The content of the magazine reflects a wide range of intellectual engagements. Literary compositions, critical essays, and reviews of English texts indicate a deep engagement with the canonical tradition. At the same time, the inclusion of reports on student organizations, debates, and public events reveals the integration of English education into the broader social and cultural life of the institution.

Importantly, *The Ravenshavian* also documents the institutional growth of Ravenshaw College. Speeches, commemorative essays, and administrative reports provide valuable insights into the development of the college as a centre of higher education. For instance, references to the expansion of faculty and the introduction of new subjects highlight the increasing complexity and scope of English studies within the institution (“The Laying of the Foundation-Stone” 4–5).

From a theoretical perspective, the magazine can be understood through Jürgen Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, defined as a space of rational-critical debate where individuals engage with issues of common concern (Habermas 27). *The Ravenshavian* functioned as such a space within the institutional context of Ravenshaw College, enabling students and faculty to participate in intellectual discourse.

At the same time, the magazine exemplifies what Francesca Orsini describes as the “multilingual archive” of colonial print culture, where English coexists with vernacular languages and cultural forms (Orsini 15). The writings in *The Ravenshavian* thus reflect a

¹³ The *Ravenshavian* (1917–1947) remains a key archival source for understanding student writing and institutional culture at Ravenshaw College.

hybrid intellectual environment, where English is both a medium of expression and a site of negotiation.

English Beyond the Classroom: Print Culture and the Odia Public Sphere

If Ravenshaw College functioned as the institutional nucleus of English education in Odisha, print culture extended its reach into a broader social domain, enabling the circulation of ideas beyond the classroom and the formation of a regional public sphere. This sphere was constituted through a network of periodicals, magazines, and literary associations that facilitated the circulation of ideas and the formation of public opinion.

Periodicals such as *Arya*, *Mahodadhi*, and *Prabodh Chandrika* played a crucial role in this process. These publications not only disseminated information about scientific and technological developments but also provided a platform for debates on education, culture, and politics.¹⁴

The coexistence of modern scientific discourse and traditional cultural forms within these periodicals reflects the hybrid nature of the Odia public sphere. For instance, discussions of industrial technologies such as steam engines and electricity appear alongside traditional calendars and literary texts, illustrating the simultaneous engagement with global modernity and local tradition.

This hybrid public sphere aligns with Partha Chatterjee's distinction between the "inner" and "outer" domains of colonial society, where Western institutions coexist with indigenous cultural practices (Chatterjee 6). English education operated primarily in the outer domain of administration and public discourse, but its influence extended into the inner domain of cultural identity and social life.

At the same time, the public sphere was marked by ideological contestation. Articles such as "English Education and Independence" critique the colonial education system as a tool of intellectual domination, arguing that it produces a class of intermediaries rather than genuinely educated individuals ("English Education and Independence" 66).

Such critiques resonate with postcolonial theories of education, particularly those of Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who emphasize the role of language in shaping

¹⁴ Periodicals such as *Arya* and *Mahodadhi* played a crucial role in shaping public discourse in colonial Odisha.

consciousness and identity. The Odia public sphere thus becomes a site where the meanings and functions of English are actively debated and contested.

From Pedagogy to Politics: Nationalism and the Refunctioning of English

By the early twentieth century, English education in Odisha had become deeply intertwined with nationalist politics. Students and faculty at institutions such as Ravenshaw College participated in movements such as the Swadeshi Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Civil Disobedience Movement, using English as a medium for political expression and mobilization.¹⁵

This transformation reflects a broader shift in the function of English. Initially introduced as a tool of colonial governance, English became a language of resistance, enabling Indian intellectuals to articulate critiques of imperial rule. As Partha Chatterjee argues, nationalist discourse often appropriated the language of the colonizer to challenge colonial authority (Chatterjee 38).

Student writings and periodical literature provide evidence of this shift. Satirical works, essays, and political commentaries demonstrate how English was used to critique colonial policies and to articulate visions of national identity.

At the same time, English education facilitated the formation of a politically conscious intelligentsia. By providing access to global intellectual traditions, it enabled students to engage with ideas of democracy, liberty, and self-governance. This engagement was not merely theoretical but translated into active participation in political movements.

The refunctioning of English as a language of resistance thus represents a key moment in the history of English studies in Odisha. It illustrates how colonial education, despite its ideological foundations, could be appropriated and transformed by colonial subjects. Moreover, the trajectory traced across institutions, curricula, and print culture demonstrates that English studies in Odisha cannot be understood as a static colonial imposition but as a dynamic and contested field.

¹⁵ Nationalist movements such as Swadeshi and Non-Cooperation were deeply influenced by English-educated elites.

Conclusion: English Studies and the Making of Provincial Modernity

The institutionalization of English studies in Odisha between 1868 and 1950 represents a complex and dynamic process shaped by the interplay of colonial policy, regional aspiration, and intellectual agency. Ravenshaw College emerges as a central site in this process, functioning not merely as an instrument of imperial pedagogy but as a space of cultural negotiation and intellectual transformation.

Through its curriculum, faculty, student writings, and publications such as *The Ravenshavian*, the college facilitated the emergence of an Odia intelligentsia capable of engaging with both colonial and indigenous knowledge systems. English education, initially introduced as a tool of governance, was reworked into a medium of critique, creativity, and resistance.

In foregrounding Odisha as a site of provincial modernity, this study not only extends existing scholarship on colonial education but also challenges its metropolitan bias. The history of English studies in India, it suggests, must be rewritten from its margins, where the discipline acquired new meanings, functions, and political possibilities.

At the same time, the institutionalization of English studies remained socially uneven, with access largely mediated by class, caste, gender, and urban location, reminding us that colonial modernity simultaneously enabled intellectual mobility and reproduced inherited inequalities.

In this sense, the case of Ravenshaw College exemplifies the broader processes of provincial modernity, where global intellectual formations are reinterpreted and transformed within local contexts. English studies in Odisha thus emerges not as a static disciplinary formation but as a dynamic and evolving field shaped by historical contingencies and cultural negotiations.

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**Roots and Realms: An Eco-Conscious Journey Through Childhood in
Bibhuthibhushan Bandyopadhyay's 'Pather Panchali' and Barbara
Kingsolver's 'Prodigal Summer'**

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Abstract

This paper highlights how nature can act as a 'green shield' for the child characters 'Opu' and 'Durga' in '*Pather Panchali*' by Bibhuthibhushan Bandyopadhyay, protecting them from the two terrible things in the world, poverty and loneliness. It further differentiates how the child characters 'Lowell' and 'Crystal', in '*Prodigal Summer*' by Barbara Kingsolver, who are not in proximity to nature but in propinquity to modern electronic gadgets, lost the shield of nature and are compelled to confront the bitter social evils of society. This paper also emphasizes that children who are raised in nature's cradle can become future stewards of the Earth.

Keywords: Loneliness, Poverty, Children, Proximity, Nature, electronic gadgets.

Introduction

Homo sapiens, the modern human species, evolved and spent nearly their entire 120,000-year existence in the savannahs and woodlands. Our ancestors' long, sorrowful separation from nature began when they were able to live in permanent settlements and increase their population more quickly through the domestication of animals and plants (Manning 2004). However, children continued to have close contact with nature up until quite recently.

The majority of children two centuries ago spent their days on or near fields, farms, or the untamed wilderness that surrounded them.

Children's lives today are very different. Today's children rarely get the chance to play freely outside or spend much time in nature. Many reasons have caused their physical boundaries to shrink. Children's safety, pollution, insect-borne diseases and most importantly, modern gadgets are prominent among them (Francis 1991, Kytta 2004). However, research links children's reduced exposure to nature to significant trends in childhood health, such as elevated levels of depression and increased incidence of cognitive disabilities, obesity, and diabetes (Louv, 2005; Wals, 1994, Kellert, 2002, 2005).

According to many studies, humans have nature-based genetic coding and instincts as a result of our evolution in the natural world. Children are born with an innate sense of relatedness to nature, which is known as biophilia (Kellert and Wilson) or affiliation with nature, and it is important to nurture this tendency from an early age (Barrows 1995, Lewis 1996, Nelson 1993). When children have little or no interaction with the natural world, their development is thought to be a socialisation process that helps them learn to regard themselves as distinct from and not a part of the environment (Phenice and Griffore 2003, Sobel 1996).

It is the moral responsibility of the schools and parents to ensure that children spend their childhood in proximity to nature or at least in natural settings for their overall development. Most importantly, playgrounds that have been naturalised give hope that children will grow up to be future Earth stewards who protect the wonders and diversity of the natural world.

Literature Review

The role of nature in childhood development has been a recurring theme in both literary and psychological studies. Richard Louv's seminal work, *Last Child in the Woods* (2005), introduced the term "nature-deficit disorder" to describe the consequences of alienating children from natural environments. He emphasizes how overexposure to screens and underexposure to the natural world result in developmental, emotional, and behavioral issues.

In the field of ecocriticism, Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell argue that literature can play a vital role in shaping ecological consciousness by portraying human-nature interdependence.

Kingsolver, through her ecofeminist lens, and Bandyopadhyay, through his humanistic realism, provide literary terrains wherein childhood flourishes amidst natural surroundings.

Studies on *Pather Panchali* highlight how rural life, despite its hardships, nurtures imaginative freedom and emotional bonding. Critics like Gopa Nayak suggest that Apu and Durga's bond with nature offers both escape and enlightenment, serving as a counterbalance to their material poverty.

Conversely, Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* explores modern alienation from nature, highlighting how even in rural America, technological dependence and broken family dynamics disrupt a child's development. Scholars like Susan Dever and Randy Malamud argue that children in such narratives lose their innate ecological awareness and suffer psychological consequences. This contrast between nature-connected and screen-dominated childhoods is central to understanding the emotional and moral trajectories of children in both works.

In this paper, the lifestyles of children who spend most of their time with contemporary electronic devices and children who grow up in proximity to nature are compared and contrasted. Today's children are increasingly infatuated with screens for entertainment, social networking, or gaming (Cauchon), whereas previous generations relished simple outdoor pastimes like building forts, climbing trees, and skipping stones. Despite its benefits, an over-reliance on technology can impede social interactions, physical exercise, and creative play—all of which are critical for cognitive and emotional development.

This paper emphasizes that technological devices are not the only playthings that young children can use. Even something as basic as handcrafted toys, pebbles, or tiny twigs can inspire creativity, problem-solving abilities, and a stronger bond with nature. Unstructured play in the outdoors has been shown to improve children's focus, lower stress levels, and improve general well-being. Future generations can have happier and healthier childhoods if we promote a balance between technology and outdoor play.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To analyze the psychological and emotional impact of nature on child characters in *Pather Panchali* and *Prodigal Summer*.

- To compare and contrast the portrayal of childhood in rural, nature-rich versus technologically influenced environments.
- To explore how literature can advocate for eco-conscious upbringing as a remedy to loneliness, poverty, and psychological alienation.
- To emphasize the potential of nature to act as a protective and nurturing force, especially for vulnerable children.
- To examine the long-term implications of early environmental connections on shaping future ecological stewards.

Discussion

Nature appears not just as a background but also as a major character in '*Pather Panchali*' by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay and '*Prodigal Summer*' by Barbara Kingsolver, demonstrating the authors' deep reverence and affection for Mother Earth. The rural Bengali universe portrayed by Bandyopadhyay in '*Pather Panchali*' is one in which the environment is both cruel and nurturing, influencing the lives of its protagonists in personal and unavoidable ways. Nature's presence in '*Pather Panchali*' emphasizes its crucial importance in the human experience through the sounds of the wind, the seasons, and the serene beauty of the surroundings.

Similar to this, Kingsolver's '*Prodigal Summer*' crafts a complex story in which the verdant Appalachian environment not only serves as a backdrop but also as a real, breathing object that affects the protagonists' relationships and daily lives. Kingsolver portrays nature as a source of comfort, conflict, and renewal through the interdependence of human life, flora, and fauna. Despite being set in different geographical and cultural situations, both books examine the issue of harmony and conflict between humans and the earth, highlighting the close relationship that exists between humans and the land that supports them.

Pather Panchali

Horihor Roy is a poor Brahmin who lives in Nischidpur village along with his wife Sarbojaya and children Durga and Opu. His entire family lives on the paltry amount he earns as a village priest. His village house is a small ancestral home consisting of just two rooms, a raised veranda in front, and a courtyard in the heart of the woods with numerous trees, including jackfruit, mango, and bamboo groves, as well as a cow and a calf.

Chunks of the front veranda had fallen off. Wild cow-itch and kalmegh had taken root in the cracks and crevices of the walls and all the windows had to be held together with coconut-coir ropes, for the latches and hinges had long been broken. (Bandopadhyay 71)

Though they belong to the upper rung of the caste hierarchy, they are not treated with respect because of their financial status. In fact, they are mistreated by the rich of the village. The family doesn't have enough money to feed all its members three times a day. The children, Opu and Durga, never wear decent clothes.

My Opu doesn't even have a whole cloth to call his own. I've repaired so many holes in the one he wears that I've lost count. Thank goodness he doesn't care. But it breaks my heart to see my poor boy dance about happily in tattered rags. (Bandopadhyay 75)

It is hard to expect a happy childhood for the children in such a family. But it's the cradle of nature that has ensured the children a happy childhood, proving that material things can't snatch away the happiness of childhood.

One of the greatest assets in the lives of Durga and Opu is the 'forest' near their village, 'Nischidpur'.

For the next few minutes, the two siblings stood in peace under the jackfruit tree, relishing their summer treat. A quiet woodland peace reigned. The Roys' family home was practically in the middle of the woods, away from the bustle of the neighbourhood. (Bandopadhyay 71)

The other asset in their childhood is a society devoid of electronic devices and unknown dangers. The novel is set in pre-independence rural Bengal, where there are no electronic devices. So, their childhood is not entangled by television or cell phones. The novel is a testimony of how beautiful childhood would be if there were no electronic devices. Since, they reside in a danger-free society, both children have the freedom to roam around the village and in the forest near the village.

Durga, an 11-year-old girl, the eldest daughter of Horihor Roy and Sarbojaya, is the queen of the woodlands. Her entire life revolves around the village's woods and orchids. She is aware of

the berries which are the sweetest, the orchids which produce the sweetest plums, and the berry bushes which ripen quickly. Even when she is treading on human paths, she keeps a close eye out for attractive insects on the sides of the path, or little treasures like the yellow nightshade, the fruit of which would make a wonderful small toy for her doll box. Whenever she finds shattered, disposable clay shards, she quickly wraps them into the ends of her sari to utilise them as hopscotch markers afterwards. Games, her doll box, and orchards near their village are the soul and centre of her life. Despite her mother's reprimands for not behaving like typical girls in the village, Durga always finds her happiness in the woods nearby.

Look at you! No oil, no combing, loose hair flying everywhere.... who's going to say you're a brahmon's daughter? You just look like a tribal girl! Just as well, since no doubt that's who you'll end up marrying. All the other neighbourhood girls are lighting lamps and praying to Shib Thakur for good husbands... but not my daughter!.....and here she's running around jungles doing god knows what! (Bandopadhyay 90)

Opu, Durga's younger brother's favourite thing is to stealthily enter their late neighbor Neelmoni Roy's unkempt garden behind their house and to enact both sides, with equal intensity, of the epic war 'Mahabharatha' with his arrows, choir bows, and bamboo sword, along with running commentary from his storybook. Opu proves that one need not have costly or specially designed toys to have a creative and imaginative childhood, just a dried twig is enough.

Horihor Roy and Sarbojaya always lament their destitution, their helplessness in not providing a better life for their children and the debts they have in the village.

The eight rupees from the Roys barely see us through... and they only pay every second or third month! And then there are the loans. (Bandopadhyay 75)

But the children of the family, Opu and Durga, are the least concerned about their poverty and are always busy crafting plans to snatch oil and salt from the kitchen, without their mother's notice, and mix them with the raw mangoes and other berries they collect from the forest and have a delicious feast. They are the least bothered about their old clothes, lack of expensive food, or broken toys because they find an abundance of delight in the woods and gardens in their village.

'... I need some oil and salt.' She tilted the bowl towards him to show him a heap of sliced green mangoes. 'I'm going to pickle these.'

'Shh! From below the Shindurkota mango tree in Potli's garden. So, can you get the salt and oil? (Bandopadhyay 70)

I'll get some more mangoes in the evening. We can use the chilli then. The tree beside that little pond has more fruits this year than it can hold-it all comes tumbling down in the afternoon heat! (Bandopadhyay 70)

Thus, poverty cannot snatch away the children's happy childhood as they are in the cradle of nature. Woodlands are their playground, their adventurous place, their happiest place on the Earth and the soul of their life.

Opu tightened his grip on the sari once more, but this time it slipped almost immediately. "Brother and sister burst out laughing. The merriment of their youthful voices echoed and tinkled throughout the quiet woodlands and bamboo grove. (Bandopadhyay 106)

Maybe they are poor. But, amid woodlands, their childhood is no less happy than that of any rich child on the planet. Their childhood is filled with happy moments, adventures, and secret picnics.

One of the greatest adventures in their life is to find their lost calf. They have searched for it for two days but in vain. On the third day, they started their search once again but couldn't find it. During that time, a new idea popped into their minds. It's their long-term wish to see the railroad, which is on the horizon of the village, beyond the village's known boundary. In the name of finding the lost calf, both children have begun the journey towards unknown lands.

A big, deep breath, and then they were off again. Run, run, run! (Bandopadhyay 161)

That had been the first time in either of their lives that they had been beyond familiar boundaries, beyond watchful eyes and enforced limits. Exhilaration had coursed through their bodies. The joy of pure freedom, never before tasted, had made their young blood sing. (Bandopadhyay 161).

When they have understood that they have lost their way, without losing courage, they have found their way back to their house by treading marshy water and trudging through deserted paddy fields, pulling thorns from their legs and clothes. Finally, when they reach home, in order to escape from their mother's wrath, Durga has to cook up many stories.

When they had finally found the cobblestoned road again- after much treading of marshy water and trudging through deserted paddy fields- the golden afternoon had already sunk into the deep reds of early evening. When they reached home, his sister had to spin baskets upon baskets of lies to save both their hides from the wrath of their mother. (Bandopadhyay 162)

In this adventure, they are no less than explorers who chart new lands. The beauty and mysteries of the woodlands fill their hearts with wonderment and joy.

Their poverty can't stop them from having secret picnics and fun. Once Opu, Durga along with their other friend Bini, without the notice of elders, managed to get dried wood, brinjal, oil and cooked the food. Though the food is simple, just white rice and brown brinjal on green leaves, even without salt, it has given them unexpected happiness.

Cooking rice and brinjal in the middle of the woods had seemed rather fantastical (Bandopadhyay 254).

Salt! They hadn't even thought of bringing salt to the picnic, much less putting it in the food. Nonetheless, the three of them began to happily chew mouthfuls of the unripe yam and inadequately fried brinjals. Here they were, eating real food in the woods, sitting on piles of shrivelled custard-apple and palmyra leaves. Who would have thought? (Bandopadhyay 254).

They have been protected from all the adversities in their life by the green shield called nature. Because of their poverty Roy's family can't afford sweets even on special occasions. On special occasions, a sweet vendor, Chinibash comes to the village to sell special sweets.

Chinibash slowed a little when he saw the children at the doorway. Normally, he wouldn't have, for the Roys were too poor to ever buy anything from him. (Bandopadhyay 86)

As a part of fun and out of curiosity, they simply followed the sweet vendor to Bhubon Mukhujje's, one of the richest families in the village. The mistress of the family doesn't like both children's eye on their family's food. So she has uttered all the harsh words to insult them.

'What an unbelievable pair. The girl she's a greedy little thief if I ever saw one. If you want sweets buy and eat them in your own house! Why chase after the confectioner to other people's houses? Disgusting, I call it! And no wonder. Like mother, like daughter, I always say. That madame had probably put them up to it in the first place!'(Bandopadhyay 87)

Another day, for just picking up a coconut that had fallen in the storm, she has cursed the little ones with all the ruthless words.

That girl! Scarpering with a whole coconut!!! Lord, I beg you. Lord! Don't stand for this evil enmity!.....If there is power in this lamp-lighting hour, let my words come true: let those vermin never taste their stolen fruit. Let them end up under the milkwood pine before that coconut is cooked.... (Bandopadhyay 125)

The harsh words hit the little hearts hard. Again, it's the woodlands near the village that have given solace to them in their hard times. The forest is their happiest place on the earth, the soul of life. Since their family can't afford human-made sweets, they hunt in the woods for the abundant natural sweetness of fruits, from the humblest berries to the real mangoes.

Because of their poverty, they have to confront harsh words and bitter experiences from society. At a young age, all these can affect their little hearts and minds at a high intensity. They have the highest probability of falling into the ditches called 'loneliness' and 'depression'. But it's nature that shielded them from the societal evils. It's nature again that healed the wounds of the little hearts. It's the cradle of nature where their sorrows and wounds are healed and fills their world with innocent happiness. The greatest loss to Opu in his life is the death of his dearest sister Durga.

When he spotted the first leadwort blossom of the season, his first thought was about how happy she would have been to see it. Every bird call from the forest, every new cluster of wood rose buds made him miss her more. She was his sole companion in sharing these delights, the person he ran to tell when he spotted these annual miracles. Now the land was blooming again, but she was gone. (Bandopadhyay 380).

Had nature not been his companion Opu would have gone into depression.

Even scientific research also proves that children who are proximate to nature are less affected by life's stressful events.

Life's stressful events appear not to cause as much psychological distress in children who live in high-nature conditions compared with children who live in low-nature conditions...and the protective impact of nearby nature is strongest for the most vulnerable children, those experiencing the highest levels of stressful life events. (p 322) Wells and Evans (2003)

As Opu is much intertwined with nature as he has grown, he understands its importance in one's life and laments over deforestation and the destruction of nature in the name of urbanization.

Prodigal Summer

The novel '*Prodigal Summer*' is set in an American village in the 21st century. Lusa, a bugologist, is one of the protagonists of the novel. Though a city-bred girl, she has grown up amid insects, bugs and moths and dreams of marrying a farmer.

Spent it catching butterflies and moths, looking them up in her colour-keyed book and touching all the pictures, coveting those that hid in wilder places? (Kingsolver 38)

When she meets Cole, a farmer in Zublean Valley, she leaves her job and moves with him to the village to follow her childhood dream. The children, Crystal and Lowell, are Lusa's sister-in-law's children. Though the sister and brother duo Crystal and Lowell are born and brought up in a village in America called Zebulon, unfortunately, they are entangled in the web of

electronic devices. Unlike children in rural areas, their games and lives are not intertwined with nature. Electronic devices have taken them far away from nature.

“I don’t play with marbles.”

“What do you play with?”

“Game Boy.” (Kingsolver 295).

They have to confront harsh words from society as their father elopes with another woman, leaving behind their mother. Unlike ‘Opu’ and ‘Durga’, Crystal and Lowell don’t have the green shield called ‘nature’. Research asserts that children who are not proximate to nature have more chances to feel psychological distress to life’s stressful events, thus Crystal and Lowell have fallen into the terrible ditch called ‘loneliness’.

‘The boy’s a girl and the girl’s a boy’

*“Being a little person in a big world with nobody taking you very seriously is tough.”
(Kingsolver 234)*

Durga and other kids of her age, even Lusa, as a kid know about all the trees, insects and moths in their villages. Though Lusa hails from an urban area, she has grown up amid insects and moths whereas Crystal, being brought up in a village also doesn’t know how honey is collected through bee boxes.

“People raise bees, for honey. Everybody around here used to I’m sure. You see old broken-down bee boxes everywhere.” (Kingsolver 250)

Then Lusa understands that, though Crystal has been growing up in the rural part of the country, she has little attachment to nature.

How could rural kids grow up so ignorant of their world? Their parents gave them Game Boys and TVs that spewed out cityscapes of cops and pretty lawyers, but they couldn’t show them a katydid (Kingsolver 299)

She tries to connect Crystal with nature by encouraging her to catch the flies with nets and explaining to her about their uniqueness.

“I’d like to catch some bugs if it’s OK by you.”

They were both breathing hard when they reached the hilltop. Lusa flung herself on the ground panting and Crys sat down cross-legged. (Kingsolver 298)

It is in the lap of nature that Crys opens up her fears with Lusa and clears all the inhibitions and doubts in her little heart. Undoubtedly, it’s the cradle of nature that ensures a happy childhood.

Durga is a 20th-century village kid, when Lusa is a kid, she is an early 21st-century kid and Crystal is a late 21st-century kid. It is very much evident that as science and technology are advancing children are becoming ‘denatured’. Whether it is the 20th century or the 21st century a child is always a child. It cries when it is hungry, it feels happy when it is given toys to play with. The most crucial thing is that the toys need not be electronic devices but can be simple marbles or sticks amid nature or natural settings. Durga and Opu are testimony to a happy childhood with simple toys amidst nature. So the important thing is not toys but proximity to nature. Studies are suggesting that if proximity to nature is not possible, at least artificial nature settings are also more beneficial to children. (Fjortoft 2001)

Both Durga and Crystal hail from villages. Though they belong to different parts of the world and different time zones, the fact is that they both are children. Crystal has all the luxuries of Durga. Like Durga, even Crystal has a danger-free society, a society which is proximate to nature. The only difference is that for Durga, to play there is no option other than being proximate to nature but Crystal has many options to play. Had Crystal’s parents, like her aunt Lusa, would have encouraged her to be proximate to nature her childhood would also have been a happy childhood like Durga irrespective of challenges in life.

How could rural kids grow up so ignorant of their world? Their parents gave them Game Boys and TVs’ that spewed out cityscapes of cops and pretty lawyers but they couldn’t show them a katydid (Kingsolver299)

Both Opu and Lusa’s childhood is interlocked with nature so, when they grow up both feel that it is their ethical responsibility to protect nature. Lusa strongly condemns using of insecticides, unnecessary killing of animals and raising tobacco though it is a profitable crop in the area.

.....Can you believe people spray insecticide all over their fields?” (Kingsolver 302)

When her husband dies less than a year after a marriage she finds solace only in nature’s lap. Though she has the freedom to move back to the city and join in her previous job as a bugologist she prefers to work on her husband’s farm.

Opu strongly condemns deforestation and urbanisation across the world and finds it suffocating to work in concrete jungles. Like Lusa, when Opu’s beloved wife dies he finds solace only in nature’s lap. So he quits his job as a teacher and joins as a manager to an estate which is in deep jungles. Opu enjoys every moment of his life in the jungle. He feels like he has taken re-

birth again amid jungles. Both Lusa and Opu strongly feel that the complete growth of a child is possible only in the cradle of nature. So they strongly want the next generation to be raised in proximity to nature. Thus, Opu and Lusa have proved that whose lives are twined with nature at a young age, they grow up as future eco-warriors.

Children in *Pather Panchali* and *Prodigal Summer*

Both '*Pather Panchali*' and '*Prodigal Summer*' feature kid characters that have a close and deep bond with nature, which is essential to their emotional and mental growth. The rustic scenery of '*Pather Panchali*' is both joyful and sorrowful to the young Opu and his sister Durga. In addition to providing children with an escape from the struggles they endure at home, their imaginative exploration of the countryside—through fields, forests, and rivers—also helps them to better appreciate how fleeting life is. In its immensity and splendor, nature serves as a teacher and a companion, assisting them in understanding growth, loss, and pain. Opu has a formative relationship with nature, which teaches him about survival and life cycles while also influencing his curiosity, fortitude, and sense of self.

Both Kingsolver and Bandyopadhyay highlight the spiritual and educational significance of nature in children's lives, presenting it as a necessary setting for emotional development. The young characters in both books gain a sense of wonder, loss, and self-awareness via their encounters with nature, which serves as the basis for their adult existence. Childhood and environment are inextricably linked in these tales, with one continuously influencing and forming the other.

Conclusion

Research suggests that children's overall development is positively impacted by nature exposure, which also has benefits for the physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive development of children (Chawla, 1998; Kellert, 2002, 2005; Louv, 2005; Wals, 1994).

Nature offers a vital space for emotional healing for kids like Durga and Opu, who must deal with the dual problems of poverty and loss. Exposure to nature has been demonstrated to lower tension and anxiety, which helps children who have suffered trauma develop emotional

resilience (Chawla, 1998). For example, Louv (2005) emphasizes how spending time in natural environments can greatly enhance emotional control and lessen depressive symptoms in youth.

Nature can stimulate cognitive growth in addition to promoting emotional healing. Children who engage with nature have higher concentration, more creativity, and improved problem-solving abilities, according to research by Kellert (2002). The intricacy of nature promotes exploration, which is essential for cognitive development. Additionally, research by Wells (2000) has shown that kids who live in neighborhoods with access to green areas do better academically and have longer attention spans than kids who don't. This cognitive stimulation is essential for helping kids like Opu, who have suffered severe personal loss, overcome developmental obstacles.

It's also important to consider the positive social effects of being in nature. According to Kuo (2010), spending time in nature fosters collaboration and social behavior, all of which are critical for a child's healthy social development. Nature provides Lusa, an only child, with opportunities for unstructured social play that encourages peer cooperation and communication. It has been demonstrated that having natural areas in metropolitan areas enhances social cohesiveness and lessens feelings of loneliness, especially for kids from underprivileged homes (Kuo, 2003).

According to Wals (1994), these connections in natural environments are important for social skills and also improve the general well-being of kids from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, a number of studies stress the value of nature in reducing the negative consequences of socioeconomic disadvantages. According to research by Faber Taylor et al. (2001), children from low-income families who have access to natural places perform better academically, have better mental health, and experience less stress than their counterparts who do not.

Being in Proximate with nature Durga and Opu could overcome their suffering due to poverty and harsh attitudes from society. Being intertwined with nature, both Lusa and Opu could win over their loneliness as children (Lusa is the only child to their parents and Opu loses her sister Durga at a very young age) and depression as young widows.

Many researchers suggest that, independent of a child's race or socioeconomic background, exposure to nature is critical for the cognitive, emotional, social, and educational development of young people. The one magic phrase which is a great boon during childhood is 'Proximity to nature.'

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Enhancing Conceptual Clarity and Professional Communication Through Team-Based Terminology Discussion: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of a structured team-based discussion activity designed to improve students' understanding of specific and business terminology in a higher education setting. A total of 60 students participated in the activity, out of which 48 students (n = 48) submitted their responses via Microsoft Forms. The study employed a descriptive survey methodology to analyze student perceptions across eight key parameters: overall experience, understanding of specific terminology, understanding of business terminology, conceptual clarity, real-world application, confidence in usage, active participation, and depth of exploration. Quantitative analysis of the Likert-scale responses revealed that more than 90% of students provided positive ratings across all parameters, with overall experience receiving a 100% high rating (4 or 5). The findings indicate that collaborative, discussion-based learning is highly effective in developing professional communication skills, conceptual clarity, and student engagement. These results have significant implications for instructional design in business communication and language education at the undergraduate level.

Keywords: Team-based learning, Business terminology, Collaborative learning, Professional communication, Conceptual clarity, Active learning, Higher education

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, the ability to communicate effectively using domain-specific vocabulary is increasingly recognized as a critical professional competency. Business and industry-specific terminology forms the foundation of professional discourse, and students who lack proficiency in such language may face significant challenges in workplace communication, academic performance, and career advancement (Nation, 2001).

Traditional lecture-based methods of vocabulary instruction have often been criticized for their passive nature and limited retention outcomes (Prince, 2004). Active learning approaches, and

in particular collaborative or team-based learning (TBL), have emerged as powerful alternatives that promote deeper cognitive engagement, peer learning, and the practical application of concepts (Michaelsen & Sweet, 2008).

This study evaluates the effectiveness of a structured team discussion activity titled "Team Discussion on Specific & Business Terminology," conducted with undergraduate students. The activity was designed to encourage collaborative exploration of business and industry-related terms through discussion, peer explanation, and real-world contextualization.

The central research questions guiding this study are:

- (i) To what extent does team-based discussion improve students' understanding of specific and business terminology?
- (ii) Does collaborative discussion enhance conceptual clarity and confidence in professional communication?
- (iii) What is the level of active participation and peer-driven exploration during the activity?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Collaborative learning has been extensively studied as a pedagogical strategy in higher education. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory posits that learning is fundamentally social, occurring through interactions with peers within the Zone of Proximal Development. Team-based activities provide precisely such an environment, enabling learners to scaffold each other's understanding of complex concepts.

Michaelsen, Knight, and Fink (2004) formalized Team-Based Learning as a structured instructional strategy with four essential elements: groups, accountability, feedback, and assignment design. Research consistently demonstrates that TBL improves content mastery, critical thinking, and interpersonal communication skills compared to traditional instruction (Haidet et al., 2012).

In the domain of language and terminology learning, Nation (2001) emphasizes the importance of contextualized vocabulary instruction, arguing that learners retain terminology more effectively when it is encountered in meaningful, authentic contexts. Business English and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) literature further supports the integration of real-world language tasks in professional communication education (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Several studies have reported significant learning gains from peer discussion in terminology comprehension. Lou et al. (1996) found in a meta-analysis that small-group learning consistently produced higher achievement outcomes than individual learning.

Despite this body of evidence, few studies have quantitatively evaluated short-duration, structured team discussion activities using systematic student feedback instruments. This study contributes to filling that gap.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey research is appropriate when the objective is to systematically describe the characteristics, perceptions, or responses of a defined population at a specific point in time (Creswell, 2014). The data were

collected immediately following the completion of the activity to capture students' fresh perceptions.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

A total of 60 undergraduate students enrolled in a Business Communication course participated in the team discussion activity. Of these, 48 students (80%) submitted their responses through an online survey instrument administered via Microsoft Forms. The response rate of 80% is considered robust for survey-based educational research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008).

3.3 THE ACTIVITY

Students were divided into small teams and assigned specific business and industry-related terminology topics. Each team engaged in a structured discussion covering the meaning, contextual application, and real-world relevance of their assigned terms. Teams were encouraged to explore examples beyond the provided material and to collaboratively clarify any conceptual doubts. At the conclusion of the activity, responses were collected and analyzed systematically.

3.4 INSTRUMENT

The data collection instrument consisted of an eight-item structured questionnaire. Seven items employed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to assess specific dimensions of the activity's effectiveness. One item used a 5-point rating scale (1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent) to measure overall experience. The questionnaire was administered digitally via Microsoft Forms immediately following the activity.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Frequency distributions and percentage calculations were performed for all items. Responses rated 4 (Agree/Good) and 5 (Strongly Agree/Excellent) were classified as positive responses, in line with standard Likert analysis practices. Neutral (3), negative (2), and strongly negative (1) responses were analyzed separately to identify any areas requiring improvement.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents a comprehensive summary of student responses across all eight parameters evaluated in the study.

Table 1: Summary of Student Responses (n = 48)

Parameter	Strongly Agree / Excellent (5)	Agree / Good (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	SD (1)	Positive %
Overall Experience	33 (68.75%)	15 (31.25%)	0	0	0	100.00%
Understanding of Specific Terminology	19 (39.58%)	27 (56.25%)	1 (2.08%)	1 (2.08%)	0	95.83%
Understanding of Business Terminology	20 (41.67%)	27 (56.25%)	1 (2.08%)	0	0	97.92%
Conceptual Clarity Through Discussion	19 (39.58%)	26 (54.17%)	3 (6.25%)	0	0	93.75%
Connection to Real-World Applications	19 (39.58%)	26 (54.17%)	2 (4.17%)	1 (2.08%)	0	93.75%

Parameter	Strongly Agree / Excellent (5)	Agree / Good (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	SD (1)	Positive %
Confidence in Using Terminology	18 (37.50%)	26 (54.17%)	4 (8.33%)	0	0	91.67%
Active Participation by Team Members	20 (41.67%)	23 (47.92%)	1 (2.08%)	4 (8.33%)	0	89.59%
Sharing of Examples Beyond Material	24 (50.00%)	21 (43.75%)	3 (6.25%)	0	0	93.75%

4.1 OVERALL EXPERIENCE

All 48 respondents rated their experience as either Good (4) or Excellent (5), resulting in a 100% positive response rate. Specifically, 33 students (68.75%) rated the activity as Excellent and 15 students (31.25%) as Good. This exceptional outcome is consistent with prior research indicating that active, learner-centred tasks generate high levels of student satisfaction and engagement (Freeman et al., 2014).

4.2 UNDERSTANDING OF SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

A total of 46 students (95.83%) indicated positive improvement in their understanding of specific terminology, with 19 students strongly agreeing (39.58%) and 27 agreeing (56.25%). Only one student (2.08%) remained neutral and one (2.08%) disagreed. These results affirm that structured peer discussion is highly effective for vocabulary acquisition in specialized domains, corroborating findings from Nation (2001).

4.3 UNDERSTANDING OF BUSINESS TERMINOLOGY

This parameter recorded the second-highest positive response rate at 97.92% (n = 47). Twenty students (41.67%) strongly agreed and 27 (56.25%) agreed that their understanding of business terminology improved. Only one student (2.08%) remained neutral. This outcome aligns with the communicative approach to ESP instruction, where contextual, collaborative engagement is recognized as superior to rote learning (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

4.4 CONCEPTUAL CLARITY THROUGH TEAM DISCUSSION

93.75% of students (n = 45) indicated that team discussions deepened their conceptual clarity, with 19 students strongly agreeing (39.58%) and 26 agreeing (54.17%). Three students (6.25%) remained neutral, which may reflect individual differences in collaborative learning preferences. These findings support Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural framework, which emphasizes peer interaction as a mechanism for conceptual development.

4.5 CONNECTION TO REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS

93.75% of respondents positively affirmed their team's ability to connect terminology with real-world examples (Strongly Agree: 39.58%, Agree: 54.17%). One student (2.08%) disagreed, and two (4.17%) remained neutral. The capacity to contextualize vocabulary in authentic scenarios is a key indicator of deep learning and transferable professional competency (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

4.6 CONFIDENCE IN USING TERMINOLOGY

91.67% of students reported increased confidence in using business terminology following the activity (Strongly Agree: 37.50%, Agree: 54.17%). Four students (8.33%) remained neutral, indicating that confidence-building may require additional sustained practice for a minority of learners. These results are consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which posits that successful collaborative performance enhances individuals' belief in their own competence.

4.7 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY TEAM MEMBERS

89.59% of students affirmed that all members of their team participated actively (Strongly Agree: 41.67%, Agree: 47.92%). Four students (8.33%) disagreed. This was the lowest positive response rate across all parameters, suggesting that group dynamics and individual accountability warrant continued attention in instructional design. Michaelsen and Sweet (2008) similarly note that inter-group participation disparities are a common challenge in TBL implementation.

4.8 SHARING OF ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES AND EXPLORATION

93.75% of respondents confirmed that their team shared examples beyond the provided material (Strongly Agree: 50.00%, Agree: 43.75%), with three students (6.25%) remaining neutral. The high proportion of strong agreement (50%) suggests that the activity successfully stimulated intrinsic motivation and intellectual curiosity, key attributes of deep-approach learners (Marton & Säljö, 1976).

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling empirical evidence for the effectiveness of structured team-based discussion as a pedagogical tool in higher education business communication contexts. Across all eight parameters, positive response rates consistently exceeded 89%, with five of the eight dimensions exceeding 93%.

The near-universal high rating for overall experience (100%) suggests that the activity format itself was engaging and perceived as valuable by students, which is a necessary precondition for effective learning (Keller, 1987). The particularly strong performance on understanding of business terminology (97.92%) and sharing of examples (93.75%) indicates that collaborative, peer-driven learning environments are especially conducive to vocabulary acquisition and deep exploration.

The slightly lower positive response rate for active participation (89.59%) — the only parameter to receive any disagreement responses — highlights an inherent challenge of group-based learning: equitable contribution. These results are consistent with the social loafing literature (Latané et al., 1979), which identifies uneven participation as a recurring concern in collaborative settings. Future iterations of this activity may benefit from structured individual accountability mechanisms, such as individual readiness assurance tests (iRATs) as advocated by Michaelsen et al. (2004).

Overall, the consistent pattern of high positive ratings across conceptual, affective, and participatory dimensions confirms the multi-dimensional effectiveness of the team discussion approach. This aligns with the construct of 'active learning' as defined by Bonwell and Eison

(1991): learning that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that a structured team-based discussion activity is a highly effective pedagogical tool for enhancing undergraduate students' understanding of specific and business terminology. With consistently high positive response rates across all dimensions — including conceptual clarity (93.75%), confidence in language use (91.67%), and real-world application (93.75%) — the findings affirm the value of collaborative, active learning over passive instructional methods.

The activity's success in stimulating peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, contextual vocabulary learning, and professional communication skills underscores its potential as a replicable model for language and business communication instruction in higher education. To further optimize outcomes, instructors are encouraged to supplement team discussions with individual accountability mechanisms to address participation disparities.

Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of repeated TBL interventions on vocabulary retention and professional communication competency, as well as comparisons across different disciplinary contexts and student cohorts.

7. LIMITATIONS

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample size of 48 respondents, while sufficient for descriptive analysis, limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional survey design captures perceptions at a single point in time and does not assess long-term retention or transfer of learning. Third, self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias. Fourth, the absence of a control group precludes causal inference. Future studies employing experimental or quasi-experimental designs with larger, more diverse samples are recommended to validate and extend these findings.

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Nature, Humanity, and Ecological Harmony in the Writings of Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract

This research paper explores the ecological consciousness and environmental philosophy reflected in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's literary works present nature not merely as a physical backdrop but as a living, spiritual, and moral force deeply connected with human existence. Through his poetry, essays, songs, novels, and educational philosophy, Tagore emphasizes harmony between humans and nature and advocates a balanced relationship based on coexistence, respect, and spiritual unity. The paper examines how Tagore's ecological vision anticipates modern environmental thought and sustainability discourse. It analyses selected works such as *Gitanjali*, *Sadhana*, and his educational experiments at Visva-Bharati University to demonstrate his belief in natural harmony, rural regeneration, and environmental ethics. The study further discusses Tagore's critique of industrial modernity and materialism, which disrupt the organic relationship between humans and the natural world. Using ecocritical and philosophical approaches, the paper highlights Tagore's relevance in contemporary discussions on ecology, sustainability, and environmental consciousness. Ultimately, the research argues that Tagore's writings provide a holistic ecological vision that promotes emotional, cultural, and spiritual integration with nature, offering valuable insights for addressing present environmental crises.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, ecology, nature, sustainability, ecocriticism, environmental ethics, harmony, humanism, Indian literature.

Introduction

The relationship between nature and humanity has been a central concern in literary, philosophical, and environmental discourses across cultures. In the modern age, increasing industrialization, environmental degradation, and ecological crises have renewed interest in thinkers and writers who envisioned a harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world. Among such visionaries, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), the Nobel Prize-winning poet, philosopher, educator, and social reformer, occupies a unique position. His writings reflect a profound ecological consciousness that transcends conventional anthropocentric perspectives and emphasizes the interconnectedness of all forms of life. Through his poetry,

essays, songs, novels, and educational philosophy, Tagore articulated a vision of ecological harmony grounded in spiritual unity, ethical responsibility, and respect for nature [1]. Tagore's understanding of nature was deeply influenced by the Indian philosophical tradition, particularly the Upanishadic concept of the unity of existence. He perceived nature not as an external object to be exploited but as a living and dynamic presence intimately connected with human life. In his literary works, nature appears as a source of beauty, wisdom, creativity, and spiritual realization. The natural world in Tagore's writings serves as a medium through which individuals can transcend material limitations and experience a deeper sense of universal belonging [2]. His poetic imagination frequently portrays rivers, forests, flowers, birds, and seasons as active participants in human existence, thereby challenging the rigid separation between humanity and nature. The ecological dimensions of Tagore's thought are particularly relevant in the contemporary context of environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and unsustainable development. Long before the emergence of modern environmentalism, Tagore warned against the dangers of excessive materialism, mechanization, and the domination of nature for economic gain. He criticized the exploitative tendencies of industrial civilization and advocated a development model that balanced human progress with ecological sustainability [3]. His critique was not merely economic or political but fundamentally ethical, emphasizing the need for harmony between human aspirations and the natural environment. Tagore's educational experiments at Santiniketan further demonstrate his commitment to ecological values. He envisioned education as a process that nurtures an intimate relationship between learners and nature. Open-air classrooms, seasonal festivals, tree-planting ceremonies, and direct engagement with the natural environment formed integral components of his educational philosophy [4]. Through these practices, Tagore sought to cultivate environmental awareness, creativity, and a sense of responsibility toward the earth. His educational vision anticipated many principles that are now associated with environmental education and sustainable living.

Furthermore, Tagore's literary and philosophical works reveal a holistic conception of humanity. He believed that human well-being cannot be separated from the well-being of nature. His writings emphasize mutual dependence, compassion, and coexistence rather than domination and exploitation. This perspective resonates strongly with contemporary ecological theories, particularly those advocating deep ecology, environmental ethics, and sustainable development [5]. By foregrounding the intrinsic value of nature, Tagore offers an alternative framework for understanding the relationship between humans and the environment. This paper examines the themes of nature, humanity, and ecological harmony in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. It explores how his literary works and philosophical reflections articulate an ecological worldview rooted in spiritual interconnectedness and ethical responsibility. By analyzing selected texts, the study highlights the relevance of Tagore's environmental vision in addressing contemporary ecological concerns and demonstrates how his ideas continue to inspire sustainable and harmonious ways of living in the twenty-first century.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach based on textual analysis of selected literary works of Rabindranath Tagore. The research uses ecocritical theory and environmental humanities as the primary theoretical frameworks. Primary texts include poems, essays, songs, and lectures, while secondary sources include scholarly articles, books, and critical studies related to ecology and Tagore's philosophy.

Ecological Consciousness in Tagore's Writings

Rabindranath Tagore's ecological consciousness emerges from his deep understanding of the interconnectedness between human beings and the natural world. Unlike modern environmental thought, which often develops in response to ecological crises, Tagore's environmental vision was rooted in a spiritual and philosophical worldview that recognized nature as a living, dynamic, and sacred entity. His poems, essays, songs, and lectures consistently portray nature not merely as a backdrop for human activity but as an active participant in the process of life and self-realization. Tagore believed that the alienation of humanity from nature leads to moral and spiritual decline, while a harmonious relationship with the environment fosters creativity, inner peace, and collective well-being [6]. In works such as *Gitanjali*, *The Religion of Man*, and *Tapovan*, he emphasized the unity of all existence and advocated respect for the intrinsic value of natural elements. His criticism of industrialization and unchecked materialism reflected concerns about the exploitation of natural resources and the disruption of ecological balance [7]. Through his educational experiments at Santiniketan and Sriniketan, Tagore promoted environmental awareness, tree plantation, rural reconstruction, and sustainable living practices, anticipating many principles of contemporary ecological thought [8]. His writings thus offer a holistic ecological perspective that integrates environmental stewardship with ethical responsibility, cultural values, and spiritual harmony. In the context of present-day environmental challenges, Tagore's ecological consciousness remains highly relevant, providing an alternative framework for understanding sustainable development and humanity's relationship with the natural world [9].

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."

Gitanjali, Poem 69

"The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion."

Gitanjali, Poem 65

Nature as a Living Presence

In Rabindranath Tagore's writings, nature is portrayed as a living, dynamic, and spiritually significant presence that shares an intimate relationship with human life. Rather than treating nature as a passive background, Tagore presents rivers, forests, flowers, birds, and changing seasons as active expressions of the universal spirit. His literary works emphasize that human emotions, creativity, and moral development are deeply influenced by the natural environment. Nature symbolizes growth, renewal, beauty, and harmony, serving as a bridge between the individual and the cosmos. In *Gitanjali*, natural imagery becomes a medium for spiritual realization, through which the poet experiences divine presence and universal unity. The poems express gratitude toward the earth and celebrate the interconnectedness of all living beings, suggesting that genuine happiness and wisdom emerge from a close relationship with nature. Through this vision, Tagore challenges the separation between humanity and the environment and advocates a worldview based on mutual coexistence and respect for the natural world [10], [11].

"The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs."

"Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven."

Stray Birds, No. 311

Spiritual Relationship with Nature

Tagore's ecological vision is deeply rooted in Indian spiritual traditions, particularly the Upanishadic concept of the essential unity of all existence. He believed that nature and humanity are not separate entities but integral parts of a larger cosmic reality. According to Tagore, the natural world reflects the divine spirit and provides opportunities for individuals to attain self-realization and spiritual fulfillment. In *Sadhana*, he argues that human beings discover their true nature when they live in harmony with the environment rather than seeking domination over it. He viewed the modern tendency to isolate humans from nature as a source of alienation, moral decline, and spiritual emptiness. By emphasizing harmony, balance, and interconnectedness, Tagore presents nature as a sacred space where individuals can experience freedom, beauty, and communion with the universe. His spiritual interpretation of ecology offers an ethical framework that encourages reverence for life and environmental responsibility [12], [13].

"The same consciousness that is manifest in the stars and the planets shines in the inner being of man."

Sadhana: The Realisation of Life

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!"

Gitanjali, Poem 11

Critique of Industrial Civilization

Tagore strongly criticized the unchecked growth of industrialization, materialism, and mechanized civilization, which he believed threatened both human values and ecological balance. He argued that modern industrial society promotes excessive consumption, competition, and exploitation of natural resources while weakening humanity's emotional and spiritual connection with nature. In his essays, lectures, and social commentaries, Tagore warned against the consequences of urban expansion, environmental destruction, and economic systems driven solely by profit. He believed that mechanical progress without ethical restraint leads to social inequality and ecological degradation. As an alternative, Tagore advocated rural reconstruction, sustainable development, community cooperation, and a simpler mode of living that respected natural limit. His educational and rural development initiatives at Santiniketan and Sriniketan reflected these principles in practice. In the contemporary era of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental crises, Tagore's critique of industrial civilization remains remarkably relevant, offering valuable insights into the pursuit of sustainable and harmonious development [14], [15].

"The Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation."

Nationalism

"Man's world is never truly human unless it is made beautiful by harmony with nature."

The Religion of Man

Nature in Tagore's Poetry

Nature imagery occupies a central place in Rabindranath Tagore's poetry, serving as a powerful medium for expressing emotional, philosophical, and spiritual experiences. His poems are filled with vivid descriptions of changing seasons, rivers, flowers, birds, clouds, and sunlight, all of which symbolize different aspects of human life and consciousness. Rather than depicting nature merely as a physical landscape, Tagore presents it as a living force that participates in human joys, sorrows, hopes, and aspirations. In *Gitanjali*, the poem beginning "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day" illustrates the unity between human existence and the natural world, emphasizing the common life-force shared by all creation. Similarly, in *The Crescent Moon*, natural elements such as the sky, flowers, and moonlight create an atmosphere of wonder and spiritual intimacy, revealing the poet's belief that nature is a source of beauty, wisdom, and self-discovery [16], [17].

"Today the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs; and the bees are plying their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering grove."

Gitanjali, Poem 20

"The rain has held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely naked—not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower."

Gitanjali, Poem 18

Seasons and Human Emotions

Tagore frequently employs seasonal imagery to symbolize human emotions, psychological states, and the cyclical nature of life. Spring, with its blossoming flowers and fresh greenery, often represents joy, hope, love, and renewal, while the monsoon season reflects longing, passion, separation, and transformation. In the poem "Aji Jharo Jharo Mukharo Badolo Dine" ("On This Rainy Day"), the monsoon rain becomes a metaphor for emotional intensity and yearning, capturing the restless feelings of the human heart. Likewise, in the celebrated song "Ore Grihabashi, Khol Dwar Khol," the arrival of spring symbolizes awakening and liberation from stagnation, encouraging individuals to embrace new possibilities and spiritual growth. Through these seasonal representations, Tagore connects human emotions with the rhythms of nature, demonstrating that personal experiences are inseparable from the larger processes of the natural world [18], [19].

"Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside at the door all alone?"

Gitanjali, Poem 16

"The storm is over now and the sky is smiling like a flower."

The Crescent Moon

Rivers and Freedom

Rivers are among the most recurring symbols in Tagore's poetry and frequently represent movement, continuity, freedom, and the eternal flow of life. The flowing river signifies both physical and spiritual journeys, reflecting the dynamic nature of existence and the interconnectedness of all living beings. In *Gitanjali*, the image of the river flowing toward the sea symbolizes the human soul's journey toward the infinite and its desire for union with the divine. Another notable example appears in the poem "The Golden Boat" (*Sonar Tori*), where the river serves as a symbol of life's continuous passage and the fleeting nature of worldly possessions. The movement of water in these poems conveys freedom from limitations and emphasizes the necessity of embracing change as a fundamental aspect of existence. Through river imagery, Tagore celebrates life's fluidity and humanity's place within the larger currents of nature [20], [21].

"The stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."

Gitanjali, Poem 69

"The river has its everyday work to do and hastens through fields and hamlets."

Stray Birds

Birds and Spiritual Aspiration

Birds in Tagore's poetry symbolize freedom, imagination, transcendence, and the soul's aspiration toward spiritual fulfillment. Their ability to soar across the sky represents liberation from worldly constraints and the quest for higher truths. In *Stray Birds*, Tagore uses birds as symbols of fleeting wisdom and spiritual insight, as seen in brief poetic reflections that connect natural beauty with universal truths. Another significant example appears in *The Gardener*, where the image of a bird leaving its cage symbolizes the soul's longing for freedom and self-realization. Birds often function as messengers between the earthly and the divine realms, embodying the human desire to transcend material limitations and attain spiritual enlightenment. Through such imagery, Tagore establishes a profound emotional and spiritual relationship between humanity and the natural environment, presenting nature as a guide on the path toward inner freedom and universal harmony [22], [23].

"Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark."

Stray Birds, No. 254

"The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs."

Gitanjali, Poem 48

Educational Philosophy and Nature

Rabindranath Tagore's ecological consciousness found practical expression in his educational philosophy, which emphasized learning in close communion with nature. He believed that true education should not be confined within the walls of classrooms but should unfold in an environment where students could directly experience the beauty, rhythms, and lessons of the natural world. This vision was realized at Santiniketan, where classes were conducted under trees and amidst open landscapes, enabling learners to develop a living relationship with their surroundings. Tagore regarded nature as an active teacher that nurtures creativity, observation,

imagination, and emotional growth. His educational system sought to cultivate environmental awareness, respect for nature, simplicity, sustainability, rural development, and artistic harmony. These principles anticipated many contemporary ideas of environmental education and sustainable learning. The ecological spirit of his educational philosophy is reflected in his poetry as well. In *Gitanjali*, the poet declares, “The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world,” emphasizing the unity between human beings and the natural environment and suggesting that learning emerges from recognizing this interconnectedness [24]. Similarly, in *The Crescent Moon*, the poem “The Champa Flower” presents a child imagining himself as a flower growing on a tree, expressing innocence, imagination, and an intimate bond with nature that mirrors Tagore’s educational ideals [25]. Another example appears in *Gitanjali*, where the poet finds divine presence not in isolation but amidst fields, sunlight, and everyday life, highlighting nature as a source of wisdom and spiritual insight [24]. Likewise, in *The Crescent Moon*, poems such as “Playthings” depict children learning through direct engagement with the natural world rather than through rigid instruction, reinforcing Tagore’s belief that nature stimulates curiosity and holistic development [25]. Through both his educational experiments and poetic works, Tagore advocated a model of learning that harmonizes intellectual growth with environmental sensitivity and cultural creativity, making his educational philosophy remarkably relevant to modern discussions of sustainability and ecological responsibility [26].

"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence."

Personality

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free."

Gitanjali, Poem 35

Tagore and Sustainability

Although the term “sustainability” emerged long after Rabindranath Tagore’s lifetime, many of his ideas anticipate contemporary concepts of sustainable development, ecological balance, and environmental ethics. Tagore believed that human progress should be achieved in harmony with nature rather than through its exploitation. His vision of rural reconstruction emphasized self-reliant villages, environmentally responsible agriculture, traditional crafts, and local economic systems that preserved ecological equilibrium. Through the rural development initiatives at Sriniketan, he sought to improve social and economic conditions while maintaining respect for natural resources. Tagore consistently argued that genuine prosperity depends upon cooperation with nature and warned against forms of development that encourage excessive consumption, environmental degradation, and social inequality. His ecological philosophy promotes compassion, responsibility, and ethical relationships with all forms of life, principles that closely resemble modern discussions of sustainability and environmental stewardship [27].

The foundations of this sustainable worldview can be observed throughout Tagore’s poetry. In *Gitanjali*, the poet proclaims, “The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world,” emphasizing the interconnectedness of human beings, animals, plants, and the wider universe. This image suggests that human well-being is inseparable from

the health of the natural world and reflects an ecological understanding of mutual dependence [27]. Another example from *Gitanjali* appears in poems where the divine is encountered amid fields, rivers, and open landscapes rather than through material accumulation, conveying the idea that fulfillment arises from harmony with nature rather than domination over it [27].

Tagore's concern for sustainable living is also evident in *The Gardener*. In one poem, the blossoming flower becomes a symbol of nature's generosity and beauty, reminding human beings of the need to appreciate rather than exploit the gifts of the earth. Similarly, the recurring imagery of gardens, trees, and seasonal cycles throughout the collection illustrates the importance of balance, renewal, and coexistence between humanity and nature [28]. These poetic representations reinforce Tagore's conviction that nature possesses intrinsic value and should be treated with respect and care. By advocating rural self-sufficiency, ecological responsibility, and ethical engagement with the environment, Tagore developed a vision that resonates strongly with present-day concerns about sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and environmental justice. His writings continue to offer valuable insights into creating a future based on harmony, responsibility, and ecological ethics rather than unchecked exploitation of natural resources [29].

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."

Gitanjali, Poem 69

"Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf."

Stray Birds, No. 48

"The trees, like longings of the earth, stand a-tiptoe to peep at the heaven."

Stray Birds, No. 48

"The river has its everyday work to do and hastens through fields and hamlets."

Stray Birds, No. 48

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life."

Gitanjali, Poem 1

"The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough."

Stray Birds, No. 267

Ecocritical Interpretation of Tagore

From an ecocritical perspective, Rabindranath Tagore's writings offer a profound challenge to anthropocentric worldviews that place human beings at the center of existence and regard nature merely as a resource for human use. Instead, Tagore advances an ecocentric vision in which humans are integral participants within a larger web of life. His literary works emphasize ecological harmony, celebrate biodiversity, criticize exploitative attitudes toward the environment, encourage ethical coexistence, and integrate spirituality with ecological awareness. For Tagore, nature possesses intrinsic value independent of its utility to humans,

and the well-being of humanity is inseparable from the well-being of the natural world. This perspective anticipates many contemporary concerns of environmental humanities and green literary studies, which seek to understand the ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of human–nature relationships [30].

Tagore’s ecocentric outlook is vividly expressed in *Gitanjali*. One notable example occurs in the famous lines, “The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world,” where the poet dissolves the boundaries between humanity and the rest of creation. The image presents all living beings as participants in a shared life force, emphasizing ecological interconnectedness rather than human superiority [30]. A second example from *Gitanjali* appears in poems where the divine presence is experienced through sunlight, fields, rivers, flowers, and the rhythms of nature. By locating spiritual fulfillment within the natural environment, Tagore elevates nature from a passive setting to an active source of wisdom and sacred meaning, reinforcing an ecocentric understanding of existence [30].

Similarly, *Stray Birds* provides numerous examples of Tagore’s ecological sensitivity and appreciation of biodiversity. In one celebrated verse, the free movement of birds across the sky symbolizes harmony between living creatures and their environment, highlighting freedom and coexistence rather than domination. Another example is found in the brief poetic reflections that compare flowers, trees, clouds, and birds to expressions of universal truth and beauty. These images celebrate the diversity of life forms and encourage readers to recognize their intrinsic worth beyond economic or utilitarian considerations [31]. Through such poetic representations, Tagore cultivates respect for all living beings and advocates a relationship with nature grounded in empathy and reverence.

An ecocritical reading of Tagore also reveals his criticism of environmental exploitation and materialistic attitudes. His recurring preference for rural landscapes, forests, rivers, and open skies over mechanized urban environments reflects a concern for preserving ecological balance and cultural harmony. Rather than promoting conquest over nature, Tagore advocates cooperation, restraint, and ethical responsibility. His integration of spirituality with ecology suggests that environmental care is not merely a practical necessity but also a moral and spiritual obligation. Consequently, Tagore’s ecological thought contributes significantly to contemporary environmental discourse by offering a holistic framework that combines environmental ethics, cultural values, and spiritual consciousness. His writings continue to inspire ecocritical scholarship and provide valuable insights for addressing modern ecological challenges through harmony, sustainability, and respect for the interconnected community of life [32].

"Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven."

Stray Birds, No. 311

"The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough."

Stray Birds, No. 267

"Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf."

Stray Birds, No. 48

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."

Gitanjali, Poem 69

Relevance in the Contemporary World

Rabindranath Tagore's environmental philosophy possesses remarkable relevance in the contemporary world, where humanity faces unprecedented ecological challenges such as global warming, climate change, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation. His vision of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature offers an alternative to the exploitative models of development that have contributed to the present ecological crisis. Tagore emphasized sustainable living, ecological balance, rural self-reliance, environmental ethics, and a deep spiritual connection with the natural world, principles that closely align with modern concepts of sustainable development and environmental conservation. In his poetry, nature is not merely a resource for human use but a living presence deserving respect, care, and ethical responsibility. His belief that human well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the environment encourages a holistic approach to development that integrates economic progress with ecological sustainability. Furthermore, Tagore's advocacy of environmental awareness through education, community participation, and cultural values highlights the importance of fostering ecological consciousness among future generations. In an age marked by increasing environmental uncertainty, Tagore's writings remind humanity that protecting nature is not only a scientific, economic, or political necessity but also a moral and cultural obligation. His ecological vision continues to inspire scholars, environmentalists, educators, and policymakers seeking sustainable solutions to contemporary environmental problems and a more balanced relationship between humanity and the natural world.

Sustainable Living: In the contemporary world, marked by climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation, Tagore's vision of sustainable living offers important insights for building a balanced relationship between humanity and nature. He believed that human progress should be guided by moderation, simplicity, and respect for ecological limits rather than by excessive consumption and materialism. This perspective is reflected in *Gitanjali*, where the poet repeatedly finds fulfillment in the simple gifts of nature rather than in material wealth. One example appears in the poem beginning "The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day," which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life and the need for harmonious coexistence with the natural world [33]. Another example is found in poems where the poet experiences joy in sunlight, fields, rivers, and open landscapes, suggesting that true prosperity emerges from communion with nature rather than domination over it [33]. These poetic insights resonate strongly with contemporary principles of sustainable development and ecological responsibility.

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."

Gitanjali, Poem 69

"Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf."

Stray Birds, No. 48

Ecological Harmony and Rural Development: Tagore's emphasis on ecological harmony and rural development remains highly relevant in addressing present environmental challenges. He envisioned villages as self-reliant communities where economic activities, agriculture, and social life would exist in balance with nature. His concern for harmonious coexistence is vividly expressed in his poetry. In *The Gardener*, gardens, flowers, and seasonal cycles symbolize cooperation, renewal, and the interdependence of all living beings. One example is the recurring image of flowering plants that flourish through their relationship with the surrounding environment, reflecting the ideal of mutual coexistence [34]. Another example appears in poems where rivers and trees are portrayed as companions of human life, demonstrating that human well-being depends upon ecological balance and environmental care [34]. Through such imagery, Tagore anticipates modern approaches to sustainable rural development and community-based environmental conservation.

"The trees, like longings of the earth, stand a-tiptoe to peep at the heaven."

Stray Birds, No. 48

"Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven."

Stray Birds, No. 311

Environmental Ethics and Spiritual Connection with Nature: Tagore regarded environmental protection not merely as a scientific or political issue but as a moral, cultural, and spiritual responsibility. He believed that respect for nature arises from recognizing the sacred unity that binds all forms of existence. This ethical and spiritual perspective is evident in *Stray Birds*, where natural elements are presented as carriers of wisdom and universal truth. One example is the image of birds moving freely across the sky, symbolizing harmony, freedom, and the interconnectedness of life [35]. Another example is Tagore's portrayal of flowers and trees as expressions of beauty and generosity, encouraging an attitude of reverence toward the natural world [35]. These poetic representations foster compassion, responsibility, and ethical coexistence with all living beings. In an era of global warming, pollution, and ecological imbalance, Tagore's environmental philosophy continues to provide valuable guidance by reminding humanity that safeguarding nature is both an ecological necessity and a moral obligation.

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!"

Gitanjali, Poem 11

"The same consciousness that is manifest in the stars and the planets shines in the inner being of man."

Sadhana: The Realisation of Life

Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore emerges as one of the most important literary voices advocating harmony between humans and nature. His writings reflect profound ecological consciousness rooted in spirituality, humanism, and cultural philosophy. Through poetry, essays, songs, and educational

practices, Tagore presents nature as a living force essential for human creativity, morality, and spiritual fulfilment. His critique of industrial materialism and his advocacy of sustainable living demonstrate remarkable ecological foresight. Long before the rise of modern environmental movements, Tagore emphasized coexistence, simplicity, and respect for the natural world. In the contemporary era of environmental crisis, Tagore's ecological vision offers meaningful insights for building a more sustainable and compassionate world. His works continue to inspire readers to rediscover their connection with nature and to develop an ethical responsibility toward the environment. Rabindranath Tagore's writings present a profound and holistic vision of the relationship between nature, humanity, and the universe. His poetry, philosophy, educational experiments, and social ideas reveal a deep ecological consciousness rooted in harmony, interconnectedness, and spiritual unity. Through his celebration of seasons, rivers, birds, flowers, and rural landscapes, Tagore portrays nature as a living presence that nurtures human emotions, creativity, and moral development. His critique of industrial materialism and environmental exploitation, combined with his advocacy of sustainable living, rural reconstruction, and ethical coexistence, anticipates many principles of contemporary environmental thought. From an ecocritical perspective, Tagore challenges human-centered attitudes and promotes a worldview that recognizes the intrinsic value of all forms of life. His educational philosophy further emphasizes the importance of learning through direct engagement with nature and cultivating environmental awareness. In the present era of climate change, ecological degradation, and environmental uncertainty, Tagore's vision offers valuable guidance for building a more sustainable and compassionate future. His works remind humanity that true progress lies not in the domination of nature but in establishing a harmonious relationship with the natural world based on respect, responsibility, and spiritual understanding.

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