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Silent Casualties: Depression and Moral Injury Among Healthcare Workers in Active and Post-Conflict Zones

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Abstract

This paper examines the psychological consequences of war on a group that is frequently overlooked in both academic research and public awareness: frontline healthcare workers. While existing literature on war and mental health has focused predominantly on soldiers and civilians, medical staff who serve in active conflict and post-conflict zones carry a distinct and underexplored psychological burden. This review focuses specifically on two outcomes: clinical depression and moral injury, both of which emerge repeatedly in the limited studies that do exist on this population. The findings reveal that healthcare workers in war zones suffer significant and lasting psychological harm, yet receive remarkably little institutional support or academic attention. They are neither recognised as victims of war nor protected as essential workers within it. This paper argues that this neglect is not only a humanitarian failure but a public health problem, since the mental collapse of medical staff directly affects the quality of care available to entire conflict-affected communities. Greater research attention, stronger policy frameworks, and dedicated psychological support systems are urgently needed for this invisible casualty of war.

Keywords: Depression, Moral Injury, Healthcare Workers, War, Armed Conflict, Post-Conflict, Mental Health, PTSD, Burnout, Frontline Medical Staff, Psychological Distress, Conflict Zones

1. Introduction

War is one of the most destructive forces in human history, and its effects on public health extend well beyond the battlefield. While the casualties of combat receive widespread attention, there is a quieter group of people whose suffering tends to go unnoticed: the doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other healthcare workers who remain in conflict zones to provide medical care. These individuals are exposed to experiences that most people cannot imagine, including treating mass casualties, working without adequate medicine or equipment, facing personal physical danger, and making decisions about who receives care when resources simply do not allow for everyone to be treated.

It might be tempting to assume that medical training prepares people for such situations, but evidence increasingly suggests otherwise. The psychological toll of working in a war environment is severe and often long-lasting. Depression is one of the most commonly reported outcomes, but it is not the only one. A growing body of research has begun to pay attention to something called moral injury, which refers to the psychological damage that occurs when a person is forced to act against their own values, or when they are prevented from doing what they believe is right. For a nurse who watches a patient die because there are no supplies, or a doctor who must decide which wounded person to prioritise, the emotional aftermath is distinct from what soldier's experience after combat, and it requires its own understanding.

The inspiration for this paper grew from a creative writing project undertaken as part of a college initiative, in which the author was responsible for developing a character who was a medical staff member deployed into a war zone. The process of writing that character's experience brought into sharp focus something that is rarely discussed in public discourse: the psychological burden carried specifically by healthcare workers in conflict settings. Unlike soldiers, who are trained for combat, or civilians, who are recognised as victims of war, medical staff occupy a uniquely difficult middle ground. They are trained to handle blood, injury, and death in clinical settings, but war presents these realities on an entirely different scale and with an entirely different emotional weight. The repeated exposure to mass casualties, the inability to save everyone, and the collapse of normal medical infrastructure creates conditions for long lasting psychological harm that is distinct from anything experienced in peacetime medicine. Despite this, the existing body of literature on war and mental health focuses overwhelmingly on soldiers and civilians. There are countless studies,

books, and films exploring their experiences. Healthcare workers, by contrast, remain largely invisible in this conversation. This paper is an attempt to change that.

2. Literature Review

Most of what we know about the mental health effects of war comes from studies of soldiers and veterans (Mollica et al., 2004; Murthy & Lakshminarayana, 2006). Decades of research following conflicts in Vietnam, the Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq have produced a detailed picture of combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety among military personnel. The National Vietnam Veterans' Readjustment Study (Kulka et al., 1990), which is frequently cited as a landmark in this field, found that nearly one in five participants had a lifetime history of PTSD, with depression and alcohol misuse appearing as common alongside conditions.

Research on civilian populations in conflict zones has also grown considerably (Charlson et al., 2019). A wide-ranging meta-analysis published in Frontiers in Psychiatry in 2022 (Lim et al., 2022), which drew on seventy studies published between 1982 and 2021, found that rates of depression in war-affected populations were around 38.7 percent during active conflict and fell to approximately 26.2 percent in post-conflict periods. These are significant numbers, and they paint a clear picture of the scale of mental health need in communities affected by armed conflict.

What is notably absent from most of this research, however, is sustained attention to healthcare workers as a distinct group. When medical staff appear in these studies at all, they tend to be included as part of a broader civilian category or treated as a minor subgroup. This is a serious gap, because the experience of a doctor or nurse in a war zone is qualitatively different from that of a civilian survivor or a combatant. Healthcare workers carry both the burden of personal exposure to violence and displacement, and the additional weight of professional responsibility for others, often without the institutional support that military personnel may receive.

A qualitative study published in 2024 (Legesse et al., 2024), which examined the lived experiences of healthcare workers at Ayder Comprehensive Specialized Hospital in Tigray, Ethiopia during the conflict there, offered some of the most direct testimony available on this subject. Participants described feeling helpless and deeply distressed by their inability to provide adequate care due to supply shortages caused by the war. One healthcare worker described thinking about how they had

reached what they called a kind of hell, feeling anxious and sad, and at times experiencing deep grief when they realised they could no longer treat patients who might otherwise have survived. These accounts reflect something that goes beyond ordinary occupational stress. The concept of moral injury becomes especially real when considering situations where healthcare workers possess the knowledge and skill to save a life, but lack the basic equipment to do so. Watching a patient die not because medicine failed, but because a war destroyed the supply chain, creates a wound that goes far deeper than grief. It is the psychological damage of knowing what could have been done, and being powerless to do it. This form of distress, rooted in professional helplessness rather than fear, is what distinguishes the experience of healthcare workers from that of other conflict-affected populations.

Writing published in the British Journal of Psychiatry in early 2025 (Invisible wounds, 2026) addressed the specific issue of vicarious trauma among psychiatrists and mental health clinicians working in conflict zones. The authors noted that in these settings, the line between the person providing care and the person receiving it often becomes unclear, because clinicians are frequently living through the same environment of fear and instability as their patients. The paper called for trauma-informed supervision and organisational safeguards as baseline requirements, while acknowledging that in most conflict settings, these do not exist.

A 2025 article based on the experiences of clinicians during the 2024 war in Lebanon (Atoui et al., 2025) added further texture to this picture. It described the clinical impossibility of treating patients with medications that take weeks to work in environments where follow-up care cannot be guaranteed, and noted that the mental health stigma common in many war-affected communities also affects healthcare workers themselves, making them reluctant to seek support even when they are clearly struggling.

3. Methodology

This paper is based on a narrative literature review. The goal of this approach is not to produce a statistical synthesis but rather to draw together findings from a range of study types, including quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, clinical reflections, and large-scale meta-analyses, in order to build a coherent picture of what is currently known about depression and moral injury in healthcare workers in conflict settings.

Searches were conducted across several academic databases, including PubMed, MEDLINE, ScienceDirect, Frontiers in Psychiatry, and the British Journal of Psychiatry. The search terms used included combinations of phrases such as depression among healthcare workers in war, moral injury in medical staff in conflict zones, mental health of frontline workers in armed conflict, burnout among doctors and nurses in war, and vicarious trauma among clinicians in humanitarian settings.

Studies were included if they focused on healthcare professionals as either a primary or identifiable subgroup, took place in an active conflict or post-conflict setting, and addressed psychological outcomes including depression, moral injury, burnout, or related forms of distress. The review focused on studies published in English between 2000 and 2025. Studies that focused exclusively on military combatants, veterans, or civilian populations without any identifiable healthcare worker subgroup were not included.

Because many of the relevant studies are qualitative or narrative in nature, a formal meta-analysis was not appropriate. Instead, themes were drawn out across the reviewed material and organised around four main areas: the types of psychological harm healthcare workers experience, the institutional and systemic factors that contribute to that harm, the specific nature and role of moral injury, and what interventions have been proposed or tested.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Depression and Psychological Distress in Conflict-Zone Healthcare Workers

Perhaps the most devastating mental health outcome for healthcare workers in conflict zones is not fear, but guilt. Unlike soldiers who are trained to accept loss as part of combat, healthcare workers enter war zones with a fundamental professional mission: to save lives. When that mission becomes impossible, not because of any failure of skill or effort, but because the resources simply do not exist, the psychological consequence is a form of guilt that cuts to the core of who they are as professionals and as human beings. This guilt does not fade easily. The memory of a patient who could not be saved, of a procedure that could not be performed, of a life that slipped away not because medicine failed but because war made medicine impossible, stays with healthcare workers long after the conflict ends. It becomes a wound that does not heal on its own. This is why

depression in this population tends to be deep, persistent, and resistant to standard treatment approaches. It is not simply sadness. It is the weight of remembering, and the inability to forget.

A pattern that appeared across multiple studies was that depression in this population tends to coexist with continued professional functioning. Healthcare workers frequently continued to show up and treat patients even while experiencing significant psychological distress. Many attributed their difficulties to personal weakness rather than recognising them as a predictable response to genuinely extraordinary circumstances. This tendency to internalise suffering, combined with widespread cultural stigma around mental health in many conflict-affected regions, contributes to a situation where distress goes unaddressed for long periods.

4.2 Moral Injury as a Distinct Form of Harm

One of the most consistent themes across the reviewed literature is the importance of moral injury as a psychological outcome in this population. Moral injury is defined as the psychological damage that results from participating in, witnessing, or being unable to prevent events that violate a person's deeply held moral beliefs (Litz et al., 2009). It is different from PTSD in an important way: where PTSD is primarily rooted in fear and the experience of threat, moral injury is rooted in guilt, shame, and a sense that one has either done something wrong or failed to do what was right.

For healthcare workers in conflict zones, moral injury tends to arise from situations that are specific to their professional role. These include being forced to decide which patients receive treatment when there is not enough medicine or equipment for all of them, being unable to save someone whose life could have been saved in a properly resourced setting, and continuing to work within systems that they know are failing their patients. The 2024 Tigray study described this kind of distress in clear and human terms, with participants speaking about the grief they felt when they could not treat patients and the psychological weight of working in conditions of near-total institutional collapse.

What makes moral injury particularly important as a concept is that standard trauma therapies, including cognitive behavioural therapy and EMDR, are not well suited to addressing it. These approaches were developed primarily for fear-based trauma responses. Moral injury, by contrast, calls for approaches that engage with questions of guilt, professional identity, values, and meaning.

Some research has pointed to compassion-focused therapies as a potentially useful direction, but this area remains underdeveloped, and almost no studies have looked at moral injury interventions specifically in the context of healthcare workers in conflict zones.

4.3 Institutional Gaps and the Absence of Support

Perhaps the most striking finding across the reviewed literature is the near-total absence of formal psychological support for healthcare workers in conflict settings. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation for military personnel in some countries. In the United States, for example, military mental health support has become increasingly integrated into deployment and post-deployment processes, with embedded behavioural health teams, structured screening, and dedicated services for veterans (Hoge et al., 2016). Research has shown that this kind of institutional support does make a measurable difference to mental health outcomes.

Civilian healthcare workers in conflict zones have no equivalent. International humanitarian organisations such as Medecins Sans Frontieres have developed some staff wellness frameworks, but implementation is inconsistent and the resources allocated to this area are limited. In the low- and middle-income countries where most of the world's armed conflicts take place, structured psychological support for medical staff is almost non-existent. Healthcare workers are deployed into some of the most psychologically demanding environments imaginable and then largely left to manage on their own.

5. Discussion

Taken together, the evidence reviewed in this paper reveals a population that carries a significant and underacknowledged psychological burden. Healthcare workers in conflict zones are not simply exposed to traumatic events in the way that soldiers or civilian survivors are. They also carry a professional identity that shapes how they interpret their own suffering, often in ways that make it harder, rather than easier, to seek help. The combination of depression and moral injury creates a form of distress that existing frameworks are not well designed to address.

The comparison with military mental health systems is instructive. Countries that have invested in structured support for their armed forces have seen better outcomes. Translating a similar logic to civilian healthcare workers in conflict settings is not straightforward, but it is not impossible either.

Telepsychiatry has shown some promise in conflict settings as a way of providing clinical supervision and support to health workers who have no access to local mental health services. Peer support networks, where healthcare workers are trained to recognise and respond to distress in their colleagues, offer another practical option that does not require significant infrastructure. Psychological first aid, properly adapted for professional caregivers rather than patients, is another approach that deserves further exploration.

It is also worth noting that protecting the mental health of healthcare workers is not separable from protecting the quality of care they provide. A doctor who is experiencing severe depression or moral injury is less able to make clear clinical decisions, less able to connect with patients, and less likely to remain in post for the duration of a crisis. The long-term sustainability of health system function in conflict-affected areas depends, in part, on ensuring that the people running those systems are supported well enough to keep going. Responsibility for the psychological welfare of healthcare workers in conflict zones cannot rest with any single body. These are individuals who made a conscious choice to enter some of the most dangerous environments on earth, not because they were ordered to as soldiers are, but because their professional values and human compassion compelled them. That choice deserves recognition at every level. Governments must legislate protections and fund mental health support for medical personnel deployed in conflict settings. Hospitals and healthcare institutions must create structured psychological care systems that follow workers before, during, and after their service in war zones. International organisations such as the WHO and the ICRC must treat the mental health of healthcare workers as a core humanitarian priority, not an afterthought. When a person gives everything, including risking their own life, to protect both civilians and soldiers alike, the least that society can offer in return is to protect their mind.

There is also a broader ethical dimension here. Healthcare workers who choose to remain in conflict zones, or who have no choice but to do so, are making an enormous contribution under conditions of extreme adversity. The least that the international health and humanitarian community can do is take their psychological welfare seriously, not as an afterthought, but as a core component of humanitarian response planning.

6. Overall Findings

The findings of this review point to a truth that is as simple as it is uncomfortable: the people who save lives during war are themselves being left behind. Healthcare workers enter conflict zones and give everything they have, their skills, their safety, and in many cases their mental health, to keep others alive. Yet when the war ends, they return to a world that has very little to offer them in return. The psychological problems they carry home, the depression, the moral injury, the guilt, the memories that cannot be erased, receive almost no formal recognition or structured support. They are not counted among the casualties of war, yet they are casualties in every meaningful sense of the word. This review finds that the neglect of healthcare workers in post-conflict mental health planning is not accidental. It reflects a broader failure to see these individuals as anything other than providers of care rather than people who need care themselves. That must change. The problems they face are real, they are serious, and they are lasting. Recognising that is the first and most important step toward doing something about it. With that in mind, the review points to five key conclusions:

Healthcare workers in conflict zones experience depression and moral injury at rates that are significantly higher than baseline levels, driven by a combination of direct trauma exposure, professional helplessness, physical danger, and the near-total absence of institutional support.

Moral injury is a central and distinct psychological outcome in this population. It is not adequately captured by existing PTSD frameworks and requires specific therapeutic approaches that engage with questions of guilt, professional identity, and values.

The research base for this topic remains very thin. Most conflict mental health studies either exclude healthcare workers entirely or treat them as a minor subgroup, which means the full scale of the problem is likely underestimated.

Institutional mental health support for healthcare workers in conflict settings is almost entirely absent, particularly in the low- and middle-income countries where most conflicts occur. This represents a significant and addressable policy failure.

The mental health of healthcare workers in war zones has direct and measurable consequences for the quality and sustainability of health system function in conflict-affected communities. It is, therefore, a public health issue as much as an occupational one.

7. Conclusion

Healthcare workers in conflict zones are among the most psychologically exposed people in the world, yet they are among the least studied and least supported. The evidence reviewed in this paper makes clear that depression and moral injury are significant, recurring, and largely unaddressed outcomes for medical staff operating in war and post-war settings. The way these conditions develop in healthcare workers is shaped by their professional identity and the particular ethical pressures of their role, and this makes their experience distinct from that of other conflict-affected populations.

Moving forward, there are several things that need to happen. Research needs to begin treating healthcare workers as a primary population of interest in conflict mental health studies rather than an incidental subgroup. Interventions that are specifically designed for this population, and that take moral injury seriously as a distinct form of harm, need to be developed and tested. And international bodies, including the World Health Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and major humanitarian organisations, need to work with governments and health ministries to establish meaningful standards for the psychological protection of medical staff in conflict settings.

Healthcare workers who serve in war zones carry wounds that the world rarely sees. They walk into conflict not because they were commanded to, but because they chose to, driven by a commitment to human life that does not pause for danger. Yet when the war ends, their trauma does not. The depression, the moral injury, the loss of colleagues, the memory of patients they could not save despite trying everything, these do not simply disappear. This paper ends with a simple but urgent hope: that these men and women are recognised for the extraordinary sacrifice they make. That governments take meaningful action to provide them with the psychological support they deserve. That the international community builds systems of care specifically designed for them. And perhaps most importantly, that we as a society understand the need to have doctors for doctors. Because those who spend their lives healing others deserve to be healed too.

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Framing Value: How Language Shapes the Perception of Money Across Social Institutions

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Abstract

Money, as a universal medium of exchange, is represented through a wide range of lexical forms that vary across social, institutional, and cultural contexts. This study investigates the morphological variation and psycholinguistic implications of monetary terminology, focusing on how a single economic concept is linguistically reframed into terms such as fee, tax, salary, pension, donation, bribe, ransom, and dowry. Drawing upon frameworks from Morphology, Psycholinguistics, and Cognitive Linguistics, the research examines how lexical choices influence cognitive processing, emotional response, and moral evaluation. The study employs a qualitative analytical approach, combining semantic classification, morphological analysis, and contextual discourse interpretation. Monetary terms are categorized into institutional, transactional, and socio-moral domains to highlight patterns of polysemy and pragmatic variation. The findings reveal that while all terms denote the transfer or possession of economic value, their meanings are significantly shaped by contextual usage and social function. For instance, terms like “donation” and “tip” evoke positive cognitive associations linked to generosity and reward, whereas “bribe” and “ransom” trigger negative moral judgments associated with illegality and coercion. Neutral terms such as “salary” and “fee” occupy an intermediate cognitive space, reflecting formalized economic relationships. The analysis further demonstrates that linguistic labeling plays a critical role in framing perception, supporting the premise that language not only reflects but actively constructs social reality. Variations in monetary terminology encode cultural norms, institutional

authority, and ethical distinctions, thereby influencing individual cognition and collective behavior. This study contributes to interdisciplinary research by bridging linguistic structure with cognitive interpretation, offering insights into how language shapes economic understanding and social values.

Keywords: Money, Lexical Variation, Psycholinguistics, Morphology, Cognitive Framing

Introduction

Money is a fundamental construct in human society, functioning not only as a medium of exchange but also as a symbol of value, power, obligation, and social relationships. While its economic role has been extensively studied, the linguistic representation of money across different contexts remains an area of growing interdisciplinary interest. A striking feature of monetary discourse is the diversity of terms used to denote essentially the same entity—money—depending on situational, institutional, and cultural frameworks. For instance, money is referred to as *fee* in education, *tax* in governance, *salary* in employment, *dowry* in marriage, *ransom* in criminal contexts, and *donation* in religious settings. These variations are not arbitrary; rather, they reflect deeper morphological structures, semantic shifts, and cognitive interpretations embedded within language use [1].

From the perspective of Morphology, words are formed and modified according to systematic rules that often correspond to their functional roles. Monetary terms frequently emerge from institutionalized linguistic practices, where suffixes, roots, and derivations signal specific types of transactions or relationships. For example, terms like *payment*, *taxation*, and *donation* illustrate how morphological processes encode purpose and agency. Such variations demonstrate that language is not merely descriptive but structurally adaptive to social needs [2].

Equally important is the role of Psycholinguistics in understanding how individuals process and interpret these terms. Different labels for money evoke distinct cognitive and emotional responses. A *donation* may trigger associations of altruism and goodwill, whereas a *bribe* often carries negative connotations of corruption and illegality. These differences highlight how lexical choices influence mental representation and decision-making processes. Research suggests that language

can shape perception by activating specific cognitive schemas, thereby affecting how individuals evaluate similar economic transactions differently based solely on terminology [3].

The concept of framing, central to Cognitive Linguistics, further explains how linguistic variation influences thought. Framing theory posits that the way information is presented affects interpretation and judgment. In the case of monetary terminology, words act as frames that encode social norms, ethical values, and institutional authority. For example, the term *tax* implies a legal obligation to the state, whereas *donation* suggests voluntary contribution, even though both involve the transfer of money. Such distinctions reveal how language constructs social reality by embedding cultural meanings within lexical choices [4].

This study seeks to explore the intersection of morphology, semantics, and psycholinguistics in the context of monetary terminology. By analyzing the various names assigned to money across domains, the research aims to uncover patterns of lexical variation and their cognitive implications. It also investigates how these linguistic forms reflect and reinforce social structures, moral judgments, and cultural practices. Ultimately, this inquiry contributes to a deeper understanding of how language shapes economic perception and human behavior, emphasizing that money, as represented in language, is as much a cognitive and cultural phenomenon as it is an economic one.

Research Objectives

- To classify different lexical forms of money across contexts
- To analyze morphological patterns in monetary terminology
- To examine cognitive and emotional responses to different terms
- To explore socio-cultural implications of monetary language

Literature Review

The study of monetary terminology from a linguistic and cognitive perspective draws upon a wide range of interdisciplinary scholarship spanning linguistics, psychology, sociology, and economics. Early foundational work by Noam Chomsky emphasized the structural and generative nature of language, arguing that lexical forms are not arbitrary but governed by underlying rules and patterns [5]. This perspective was further extended by Mark Aronoff, who explored word formation processes and demonstrated how morphology reflects functional and semantic distinctions within

language systems [6]. These foundational theories provide a basis for understanding how terms like *taxation*, *donation*, and *payment* emerge through morphological derivation and institutional usage.

Subsequent developments in Lexical Semantics highlighted the role of meaning variation in language. Scholars such as John Lyons and Geoffrey Leech examined how words acquire multiple meanings depending on context, contributing to the concept of polysemy [7][8]. This is particularly relevant to monetary terminology, where a single concept—money—is represented through diverse lexical items that differ semantically and pragmatically. The distinction between denotation and connotation plays a crucial role in shaping how monetary terms are perceived in different contexts.

Research in Psycholinguistics has further enriched this discussion by examining how language influences cognition. Steven Pinker argued that words are linked to mental representations that shape thought processes and emotional responses [9]. Similarly, studies by Elizabeth Loftus demonstrated that linguistic framing can alter memory and perception, suggesting that the labeling of monetary transactions (e.g., *donation* vs. *bribe*) may influence moral judgment and recall [10]. These insights are supported by experimental findings in cognitive psychology, which show that semantic framing affects decision-making and behavioral outcomes [11].

The theoretical framework of Cognitive Linguistics, particularly the work of George Lakoff, has been instrumental in understanding how language structures thought through conceptual metaphors and frames [12]. Lakoff's framing theory suggests that words activate specific cognitive schemas, which in turn shape interpretation and evaluation. This perspective has been widely applied in studies of political discourse, economic communication, and social behavior, demonstrating that lexical choices can influence public perception and policy attitudes [13].

In the domain of Sociolinguistics, researchers such as William Labov and Dell Hymes emphasized the role of social context in language variation [14][15]. Their work highlights how linguistic forms are shaped by social structures, cultural norms, and institutional practices. Monetary terminology, in this sense, reflects power relations and social hierarchies, as seen in distinctions between *wages* and *salary* or *tax* and *tribute*. Further studies have shown that language use varies

across domains such as law, religion, and economics, reinforcing the idea that lexical variation is context-dependent [16].

Recent interdisciplinary research has explored the intersection of language and economics, often referred to as linguistic economics or economic discourse analysis. Scholars have investigated how financial terminology influences market behavior, consumer perception, and institutional trust [17]. Studies on moral language and ethics have also examined how terms like *bribe* and *donation* encode normative judgments, shaping societal attitudes toward legality and morality [18]. Additionally, corpus-based analyses have revealed patterns of frequency and usage in monetary terms, providing empirical evidence for semantic variation across contexts [19].

Advances in cognitive science and neuroscience have further contributed to understanding how the brain processes economic language. Neuro-linguistic studies indicate that emotionally charged words activate different neural pathways compared to neutral terms, suggesting that lexical variation in monetary terminology may have measurable cognitive effects [20]. Computational linguistics and artificial intelligence have also been employed to model semantic relationships and predict language patterns, offering new tools for analyzing large datasets of financial discourse [21].

Despite these advancements, there remains a gap in integrating morphological, semantic, and psycholinguistic perspectives into a unified framework for analyzing monetary terminology. Existing studies often focus on individual aspects, such as word formation or cognitive processing, without addressing their combined impact on social meaning and behavior. This research seeks to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how different names for money function within language and cognition. Overall, the literature demonstrates that monetary terminology is a rich and complex area of study, reflecting the interplay between linguistic structure, cognitive processes, and social context. The present study builds upon these foundations to explore how lexical variation in monetary terms shapes perception, reinforces cultural norms, and influences human interaction.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary research design integrating insights from Morphology, Psycholinguistics, and Cognitive Linguistics to analyze the lexical variation of monetary terminology. Data were collected through purposive sampling of commonly used monetary terms across institutional, social, and cultural contexts, including categories such as education (*fee*), governance (*tax*), employment (*salary*, *wages*), legal systems (*fine*, *alimony*), religion (*donation*), and informal or illegal domains (*bribe*, *ransom*). The analysis involved three stages: (i) morphological classification to examine word formation patterns, (ii) semantic and pragmatic categorization to identify contextual meanings and usage, and (iii) cognitive framing analysis to interpret how different lexical labels influence perception and moral evaluation. The study further employs discourse analysis to understand contextual usage in real-life communication. This approach enables a systematic examination of how linguistic structures interact with cognitive processes and social norms in shaping the interpretation of money-related terminology.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis indicates that monetary terminology, despite referring to the same underlying concept of economic value, varies significantly across contexts due to functional, social, and cognitive factors. Most terms are morphologically simple, yet they carry complex semantic and pragmatic meanings shaped by institutional roles and cultural norms. Words such as *fee, salary,* and *tax* reflect formalized and socially accepted exchanges, while terms like *donation* and *tip* convey positive emotional and voluntary associations. In contrast, *bribe* and *ransom* encode negative moral judgments and illegality. This variation demonstrates that lexical choices are not neutral but actively influence perception and interpretation, supporting insights from Psycholinguistics and Cognitive Linguistics. Overall, the analysis highlights that language functions as a powerful tool in framing economic interactions, embedding them with social meaning, ethical value, and cognitive significance.

In school, it is called *fee* — Fee /fiː**/**

/ðə ˈstjuːdənt peɪd ðiˈ ænjuəl skuːl fiː/

The student paid the annual school fee.

/ə ˌkɒnsəlˈteɪʃən fiː ɪz rɪˈkwaɪərd bɪˈfɔːr ˈmiːtɪŋ ðə ˈdɒktər/

A consultation fee is required before meeting the doctor.

/ðə ˈlɔɪər tʃɑːrdʒd ə ˈliːgəl fiː fɔːr hɪz ˈsɜːrvɪsɪz/

The lawyer charged a legal fee for his services.

In divorce, it is called *alimony* — Alimony /ˈælɪˌmoʊni/

/ðə kɔːrt ˈgræntɪd ˈmʌnθli ˈælɪˌmoʊni tuː ðə spaʊs/

The court granted monthly alimony to the spouse.

/hi ˈstrʌgəld tuː peɪ ˈælɪˌmoʊni ˈæftər ðə dɪˈvɔːrs/

He struggled to pay alimony after the divorce.

/ˈælɪˌmoʊni ɪnˈʃʊərz faɪˈnænʃəl səˈpɔːrt poʊst ˈmærɪdʒ/

Alimony ensures financial support post-marriage.

In court, it is called *fine* — Fine /faɪn/

/hi peɪd ə faɪn fɔːr ˈbreɪkɪŋ ˈtræfɪk ruːlz/

He paid a fine for breaking traffic rules.

/ðə ˈkʌmpəni feɪst ə ˈhɛvi faɪn fɔːr ˌvaɪəˈleɪʃənz/

The company faced a heavy fine for violations.

/leɪt səbˈmɪʃən rɪˈzʌltɪd ɪn ə faɪn/

Late submission resulted in a fine.

To kidnappers, it is called *ransom* — Ransom /ˈrænsəm/

/ðə ˈkɪdnæpərz dɪˈmændɪd ˈrænsəm fɔːr rɪˈliːs/

The kidnappers demanded ransom for release.

/ə ˈrænsəm noʊt wəz sɛnt tuː ðə ˈfæmɪli/

A ransom note was sent to the family.

/pəˈliːs rɪˈfjuːzd tuː peɪ ˈrænsəm tuː ˈkrɪmɪnəlz/

Police refused to pay ransom to criminals.

In marriage, it is called *dowry* — Dowry /ˈdaʊri/

/ˈdaʊri ɪz ˈliːgəli prəˈhɪbɪtɪd ɪn ˈmɛni ˈkʌntriz/

Dowry is legally prohibited in many countries.

/ðə ˈfæmɪli əˈpoʊzd ˈgɪvɪŋ ˈdaʊri ɪn ˈmærɪdʒ/

The family opposed giving dowry in marriage.

/ˈsoʊʃəl rɪˈfɔːrmz eɪm tuː ɪˈlɪməˌneɪt ˈdaʊri ˈpræktɪsɪz/

Social reforms aim to eliminate dowry practices.

When you owe someone, it is called *debt* — Debt /dɛt/

/hi ɪz ˈtraɪɪŋ tuː rɪˈpeɪ hɪz dɛt/

He is trying to repay his debt.

/ðə ˈkʌmpəni fɛl ˈɪntuː ˈhɛvi dɛt/

The company fell into heavy debt.

/ˈstjuːdənt dɛt ɪz ɪnˈkriːsɪŋ ˈgloʊbəli/

Student debt is increasing globally.

When you pay the government, it is called *tax* — Tax /tæks/

/ˈsɪtɪzənz mʌst peɪ ˈɪnkʌm tæks ˈænjuəli/

Citizens must pay income tax annually.

/ðə ˈgʌvərnmənt ɪnˈkriːst ðə tæks reɪt/

The government increased the tax rate.

/gʊdz ɑːr ˈsʌbdʒɪkt tuː seɪlz tæks/

Goods are subject to sales tax.

For civil servant retirees, it is called *pension* — Pension /ˈpɛnʃən/

/ʃi rɪˈsiːvz ə ˈpɛnʃən ˈæftər rɪˈtaɪərmənt/

She receives a pension after retirement.

/ˈpɛnʃən skiːmz səˈpɔːrt ˈɛldərli ˈsɪtɪzənz/

Pension schemes support elderly citizens.

/ˈgʌvərnmənt ˌɛmpləɪˈiːz gɛt ˈpɛnʃən ˈbɛnɪfits/

Government employees get pension benefits.

From employer to workers, it is called *salary* — Salary /ˈsæləri/

/hi ɜːrnz ə ˈmʌnθli ˈsæləri/

He earns a monthly salary.

/ðə ˈkʌmpəni ˈɒfərz ə haɪ ˈsæləri ˈpækɪdʒ/

The company offers a high salary package.

/ˈsæləri ˈɪnkrəmənts dɪˈpɛnd ɒn pərˈfɔːrməns/

Salary increments depend on performance.

From master to subordinates, it is called *wages* — Wages /ˈweɪdʒɪz/

/ˈwɜːrkərz ɑːr peɪd ˈdeɪli ˈweɪdʒɪz/

Workers are paid daily wages.

/ˈmɪnɪməm ˈweɪdʒɪz lɔːz prəˈtɛkt ˈleɪbərərz/

Minimum wages laws protect laborers.

/hi ɜːrnz ˈaʊərli ˈweɪdʒɪz/

He earns hourly wages.

In temple or church, it is called *donation* — Donation /doʊˈneɪʃən/

/ʃi meɪd ə doʊˈneɪʃən tuː ˈtʃærɪti/

She made a donation to charity.

/doʊˈneɪʃənz hɛlp fʌnd ˈsoʊʃəl ˈkɔːzɪz/

Donations help fund social causes.

/ðə ˈtɛmpəl rɪˈsiːvd ˈdʒɛnərəs doʊˈneɪʃənz/

The temple received generous donations.

When you borrow from a bank, it is called *loan* — Loan /loʊn/

/hi tʊk ə loʊn frɒm ðə bæŋk/

He took a loan from the bank.

/loʊnz mʌst biː rɪˈpeɪd wɪð ˈɪntrəst/

Loans must be repaid with interest.

/ʃi əˈplaɪd fɔːr ən ˌɛdʒʊˈkeɪʃən loʊn/

She applied for an education loan.

When you offer after good service, it is called *tip* — Tip /tɪp/

/hi gɛɪv ə tɪp tuː ðə ˈweɪtər/

He gave a tip to the waiter.

/tɪps ɑːr ˈkɒmən ɪn ˈrɛstərɒnts/

Tips are common in restaurants.

/ʃi lɛft ə ˈdʒɛnərəs tɪp/

She left a generous tip.

Illegally received in the name of service, it is called *bribe* — Bribe /braɪb/

/ði ˈɒfɪsər wəz kɔːt ˈteɪkɪŋ ə braɪb/

The officer was caught taking a bribe.

/braɪbz ˌʌndərˈmaɪn ˈdʒʌstɪs ˈsɪstəmz/

Bribes undermine justice systems.

/hi rɪˈfjuːzd tuː əkˈsɛpt ə braɪb/

He refused to accept a bribe.

Morphological Classification: The majority of the monetary terms analyzed are monomorphemic (single-root lexical items), such as *fee, tax, debt,* and *loan*, which exhibit minimal internal

morphological complexity. These forms are structurally simple and do not contain prefixes or suffixes that alter their grammatical category. Their simplicity, however, does not imply semantic limitation; rather, it highlights the efficiency of language in encoding complex socio-economic meanings within compact lexical units. A smaller subset of terms, including *donation* and *pension*, demonstrates derivational morphology through suffixation, particularly with the suffix *-tion*, indicating nominalization from verb roots (e.g., *donate* → *donation*). This morphological process reflects institutionalization and formalization of actions into recognized categories of financial exchange. Additionally, borrowed forms such as *alimony* and *ransom* illustrate historical linguistic influences, showing how lexical items evolve through language contact rather than internal word formation. Overall, the morphological patterns suggest that variation among monetary terms is not primarily driven by structural complexity but by contextual specialization and functional differentiation. This aligns with principles in Morphology, where form and function interact to produce meaningful linguistic units adapted to specific communicative needs.

Semantic Variation: Although all the selected terms fundamentally refer to the concept of money, their meanings vary significantly depending on the context in which they are used. This variation reflects a high degree of semantic specialization and contextual differentiation. Institutional terms such as *tax, salary,* and *pension* denote regulated and formalized financial transactions governed by legal or organizational frameworks. In contrast, transactional terms like *fee, loan,* and *debt* emphasize the dynamics of economic exchange, obligation, and reciprocity between individuals or entities. Furthermore, socio-moral terms such as *donation, bribe, ransom,* and *dowry* carry strong evaluative connotations that extend beyond mere economic value. For instance, *donation* is associated with altruism and voluntary giving, whereas *bribe* implies illegality and ethical violation. This range of meanings demonstrates polysemy, where a single conceptual domain—money—is expressed through multiple lexical items with distinct semantic nuances. The variation is not arbitrary but systematically linked to social roles, institutional contexts, and moral frameworks. Such findings are consistent with theories in Lexical Semantics, which emphasize that meaning is shaped by usage, context, and cultural interpretation.

Cognitive Interpretation: From a Psycholinguistics perspective, each monetary term activates distinct mental representations, emotional responses, and evaluative judgments. Words such as *donation* and *tip* are cognitively associated with positive affect, generosity, and social appreciation,

often triggering feelings of goodwill and voluntary engagement. Neutral terms like *salary* and *fee* are processed as routine and expected elements of structured economic systems, leading to minimal emotional activation and a perception of normalcy. In contrast, negatively charged terms such as *bribe* and *ransom* evoke strong emotional reactions, including distrust, fear, and moral disapproval. These responses are shaped by prior knowledge, cultural conditioning, and ethical frameworks embedded in the mind of the language user. The variation in cognitive interpretation illustrates how lexical choices influence not only understanding but also decision-making and behavior. For example, individuals may respond differently to the same monetary transaction depending on whether it is framed as a *donation* or a *payment*. This supports the view that language plays a crucial role in shaping cognition by activating specific schemas and conceptual frames, thereby guiding perception and judgment in socio-economic interactions.

Socio-Cultural Implications: Monetary terminology serves as a reflection of broader social norms, cultural values, and institutional structures within a given society. Terms such as *dowry* are deeply rooted in traditional practices and carry cultural significance, even when they are legally restricted or socially contested. On the other hand, terms like *tax* and *pension* represent formalized relationships between individuals and the state, highlighting systems of governance, authority, and social welfare. Similarly, distinctions between *wages* and *salary* reveal underlying class structures and labor divisions, where *wages* are often associated with manual or hourly labor and *salary* with professional or white-collar employment. These linguistic distinctions encode power relations, economic hierarchies, and cultural expectations, demonstrating how language functions as a social semiotic system. Furthermore, variations in practices such as tipping illustrate how cultural norms influence the interpretation and use of monetary terms across different societies. From the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics, these terms act as conceptual frames that shape how individuals understand and engage with economic activities. Thus, monetary language not only reflects social reality but also reinforces and perpetuates it through everyday communication.

Results and Discussion

The analysis reveals that monetary terminology exhibits a high degree of lexical diversification, where a single economic entity—money—is systematically re-labeled according to context, function, and social meaning. The results indicate that most of the selected terms are

morphologically simple (monomorphemic), such as *fee, tax, debt,* and *loan*, while a smaller subset demonstrates derivational morphology, such as *donation* and *pension*. Despite this relative morphological simplicity, the semantic load carried by these terms is complex and context-dependent. This finding suggests that variation in monetary terminology is driven less by morphological complexity and more by socio-functional specialization, aligning with principles in Morphology and Lexical Semantics.

From a semantic perspective, the results show clear categorization into three broad domains: (i) institutional terms (*tax, salary, pension*), (ii) transactional terms (*fee, loan, debt*), and (iii) socio-moral terms (*donation, bribe, ransom, dowry*). Each category reflects a distinct functional and evaluative dimension. Institutional terms are associated with formal systems and authority structures, transactional terms with economic exchange and obligation, and socio-moral terms with ethical judgment and cultural values. This classification demonstrates that lexical variation is not random but structured around social roles and communicative purposes.

The psycholinguistic analysis further indicates that different monetary terms activate distinct cognitive schemas and emotional responses. Words such as *donation* and *tip* evoke positive affective states related to generosity and appreciation, whereas *bribe* and *ransom* trigger negative emotional responses associated with illegality, coercion, and moral violation. Neutral terms like *salary* and *fee* occupy an intermediate cognitive position, representing routine and socially accepted exchanges. These findings support theories in Psycholinguistics, which argue that lexical choices significantly influence perception, judgment, and decision-making processes.

A key outcome of this study is the identification of strong cognitive framing effects. In line with principles from Cognitive Linguistics, the results demonstrate that linguistic labels act as frames that shape how monetary transactions are interpreted. For example, the act of giving money may be perceived as altruistic when labeled as a *donation*, obligatory when termed as a *tax*, or unethical when described as a *bribe*, despite involving similar economic transfers. This highlights the role of language in constructing social reality and guiding behavioral responses.

The socio-cultural analysis reveals that monetary terminology is deeply embedded in cultural norms and institutional practices. Terms like *dowry* illustrate how language reflects traditional practices that may persist despite legal or ethical challenges, while *pension* and *salary* reflect

modern economic structures and welfare systems. Additionally, variations in the use of terms such as *tip* across cultures indicate that linguistic practices are influenced by localized social expectations and economic behaviors.

The findings underscore the interdisciplinary nature of monetary terminology, demonstrating that linguistic forms are closely tied to cognitive processing and social context. The study contributes to a broader understanding of how language not only represents economic transactions but also shapes perception, reinforces social norms, and influences human behavior.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that monetary terminology is not merely a reflection of economic exchange but a linguistically and cognitively structured system that encodes social, moral, and institutional meanings. Through the analysis of terms such as *fee, tax, salary, wages, donation, bribe,* and *dowry*, it becomes evident that a single underlying concept—money—is diversified into multiple lexical forms depending on context and function. These variations are largely independent of morphological complexity but are strongly influenced by semantic specialization and pragmatic usage. From a psycholinguistic perspective, each term activates distinct cognitive and emotional responses, shaping how individuals perceive legitimacy, obligation, generosity, or corruption in financial interactions. Furthermore, the study highlights that language plays a crucial role in framing socio-cultural realities, as monetary terms reflect power relations, cultural traditions, legal systems, and ethical judgments. Within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, these lexical distinctions function as conceptual frames that shape human understanding and behavior. Overall, the findings confirm that language does not simply describe financial transactions but actively constructs their meaning, reinforcing the interplay between linguistic structure, cognition, and social context in everyday economic life.

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Feeling with Machines: Emotional AI, and Humane Pedagogy in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

The Pedagogical landscape in English Language Teaching (ELT) is being continuously redefined by the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically in regards to emotional or affective computing. This essay analyzes the role of emotional AI in transforming the affective, ethical and relational aspects of teaching and learning. The study takes a conceptual, interpretive approach and utilizes the affect theory, critical pedagogy, and posthumanism to guide the study as well as incorporating empirical evidence of current studies on emotional recognition, adaptive feedback, and emotion regulation in teachers.

The review reveals that culturally specific emotions are frequently misconstrued in emotional AI, escalates emotional labour in teachers and diminishes intricate affective encounters to quantifiable information points. Although in this way, such systems have the potential to make augmentation more engaging by providing adaptive feedback, they may be prone to standardisation of emotional expression and favouring algorithmic legibility over human authenticity.

Subsequently, the paper suggests the Emotionally Intelligent AI-Pedagogy Framework (EI-AIPF) that focuses on emotional awareness, ethical governance, as well as human mediation. The paper

holds the opinion that educators need to develop critical emotional literacy as a way of becoming ethically aware of AI-generated affective data and because educators need to maintain relational sense in AI-mediated classrooms. The article adds the theoretically based framework of maintaining the humane pedagogy in the technologically mediated education settings.

Keywords: Emotional AI, ELT, Affective pedagogy, Critical pedagogy, Posthumanism, AI in education

1. Introduction

1.1. Affective Turn in Digital Pedagogy

The learning of English by intelligent machines is delicate to a certain extent. What was once a subtle system of voices, gestures, and shared laughter is now translated with the invisible existence of algorithms. Artificial Intelligence (AI) does not only enter the modern teaching of English as a set of tools but also as a cultural, emotional, and epistemic phenomenon that redefines the ways in which the teachers and learners experience, perceive, and interact. Formerly an affective ecology of glances, silences, hesitations, mutual humour or discomfort, communication and language learning become mixed into the algorithms of judgement and predictive models which are said to read emotions. Recent research indicates that emotional AI is not merely a viewer of emotions but is an active participant in terms of what can be viewed as attention, engagement, or enthusiasm (Liu et al., 2024; Vistorte et al., 2024). The role of emotion in the era of AI is thus paradoxical, both as the focus of learning and as a flattened data point to familiarise oneself with, which only contributes to the idea of the circulation of affect between bodies, technologies, and institutional contexts where emotions are continuously shaped and reshaped, as Ahmed (2004) explains.

There is no shortage of AI in the English Language Teaching (ELT) domain. For example, many are already familiar with writing assistance which adapts to the preferences of the learner, pronunciation assistants, chatbots which seek to anticipate the needs of the learners, lesson writing systems, and feedback engines. The question of whether machines can teach is no longer an issue, and the more pressing one is whether machines can feel and what the pedagogy is when machines strive to emulate feeling. Pedagogy is not cognitive or technical work but emotional, moral, and interpersonal, as the affective turn in education has always demonstrated (Ahmed,

2004; Benesch, 2017). AI compels teachers to readdress emotion as the place of tension and value between human compassion and machinic deciphering.

The emergence of AI in ELT is the manifestation of a conflict between affective automation and the relationality of humans. Although individualised learning can be offered by systems like affect-recognising feedback tools or adaptive writing assistants, they rely on universalised emotion models that can misunderstand or simplify cultures, linguistic or neurodiverse manifestations (Chutia and Baruah, 2024; Salloum et al., 2025). This forces the field to face some acute questions:

1. What is it like to teach English humanely in the presence of intelligent technologies?
2. In what ways could emotional intelligence be used as an opposition to the mechanisation of care?
3. Does that not mean that the economies of feeling in teaching are platitudes?

These are some of the questions that guide this paper.

The current paper relies on affect theory (Ahmed, 2004, 2010), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2011), and posthumanism to discuss the emotional changes caused by AI in ELT.

To address these gaps, this paper proposes the Emotionally Intelligent AI-Pedagogy Framework (EI-AIPF) as a model for integrating artificial intelligence with humane, affect-sensitive pedagogy in English language teaching.

2. Analytical Orientation

The study presented in this article takes a qualitative and interpretive approach to analysis. This paper does not aim to gauge the validity of emotional AI tools but to learn how they transform the affective, ethical, and relational realities of English language teaching. To achieve that, the paper will rely on the literature published between 2014 and 2025, both recent empirical studies on affective computing in ELT (Liu et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025; Salloum et al., 2025; Vistorte et al., 2024; Seyri and Ghiasvand, 2025; Xie et al., 2025) and theoretical background in the study of affect theory, critical pedagogy, and posthuman philosophy (Ahmed, 2004, 2010; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Giroux, 2011; Braidotti, 2013).

The argument rather takes a conceptual and hermeneutic approach instead of synthesising this literature in a quantitative manner. It views empirical results in the light of a philosophical and pedagogical model to comprehend the process of mediation, control or transformation of emotional life in AI-enhanced classrooms.

This study is a conceptual and critical theoretical inquiry that develops a pedagogical framework rather than reporting empirical data.

3. Theoretical Background: Emotion, Intelligence and the Posthuman Classroom

The affective turn in the humanities changed the conceptualisation of learning and subjectivity by scholars. According to Ahmed (2004), in lieu of internal properties, emotional states are circulations of value sticky intensities binding bodies, objects, and histories. Emotions pass through the classroom: intrigue, worry, happiness and anger go round in gesture, words and quietness to create the emotional experience we employ to refer to learning. Freire (1970) brings to our minds the fact that education can never be neutral but an act of love or domination. In order to teach with love, in the case of Freire, it is necessary to converse not only in dialogues in an emotional way but also in dialogues in a political way.

This is advanced and refined by bell hooks (1994), who promotes engaged pedagogy, as she maintains that the teachers should teach out of their entire being and not a separation between the intellect and the emotion. Giroux (2011) places emotional labour in the context of more general neoliberal pressures, which have the potential to empty out the caring imagination required to live a democratic life. In this school of thought, emotion is not sentimental; rather, it is ethical and political as a social intelligence.

Posthuman theorists (Braidotti, 2013; Knox, 2019) take these arguments further to digital ecologies, where human beings and machines are co-producers of knowledge. Emotion circulates in such assemblages involving teacher, learner, device and algorithm. The difficulty is to make certain that posthuman pedagogy is humanising so that machine-simulated empathies do not displace human relationality.

The current investigations in AI and ELT indicate that algorithmic visibility is influencing emotional lives in classrooms more and more. Xie et al. (2025) demonstrate that the application

of AI systems impacts the way teachers regulate their emotions, which tends to provoke a performative neutrality, which fits into the Giroux critique of emotional standardisation (2011). In this way, emotional intelligence in posthuman classrooms demands critical emotional literacy, or the ability to know when the emotions are organically generated or when they are mechanically induced by machinic expectations.

Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) cannot be understood as an individual ability in this new environment but rather as a political-ethical literacy. The training information, cultural customs, and computational bias are all that define emotional signals that AI eye movements, tone, and gestures discern (Liu et al., 2024). Critical emotional literacy involves the acknowledgement of real affect, coded affect and commodified affect. It is only at that point which educators can exercise responsible interference in the digital learning spaces.

4. The Artificial Intelligence and the Emotional Politics of English Teaching

AI comes into English education in the forms of both hope and danger. It has visions of automatic-error-correcting classrooms, personalised tasks, and measurable interaction. However, as Selwyn (2019) cautions, AI is an ideological endeavour: automating the affect and privatising the empathy. Similar claims are made by Macasawang (2025), who states that AI impacts cognitive, social, affective, and ethical aspects of human behaviour and that emotional reactions to AI are greatly influenced by the human-computer interaction context. Educators and students are under the threat of being recreated in the likeness of affective transparency and productivity.

Recent empirical research indicates that emotional AI remakes the affective economy of ELT give precedence to legibility over authenticity through automated feedback loops. As Liu et al. (2024) show, AI is unable to recognise culturally specific manifestations of excitement or disorientation. Similarly, Benaissa (2024) demonstrates that an emotional negotiation process occurs in the teachers engaging in integration of AI, since they are both enabled and restrained by AI-mediated instruction requirements. Salloum et al. (2025) discovered that the real-time emotion recognition increases frustration, which in turn affects the reaction of the teachers. Such systems are prone to making emotion a performance in accordance with the algorithmic expectations.

The emotional factor has always been at the centre of ELT, which included worry, endurance, tediousness, hope, trust, and weakness. However, the ambiguity of affect is minimised when it is coded into algorithms. Barrett (2017) cautions about emotion recognition, which supposes that all emotions are expressed in the same way, irrespective of cultural differences. A smile in Delhi will never be the same as a smile in Dublin, but AI systems tend to view them as such.

More recent studies also indicate that emotional AI has the ability to replicate injustices. According to Vistorte et al. (2024), cameras that detect emotions cannot read people with darker skin colour or non-Western norms of affect. Such misrecognition would become embedded in marginalisation in varied ELT classrooms.

This makes emotion not only a matter of analysis but also a location of politics. The emotional labour is commodified (Benesch, 2017), and teachers are commonly required to promote the requirements of positivity and resilience supported by AI-based emotional analytics.

Yet change is possible. Emotion-sensitive systems may be retooled as a means of insight and not surveillance. Emotional information when mediated by teacher interpretation can support an empathetic reaction to frustration or lack of interest. According to Akgun and Greenhow (2021), transparency and human decision-making are in focus.

5. Findings: New Trends in Emotional Artificial Intelligence and Second Language Teaching

A review of the modern studies on the topic of emotional artificial intelligence (AI) in ELT shows that there are four key thematic findings. These conclusions point to the fact that AI is not only changing the technical aspects of teaching but also transforming the affective, relational, and political context of the environment in which English language teachers and learners conduct their work.

5.1. Emotional AI Misinterprets and Normalises Selected Emotional Cultures

As present literature indicates, emotional AI systems have difficulty comprehending affect in the correct context in a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. According to Liu et al. (2024), the sentiment analysis tools and affect recognition tools often interpret the emotional state of learners very poorly, particularly in the situation when cultural norms influence expressions

differently. Vistorte et al. (2024) show that a large number of emotion-recognition systems are biased towards Western patterns of emotion, that a state of neutrality or introspection is perceived as a lack of engagement, and that an expression is perceived as a lack of clarity or frustration. This is an indicator of structural bias that has been ingrained into AI systems and thus ends up favouring particular emotional cultures above other cultures.

5.1.1. Interpretation:

The AI systems do not simply read emotion, but they generate emotional norms. They encourage certain expressions at the expense of others, thereby transforming the affective dynamics of the classroom.

5.2. AI Modulates the Teacher Emotions and Strengthens Emotional Labour.

The AIs do not mediate the emotions of students, but they also affect the emotional behaviour of teachers. Seyri and Ghiasvand (2025) demonstrate that educators in AI-improved classrooms tend to change their emotional displays, smiling more, managing their irritation, and engaging in an upbeat tone since the system monitors their emotional state. Benaissa (2024) demonstrates that the emotional involvement of EFL teachers varies between excitement and uneasiness as the classroom expectations are transformed by AI. Accordingly, Liu et al. (2025) show that AI-based assessment systems reduce complicated teacher-student interactions of emotions to quantifiable factors of calmness, positivity, or engagement.

5.2.1. Interpretation:

The emotional labour is heightened in the AI, which transforms the teachers into data points. This alters the work of the teacher to be focused on relational care to affective performance in accordance with the algorithmic expectations.

5.3. Adaptive Emotional Feedback Increases Engagement at the Risk of Emotional Reductionism.

Feedback systems based on AI can detect the development of student frustration or lack of engagement and provide support in time. Salloum et al. (2025) observed that real-time emotional monitoring enhanced engagement of the learners and minimised negative affective states that

lasted long. But these systems understand emotion in a discrete form – frustrated, confused, bored – and not as complex and layered experiences. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) make us remember that the emotions of language learning are dynamic and contradictory by nature.

5.3.1. Interpretation:

Artificial intelligence enhances the emotions, but it does not have access to emotional meaning. It is capable of identifying the behaviours related to affect as compared to the living, relational and cultural aspects of learning emotions.

5.4. Teachers also need emotional literacy as much as digital literacy.

Recent research emphasises that affective AI technology entails novel interpretative pressures on educators. Yuvaraj et al. (2025) point out that teachers should be in a position to perceive emotional predictions and biometric indicators critically but not accept them as absolute facts. Crompton et al. (2024) discovered that teachers frequently tend to believe AI-generated insights without questioning them and end up relying on them more than on their own intuitions as teachers. As reiterated by Macasawang (2025), AI has an impact that goes beyond thinking to emotional and ethical behaviour, and this makes the role of an educator an important challenge to negotiate AI effects affecting them critically. Benesch (2017) demonstrates that ELT emotional labour is always a political phenomenon, which AI makes even more intense, transforming the emotional stimuli into institutional measurements.

5.4.1. Interpretation:

Educators need to ensure the achievement of not merely technical competence but also critical emotional literacy: the capacity to ask questions of affective information, identify algorithmic prejudices, and moderate AI results with human compassion and cultural context.

6. Research Gaps

Although the number of studies exploring the subject of emotional AI continues to grow, there are still a number of conceptual, methodological, and political gaps. These lacunae support the necessity of end-of-technical or end-of-behavioural analyses of emotion like this paper.

6.1. Few studies have investigated how teachers are resisting emotional automation

Previous research explains the effect of AI on the emotional behaviour of teachers (Seyri and Ghiasvand, 2025; Liu et al., 2025), although little tries to examine how teachers:

6.1.1. Oppose procedural emotional conventions,

6.1.2. Question computer-based emotional demands,

6.1.3. Refranchise emotional information using cultural or relational information.

6.2. Contribution of this paper:

The present paper predicts emotional intelligence as an ethical and pedagogical resistance mode, which is not addressed in recent studies. Further, this paper theorises humane teaching based on affect theory, critical pedagogy, and posthumanism, an area which is not represented much in the current literature on AI. This paper also synthesizes the below traditions and research in a unique way to shed light on the emotional politics of AI in ELT.

6.3. The absence of conceptual clarity on the issue of humane teaching in AI environments

In the majority of emotional AI studies, the authors concentrate on:

6.3.1. Accuracy,

6.3.2. Engagement,

6.3.3. Behavioural outcomes,

6.3.4. Detection performance.

Few pieces of literature deal with more profound questions, such as:

1. Humane teaching when machines can read emotions?
2. What other relationalities do we have after surveillance?
3. What ways do teachers maintain dignity, ambiguity and care when they are automated?

6.4. The Lack of Integrating Affect Theory, Critical Pedagogy and Posthumanism in AI Research

Recent research is based on the extensive use of psychological or computational theories of affect. Very minimal emotion AI research is based on:

6.4.1. Sara Ahmed's affect theory,

6.4.2. Political love as envisaged by Freire,

6.4.3. Hooks' engaged pedagogy,

6.4.4. The criticism of the neoliberal emotional labour by Giroux,

6.4.5. New posthuman ethics by Braidotti.

6.5. Lack of Conceptual Frameworks between Emotion, AI Ethics and ELT Practice

Although there are frameworks of:

6.5.1. AI in education,

6.5.2. Teacher emotions,

6.5.3. Affective computing,

There does not exist a unified model of all three.

6.6. Contribution of this paper:

One of the earliest attempts to conceptualise the idea of emotionally intelligent pedagogy in AI-enhanced ELT is EI-AIPF.

6.7. Excessive Reliance on Quantitative or Engineering Strategy

Most emotional AI studies:

6.7.1. Focus on the facial recognition rate,

6.7.2. Use enormous sets of emotional data,

6.7.3. Treat affect as measurable,

6.7.4. Do not consider cultural, ethical and relational dimensions.

6.8. Contribution of this paper:

The study is a reflective, theoretical, and qualitative critique that puts the emotional AI into context in successive socio-cultural and ethical issues.

7. Discussion: A Humanist Future of Feeling Machines

It is paradoxical to teach in the era of AI. Machines are smarter and even lovelier, though their appeal is simulation and an echo of our emotional cues. Teachers are urged to be more like data analysts and read dashboards rather than dispositions.

Humane teaching involves going beyond emotional coldness in favour of relationship richness. Although AI is able to distinguish facial tensions or vocal strain, it is not able to read between the lines or weakness (Liu et al., 2024). This is an indication of what Macasawang (2025) noted: that the interaction between a human and a computer influences emotional and ethical behaviour in a manner that AI cannot fully explain. The humaneness is in the relational presence, the judgement of ethics and the cultural sensitivity.

The resistance of emotional intelligence occurs when teachers criticise machinic emotional norms. Seyri and Ghiasvand (2025) demonstrate that instructors are under the pressure to act positively, but emotionally literate teachers fight against it by focusing on authenticity and relational honesty.

Even in AI-mediated contexts, emotional agency, according to recent systematic reviews (Yuvaraj et al., 2025), is in the centre stage. Nonetheless, the emotional economies are not entirely encoded; AI acquires signals, not meanings (Vistorte et al., 2024); emotional states, not emotional stories (Salloum et al., 2025).

Therefore, emotional information should not be conclusive but descriptive.

8. Emotionally Intelligent AI-Pedagogy Framework (EI-AIPF).

The Emotionally Intelligent AI-Pedagogy Framework (EI-AIPF) is a result of the intersection between affect theory and critical pedagogy and recent studies concerning emotional AI in ELT. It hypothesises that emotional intelligence and artificial intelligence are not conflicting aspects but are co-constitutive components of an ethical learning system of the future.

Instead of considering AI as the tool of efficiency or as the danger to human emotion, EI-AIPF places AI in the role of a partner, the insights of which are to be mediated by human empathy, cultural awareness, and moral imagination.

The paradigm recognises the fact that AI is good at identifying surface affect patterns in voice, eyes, hands, and involvement but not at access to lived emotional content. Human teachers, on the other hand, are good practitioners in interpretation, moral judgement and relational presence. In this way, emotionally intelligent pedagogy will be a hybrid practice: machines, on the one hand, notice signals; on the other hand, people create meaning. This slimmed-down agency safeguards against technological determinism without a retrogressive humanist lapse.

8.1. Emotional Awareness

Pedagogy of emotional intelligence starts with an understanding of the fact that emotion is both information and experience. Artificial intelligence will be able to notice changes in the tone, speed, or even facial expression; however, the cultural, interpersonal, and historical context of such emotions will have to be interpreted by an educator. Teachers are effective translators who act as intermediaries between the crude messages that systems pick up and the realities of lived experience among learners. According to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), there are anxiety and enjoyment phases in language learning; EI-AIPF makes sure that this emotional nuance is not reduced and disregarded.

8.2. Feedback espoused

AI promises more responsiveness than any system that has existed before through its real-time feedback, which, however, can be mechanistic or punitive in its absence of empathy. Adaptivity at EI-AIPF is reformulated as dialogic in place of algorithmic. The feedback must be sensitive to the language mistakes as well as emotional states such as frustration, boredom, or confidence. Instead of controlling learners to behave in the same manner, adaptive systems should help them be emotionally resilient (Salloum et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2024).

8.3. Governance Ethics

Emotional AI cannot afford to think about ethics as an appendix. Selwyn (2023) and Luckin and Holmes (2016) caution that instead of supporting learners, affective data can be utilised to

discipline them. EI-AIPF demands transparency in the data practices, informed consent, sensitivity to the culture and accountability. Emotional data must be used to enable self-reflection and relational care and not to monitor or measure performance. The moral requirement is quite straightforward: emotion should never be turned into a product.

8.4. Human Mediation

Lastly, all AI-generated feedback, predictions, and emotional responses should be received in the light of the relational, cultural, and ethical knowledge of educators. AI can identify the tendencies in engagement, yet it is a task of teachers to identify the context of engagement. The human mediation will mean that AI provides a complement, not a substitution, to the pedagogical judgement. According to this model, the teachers do not act as administrators of algorithms but rather co-create meaning in an environment that is hybrid, affective learning.

Collectively, these principles make up a paradigm that was not only resistant towards technological determinism but also nostalgic humanism. EI-AIPF proposes that educators should consider AI as a companion that is as accurate as human emotions are in depth and develop a pedagogy that is both ethically robust, relationally full and critically conscious.

9. Conclusion: On the way to a humanised pedagogy of AI.

The meeting point between artificial intelligence and English language teaching is a tension that is not solved yet: computers become even more skilled at processing the text, but they do not feel the basic human quality of communication. Teaching English nowadays is to move between code and care, information and passion, anticipation and reality. Emotional intelligence does not disappear in this scene; instead, it turns out to be unavoidable. Pedagogy is attached to humanity by the thread.

This paper has demonstrated that in the field of teaching, AI is intruding on the emotional component of the teaching process, which necessitates a novel type of literacy: affective, ethical, and critically digital. The promise of emotional AI is that it can detect the emotions of learners, but the interpretive aspect of the technology can oversimplify the classroom effect. The EI-AIPF framework provides a means by which one can strike a balance between the precision of the

analytical and emotional facets of the human project of education and the factors that may result in the project being overshadowed by technology.

The more that schools and institutions become quantitative and instrumentalise emotion, the harder the task of the critical pedagogue of recovering feeling as a form of resistance is. Emotion should not be regarded as a liability or a measure but as a relationship becoming a place where learners expose themselves to others and the uncertainties of language. In the online or offline classroom, the classroom is one of the few remaining spheres where unpredictability, vulnerability, and presence still count.

A humanised pedagogy of AI is thus based on two promises, and they include adopting what machines are good at – pattern detection, accuracy, and responsiveness – and maintaining what is exclusive to humans: interpreting, empathising, listening, and relating. AI can be used to enhance the efforts of teaching, although it could not substitute relational, ethical, and affective labour that distinguishes the educational activity. In this respect, emotion is not a thing but an object to be respected. It is the thing that machines will never automate and even what makes teaching something worth defending.

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History as Narrative: Reimagining the Past in Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence*

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Abstract

This paper examines Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* as a paradigmatic instance of historiographic metafiction that reconceptualises history as a narrative construct shaped by imagination, power and discourse. Situating the novel within the theoretical frameworks enunciated by Hayden White, Linda Hutcheon, E. H. Carr and Patricia Waugh, the study argues that Rushdie moves beyond 'historiographical scepticism' to foreground the 'ontological instability' of the past itself. Through its hybrid setting of Mughal India and Renaissance Florence, the novel collapses temporal and spatial boundaries, transforming history into a discursive field of competing narratives rather than a stable archive of facts.

The analysis demonstrates how the traveller's rhetorical performance, Qara Koz's fragmented genealogy and Akbar's imagined queen collectively destabilise the distinction between fact and fiction. Drawing on Roland Barthes's notion of historical discourse as ideological, Michel Foucault's theory of power/knowledge and Jacques Derrida's concept of différance, the paper shows that historical meaning in the novel emerges through narrative performance, reception and belief.

Ultimately, the essay contends that Rushdie redefines storytelling as the very condition of historical existence: history does not precede narrative but is produced by it. In doing so, *The Enchantress of Florence* challenges the epistemological foundations of historiography and advances a postmodern vision of truth as provisional, plural and contingent upon discursive practices.

Keywords: Historiographic Metafiction; Narrative Identity; Historical Imagination; Postmodern Historiography; Power and Discourse; Narrative Construction

Introduction:

Salman Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* is a rich and multi-layered novel that blends history and fiction to explore how the past is imagined, narrated and reinvented. The novel represents Salman Rushdie's most elaborate engagement with the idea that history is not a fixed record of the past but a construct shaped by narrative, imagination and power. Set across two distinct yet interconnected worlds- Mughal India under Emperor Akbar and Renaissance Florence- the novel collapses geographical and temporal boundaries to create a hybrid narrative space where history and imagination coexist.

From a historical perspective, Rushdie draws upon real figures such as Akbar, Niccolò Machiavelli and the Medici family, situating the narrative within recognisable political and cultural contexts of the sixteenth century. The Mughal court at Fatehpur Sikri and the intellectual climate of Florence are depicted with vivid detail, reflecting the grandeur, philosophical debates and power struggles of their respective eras. However, these historical settings are not presented as fixed or authoritative; instead, they serve as frameworks within which alternative versions of history can emerge.

From a fictional perspective, the novel introduces the enigmatic traveller who claims kinship with Akbar and narrates the story of Qara Koz, a legendary Mughal princess who journeys from India to Europe. This narrative, lacking historical verification, exemplifies how storytelling can reshape and even fabricate history. Characters such as the imagined queen Jodha and the mysterious Qara Koz blur the line between reality and invention, suggesting that belief and narrative can grant fiction a form of truth.

By intertwining documented history with imaginative storytelling, Rushdie demonstrates that history itself is constructed through narrative acts. The novel challenges the idea of a single, objective past and instead presents history as a fluid, contested space shaped by memory, desire and power. Ultimately, *The Enchantress of Florence* reveals that the boundary between history and fiction is not fixed but constantly negotiated, making storytelling the central force through which both are understood.

Use of Narrative Storytelling

By interweaving Mughal India with Renaissance Florence, Rushdie deliberately collapses temporal and geographical boundaries, creating what Linda Hutcheon terms historiographic metafiction- a mode that is "intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lays claim to historical events and personages," and it "problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge." (*A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 122). The novel's hybrid narrative structure challenges the authority of official histories by foregrounding storytelling as the primary means through which the past is both remembered and reinvented. In doing so, Rushdie aligns with Hayden White's claim that history is not a transparent record of events but "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse" (*Metahistory* ix), shaped by emplotment, selection and interpretation rather than objective truth.

Central to this narrative strategy is the primacy of storytelling as a condition of identity and historical existence. The assertion "All men needed to hear their stories told…" (EF 91) moves beyond a simple reflection on narrative desire and becomes an epistemological claim about the formation of selfhood and memory. Paul Ricoeur's concept of "narrative identity" suggests that individuals understand themselves only through stories (*Time and Narrative* 246), and Rushdie extends this idea to cultures and empires. The traveller's bold declaration "That I, my lord, am none other than . . . your relative by blood. In point of fact your uncle" (EF 100) further demonstrates how history can be rhetorically produced. Devoid of empirical verification, his claim relies entirely on narrative persuasion, reinforcing Roland Barthes's argument that historical discourse is "a form of ideological elaboration" (Barthes 16-17). Truth, therefore, emerges not from factual accuracy but from the ability of a story to convince its audience.

Moreover, the novel destabilises historical certainty through competing and contradictory accounts. Qara Koz's revelation, "the blurring of generations… the substitution of… incestuous words" (EF 348) symbolises the fragmentation inherent in all historical narratives. This aligns with Jacques Derrida's notion of the instability of meaning suggests that origins are always deferred and never fully recoverable. "Meaning is always deferred and never fully present; the origin itself is constituted through this process of deferral" (*Of Grammatology* 158).

Rushdie thus presents history as a palimpsest of overlapping stories rather than a coherent, linear progression. The authority of history is further undermined by the performative dimension of storytelling: "The Hindustani storyteller always knows when he loses his audience…" (EF 113).

This highlights that narratives survive only through reception, echoing Michel Foucault's insight that knowledge is deeply entangled with power (*Power/Knowledge* 88). In Akbar's court, storytelling becomes a political act where survival depends on sustaining belief.

Metafictional Dimension

The metafictional dimension of the novel, particularly in the figure of "an imaginary wife dreamed up by Akbar…" (EF 27), blurs the boundary between imagination and reality. This reflects Brian McHale's argument that postmodern fiction foregrounds 'ontological uncertainty', "characterized by a dominant ontological concern", "with questions of being and the modes of existence of objects and worlds." (*Postmodernist Fiction* 10). By presenting imagined figures as experientially real, Rushdie suggests that perception itself constructs reality. Consequently, *The Enchantress of Florence* does not merely retell history; it exposes the mechanisms through which history is narrated, contested and legitimised. In this sense, the novel advances a fundamentally postmodern argument: that history, like fiction, is an interpretive act shaped by narrative strategies, cultural contexts, and the dynamics of power (Hutcheon; White; Foucault).

At the centre of *The Enchantress of Florence* lies the figure of the storyteller, whose role is not merely to recount events but to produce meaning and shape reality itself. Storytelling becomes essential to being, suggesting that identity is not inherent but constructed through narrative. As Paul Ricoeur argues, "selfhood is constituted by the narrative identity" (*Time and Narrative* 246), a concept Rushdie vividly dramatizes through his characters, whose identities emerge through the telling and retelling of stories. Without narrative, the self disintegrates into incoherence and history itself loses structure and meaning.

Rushdie extends this idea beyond the individual to encompass entire civilizations. The Mughal court, like Renaissance Florence, is sustained by stories that define its cultural memory and political legitimacy. In this sense, storytelling becomes a mode of historical production. Hayden White's assertion that history is "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse" (*Metahistory* ix) is particularly relevant here, as Rushdie demonstrates that the past is not simply recorded but narrativised. The storyteller does not passively transmit facts; he actively constructs them, selecting, arranging and interpreting events to produce a coherent account. Consequently, truth is no longer an objective entity but a function of narrative form.

Furthermore, the dependence of truth on storytelling underscores the rhetorical and performative dimensions of history. Roland Barthes's observation that historical discourse is "a form of ideological elaboration" (Barthes 16-7) highlights how narratives are shaped by cultural and political forces. In Rushdie's novel, the storyteller's authority derives not from factual accuracy but from his ability to persuade and captivate his audience. This aligns with Michel Foucault's view that knowledge is inseparable from power, as those who control narratives effectively control what is accepted as truth (*Power/Knowledge* 88). The storyteller, therefore, occupies a position of immense influence, mediating between imagination and reality.

Ultimately, Rushdie suggests that history and identity are inseparable from the act of storytelling. By foregrounding narrative as the basis of both personal and collective existence, the novel challenges the notion of fixed truth and instead presents history as a dynamic, interpretive process shaped by memory, imagination and discourse (Hutcheon; White; Ricoeur).

The traveller's audacious claim of being the emperor's uncle serves as a powerful illustration of how history can be rhetorically constructed, negotiated and ultimately manipulated. Devoid of empirical verification, the claim derives its authority not from evidence but from narrative performance. In Rushdie's fictional universe, persuasion precedes proof and plausibility displaces factuality. In this narrative strategy meaning is not discovered in the past but imposed upon it through emplotment and interpretation. The traveller's story of Qara Koz thus becomes less an act of recovery than one of invention, exposing the instability of historical records and their susceptibility to revision. His survival depends not on the truth of his claim but on its narrative coherence and emotional resonance, reinforcing Michael Riffaterre's argument that fictional truth lies in its rhetorical force rather than its correspondence to reality (*Fictional Truth* 1). In this sense, Rushdie foregrounds the idea that history itself operates through similar mechanisms of selection, arrangement and persuasion.

The traveller's narrative also exemplifies what Linda Hutcheon identifies as the central paradox of historiographic metafiction: it both invokes and subverts historical authority (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 122). By embedding a fabricated genealogy within a recognisable historical framework, Rushdie blurs the boundary between documented past and imaginative reconstruction. The Mughal court, which ought to function as a site of historical legitimacy, instead becomes a theatre of narrative contestation where competing versions of the past vie for acceptance. This

aligns with Dipesh Chakrabarty's critique of historicism, which questions the universality and objectivity of historical knowledge by emphasising its culturally mediated nature (*Provincializing Europe* 16). The traveller's success in momentarily persuading Akbar reveals that history is not a fixed archive but a discursive field open to reinterpretation.

Furthermore, the novel destabilises the notion of a singular, coherent historical truth through the proliferation of conflicting narratives. Qara Koz's revelation "The blurring of generations… the substitution of… incestuous words" (EF 348) introduces fragmentation at the level of identity, lineage and memory. Genealogy, traditionally regarded as a stabilising structure in historical discourse, is here rendered unstable and unreliable. This disruption symbolises a broader epistemological uncertainty: the impossibility of tracing origins with certainty. Jacques Derrida's concept of différance is particularly relevant in this context, as it suggests that meaning is never fully present but constantly deferred (*Of Grammatology* 158). Rushdie's narrative embodies this deferral, presenting history as a series of overlapping, contradictory accounts rather than a unified continuum. The past becomes a palimpsest, where each new story partially erases and rewrites what came before.

This multiplicity of narratives also reflects Jean-François Lyotard's critique of grand narratives, which he argues have lost their credibility in the postmodern condition (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv). In *The Enchantress of Florence*, no single version of history achieves dominance; instead, the text sustains a plurality of voices that resist closure. Qara Koz's counter-narrative does not resolve the contradictions introduced by the traveller but intensifies them, demonstrating that historical truth is always provisional and contested. As a result, Rushdie challenges the epistemological foundations of historiography, exposing its reliance on narrative coherence rather than empirical certainty.

Storytelling as Performance and Politics

Rushdie further strengthens his critique by foregrounding the performative and political dimensions of storytelling. The observation that "The Hindustani storyteller always knows when he loses his audience…" (EF 113) underscores the dependence of narrative on reception and engagement. Storytelling, in this context, is not merely a communicative act but a performative one, where the storyteller must constantly negotiate with the expectations and desires of the audience. Truth, therefore, emerges as an effect of performance rather than a pre-existing reality.

Roland Barthes's claim that narrative is "a site of ideological production" (Barthes 16–17) becomes particularly pertinent here, as Rushdie demonstrates how stories are shaped by the socio-political context in which they are told.

In Akbar's court, the stakes of storytelling are extraordinarily high: the storyteller's life depends on his ability to sustain belief. This transforms narrative into an instrument of power, aligning with Michel Foucault's assertion that knowledge and power are inextricably linked (*Power/Knowledge* 88). The authority to define the past becomes a form of political control and the storyteller's success depends on his ability to align his narrative with the ideological frameworks of his audience. At the same time, Rushdie exposes the fragility of this authority, as it can be undermined by competing narratives or shifts in audience perception. The court thus becomes a microcosm of historiographical practice, where truth is continuously negotiated rather than definitively established.

The metafictional dimension of the novel is most evident in the figure of Akbar's imagined queen: "an imaginary wife dreamed up by Akbar…" (EF 27). This episode collapses the boundary between imagination and reality, suggesting that perception itself is constitutive of truth. Akbar's refusal to distinguish between the real and the imagined reflects a postmodern epistemology in which reality is mediated through discourse. The imagined queen, though fictional, exerts a tangible influence on Akbar's thoughts and actions, thereby acquiring a form of ontological presence. This paradox illustrates Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation, where representations become more real than reality itself (*Simulacra and Simulation* 1). The queen exists not as a historical figure but as a narrative construct that shapes perception and behaviour.

Michel Foucault's insight that "knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting" (*Power/Knowledge* 88) further illuminates this dynamic. What is accepted as truth is determined by systems of power and representation rather than by objective verification. Akbar's imagined queen demonstrates how belief can materialise fiction into perceived reality, blurring the distinction between ontology and epistemology. Rushdie thus suggests that historical knowledge operates in a similar manner: it is produced through discourse and sustained by belief rather than grounded in immutable facts.

Moreover, the novel's intertextual blending of Machiavelli and Akbar further complicates historical boundaries. These figures, who never met in reality, are brought into a shared narrative

space, emphasising the artificiality of historical separation. By juxtaposing Renaissance political thought with Mughal imperial ideology, Rushdie creates a dialogic framework that transcends conventional historiographical divisions. This strategy aligns with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, which emphasises the coexistence of multiple voices and perspectives within a single text (*The Dialogic Imagination* 84). The interaction between Machiavelli and Akbar generates a space in which different historical discourses intersect, challenging the notion of a singular, authoritative history.

Brian McHale's observation that postmodern fiction "foregrounds ontological questions" (*Postmodernist Fiction* 10) is particularly relevant here. By merging disparate historical contexts, Rushdie shifts the focus from epistemological concerns-how we know the past- to ontological ones- what kind of reality the past constitutes. The novel invites readers to question whether historical events possess any inherent meaning outside the narratives that represent them. In doing so, it reinforces the idea that history is not discovered but constructed- an imaginative act shaped by narrative choices, cultural contexts and ideological frameworks.

This argument is further supported by Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities, which posits that nations themselves are narrative constructs sustained through shared stories (*Imagined Communities* 6). Rushdie's blending of Mughal and European histories suggests that cultural and historical identities are similarly constructed through narrative acts. The boundaries between East and West, past and present, fact and fiction are revealed to be porous and contingent rather than fixed and essential.

The Enchantress of Florence and Historical Absolutism

Ultimately, *The Enchantress of Florence* advances a sustained critique of historical absolutism by demonstrating that history, like fiction, is inherently narrative, interpretive and contingent. Through the traveller's persuasive storytelling, Qara Koz's fragmented genealogy, the performative dynamics of Akbar's court, and the metafictional presence of the imagined queen, Rushdie exposes the mechanisms through which historical knowledge is produced and legitimised. The novel does not merely blur the line between fact and fiction; it reveals that this line has always been unstable. By foregrounding the role of narrative in shaping both identity and history, Rushdie compels readers to recognise that what we accept as truth is ultimately the product of storytelling- a dynamic interplay of imagination, memory and power (Hutcheon; White; Derrida; Foucault).

In this sense, *The Enchantress of Florence* becomes a sustained and forceful argument against historical absolutism. It demonstrates that history, like fiction, is selective, interpretive and deeply influenced by narrative form, ideological positioning and cultural context. As Hutcheon observes, historiographic metafiction "both installs and then subverts the conventions of historical representation" (*Politics of Postmodernism* 78). Rushdie follows this trajectory with remarkable precision: he begins by invoking recognisable historical figures- Akbar, Machiavelli, the Mughal court, Renaissance Florence- and situates them within seemingly authentic historical frameworks. However, this apparent fidelity to history is quickly destabilised through imaginative reconstruction, narrative layering and metafictional play. The effect is not merely to blur the boundary between history and fiction, but to reveal that such a boundary has always been porous and constructed.

Rushdie's strategy aligns with Hayden White's contention that historical narratives are shaped by the same tropological structures as literary texts, where meaning is imposed through emplotment rather than inherent in events themselves (*Metahistory* ix). By juxtaposing incompatible timelines and introducing unverifiable genealogies, Rushdie exposes the artificial coherence that traditional historiography attempts to impose on the past. The novel thus resists the teleological impulse of conventional history-writing, which seeks to organise events into a linear, causal sequence. Instead, it offers a fragmented, polyphonic narrative that foregrounds discontinuity, contradiction and multiplicity. This narrative form challenges the authority of what Jean-François Lyotard calls "grand narratives," those totalising explanations that claim universal validity (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv). In Rushdie's text, no single narrative achieves dominance; rather multiple, competing stories coexist, each offering a partial and provisional version of truth.

At a deeper level, the novel insists that storytelling is not merely a reflection of history but its very condition of possibility. The past does not exist as an accessible, objective reality waiting to be discovered; it survives only through its narration. As Paul Ricoeur suggests that "time itself becomes humanly meaningful only when articulated through narrative" (*Time and Narrative* 52). Rushdie extends this insight by demonstrating that history is not simply recorded but actively produced through acts of storytelling. The traveller's tale, Akbar's imaginings, and Qara Koz's counter-narrative all contribute to a dynamic process in which the past is continuously rewritten.

These narratives are always shaped by desire, memory and power, reflecting both individual subjectivities and broader ideological forces.

The role of desire in shaping history is particularly significant. Characters in the novel do not merely recount the past; they reinvent it in ways that fulfil emotional, political, or existential needs. The traveller's claim to royal lineage, for instance, is driven by a desire for legitimacy and survival, while Akbar's imagined queen reflects a longing for companionship and transcendence. These desires inflect the narratives they produce, demonstrating that history is never neutral but always mediated by human intention. This aligns with Freud's insight that memory itself is reconstructive rather than reproductive (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 47), as well as with poststructuralist theories that emphasise the instability of meaning and the role of the subject in its production.

Memory, too, plays a crucial role in Rushdie's reconfiguration of history. The novel suggests that memory is inherently selective and unreliable, shaped by forgetting as much as by recollection. This selective process mirrors the operations of historiography, which necessarily includes some events while excluding others. As Pierre Nora argues, history emerges precisely when living memory fades, transforming experience into representation (*Realms of Memory* 2). Rushdie's narrative underscores this transformation, showing how personal and collective memories are reworked into stories that claim historical validity. Yet these stories remain open to revision, subject to reinterpretation and contestation.

Power constitutes the third crucial element in Rushdie's critique of historical truth. Michel Foucault's assertion that knowledge and power are mutually constitutive (*Power/Knowledge* 88) is vividly illustrated in the dynamics of Akbar's court, where the authority to define history is inseparable from political authority. The storyteller's success depends on his ability to align his narrative with the expectations and beliefs of those in power, while dissenting or less persuasive narratives risk erasure. In this context, history becomes a site of struggle, where different versions of the past compete for legitimacy. The novel exposes how official histories are often the product of such power struggles, privileging certain voices while silencing others.

Moreover, Rushdie's use of intertextuality further complicates the notion of historical truth. By bringing together figures like Akbar and Machiavelli- who belong to distinct cultural and historical contexts- the novel creates a dialogic space in which different traditions intersect and interact. This intertextual blending challenges the idea of discrete, self-contained histories and instead presents

a vision of history as interconnected and mutually constitutive. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is particularly useful here, as it emphasises the multiplicity of voices within a text and the absence of a single authoritative perspective (*The Dialogic Imagination* 84). Rushdie's narrative embodies this multiplicity, refusing to privilege any one account over others.

In exposing the mechanisms through which history is constructed, *The Enchantress of Florence* ultimately compels readers to reconsider the nature of truth itself- not as a fixed or stable reality, but as a dynamic and contingent product of narrative processes. Truth, in this framework, is not something to be discovered but something that emerges through interpretation, shaped by language, perspective and context. This does not imply that all narratives are equally valid, but rather that their validity depends on the frameworks within which they are produced and received. Thus, Rushdie's novel does more than blur the boundary between fiction and history; it interrogates the very foundations upon which that boundary rests. By revealing the narrative structures underlying historical discourse, it challenges readers to adopt a more critical and self-reflexive approach to the past. In doing so, *The Enchantress of Florence* affirms the postmodern insight that history is not a repository of immutable truths but a living, evolving narrative- one that is continually rewritten in response to changing perspectives, desires and power relations.

Conclusion

The Enchantress of Florence ultimately advances a sustained and rigorous critique of historical absolutism by demonstrating that history is not an objective repository of facts but a narrative construct produced through acts of storytelling. By placing its fictional inventions alongside figures such as Akbar and Niccolò Machiavelli, the novel exposes the instability of the boundary between documented past and imaginative reconstruction. This boundary, far from being fixed, is revealed to be contingent upon narrative strategies, interpretive frameworks and ideological investments.

Drawing upon Hayden White's insight that historical narratives are structured through emplotment and Linda Hutcheon's formulation of historiographic metafiction, the novel demonstrates that history is always already textualised. At the same time, it extends E. H. Carr's claim that facts are mediated by interpretation by showing that "facts" themselves are narratively constituted. Through the performative dynamics of storytelling- most vividly embodied in the traveller's persuasive

rhetoric- the text foregrounds the extent to which truth depends not on verification but on plausibility, reception, and power. In this respect, the novel substantiates Michel Foucault's argument that truth is produced within regimes of power and Roland Barthes's assertion that historical discourse is ideologically inflected.

Moreover, the novel's emphasis on fragmentation, multiplicity and narrative contradiction aligns with Jacques Derrida's notion of deferred meaning and Jean-François Lyotard's scepticism toward grand narratives. History emerges not as a coherent, linear progression but as a palimpsest of overlapping and competing accounts, each shaped by memory, desire and cultural context. The interplay of Mughal and Renaissance worlds further reinforces a dialogic model of history, resonating with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of 'heteroglossia'.

Crucially, Rushdie's novel does not merely deconstruct historical knowledge; it reconstructs it as an imaginative and narrative practice. Storytelling is not simply a means of representing the past but the very mechanism through which the past comes into being. Identity, memory and history are shown to be inseparable from narrative processes, affirming Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity while extending it to collective and civilizational levels.

In this sense, *The Enchantress of Florence* compels a fundamental rethinking of truth itself. Truth is no longer conceived as a stable, discoverable entity but as a dynamic and contingent product of discourse- emerging through interpretation, shaped by language and sustained by belief. By revealing the narrative foundations of historiography, Rushdie not only interrogates the distinction between history and fiction but demonstrates that this distinction has always been inherently unstable. The novel thus reaffirms storytelling as the central epistemological and ontological force through which reality- past and present- is constructed, contested and continually reimagined.

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Food, Feelings and Filters: The Cultural Evolution of English through Social Media

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Abstract

Over the past decade, social media has become a major influence on how people interact, express ideas, and use language in everyday life. This study examines the impact of social media on English communication, focusing on the emergence of food-related metaphors, new word formation, the use of hashtags, and meme-based communication. It also considers how these changes reflect broader cultural trends.

The paper analyses how digital platforms encourage the creation and spread of new vocabulary, including slang, abbreviations, and hybrid expressions, many of which draw from food-related imagery such as “spilling the tea”, “salty”, and “that’s my cup of tea.” It further investigates how hashtags function not only as tools for categorizing content but also as a means of expressing opinions and emotions in a concise and impactful way.

In addition, the study discusses how meme culture depends on shared cultural understanding and frequently employs figurative language such as irony, exaggeration, and metaphor. Another key focus is the distinction between digital English and academic English. While digital communication tends to be informal, dynamic, and creative, academic writing follows structured and formal conventions. This contrast is particularly significant for students who navigate between both styles. Ultimately, this paper suggests that social media does not simply reflect changes in language but actively contributes to the evolution of modern English through culturally influenced and metaphor-rich forms of expression.

Keywords: Social media, Food-Based Metaphors, Digital Expressions, Hashtags,Meme culture, Language Evolution

Introduction

Language continuously changes over time, particularly with the rise of digital technology. In the past decade, social media has become one of the most influential forces shaping communication worldwide. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have created dynamic spaces where people interact daily, share ideas, and express themselves in ways that are often quick, informal, and highly creative. As a result, English communication has undergone significant changes, with new words and expressions continuously emerging through online interactions. One clear example of this shift is the rise of food-based metaphors such as "serving", "cooked", and "that's my cup of tea", which convey emotions and opinions in a relatable and engaging manner. Alongside these, hashtags and memes have introduced new ways of expressing meaning that go beyond traditional sentence structures, making language more dynamic and context based.

This paper explores on understanding how social media contributes to changes in English communication and reflects broader cultural transformations. It examines vocabulary expansion, the role of hashtags, the influence of meme culture, and the use of food-based metaphors in digital discourse. It also highlights the contrast between digital English, which is informal, flexible, and creative, and academic English, which remains structured and formal. Through this analysis, the research aims to provide a clearer understanding of how language is evolving in the digital age and what this means for communication in both academic and social contexts.

Literature Review

The influence of social media on language and communication has become an important area of research in recent years. Earlier, digital platforms were mainly viewed as tools that enabled communication across distances. However, more recent studies suggest that social media actively shapes how language evolves and is used in everyday interactions (Dembe, 2024; Petrovic, 2025). Crystal (2011) argues that language naturally adapts to technological developments, particularly in online environments where communication tends to be more informal and creative. Similarly, Baron (2008) points out that digital communication encourages brief, fast, and conversational forms of expression, which differ significantly from traditional academic writing. Building on this, researchers have increasingly examined how new forms of language emerge and spread through social media. Online platforms provide spaces where users create and share new words, abbreviations, and hybrid expressions, forming flexible "micro-languages" within different communities (Dembe, 2024; Sikorska et al., 2025).

In this context, figurative language plays an important role. Food-based metaphors, for instance, are widely used to express emotions and opinions in ways that are both simple and culturally meaningful. In addition, hashtags and meme culture have become central to digital communication. Zappavigna (2015) highlights that hashtags are not only used to organize content but also to express identity and social meaning. Likewise, memes function as powerful tools for

communication, often relying on humour, irony, and shared cultural knowledge. Studies suggest that memes allow ideas to be communicated quickly while also reflecting social attitudes (Ismail, 2025). At the same time, there is a clear distinction between digital English and academic English. While digital communication is typically informal, flexible, and creative, academic writing follows more structured conventions and prioritizes clarity (Baron, 2008; Petrovic, 2025). This difference can create challenges for students, who must shift between these two styles depending on context. Taken together, existing research shows that social media plays a significant role in shaping modern language by encouraging creativity and cultural expression.

However, although many studies address language change broadly, there is still limited research focusing specifically on the use of food-based metaphors in digital communication.

This gap highlights the need to further explore how such metaphors influence meaning and expression in online interactions. This study therefore moves beyond viewing digital language as merely functional, instead recognizing it as a reflection of evolving cultural identities and patterns shaped by online communication.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of digital language with quantitative survey data to examine the influence of social media on English communication, particularly focusing on food-based metaphors, hashtags, and meme culture.

1. Research Design

A descriptive research design was used to analyze patterns in language use among social media users. The study focuses on identifying how frequently students use digital expressions, especially food-related metaphors, and how they perceive their impact on communication.

2. Data Collection

a) Social Media Language Samples

Language samples were observed from platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. These included captions, comments, and memes that demonstrate the use of expressions like “tea,” “salty,” and other informal digital phrases.

b) Survey Data

A structured survey was conducted among 24 students. The questionnaire included multiple-choice and frequency-based questions. It focused on:

•Frequency of social media usage (e.g., rarely, occasionally, frequently)

•Usage of food-based metaphors such as “tea” and “salty”

•Understanding and usage of hashtags and memes

•Perception of whether social media improves or affects communication

•Preference between digital English and formal academic English

3. Evaluation Criteria

The responses were analyzed based on:

• **Frequency of Usage** – how often students use social media and digital expressions

• **Metaphor Usage** – use of food-related expressions in communication

• **Awareness and Understanding** – ability to interpret memes and hashtags

• **Perception** – opinions on the effectiveness and impact of social media language

4. Data Analysis

• **Quantitative Analysis** was used to calculate response patterns (e.g., “rarely”, “once”, “often”), presented in percentages.

• **Qualitative Analysis** was applied to interpret how students use and understand food metaphors and digital expressions.

• **Comparative Analysis** was used to examine differences between digital communication and formal academic English.

5. Limitations

• Limited sample size (24 students)

• Data based on self-reported responses

• Focus on a specific student group

• Rapidly changing nature of social media language

Results and Analysis

This section presents the findings based on survey responses collected from 24 participants. The results highlight the influence of social media on English communication, particularly through food-based metaphors, memes, and digital expressions.

Survey Results

These findings reveal that **75%** of respondents identified social media as their main source for learning new English words related to food, while **25%** rely on friends or peers. This indicates the strong role of digital platforms in vocabulary development.

When looking at the usage of the term *"foodie"*, **45.8%** of participants reported that it is their primary term, while **29.2%** rarely use it and **25%** use it occasionally. This suggests a shift from traditional terms like "gourmet" to more informal, trendy expressions.

Food-based metaphors such as "tea" (gossip) and "cooked" (in trouble) were widely recognized, often appearing alongside related expressions like "brunch" and "hangry." This reveals that food-inspired figurative language has become a common part of everyday communication.

When asked about hashtags, **45.8%** of participants reported that they do not use them, while **33.3%** use them to increase visibility and **12.5%** to follow trends. Only **8.3%** use hashtags to express opinions, showing that hashtags are still more functional than expressive for many users.

Interestingly, a strong preference for visual communication was also observed, with **75%** of respondents stating that emojis are more effective than words when describing food. This reflects the growing importance of visual elements in digital interaction.

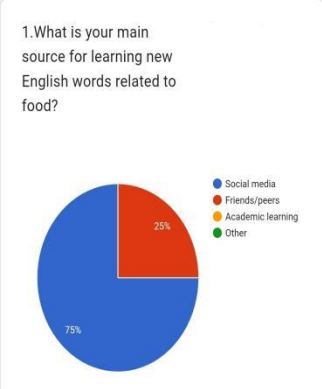
In relation to memes, **58.3%** of participants stated that memes are a primary source for learning new expressions, while **41.7%** reported partial influence. Additionally, **62.5%** believe that social media is the biggest reason for changes in the English language.

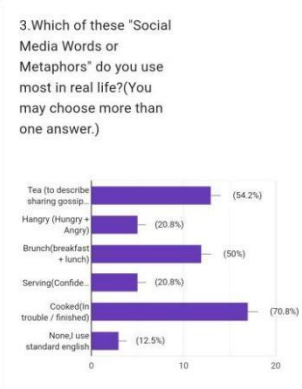
Most participants (**62.5%**) felt that social media is the main reason behind changes in the English language, while **33.3%** believed it is just one of several influencing factors. This suggests that social media is widely seen as a powerful force shaping how English is used today.

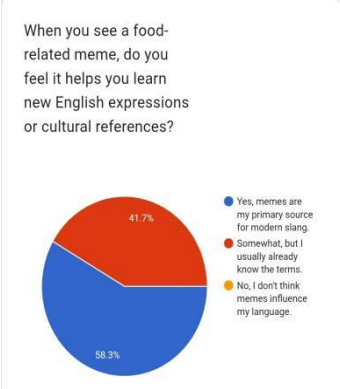
Half of the respondents reported learning new slang through food-related memes at least occasionally, while **29.2%** considered memes their main source of vocabulary. This further emphasizes the role of meme culture in language development.

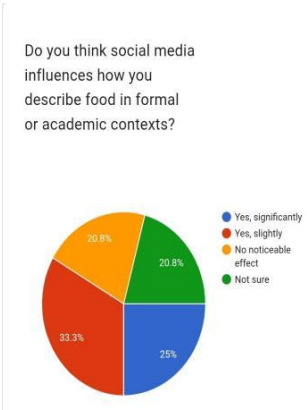
When examining the influence on formal communication, responses were mixed: **33.3%** observed slight influence, **25%** significant influence, while the rest reported no effect or uncertainty. This suggests that digital language is gradually entering formal contexts.

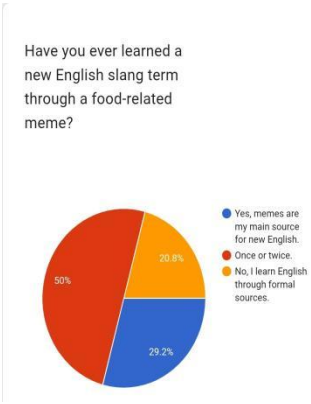
Finally, responses regarding text-speak in formal writing were mixed. About **33.3%** admitted to using it frequently, whereas **37.5%** stated that they consciously avoid it. This indicates an emerging overlap between informal digital language and academic writing practices.











Analysis

The results make it clear that social media plays a major role in shaping modern English communication. The high percentage of participants relying on social media for vocabulary learning confirms its influence as a linguistic platform.

Food-based metaphors such as *"tea", "sweet",* and *"cooked"* shows how everyday concepts are transformed into expressive language tools. These metaphors make communication more engaging, relatable, and culturally relevant.

The widespread use of emojis and memes further highlights a shift from traditional text-based communication to more visual and symbolic forms. This supports the idea that digital English is becoming more creative and context driven.

At the same time, the partial influence of social media on academic writing suggests that while digital language is powerful, formal English still maintains its structure and importance. However, the presence of text-speak in academic contexts indicates a gradual blending of these two forms. Taken together, these patterns show that social media is not just expanding vocabulary but also reshaping how meaning is formed and interpreted, particularly through creative expressions such

as food-based metaphors.

Comparative Analysis of Food-Based Expressions

Expression	Meaning	Traditional Meaning	Social Media Influence
Tea	Gossip/news	A drink	Popularized through memes to mean sharing secrets
Spicy	Bold/exciting	Flavor (hot)	Used for dramatic or controversial content
Cooked	In trouble/failed	Prepared food	Meme slang for being defeated or exposed
Ate (ate and left no crumbs)	Did something perfectly	Eating food	Used to praise performance (Gen Z slang)
Salty	Annoyed/irritated	Taste (salt)	Used to describe emotional irritation
Snack	Attractive person	Food item	Used in comments to describe good-looking people

The table clearly shows how simple food-related words are being used in new and creative ways in social media communication. These expressions make conversations more engaging and help people share feelings and ideas quickly and effectively. This highlights how social media is not just influencing language, but also changing the way people think and express themselves in everyday life.

The transformation from complete sentences to hashtag-based expressions can be illustrated as follows

"I really enjoyed this homemade chocolate cake" → #homemade #chocolatelover #delicious

"This trip was very relaxing and peaceful" → #peaceful #vibes #traveldiaries

"I am very excited about this event" → #excited #cantwait #event

From these examples, it becomes clear that social media favors short, keyword-based expressions rather than complete sentences. This makes communication faster and more eye-catching, while still conveying the intended meaning effectively.

Shift from Formal to Informal Language in Social Media Communication

Formal Expression	Informal / Social Media Version	Context of Use
I am very happy	I'm so hyped / This is sweet	Expressing excitement
I like this very much	This is my jam	Showing personal preference
Please share the details	Spill the tea	Asking for gossip
He is very confident	He's got sauce	Describing confidence/style
I am in trouble	I'm cooked	Expressing difficulty or stress
That is disappointing	That's bitter	Expressing dissatisfaction

The table highlights a clear shift from formal language to more informal styles in social media communication. Users tend to favor shorter, more expressive phrases rather than traditional, structured forms. Many of these informal expressions include food-related metaphors, which add a sense of relatability and emotional depth to communication.

This trend points to the growing influence of digital platforms in shaping how language is used, encouraging both creativity and personal expression. Although formal language continues to play an important role in academic and professional settings, informal styles are more commonly used in online interactions, particularly among younger audiences.

Conclusion

Social media today plays a significant role in shaping how language is used and understood, particularly through the creative use of food-related metaphors. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter not only introduce new expressions but also bring older ones back into use, often with updated meanings that keep them relevant in everyday communication. This ongoing process highlights the flexible and evolving nature of language in the digital age.

The popularity of these metaphors also shows how users connect emotions, trends, and shared cultural experiences with familiar food imagery, making communication more engaging and easier to relate to. Rather than replacing traditional forms of language, social media reshapes them, allowing older expressions to adapt and remain meaningful for a new generation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that social media does more than influence language—it supports its continuous evolution while maintaining a link between past usage and present-day expression.

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The Wealth Gap: Who Gets to Survive?
Well-Being, Economic Inequality, and the Commodification of Hope

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Abstract

This paper examines the structural relationship between economic inequality and well-being, arguing that hope — broadly understood as the psychological capacity to anticipate a better future — functions not as a universal human endowment, but as a resource unevenly distributed along class lines. Drawing on empirical research in health economics, positive psychology, and social policy, this analysis contrasts the well-being losses experienced across income strata and demonstrates that the poor are not merely materially deprived, but are systematically excluded from the psychological infrastructure of aspiration. The findings suggest that addressing the wealth gap requires more than income redistribution; it demands the democratization of hope itself.

I. Introduction: The Unequal Distribution of Tomorrow

In most public discourse, hope is treated as a personal virtue — something one chooses to maintain regardless of circumstance. Popular culture celebrates stories of individuals who, despite crushing

poverty, held fast to their dreams and eventually succeeded. These narratives are compelling precisely because they feel universal: hope, unlike money, seems freely available to all.

But this view cannot survive scrutiny. The sociological and psychological evidence accumulated over the past three decades paints a fundamentally different picture: the capacity to hope — to genuinely believe that one's future will be better than one's present — is profoundly shaped by material circumstance. When survival itself is uncertain, when debt accumulates faster than wages, when a single medical bill can erase years of savings, the cognitive bandwidth required to imagine a different tomorrow is consumed entirely by managing today.

This paper does not argue that poor people cannot hope. Rather, it argues that they must pay a far greater cost to do so — and that this cost, invisible in most economic analyses, is among the cruelest dimensions of inequality. To be wealthy is to have the future as a resource. To be poor is to have the present as a burden. The gap between these two experiences is not merely financial. It is existential.

II. Mapping the Well-Being Losses: What Inequality Actually Costs

Standard economic measures of inequality focus on income, wealth, and consumption. These are necessary, but insufficient. A growing body of research in welfare economics and public health has documented the cascading well-being losses that accompany material deprivation — losses that extend far beyond the absence of money.

Physical Health as a Class Variable

The relationship between income and health outcomes is among the most robustly documented findings in social science.

The stratification of physical health outcomes across socioeconomic boundaries represents a well-substantiated paradigm within contemporary social science. Financial deprivation frequently correlates with an elevated incidence of severe chronic pathologies, including respiratory ailments, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular complications. Demographically, this disparity manifests in stark longevity differentials; statistical evaluations within the United States indicate that life expectancies diverge by more than a decade when contrasting the highest and lowest economic percentiles (Chetty et al., 2016).

Physical health and Racial context Addition

However, this biological damage cannot be decoupled from the deeply entrenched racial context of the United States. Economic stratification is inextricably linked to systemic racism, which multiplies these health vulnerabilities for communities of color. Geronimus's foundational work explicitly highlights how the health of Black women and infants is degraded by the cumulative toll of systemic racial discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization. Due to historically segregated neighborhoods, environmental racism, and discriminatory medical practices, racial minorities are disproportionately exposed to toxic environments and lower-quality healthcare regardless of income. The intersection of race and class means that the physical toll of poverty is not uniformly distributed, but heavily racialized, deepening the health inequities experienced across the nation.

The well-being loss here is not simply ill health. It is the persistent awareness that one's body is being consumed by circumstances beyond one's control — a form of slow erosion that is invisible to those who do not experience it.

Mental Health and Cognitive Load

Beyond physical health, the persistent psychological strain of financial insecurity fundamentally alters cognitive functionality. Empirical evaluations of economic scarcity demonstrate that operating under extreme resource deficits imposes a cognitive load equivalent to a substantial deficit in measured intelligence or acute sleep deprivation (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2013). This structural depletion of mental bandwidth compromises long-term planning horizons, executive functioning, and emotional regulation. Consequently, behavioral patterns historically misattributed to flawed personal decision-making are more accurately understood as predictable, systemic cognitive outputs engineered by chronic socioeconomic stress.

Depression and anxiety are also significantly more prevalent in lower-income populations, and not simply because poor mental health causes poverty. The reverse causal pathway — that poverty causes mental illness — is equally well established. Financial stress is among the leading sources of chronic psychological distress, and access to mental health services is itself stratified by income, compounding the damage.

Social Capital and Relational Deprivation

Well-being is not experienced in isolation. Humans are profoundly social, and the quality of our relationships — our sense of belonging, trust, and mutual support — is among the strongest predictors of subjective well-being. Lower-income communities are subject to higher rates of neighborhood instability, residential transience, and social fragmentation. Trust — both interpersonal and institutional — erodes in contexts of chronic scarcity and perceived injustice. The result is a form of relational poverty that compounds material poverty, leaving individuals not merely without resources, but without the social scaffolding through which resources are typically shared and mobilized.

III. Hope as a Luxury: The Political Economy of Aspiration

To argue that hope is a luxury is not to suggest that wealthy people are simply more optimistic by temperament. It is to identify the structural conditions under which hope becomes possible, sustainable, and actionable.

Hope, in its psychologically meaningful form, is not mere wishful thinking. Drawing on the foundational work of C.R. Snyder (1994), hope theory identifies two essential components: the belief that one can achieve desired goals (agency thinking), and the ability to generate pathways toward those goals (pathways thinking). Both components are materially dependent.

Agency thinking — the belief in one's own efficacy — is difficult to sustain in the face of repeated systemic failure. When every pathway toward a goal is blocked by structural barriers (inadequate education, discriminatory hiring, lack of capital, insufficient safety nets), the rational response is not continued hope but learned helplessness. Psychologist Martin Seligman's concept of learned helplessness finds its most devastating real-world expression in communities where sustained effort has consistently failed to produce reward.

Pathways thinking, meanwhile, requires information, imagination, and viable options. Wealthy individuals grow up surrounded by models of success, with access to networks that translate aspiration into opportunity. First-generation low-income students, by contrast, navigate college applications, financial aid systems, and professional cultures without maps or guides. The knowledge infrastructure of upward mobility is itself unequally distributed.

Caste Dynamics and the Distribution of Hope

While race and economic class heavily structure the architecture of aspiration in the West, exploring the concept of caste provides a parallel, deeply rigid framework for understanding how hope may be structurally rationed. Caste operates as an inherited, immutable social hierarchy that assigns individuals a fixed status from birth. Unlike class, which possesses at least a theoretical framework for fluidity and upward mobility, caste enforces a permanent spatial, social, and psychological containment.

This rigid stratification fundamentally influences both agency and pathways thinking. In a deeply entrenched caste system, an individual's sense of personal agency is constantly assaulted by institutionalized social stigma, generational trauma, and systematic exclusion. When societal norms explicitly dictate that certain groups are inherently unworthy of dignified livelihoods, the psychological capacity for agency thinking is severely suppressed. Furthermore, pathways thinking becomes highly restricted; when access to education, capital, and social networks is historically and strictly gatekept along ancestral lines, creating viable pathways out of oppression is not merely difficult, but structurally forbidden. Consequently, caste functions as a powerful mechanism that can totally constrain the psychological infrastructure of hope, transforming aspiration from a shared human capacity into a strictly policed privilege of the dominant castes

This matters because hope is not merely a pleasant psychological state. It is a critical predictor of resilience, academic performance, health behaviors, and long-term life outcomes. To be cut off from hope is to be cut off from one's future — to be structurally confined to the present tense.

The wealthy do not merely have more money. They have more time horizons. They can afford to fail and try again. They can defer gratification because gratification is a reasonable expectation. They can plan because their plans have a plausible relationship to outcomes. For those at the bottom of the wealth distribution, the future is not a resource to be invested in — it is an abstraction, a country to which the visa is perpetually denied.

IV. Conclusion: Toward a Politics of Hope

The wealth gap is commonly framed as a problem of distribution — too much money concentrated in too few hands, with insufficient resources reaching those who need them. This framing is not

wrong, but it is incomplete. What this analysis has attempted to show is that the wealth gap is also a gap in something less tangible but equally essential: the capacity to imagine and pursue a different future.

The well-being losses documented here — in health, cognition, mental illness, social connection, and psychological agency — are not incidental to poverty. They are its substance. And they compound in ways that make escape increasingly difficult: chronic stress impairs decision-making; mental illness goes untreated because care is inaccessible; depleted social networks offer fewer lifelines; and the exhaustion of surviving today leaves nothing for planning tomorrow.

Policy responses to inequality must therefore go beyond wage floors and tax reform, though these remain necessary. They must attend to the infrastructure of hope: the public institutions, social supports, and relational networks through which individuals come to believe that their lives can change. This means fully funded public education, universal healthcare, accessible mental health services, and guaranteed economic floors below which no one can fall — the conditions under which aspiration becomes rational rather than naive.

There is something quietly devastating about a society that celebrates hope while systematically undermining the conditions that make it possible. Hope is not a disposition. It is an outcome — one that some can afford and others cannot. Until that changes, the question in the title of this paper will have the same uncomfortable answer: in a world defined by extreme inequality, survival itself remains a privilege.

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The Usage of Nominative Case Marker in Bodo: A Morphosyntactic Analysis

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of nominative case markers in Bodo from a morphosyntactic perspective, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken primarily in Northeast India. The study identifies {-a} as the basic nominative marker, alongside its phonologically conditioned allomorphs {-ja}, {-wa}, {-ɯ}, and {-jɯ}. It is observed that nominative case marking in Bodo is assigned to definite subjects based on syntactic roles and semantic features. The analysis further reveals that Bodo follows a nominative-accusative alignment, treating subjects of transitive and intransitive verbs similarly in case assignment. The interaction between morphology and syntax highlights the complexity and richness of Bodo's case marking system. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of morphosyntactic processes in Tibeto-Burman languages.

Keywords: Bodo, nominative case, morphosyntax, case alignment, allomorphs.

1.0 Introduction

The Bodo language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The origin of the Bodos, a branch of the Kachari race, is largely uncertain due to the absence of reliable historical records. Based on their Mongoloid features, research suggests Tibet or China as their likely place of origin (Endle 3). According to Aleendra Brahma, the Bodo

language has a clear and rich case system, with no fewer than nine case markers (40). Bodo thus exhibits a robust case-marking system. Among the various cases, the nominative case holds a fundamental position, as it typically marks the subject of a sentence. In Bodo, specific case markers often indicate the nominative case, although it can sometimes remain unmarked. The nominative case markers in Bodo signal grammatical relationships and are sensitive to morphological and semantic factors, such as the type of noun or the notion of definiteness. As a Tibeto-Burman language, Bodo shares certain morphosyntactic features with other languages in the family but also displays unique patterns in its use of nominative case markers. Understanding the behaviour of these markers is essential for a deeper analysis of Bodo's morphosyntactic structure and for situating it within broader typological studies of the Tibeto-Burman languages.

Review of literature

Since the beginning of Bodo literature and grammar writing, both foreign and native scholars have contributed to the study of the case marking system in Bodo. However, most of their statements and explanations differ from one another. The same inconsistency is also found in the discussion of nominative case markers. The following is a summary of their views.

Rev. Sidney Endle is widely regarded as the founder of Bodo literature and grammar. In his works, *Outline Grammar of the Kachari (Bara) Language as Spoken in District Darrang, Assam* (1884) and *The Kacharis* (1911), he mentions that the nominative case in Bodo is unmarked. His early observations laid the foundation for future research into Bodo grammar.

Following him, **Kamal Kr. Brahma** emerged as the first grammarian among the Bodos to study Bodo grammar in depth. In his works *Gibi Raokhanthi* (1968) and *Gwnang Raokhanthi* (1972), he discussed the case marking system, though he did not specifically identify the nominative case marker. Nevertheless, from the sentence examples in his texts, it can be inferred that the nominative case marker is **-a**. He categorized the nominative case into six types.

Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya was another pioneering scholar in the study of the Bodo language. In *A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language* (1977), he described the nominative case and explicitly noted the case marker as **{-a/Ø}**, pointing out that the nominative marker is often optional. On the other hand, **Madhu Ram Baro** identifies the nominative case markers as **{Ø/a/ɯ}**, where **/Ø/** is suffixed to indicate general, **/a/** only with nouns, and **/ɯ/** only with pronouns

to indicate definitive sense (72). **Phukan Chandra Basumatary** also supports this classification of nominative case markers; however, his classification is identical to Baro's.

Swarna Prabha Chainary, in her work *Boro Raokhanthi* (2006), discusses the use of **{-a}** and **Ø** as nominative case markers and notes that **{-ɯ}** is also used in certain contexts. She further explains that **{-a}** has three phonologically conditioned allomorphs, **{-a}, {-ja},** and **{-wa}**, depending on the final phoneme of the noun and pronouns. All the allomorph conditions are explained with examples.

Aleendra Brahma offers a more detailed and systematic account of the nominative case marker system in his *Modern Bodo Grammar* (2012). According to him, the basic nominative marker is **{-a}**, with four allomorphs: **{-ja}**, **{-wa}**, **{-ɯ}**, and **{-jɯ}**. Specifically, **{-a}** is used with nouns ending in consonants or the vowel /ɯ/, **{-ja}** with nouns ending in front vowels, **{-wa}** with back vowels, **{-ɯ}** with consonant-ending pronouns, and **{-jɯ}** with vowel-ending pronouns.

In his later work, *Case Systems in Bodo and Dimasa* (2020–21), **Aleendra Brahma** also explores the case systems of both Bodo and Dimasa, focusing particularly on **case assignment** and **alignment**. His analysis demonstrates that case markers in these languages serve not only syntactic functions but also semantic ones, such as marking definiteness. For example, in both languages, certain case markers double as definiteness markers.

Traditionally, Bodo grammarians have approached case marking as a matter of morphology. However, more recent approaches emphasize the importance of a **morphosyntactic perspective** to gain a clearer understanding of the case system. Furthermore, case assignment and alignment in Bodo have not yet been examined in sufficient detail. A more complete and accurate description of the case system requires attention to both of these aspects, as they are crucial for explaining how cases function grammatically and semantically in the language.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. Identifying the different allomorphs of the nominative marker and describing the phonological conditions governing each allomorph.

2. Analysing how the case is assigned based on syntax and definiteness.

3. Examining the alignment pattern (nominative-accusative).

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected by talking with native Bodo speakers through question sessions and recording their natural speech, while secondary data will be drawn from existing linguistic works. The analysis will focus on identifying the forms and distribution of nominative case markers, examining phonological conditioning, and exploring syntactic and semantic factors influencing case assignment. A descriptive and analytical approach will be adopted within a morphosyntactic and typological framework.

The Nominative Case in Bodo

In Bodo, the nominative case is assigned to the grammatical subject of finite clauses. Subjects in Bodo must be explicitly marked for the nominative case when they are definite. Indefinite subjects may sometimes appear without overt case marking, indicating that case assignment is sensitive to syntactic position and semantic features like definiteness.

The nominative case in Bodo is primarily marked by the morphemes {-a}, {-ɯ}, and {Ø}[1]. The morpheme {-a} has three phonologically conditioned allomorphs: {-a}, {-ja}, and {-wa}, while {-ɯ} has one allomorph: {-jɯ}. It is observed that:

{Ø} is used for general or indefinite.

{-a} is attached to nouns ending in a consonant or the /ɯ/ vowel.

{-ja} occurs with nouns ending in a front vowel.

{-wa} is used after nouns ending in a back vowel.

{-ɯ} appears with pronouns ending in a consonant.

{-jɯ} is used with vowel-ending pronouns.

This system of variation reflects the phonological sensitivity of case marking in Bodo. The examples below illustrate this.

1. a) aŋ-Ø undu-ɯ

[1] This symbol represents the unmarked case. Linguists use it to indicate that no morpheme or suffix needs to be attached to a nominal word for case marking.

I-NOM sleep-HAB

'I sleep.'

b) Ram-a sip^{h}uŋ dam-ɯ

Ram-NOM flute play-HAB

'Ram plays flute.'

c) Hari-ja met^{h}ai k^{h}ɔn -a

Hari-NOM song sing-NEG

'Hari does not sing songs.'

d) Dauharu-wa met^{h}ai k^{h}ɔn-nɯ rɯŋ-gɯu

Dauharu-NOM song sing-NF know-IFUT

'Dauharu knows how to sing songs.'

e) aŋ-ɯ met^{h}ai k^{h}ɔn-ɯ

I-NOM song sing-HAB

'I sing songs.'

f) bi-jɯ mɯsa-jɯ

She/he-NOM dance-HAB

'She/he dances.'

Morphosyntactic Assignment of the Nominative Case

The nominative case is typically associated with the subject of a clause and is a key marker in languages that follow a nominative-accusative alignment. Its assignment is governed not by lexical or semantic features, but by structural principles within the syntax. In this framework, the nominative case is assigned to noun phrases that occupy the subject position, particularly within finite clauses, and is typically licensed by the Tense (T) head in generative syntax. This section explores how the nominative case is morphosyntactically assigned in Bodo, focusing on its distribution across transitive and intransitive clauses, its structural triggers, and its role in argument alignment. The analysis aims to show that the nominative case in Bodo reflects a systematic and predictable pattern consistent with structural case theory. According to Aleendra Brahma, the morphosyntactic system of licensing case markers to nominals by the governing verb or nominal is called case assignment. The appropriate grouping of the core arguments of a verb, namely, A, S, and P, is called case alignment (239).

Structural assignment in finite clauses

In generative grammar, structural case assignment means giving case to noun phrases based on their position in the sentence, not their meaning. In finite clauses (those with tense), the subject usually gets nominative case from the functional head T (Tense), while the object of a transitive verb gets accusative case, assigned by the verb or a light verb (v). This ensures that every visible noun phrase has a case, following the Case Filter. In Bodo, finite clauses follow this pattern: subjects typically take the nominative marker ***-a***, and objects may be unmarked or marked based on other factors. This shows that Bodo has a nominative-accusative alignment, where word order and case markers work together. For example,

2. a) Rabɔn-a t^{h}ɯi-bai
Ravana-NOM die- PRF
'Ravana has died.'

The sentence *"rabɔn-a t^{h}ɯi-bai"* ('Ravana has died') is a finite clause in Bodo, marked by the perfect aspect-*bai*. In GB Theory, the subject *rabɔn-a* is in [Spec, IP] and receives nominative case from the finite I-head, realized as -*bai*. The nominative case is marked by the suffix -*a*. The verb *t^{h}ɯi* ('die') is intransitive, so it does not assign the accusative case. It gives a Theme theta-role to *rabɔn-a*, who undergoes the action. This structure shows a typical IP, where I assign the case and the verb assigns the theta-role.

Morphological (non-)marking in Bodo

Morphological (non-)marking refers to whether grammatical roles like case, number, or definiteness are visibly marked on nouns through suffixes or particles. In Bodo, a Tibeto-Burman language, case marking can be either overt (e.g., the nominative marker -*a*) or zero-marked {Ø}, especially in accusative and oblique roles. This shows that while Bodo distinguishes cases, not all roles are always marked on the surface. The variation between overt and zero marking reveals how both structural and semantic factors influence the visibility of case. This section looks at when and where case markers appear or are absent in different syntactic contexts. For instance,

3. a) ma-se sɯima-Ø sɯŋ-dɯŋ
CLF-one dog-NOM bark-CONT

‘A dog is barking.’

b) sɯima-ja sɯŋ-dɯŋ
Dog-NOM bark-CONT
The dog is barking.

In sentence (3a), *"ma-se sɯima-Ø sɯŋ-dɯŋ"* (‘A dog is barking’), the subject *sɯima* (‘dog’) is indefinite, shown by the classifier *ma-se* (‘one’). It gets the nominative case but is not marked—the case is zero-marked (Ø). This is common in Bodo for indefinite subjects. In sentence (3b), *"sɯima-ja sɯŋ-dɯŋ"* (‘The dog is barking’), the subject is definite and marked with *-ja*, showing overt nominative case. Both subjects are in [Spec, IP] and receive structural case, but the marking differs by definiteness. This indicates that Bodo follows a nominative–accusative system, and that case marking often depends on whether the subject is definite or indefinite. However, this pattern is not always consistent; in some situations, it is context-dependent. For instance, in (4a) and (4b), the nominative case can either be attached to *aŋ* and *bi* or omitted, yet the meaning of the sentences remains clear.

4. a) aŋ-Ø bi-kʰɯu sinai-jɯ
I-NOM She/he-ACC know-HAB
‘I know her/him.’

b) bi-jɯ aŋ-kʰɯu sinai-jɯ
She/he-NOM I-ACC know-HAB
‘She/he knows me.’

Alignment Patterns

Bodo generally follows a nominative-accusative alignment. In transitive clauses, the subject (agent) and the intransitive subject (S) receive nominative marking, whereas the object (O) receives accusative marking. Thus, transitive and intransitive subjects are treated similarly at the level of case marking.

As observed by Brahma, both the subject of an intransitive verb and the agent of a transitive verb in Bodo are assigned a nominative case marker, while the object of a transitive verb receives an accusative case marker.

5. a) gɔtʰɔ-wà mànbaɪ-dɯŋ — ‘The baby is crawling.’
b) gɔtʰɔ-wà bí-kʰɯó nú-baɪ — ‘The baby has seen him/her.’ (240)

These examples reflect a nominative–accusative alignment in Bodo, where structural case is assigned based on grammatical function and clause structure.

Intransitive:

An intransitive subject is the subject of an intransitive verb, which does not take a direct object. The action or state described by the verb involves only one participant, the doer and the experience of the action. For example,

6. a) abɔ-Ø pʰɯi-dɯŋ

1 elder sister- NOM come- PFV

'My elder sister has come.'

The sentence *"abɔ-Ø phɯi-dɯŋ"* ('My elder sister has come') is a finite clause, as marked by the perfective aspect *-dɯŋ*. In GB terms, the subject *abɔ* occupies [Spec, IP], where it receives nominative case from the finite I-head. The nominative is zero-marked (Ø) here, reflecting phonological variation in Bodo case marking. The verb *pʰɯi* ('come') is intransitive and assigns a Theme theta-role to the subject. This structure illustrates nominative-accusative alignment with morphosyntactic case assigned by I.

Transitive:

A transitive subject is the subject of a transitive verb, which is a verb that requires one or more objects to complete its meaning. In a canonical transitive clause, the subject is the agent or doer of an action that directly affects another participant (the object). The object is often referred to as the patient or theme. For example,

6. a) ada-ja ɯŋkʰam za-dɯŋ

1 elder brother-NOM rice eat-CONT

'My elder brother is eating rice.'

In Government and Binding (GB) Theory, every noun phrase must receive abstract case. The nominative case is assigned by INFL (Tense) to the subject in the Spec-IP position, and the verb assigns the accusative case to the object inside VP. In this sentence, *ada-ja* ('elder brother') is the subject and gets nominative case from INFL, marked as *-ja*. The object *ɯŋkʰam* ('rice') is in the verb's complement position and receives the accusative case, though it has no visible marking. This shows a nominative-accusative alignment: subjects of both transitive and intransitive verbs get the nominative case, and objects of transitive verbs get the accusative case.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the use of nominative case markers in Bodo results from a morphosyntactic interaction between syntax and semantics. The assignment of the nominative case depends on both structural and semantic factors, with the case system consistently aligning subjects within a nominative–accusative framework.

The morphosyntactic analysis of nominative case markers in Bodo reveals a highly structured system that balances syntactic rules, semantic nuances, and phonological conditions. The presence of four allomorphs ({-a}, {-ja}, {-wa}, and {-jɯ}) indicates an interaction between morphology and phonology, while the influence of definiteness highlights the role of semantics in case assignment.

Moreover, Bodo's clear nominative–accusative alignment reflects a syntactic pattern common in many Tibeto-Burman languages, yet its phonological sensitivity and definiteness marking make the system uniquely noteworthy. These findings show that the nominative case is consistently assigned to subjects regardless of verb valency. Future research may further investigate how case marking interacts with discourse features such as focus and topic in Bodo.

Abbreviations

1	1st person
ACC	Accusative
CONT	Continuous
CLF	Classifier
HAB	Habitual aspect
IFUT	Immediate Future tense
NEG	Negative
NOM	Nominative case
PFV	Perfective aspect
PRF	Perfect aspect

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Performing Illusion: Theatricality and Psychological Conflict in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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Abstract

The notion of illusion and role-playing plays the central role in Edward Albee's drama "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?". There is much in the drama devoted to the idea of role-playing that touches upon such topics as family conflict, psychological tensions, and blurring of the lines between reality and fiction. This paper seeks to explore the notion of theatricality as an aspect of a psychological coping strategy that enables characters in their struggle against emotions and failures. It becomes clear from observing interactions between George and Martha that all their relations are characterized by a constant need to stage "performances" – where roles are played out, stories are invented, and reality is manipulated. With the help of verbal games, role-playing, and invention of tales, the characters turn their family life into a performance on the domestic stage. What needs to be argued in this paper is that role-playing does not function merely as a stylistic device; rather, it is employed as a way of psychological survival of the individuals. Perhaps the most powerful illustration in the play to this end would be the fictitious child. In effect, the play portrays how human interactions depend heavily on acting and illusion in navigating conflicts in psychology.

Keywords: Theatricality, Illusion, Psychological Conflict, Performance, Modern Drama

Introduction

Indeed, the modern era of drama tends to explore the subtle divide that exists between reality and falsehood in the context of human interactions. Some of the most popular plays written over the past century that deal with the issue include “Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”. This particular play was authored by Edward Albee in 1962. In this play, the stormy relationship between George and Martha, an old married couple, is described using bickering, sarcasm, and illusion.

In the plot, a night at which George and Martha host two young people, Nick and Honey, after returning from a college party is described. Gradually, the conversation begins to turn from a simple dialogue into one that becomes psychologically complex. Personal attacks and verbal games reveal many emotional problems in the lives of these characters.

Another peculiar feature about this play is that of its theatrical nature. In fact, throughout the play, George and Martha keep performing roles for each other and their visitors. Moreover, their

marriage becomes an area of theatrical performances where emotions and power relations become the subjects of their narrative. Hence, it can be assumed that illusion is an integral part of their life. This paper proposes to analyze the role of theatrical performance as a psychological instrument used by the characters in the play.

Literature Review

Illusion and Reality have been widely discussed in terms of their connection to "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?". A great number of researchers point out the psychological struggle depicted by Albee in a contemporary marriage. In his analysis, Matthew Roudané suggests that the methods used by Albee reveal an emotional disorder in the relations between the characters (Roudané 52). He maintains that George and Martha need to create illusory images in order to preserve some sort of identity and control.

In his turn, C. W. E. Bigsby stresses the fact that Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? demonstrates a theatrical image of a home in which communication turns into manipulation and psychological pressure (Bigsby 107).

Martin Esslin considers Albee's play an example of the Theatre of the Absurd because of the emphasis on illusions, which indicate the existential problems of modern society (Esslin 90). In such a view, illusions become a way of dealing with the senseless modern world.

Although critics have extensively analyzed illusion in the play, the role of theatricality as a psychological strategy deserves further exploration. This study addresses that gap by examining how performance and role-playing shape the characters' emotional experiences.

Theoretical Framework: Theatricality and Performance

The concept of theatricality refers to the awareness of performance within dramatic representation. In literary studies, theatricality often describes situations in which characters behave as if they are actors performing roles within a staged environment.

In "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" theatricality appears in the form of wordplay, role-playing, and symbolism. George and Martha continuously switch roles between being the host, the antagonist, the storyteller, and the judge; thus, it becomes obvious that their lives are filled with performances.

Performance psychology states that a character may use his/her performance as a defense mechanism. By portraying roles, he/she may dissociate himself/herself from certain unpleasant feelings. This approach serves as a theoretical basis for the interpretation of characters' behavior in this play.

Marriage as a Stage

One of the most prominent aspects of the play is that George and Martha use their house as a stage. In other words, their actions are like a carefully rehearsed play where George and Martha play different roles. Thus, Martha tends to play the role of the person who is ready to humiliate her husband in front of all the guests. Meanwhile, George plays the role of the detached intellectual using his sarcastic tone of speech.

Their verbal battles seem theatrical and are marked by quick mood changes. The way the characters dramatize their disagreements enables them to maintain a distance from the emotions involved in those disagreements

Games As Performative Rituals

As George and Martha continue in the play, the two keep indulging themselves in wordplay referred to as the "games"; e.g., "Humiliate the Host" and "Get the Guests." Each game comes with its own set of rules and conditions, similar to those of a theatrical performance.

This entails assumption of various roles and improvisation of dialogues as well as reactions to the actions of each other. As such, they reveal themselves through their actions as well as through the games. The games reveal psychological complexities of both George and Martha.

Psychological Conflict and Identity

George sees himself as incompetent with regard to his career, whereas Martha is unhappy due to her unfulfilled ambitions and complicated relationship with her father. They attempt to reconstruct their identities by means of theatrical performance; however, paradoxically, by doing so, they find themselves entrapped in such performances, which include acts of deception and violence.

Nick and Honey can be seen as reflections of George and Martha. The nature of their relationships includes similar elements of deception and performance.

The Imaginary Child as the Ultimate Performance

The fictional offspring created by George and Martha are the strongest illusion that the couple holds. For many years, George and Martha have been deceiving themselves believing there to be a fictional child.

Such illusion has become a narrative that defines their life together. It gives them something to rely on, a story that fills their lives and allows avoiding the problems of their emotional void. It becomes obvious that George ruins this illusion when he announces the death of a fictional child. In this way, he destroys their performance, the frame through which they have coped with all their issues.

This is the climax in the drama because here George symbolically kills the child, thus breaking the illusion that they created together. Even if the truth is hurtful for both of them, this is an opportunity to be emotionally honest. They cannot continue living with illusions, and they will have to accept the truth of their dependence on one another. The ending of the drama suggests some kind of fragile reconciliation. The admission made by Martha that she fears life without illusion makes her vulnerable.

Conclusion

Analysis of the concept of theatricality of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" is aimed at discovering the complicated relationship between the process of performing and mental resilience of the characters.

Edward Albee demonstrates how the illusions and performances created by George and Martha are an attempt of coping with their disillusionments in life. This piece of theater turns a domestic dispute into a dramatic performance during which language, narration and roles become the means of psychological confrontation.

All these acts come crashing down at some stage, and the characters are forced to confront the stark reality that they were trying to avoid. This play offers us an understanding of human nature, and how it is natural for people to form illusions to deal with emotional conflicts.

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Illusion as Survival: Psychological Defense Mechanisms in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

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ABSTRACT

The illusion and reality theme in the play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? appears more important than others. One may assert that the psychological tension in the relationship between George and Martha can be explained only by their illusions and psychological shields protecting them from breaking up. In the current research, the authors attempt to demonstrate how the use of illusions helps people deal with their dissatisfaction and failures in life. Psychoanalytical theories dealing with defense mechanisms will be applied to the analysis of characters' actions and the use of

illusions and fictions in the play. It can be stated that the fictional child born by George and Martha represents the main illusion supporting their union but also illustrating the extent of their psychological vulnerability at the same time. Through textual analysis, one will prove that illusions represent a means of protection and destruction. Although George and Martha find some consolation in illusions, they cannot live without facing reality. The study proves that illusion should be destroyed for psychological truthfulness and understanding.

KEYWORDS: Illusion, Defense Mechanisms, Reality, Marriage, Psychological Conflict

INTRODUCTION

In modern plays, existential problems of a person feeling uncomfortable emotionally due to certain reasons are often discussed. One of such examples is the play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Edward Albee. The play premiered in 1962 and depicts an unhappy married couple named George and Martha.

The plot of the play starts at night when George and Martha invite another young couple called Nick and Honey to their place. Thus, what could be expected to become a simple and nice meeting turns out to be a battle of psychological games and emotions.

Illusions play a rather important part in the relationships between George and Martha since they pretend that they have a son. In other words, this illusion serves as the only motivation for living and developing a romantic relationship. When discussing about their imaginary son, George exclaims, "Our son is dead" (Albee 237). It means that illusion was the last thing that supported their marriage.

This essay analyzes the role of illusions as mechanisms of self-protection in the discussed play.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic research has shown that illusions and realities play an important role in the plot development of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Many critics analyze the play from the perspective of how it comments on the nature of human relationships and how people use psychological techniques to cope with dissatisfaction.

For example, critic Matthew Roudané says that illusion and reality can describe the relationships between George and Martha. They have an imaginary son who is an important factor for maintaining emotional well-being (Roudané 48).

Critic C. W. E. Bigsby explains that Albee's characters develop illusions in order to avoid the hardships of life (Bigsby 102). Illusions become a protection from suffering but lead to endless manipulations and confrontations with each other.

Some critics analyze the play in the context of Theatre of the Absurd and argue that illusionism in the characters' interactions reflects existential problems. For example, according to critic Martin Esslin, the characters' illusions show the fears of modern society (Esslin 85).

All the above-mentioned studies reveal important aspects of the play's theme but there are only few works dedicated to the aspect of psychology. This study adds to the body of literature on illusions among the characters in this context by applying psychoanalysis to the study.

Theoretical Framework: Psychological Defense Mechanisms

Defense mechanisms have been developed based on ideas found in psychoanalysis, specifically the writings of Sigmund Freud. The defense mechanisms can be defined as psychological mechanisms that work unconsciously within an individual’s mind to prevent anxiety, guilt, and other negative emotions (Freud 45).

The following defense mechanisms may provide a useful analysis for the characters studied:

Denial: the refusal to face up to the harsh facts of reality.

Projection: blaming other people for your own mistakes.

Displacement: taking out your anger on easier targets.

Fantasy: imagining things you wish were true rather than dealing with the truth.

These defense mechanisms enable George and Martha to create an illusion regarding their life.

THE IMAGINARY CHILD AS A SHARED ILLUSION

The strongest illusion is the one created by George and Martha of an imaginary child who does not exist except in their imagination, even though they talk about him like he's real.

There are several functions of this particular illusion. One is that it makes up for the fact that they cannot have children. Their marriage is one of disappointment, but their son can serve as compensation for it.

Secondly, the boy becomes the element of the game they play all the time. Martha often uses it to make George angry while George tries to set rules for how the illusion works. This is what Albee means with the actions of George, and the boundaries need to be strictly observed here.

George's destruction of the illusion by declaring that the child is dead makes Martha realize the harshness of her and George's condition.

VERBAL GAMES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFLICT

Another key element of the play can be found in the various forms of verbal games used by the characters. They involve embarrassing admissions, dramatic exaggerations, and insults.

Such behavior represents a psychological method of coping. Rather than confronting the emotional issues at hand, the characters convert them into games which help them vent their frustrations in a safe way.

George tends to use verbal mockery and stories in his defense, while Martha resorts to aggression as an emotional coping mechanism. This ongoing battle of the words shows the unstable nature of their relationship while preserving its emotional energy.

PROJECTION AND DISPLACEMENT

Examples of projection and displacement are found in numerous exchanges among the characters. For instance, Martha often projects her feelings of frustration onto George when she criticizes him for not being successful in his career. In actuality, the criticism is often more about herself than about George.

In the same vein, George utilizes displacement by resorting to psychological games as a form of coping with his anger, which he displaces upon Martha.

The use of such techniques by the characters demonstrates how they deal with painful emotions without having to face their true problems.

ILLUSION AND REALITY IN THE FINAL ACT

The climax of the play arises when George reveals the demise of their imagined offspring. In the process, they destroy an illusion that had been keeping their marriage alive.

While this development is tragic, it also marks a point where the characters have to face reality. When confronted with reality, they are compelled to recognize the hollowness underlying their fantasies.

In the final scene of the play, Martha confesses her terror of life devoid of illusion when she answers George's inquiry with "I am… George… I am" (Albee 239).

CONCLUSION

The climax of the play occurs when George informs them about the death of their fictional child. At this point, they shatter the illusion that had kept their marriage going.

Although this is indeed tragic, it is also an instance where they have to confront the reality of their situation. By confronting reality, they will have to accept the futility of their illusions.

At the end of the play, Martha expresses her fear of living without illusion as she responds to George's question with "I am…George…I am" (Albee 239).

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Hostel Plate: You Are What You Eat

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ABSTRACT:

The college hostel mess is generally seen as a utilitarian dining hall, but it is actually a significant site where regional and cultural identities are daily negotiated. This ethnography of a South Indian hostel mess explores how 50 students from diverse backgrounds negotiate their identities through food and language. This ethnography, based on the works of Bourdieu, Appadurai, and Anderson, reveals how the hostel mess is actually a "micro-nation" where the concept of diversity in India is actually lived. Some important findings are as follows: food preferences express regional identity, eating habits express cultural conditioning, code-switching facilitates belongingness, and nostalgia expresses the emotional essence of identity. Survey results reveal that 84% of students have eaten food from other states, but 56% still find hostel food "very different" from home food. This shows that the hostel mess is actually a site of continuous negotiation. The hostel mess actually performs the role of informal nation-building.

KEYWORDS: Hostel mess, food identity, gastro-politics, habitus, code-switching, nostalgia, imagined communities, cultural negotiation, South Indian hostel, micro-nation.

1.INTRODUCTION:

The Mess as a Site of Inquiry

The space of the hostel mess is normally considered a space that is purely utilitarian in nature—it is a space for the consumption of meals for the students. However, if one were to look at the space in a more intimate manner, one would realize that there is much more to the social reality of the space than meets the eye. Every evening, as students from different parts of India assemble in the space to have their meals together, the space assumes a completely different character. Metal plates

would function as a canvas for the inscription of personal as well as cultural histories. Rice and curry would not be consumed; they would either be placed in a certain order, mixed, or consumed separately in accordance with deeply ingrained personal as well as cultural traits.

The paper proposes the idea that the hostel mess represents a "micro-nation" and is a tangible concept—a place where the concept of the Indian nation is being negotiated on a daily basis. While the paper is not descriptive in nature, it attempts to analyze the manner in which such seemingly mundane acts represent a concept of great importance.

LITERATURE SURVEY

In order to place this research in the context of existing literature, the following four main themes were reviewed: food and identity; gastro-politics; habitus and embodied practices; language use in multilingual settings.

Food and Identity: Many researchers have shown that food is never just about nutrition. Counihan & van Esterik (2013) state that “food practices carry cultural memory” and convey a sense of social identity. In the case of India, Khare (1992) has discussed in detail that food in India is very much linked to caste, place, and community affiliation. In recent times, the relationship between food and regional identity among urban Indian youth has been investigated by Ray & Srinivas (2012). In this particular study, we try to contribute more to their research on engineering college hostel messes.

Gastro-politics: The seminal essay by Appadurai (1981) on gastro-politics in South Asian Hinduism highlighted the politics of food consumption and the way it is used as an expression of hierarchy, inclusion, and exclusion. In later studies, it has been applied to school canteens (Baumann, 1996), immigrant kitchens (Mankekar, 2002), and student hostel settings (Gundemeda, 2020).There is a limited number of studies that apply gastro-politics to the context of the Indian hostel mess, where students from all the states come and share their meals every day.

Habitus and Embodied Practice: The concept of habitus formulated by Bourdieu (1984) is the one of an embodiment practice acquired through socialization. According to Warde (2016), taste and eating practices reflect class and regional habitus. Within the Indian scenario, whether someone eats with hands or with cutlery and how food is mixed or separated in his plate can be considered as indicators of regional socialization. This study extends the concept by focusing on more than one habitus working within the same setting.

Languages, Code-Switching, and Multicultural Spaces: Language choice within multicultural spaces has been studied extensively by linguistic anthropologists as a performance of identity (Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 2007). Code-switching involving English, Hindi, and other local languages within Indian hostels has a purpose beyond utility but also involves affect (Kothari &

Snell, 2011). This paper makes an important contribution to existing research in the area through the study of food language (such as “dosai” and “dosa”) and code-switching during mealtime.

Research Gap and Contribution: Despite several existing studies on food, identity, and language individually, there have been no empirical studies examining the relationship between these phenomena within the particular setting of an engineering hostel mess of South India. This research bridges this gap by presenting empirical evidence of how 50 students construct their regional identities and nostalgia through food and talk.

2. METHODOLOGY:

An Ethnographic Lens

The study has been carried out with intense ethnographic observation in a common mess of a large public university hostel in [Coimbatore, India], spanning an academic year. The research methods used are primarily participant observation, with some unstructured talk with other students. The focus has been on the mundane and unscripted aspects of student culture - food choices, food habits (using hands, utensils, combinations of both), code-switching in language, and nostalgia. It was not the intention of the researcher to have formal interviews, but to grasp the lived reality of diversity in a common space.

2.1 Research Design

In this study, an ethnographic research method was used wherein participant observation was integrated with structured surveying during the period from August 2024 to April 2025 in the common mess facility for about 200 students at an engineering college in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

2.2 Participant Observation

Participant observations were done by the first author for 120 hours on the following areas of food choices, eating techniques, food combinations, language usage, and nostalgia. These field notes were made within two hours of conducting each session. Unstructured interviews with 25 students were recorded with pseudonym identity protection.

2.3 Survey

Paper surveys were administered among 60 students and the data analysis included 50 completed surveys (response rate: 83.3%). The surveys consisted of 18 items divided into four sections that included basic information, eating behavior, language usage, and cultural interactions, consisting of multiple choice, Likert-type, and open-ended questions.

2.4 Participants

The sample size consisted of 50 participants who were first-year engineering undergraduates having stayed at their hostels for between 3 and 18 months. The regional representation of the sample size is summarized in Table 1.1 below.

2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was subjected to descriptive analysis (percentages and frequencies), while qualitative data collected through field notes and open-ended questions were analyzed through thematic analysis with coding categories derived from the data.

2.6 Limitations

The sampling was highly biased towards Tamil Nadu hostels (72%), thereby limiting its generalizability to other regions of hostels. Biasing due to the author being one of the students was likely minimized because of extended periods of interaction with participants.

3.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

This research study is based on three important theoretical perspectives, which include habitus by Pierre Bourdieu, gastro-politics by Arjun Appadurai, and imagined community by Benedict Anderson. In combination, these three frameworks help us analyze why and how eating in the hostel mess performs a much deeper function for its members.

3.1 *Habitus (Pierre Bourdieu)*

The term habitus denotes the ingrained way of performing actions, which is internalized within us. In the chaos, whether the individual chooses to eat using their fingers or a spoon, and whether they like eating coconut food or spicy food, are determined by habitus based on their geographical and cultural background.

3.2 *Gastro-Politics (Arjun Appadurai)*

The term gastro-politics refers to the politics of food as an expression of identity. There is no neutrality in the choice of food. When the plates are laid out, choosing a dish that one recognizes and avoiding another that is strange becomes a subtle form of politics.

3.3 *Imagined Communities (Benedict Anderson)*

According to Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities," nations emerge out of shared beliefs rather than physical encounters. It is suggested that this paper illustrates how the chaos allows for such an abstract concept to become concrete. Individuals who come from all corners of India meet daily, learning about their own differences.

4.1 The Plate as Biography: Performing Regional Identity

The first performance of identity occurs at the serving counter. The choices made in terms of food are a declaration of the student's biography. The student from Kerala, in his quest for coconut, does not merely eat in response to his hunger; instead, he re-creates a culinary memory of his place of origin. This aligns with Appadurai's gastro-politics, in which the selection of food is a "statement" about who one is. This is not necessarily articulated; it is an unvoiced declaration of a certain geographical and cultural provenance. This leads to a "geography on a plate," in which the diversity of India comes together in a common space.

4.2 The Hands that Speak:

Habitus Made Visible

The act of eating itself is an unstated expression of habitus. As Bourdieu's theory would suggest, the manner of eating, the manner of mixing food with one's hands as opposed to separately and then eating with a spoon, is not arbitrary. It is an acquired manner, an expression of tradition, class, and region, shaped in childhood. In this mess, there is an unstated conflict of habitus, an unspoken dialogue of what it means to eat, and by extension, what it means to be from a particular place in India.

4.3 The Babel of the Table: Language, Code-Switching, and Intimacy

Language is a living, breathing concept of identity and belonging. The use of neutral, functional English as a lingua franca, interrupted by the use of regional dialects ("Dei," "Yaar"), is indicative of a move towards a more intimate, affective form of communication. Code-switching is not seen as an impediment to effective communication but as a means of articulating a complex self. Talking about food, about the dish from one's region, is a form of biography, a challenge to stereotype, and a demand for recognition, as is seen in the case of the Nagaland student. The "imagined community" of the nation is replaced by an imagined community of recognized individuals.

4.4 The Tenderness of Nostalgia:

The Emotional Core

Finally, there was the essential but often neglected emotional aspect: nostalgia. The simple words "I miss home food" are an act of unguarded vulnerability. They tell everyone in the room that, despite all the acts of identity and all the negotiations of diversity, there is a human experience at the core of all. This human experience is one that brings everyone in the room back to their respective parts of the nation.

HOSTEL FOOD & CULTURE SURVEY REPORT (N = 50)

Section 1: Basic Background

Table 1.1: Regional Distribution of Respondents

State/Region	Number of Respondents
Tamil Nadu	36
Kerala	7
Karnataka	3
Telangana	2
North East	1
Other (North India)	1

Table 1.2: Duration of Stay in Hostel

Duration	Number of Respondents
3–6 months	21
6–12 months	16
More than 1 year	12

Section 2: Food Habits

Table 2.1: Perceived Difference Between Hostel Food and Home Food

Response	Number of Respondents
Very different	28
Somewhat different	14
Slightly different	6
Not different	2

Table 2.2: Most Missed Home Foods (Open-ended Responses)

Region	Commonly Missed Foods
Tamil Nadu	Fish kolambu, Chettinad biryani, curd rice, home-style meals
Kerala	Mutton stew, appam, puttu, coconut dishes, parotta, beef curry
Others (Karnataka, Telangana, North East, North India)	Roti, biryani, spicy home curries

Table 2.3: Eating Style

Eating Style	Number of Respondents
Mostly with hands	36
Mostly with spoon/fork	4
Both depending on dish	10

Table 2.4: Food Mixing Behavior

Behavior	Number of Respondents
Mix everything	26
Mix some items	18
Keep items separate	6

Section 3: Language and Food Terms

Table 3.1: Word Used for "Dosa"

Term	Number of Respondents (N=50)
Dosai	32

Dosa	15
Other	3

Table 3.2: Language Used When Talking About Food with Friends

Language Preference	Number of Respondents (N=50)
Mostly native language	18
Mix of both	23
Mostly English	9

Table 3.3: Awareness of Pronunciation Differences Across Regions

Response	Number of Respondents
Yes	31
Sometimes	14
No	5

Section 4: Cultural Interaction

Table 4.1: Tried Food from Another State After Coming to Hostel

Response	Number of Respondents
Yes	50
No	0

Table 4.2: Agreement That Food Helps Students from Different Regions Connect

Response	Number of Respondents
Strongly agree	24

Agree	18
Neutral	8
Disagree	0

Table 4.3: Agreement That Food Habits Show Cultural Identity

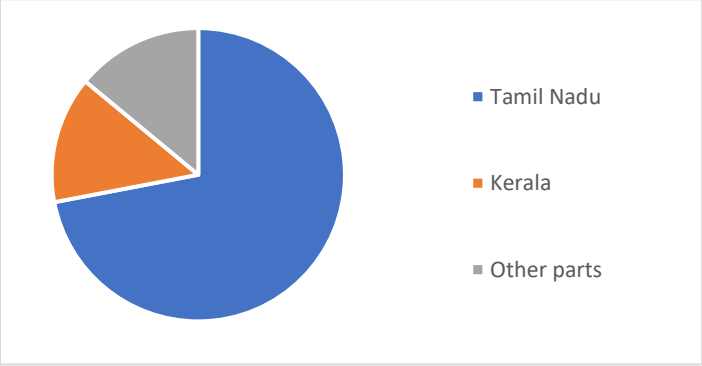
Response	Number of Respondents
Yes	33
Maybe	12
No	5

5. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION:

This section presents the analysis of survey data collected from 50 hostel students, highlighting patterns in regional distribution, food habits, language use, and cultural perceptions. The findings reveal clear trends that support the conceptualization of the hostel mess as a space of cultural negotiation.

5.1 Regional Composition and Demographic Trends

The respondent pool was heavily dominated by students from Tamil Nadu (72%, n = 36), followed by Kerala (14%, n = 7). The remaining 14% (n = 7) consisted of students from Karnataka, Telangana, North-East India, and North India.

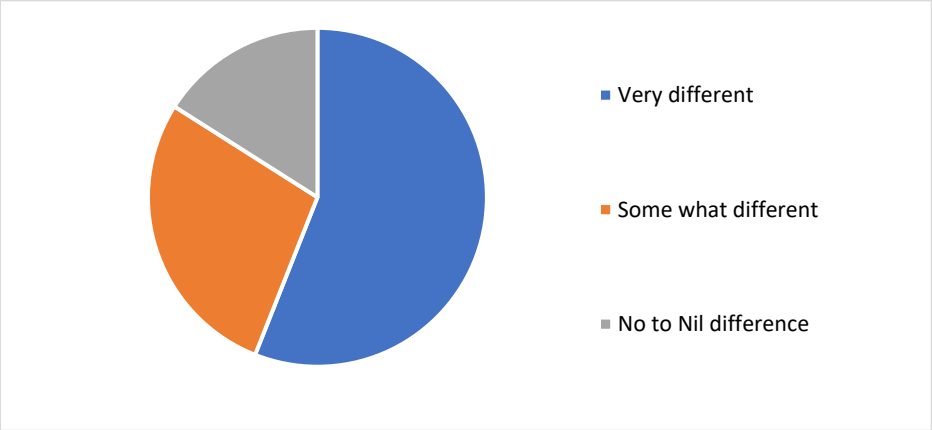


Interpretation

This skewed distribution reflects the geographical context of the institution while still maintaining a meaningful level of diversity. The dominance of Tamil students also explains the prevalence of certain linguistic and food practices observed in later findings.

5.2 Food Difference and Nostalgia Patterns

A significant majority of respondents (56%, n = 28) reported that hostel food is "very different" from their home food, while an additional 28% (n = 14) found it "somewhat different." Only 16% combined reported minimal or no difference.



Interpretation

This indicates a strong sense of culinary displacement, where students perceive hostel food as lacking familiarity. The open-ended responses further reinforce this, with students expressing a longing for region-specific dishes such as:

- Fish kollamb, Chettinad biryani, curd rice, home-style meals
- Kerala students → Mutton stew, appam, puttu, coconut dishes, parotta and beef curry

This supports the idea that food is deeply tied to memory and emotional identity, forming what can be understood as a "nostalgic attachment to home."

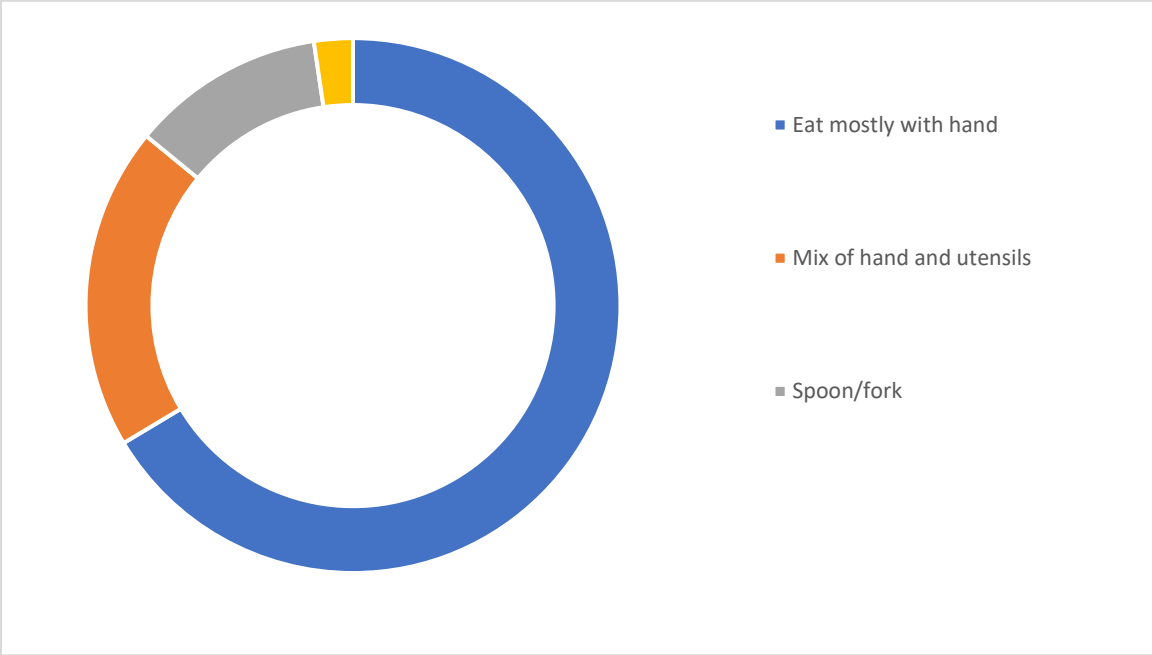
5.3 Eating Practices and Habitus

Eating styles showed a clear pattern:

- 68% (n = 34) eat mostly with hands
- 20% (n = 10) use a mix of hands and utensils
- Only 12% (n = 6) rely primarily on spoons/forks

Similarly, food combination habits revealed:

- 52% (n = 26) mix all items
- 36% (n = 18) mix selectively
- 12% (n = 6) keep items separate



Interpretation

These findings strongly align with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, where everyday practices such as eating are shaped by long-term cultural conditioning. The dominance of hand-eating and food-mixing practices reflects South Indian culinary traditions, particularly among Tamil students.

The variation, however, indicates the coexistence of multiple habitus within the same space, reinforcing the idea of the mess as a site of embodied cultural diversity.

5.4 Language Use and Code-Switching

When discussing food:

- 46% (n = 23) reported using a mix of English and native language
- 36% (n = 18) primarily used native languages
- Only 18% (n = 9) used mostly English

Additionally, 62% (n = 31) of respondents reported clearly noticing pronunciation differences in food terms, while 28% (n = 14) noticed them occasionally.

In terms of terminology:

- 64% (n = 32) used “dosai”
- 30% (n = 15) used “dosa”
- 6% (n = 3) used other variations

Interpretation

The dominance of mixed-language usage highlights the prevalence of code-switching as a communicative strategy. English functions as a neutral medium, while native languages introduce familiarity and cultural specificity.

The variation in pronunciation (e.g., “dosai” vs. “dosa”) demonstrates how language becomes a marker of regional identity, even in casual settings. This aligns with Anderson’s concept of imagined communities, where shared linguistic practices contribute to a sense of belonging.

5.5 Cultural Interaction Through Food

A large majority of respondents (84%, n = 42) reported trying food from other states after joining the hostel, while only 16% (n = 8) had not.

Regarding food as a social connector:

- 48% (n = 24) strongly agreed
- 36% (n = 18) agreed
- Only 16% combined were neutral or disagreed

On food as a marker of cultural identity:

- 66% (n = 33) responded “yes”
- 24% (n = 12) responded “maybe”
- 10% (n = 5) responded “no”

Interpretation

These findings indicate that food plays a significant role in facilitating intercultural interaction. The high percentage of students trying other regional cuisines suggests openness and adaptability within the hostel environment.

At the same time, the strong agreement that food reflects identity confirms Appadurai’s concept of gastro-politics, where food becomes a medium for expressing and negotiating cultural belonging.

5.6 Overall Trend Analysis

Across all sections, three major patterns emerge:

- Cultural Persistence
  Students retain core elements of their regional identity through food preferences and eating habits.
- Adaptive Interaction
  Exposure to diverse peers leads to increased experimentation and cultural exchange.
- Hybrid Communication
  Language use reflects a blend of English and regional dialects, enabling both functionality and intimacy.

5.7 Synthesis

The data suggests that the hostel mess is not a space of cultural homogenization but one of continuous negotiation. While dominant cultural patterns (particularly Tamil) influence the environment, minority practices remain visible and active.

This dynamic supports the central argument of the study:

The hostel mess functions as a microcosm of India, where diversity is not erased but lived, expressed, and constantly reinterpreted through everyday practices.

Conclusion:

The hostel mess is not just a dining room. It is a vital social space in which the grand narrative of India plays itself out on a human scale. It is a space in which the abstractions of region, language, and culture acquire flesh and blood through the simple act of eating and talking. The conflicts and compromises of the nation are not resolved in the mess. The boy from Kerala does not give up his coconut, nor does the speaker of Tamil alter his pronunciation of "dosai." Instead, they are negotiated. They are lived.

The mess instructs us in the ways of a diverse nation. A diverse nation is not a space of perfect harmony. It is a space in which differences are continually, and often peacefully, negotiated. The real work of being Indian does not take place in the parliament or in the textbook. It takes place, quietly and daily, in a long, crowded room.

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Giovanni's Room and *Another Country*: A Study of Modern Struggles with Loneliness, Alienation and Isolation

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Abstract

Loneliness, alienation, and isolation are recurrent themes in James Baldwin's work. His novels explore how individuals are estranged from themselves and others due to societal pressures, personal identity conflicts, and the personal dynamics of love and friendship. Baldwin's novels are mostly written from a male perspective, and the male characters live in a disturbed world. In a study by Halim & Sultan (2023), "modern man claims to be socially connected and views the world as a global village where one can connect with the other with the click of a button." However, when we explore a person's deep emotions and urges, we see that the desire to connect with others remains the same. *Giovanni's Room* (1956) and *Another Country* (1962) present characters who struggle with their loneliness to find stability in their world. Giovanni, David, Rufus, and Eric are examples of such disturbed, lonely characters, and their struggles with their identities and the desire to meet societal expectations reveal the profound impact of alienation on their lives and relationships. This paper compares the characters in *Giovanni's Room* and *Another Country* and investigates why and how they suffer from loneliness, alienation, and isolation.

Keywords: alienation, Baldwin, identities, loneliness, modern, society, struggles

Introduction

The concepts of alienation, loneliness, and isolation play a dominant role in contemporary works. According to *the New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, alienation indicates "a sense of

estrangement from society, a feeling of powerlessness to effect social change and the depersonalization of the individual" (Bullock & Trombley 55). In other words, when a person feels emotionally, physically, and socially disconnected from the world or people around him, he is considered to be struggling with loneliness, alienation, and isolation. It is a traumatic experience for a human being when, despite living among a multitude of people, he cannot connect with the people around him. Alienation is a major theme of the human condition in the contemporary epoch, and the alienated protagonist is a recurrent figure. Hence, there are serious attempts to sketch the confusion, frustration, alienation, disintegration, and estrangement of modern man (Saleem 75).

Contemporary literature has explored the themes of loneliness, isolation, and alienation to a great extent, as modern man struggles with existential issues and quests for self-knowledge and self-identity. Alienated figures are common in most modern fiction. The protagonists are misfits either because of some defects in their character or nature, or because of the society in which they live. It shows that men are reluctant to discuss emotional issues, which creates barriers to forming healthy relationships (Halim & Sultan, 2023). In *Giovanni's Room* and *Another Country*, the characters fear being alone. They are desperately running into each other's arms in search of company, irrespective of their age, race, color, or sexual identity. Yet the desperate, temporary nature of their relationship only complicates matters, leaving the characters more depressed and lonelier. Infidelity, lies, and deception lead to greater isolation and a failure to form a true bond. The essay by Gibson III states that "*Giovanni's Room* continues a Baldwinian journey into the nuances of male intimacy and vulnerability. Fraternal crisis abounds within it…" (61).

However, a large part of the novel focuses on the characters' feelings of loneliness and emptiness. Baldwin's characters are seen as marginalized exiles, alienated and despairing, and this shows the novel's move towards otherness as characters temporarily inhabit it. It is significant that these characters are presented as outcasts. As Gibson III states, "Baldwin's novel continues to reveal the pervasiveness of the author's preoccupation with loneliness" (62). The story is centered around love, identity, loneliness, and the struggle to meet societal expectations that ultimately prevent people from accepting themselves (Raina 221). The hollowness that a person feels inside governs Baldwin's characters throughout the novel. They are lost, confused, torn between conflicts and dilemmas, and struggle to identify themselves in this lonely modern world. American literature that emerged post-World War II presented the existentialist's plight, and characters such as David and Giovanni in *Giovanni's Room* and Rufus and Eric in *Another Country* represent the emptiness and hollowness within man.

Theoretical Background

In a study by Taylor et al. (2023), loneliness is defined as a perceived/subjective condition in which an individual is dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of their social relationships. Social isolation is seen as a condition characterized by a lack of contact with other people and disengagement. Being alone or isolated comes to us only when we see ourselves devoid of close relationships or detached from others. According to Hawkley & Cacioppo (2010), humans depend on secure and social surroundings to thrive as a social species. When a man feels isolated or lonely, he needs to connect to others due to the perceived threats. People can live relatively solitary lives and not feel lonely, and conversely, they can live an ostensibly rich social life and feel lonely nevertheless. A study by Saleem (2014) states that alienation is a major theme of the

human condition in the contemporary epoch. Therefore, the themes of alienation, loneliness, and isolation have been dealt with differently by various writers in modern literature.

When it comes to presenting alienation, isolation, and loneliness in the works of James Baldwin, the presentation is no exception. “A normal black child, having grown up with a normal family, will become abnormal at the slightest contact with the white world,” (Frantz Fanon 122). Hence, the characters in both *Another Country* and *Giovanni’s Room* symbolize loneliness in white society. In Baldwin’s novel, characters like Rufus experience shame, self-hatred, and emotional paralysis because of racism, sexuality, and social expectations. These emotions give rise to internal conflict and psychological fragmentation. According to Hoffman (n.d), “Loneliness is an emotional—and sometimes cognitive—discomfort occurring as a consequence of perceiving oneself as being alone or separated from others. One can experience loneliness even when around others.”

Significance of the Study

In the novels *Giovanni’s Room* and *Another Country*, Baldwin explores the identity of the characters in psychological depth in different contexts in the mid-20th century- a period of significant social change. Mid-20th-century fiction explored issues of alienation and existentialism. Influenced by existential philosophy, writers portrayed characters who struggled with a sense of purposelessness in a chaotic world. The characters and themes are set against this backdrop because Baldwin’s portrayal of alienation and isolation reflects the historical context of racial and sexual tensions. The writers during this time often presented the complexity and disorientation of modern life. The characters in these two novels exhibit psychological complexity, revealing how alienation and isolation affect their emotional well-being. Each character is lonely in his own way and seeks his identity and the meaning of life.

Research Question

Therefore, the researchers have formulated the following research question.

1. How and why do the characters in *Giovanni’s Room* and *Another Country* suffer from loneliness, alienation, and isolation?

Analyzing the causes of loneliness, alienation, and isolation among the characters in *Giovanni’s Room*

In the novel, the protagonist, David, is presented as a handsome young man in his mid-twenties living in Paris. He comes from a privileged background with a caring family, and David tries to maintain a good, stable relationship with his father. However, he is not acceptable in society because he does not meet societal expectations of what it means to be a man. He is presented as a bisexual man, but he tries to convince himself that he is neither homosexual nor bisexual. His identity sets him apart from other men in society who fulfill the social requirements of manhood. He comes to Paris, which can be interpreted as his escape to a new and unknown place where he has much more freedom than he had in America. In Paris, he falls in love with Giovanni, whom he cannot resist. David's loneliness is deeply connected to his internal conflict regarding his sexual identity. In his younger days, he was afraid of his feelings for his onetime partner, Joey, as they would confirm his sexual identity and possibly cause him to become ostracized from a large part of society, including his own family and friends. However, he does not attempt to continue his relationship with Joey and convinces himself that he will forget the incident of their

intimacy. As a man, the same kind of escapism and fleeting nature is present in him. He is torn between his feelings for Giovanni and his wishes to be a normal man in the eyes of society. This internal struggle creates a profound sense of isolation as he grapples with his true self versus the identity he feels pressured to maintain. He agrees to marry Hella, but it seems he does so to meet societal expectations. At the beginning of the novel, while he stands in front of the mirror, he recalls his promise to Hella, thinking, "I told her that I loved her once, and I made myself believe it" (*Giovanni's Room* 5). He continues, "I suppose this was why I asked her to marry me, to give myself something to be moored to" (5). He admits to himself that he was, "Wearied of the joyless seas of alcohol, wearied of the blunt, bluff, hearty and totally meaningless friendships, wearied of wandering through the forests of desperate women…" (*Giovanni's Room* 21).

This is the plight of many men in today's society, where individuals feel increasingly detached and disconnected from others. It is evident that David had been living an obscure and meaningless life to hide his identity. This is also one of the reasons why he decided to marry. His fear of societal judgment and rejection deepens his loneliness, as he feels he must hide his true self to fit conventional expectations. He also tries to deceive Hella by deciding to maintain two relationships simultaneously— one with Hella and the other with Giovanni. Hence, Baldwin illustrates David's social alienation by analyzing the process of his self-exploration and his questions on origin and identity.

On the other hand, Giovanni is presented as a contrast to the kind of life and privileges David has enjoyed. When he came to Paris, without money or a worker's permit, he could not support himself until he met Guillaume, who gave him a job as a server at his bar in exchange for various sexual favors. David meets Giovanni for the first time in the bar. His magnetic personality draws David in and contrasts sharply with David's more conflicted, self-contained nature, and later that night they become intimate in Giovanni's room. David is deeply charmed by Giovanni, but he still has reservations about their relationship. In the latter part of the novel, when he gets fired from the bar and is accused of being a thief, he tells David he would be totally lost without him.

Giovanni's freedom and romantic idealism had drawn David toward him—something he found both alluring and threatening. However, when Giovanni loses his job, he becomes increasingly vulnerable and dependent on David, which David cannot accept. David had escaped from his previous relationships, and he does the same with Giovanni. Despite his outward confidence, Giovanni's character is deeply vulnerable. His relationship with David and subsequent downfall exposes his fragility and the emotional cost of his experiences. His love for David is genuine to some extent. However, David's fleeting nature and lack of confidence, indecisiveness at various stages of his life, and his desire to meet societal expectations lead to a tragic end to Giovanni's life.

Analyzing the causes of loneliness, isolation, and alienation among the characters in *Another Country*

The novel *Another Country* presents characters who are marginalized, and alienated. Throughout the novel, the characters struggle to overcome their isolation in a hostile society. Rufus is a Black man in a predominantly White, racially prejudiced society in which he faces systemic racism and social exclusion. This isolation is both a result of and a contributor to his loneliness. He is also estranged from his family. There is a lack of understanding among the family members.

Moreover, his internal loathing of himself contributes to his alienation, which creates barriers for him to connect to others. There are people in the novel, like Vivaldo and Leona, who reach out to him to befriend him, but he fails to respond to any healthy or long-lasting relationships. In a conversation with Vivaldo, Leona says, "I know he is sick and I keep hoping he'll get well and I can't make him see a doctor" (*Another Country,* p.46).

This is most evident in Rufus's character when Baldwin writes at the beginning of the novel that while coming out of the movies, Rufus thinks of going to Vivaldo, "the only friend he had left in the city, or maybe in the whole world" (*Another Country*, p.1). Moments before his death, Rufus recalls his relationship with Eric and feels his loneliness. He formed an intimate relationship with Eric, only to despise him more, which made Eric leave him. His efforts to bridge the gap between himself and others often result in disappointment, reinforcing his sense of being alone. Rufus finds himself in a world that has no meaning and no power. Rufus's suicide can be seen as simply one link in a long chain of untimely tragedies that defined black life during the Jim Crow era (Premnath, & Udhayakumar (2021). As Gibson III states, "this reflects how nihilism has consumed his being- there is no hope, no order, no reason- it has been replaced by suffering" (126). Rufus is unable to make sense of or survive the racial intolerance that has made him homeless. This isolation is both a result of and a contributor to his loneliness. He is also estranged from his family. There is a lack of understanding among the family members.

Having suffered for long years without any healing turns him into an insensitive man who even fails to see or accept anything good from anyone. In addition, just before his death, when he is tired and lonely on the streets of New York City, not a soul comes to save him. He is left alone in the world, where he can see no other solution to his problem but to jump off the bridge.

As Gibson III writes, his loneliness is the result of his struggles with racism: it is due to social environment that is intolerant of his blackness (109). Rufus feels disconnected and rejected from the very land he calls home, which led to his tragic death. His loneliness and alienation are a complex interplay of social, familial, emotional, and psychological factors that contribute to his profound sense of isolation throughout the novel.

On the other hand, though Eric comes from a good family and is privileged because of his race and background, he is portrayed as a lonely character from an early age, leading him to take an interest in the Black servants in his household. His loneliness reflects his struggles and the broader social context of the world. He is estranged from his own identity and suffers from emotional detachment from the people around him. Moreover, strained relationships and unfulfilled desires deepen his alienation. His loneliness also reflects an existential crisis. He grapples with feelings of meaninglessness and despair, questioning his place in the world and the value of his relationships. This existential struggle deepens his sense of isolation. Even the people that he forms relationships with are lonely, depressed, and unhappy like him. In a conversation with Yves, he convinces him to stay by saying, "I'm all by myself, I've got no one to talk to…" (175). It is the same kind of loneliness he felt as a child. Baldwin writes, " When he was little, he had been very much alone for his mother was a civic leader…" (159). This detachment from his parents had isolated him from his family to such an extent that he began to find solace in the company of the Black servants in his house, especially Henry. Hence, Eric's lonely childhood significantly shapes his character and personality as he grows up. He is on his own, finding himself in a lonely world.

Discussion

Loneliness, alienation, and isolation are central themes in modernist literature, reflecting the era's deep concerns about individual existence, societal changes, and the fragmentation of traditional structures. Studies of modern fiction show that people struggle toward individual self-fulfillment outside their societies. The characters are presented to the reader in some unfamiliar method of self-revelation (Drew 20). Modernist literature explores issues with questions of identity and the self, reflecting the fragmented and multifaceted nature of modern existence. Baldwin's exploration of characters like Giovanni, David, Rufus, and Eric is a true representation of the fragmented society in which they live, which shapes their characters and personalities. The characters in both novels suffer from profound isolation from society and themselves. They struggle to find the meaning of life throughout their existence.

It is noteworthy that Baldwin shows characters from both the poor and the neglected class, as well as from the privileged class. Rufus is Black and is rejected in society, having a derogatory position and image. In exploring his condition and the traumas or injustices he goes through, readers can relate all these to his background. The alienation of black males results from black people's confusion, distortion, and loss under racial discrimination and gender oppression (Yan 9). This is seen in the presentation of Rufus. One can see why he has to offer sexual favors in exchange for money. Because of his color, he is not accepted in society. He is neglected, which makes him long for "both investment and visibility" (Gibson III 104). As Martinez writes, Rufus Scott commits suicide due to his deep-seated loneliness and desperation (782). He is presented as someone who hates himself for who he is and what he is. However, the readers wonder why someone like Eric suffers from a similar kind of alienation. His longing to connect with people around him makes it evident that, irrespective of age, race, family, or background, modern man struggles with identity, detachment, and emotional distance from others. He is no better than Rufus and jumps from one relationship to another for comfort and solace. He also has no long-term relationship with any of his partners. Hence, we come to know that social forces play a large role in shaping his personality (Martinez 788).

On the other hand, in *Giovanni's Room*, neither Giovanni nor David is black. However, these characters have their battles to fight. Like Rufus, Giovanni's background and social condition tell the readers why he offers sexual favors in exchange for money. He is a jobless expatriate in Paris. At the same time, he experiences a conflict between his desires and the expectations imposed upon him. However, David is in a much better social position than Giovanni. Like Eric in *Another Country*, he grapples with his true identity and tries to hide it from others. As a result, he is confused, traumatized, and lost. The emotional scars from past experiences, including personal loss and the impact of societal oppression, contribute to his loneliness and difficulty in forming meaningful relationships. He prefers a deceitful relationship even after marriage. He wants to be sure he is safe from both sides. In a sense, he assures himself that he is not lonely in the long run. He does not realize that he is only deceiving himself by betraying others. Hence, in the novel, his experiences involve personal betrayal and the painful journey of discovering and accepting his true self amidst societal and personal challenges.

However, it can be inferred that characters like Rufus in *Another Country* and Giovanni in *Giovanni's Room* give up their struggle and throw themselves into a world from which there is no turning back. Their individual experiences of alienation and loneliness remind readers of the emotional toll of living an inauthentic life and the deep-seated need for acceptance and

connection. They live a meaningless life and ultimately give up on life before it is time. On the other hand, characters like David and Eric discover themselves in a positive way. In his futile attempt to maintain two relationships simultaneously, Eric fails to keep even one and, at the end of the novel, is left alone. It might be because he realizes he cannot be true to anyone or stay committed to anyone. However, Eric is better than David in this regard. He finally decided on the relationship he wanted and with whom. According to some scholars, Eric symbolizes "a vehicle for reconciliation." He can take a stand for himself. His decision to stay in a single relationship reminds the readers that humans human beings crave to bond with one another. Eric longs for a stable relationship and finds one with Yves.

Hence, it addresses the research question that in both novels the characters go through traumatic experiences being lonely and crave human connections.

Conclusion

Wood (2005) describes alienation as "a psychological or social evil, characterized by one or another type of harmful separation, disruption or fragmentation, which sunders things that belong together" (p. 21). Moreover, in modern fiction, the protagonists are misfits because of defects in their nature or character, or because of the society in which they live. Baldwin's major characters suffer from a most profound isolation, alienation, and estrangement. This becomes too heavy to bear, and they search for solace in the power of love (Premnath & Udhayakumar, 2021). They all struggle to find themselves, a stable position, and meaningful relationships in society. Even when people are among many, loneliness and alienation haunt the modern man (Halim & Sultan 660).

Most struggle to cope with their disturbed conditions, while others may give up on life itself. Hence, this paper has shown how and why Baldwin's characters, like Giovanni, David, Rufus, and Eric, become victims of alienation in this world. Through them, Baldwin represents the conflicts and struggles of every modern man. He vividly portrays their feelings of disconnection from society, each other, and themselves. His novels *Giovanni's Room* and *Another Country* offer psychological insight into their characters, highlighting the modernist preoccupation with the individual's inner world and the quest to find meaning in a rapidly changing world.

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Applicability of Virtual Language Learning and its Assessment

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Abstract

Online teaching has taken leaps during COVID-19 pandemic. The inevitability is apparent and here to stay with us, whether the Virus choses to stay! The author believes that the core principles of the pedagogical procedures and assessment would still apply to online teaching with some minor variations. Apart from the virtual instruction and assessment, which has been imparted institutionally, the other available sources also need to be utilized well to reap the maximum benefit of language learning and applications. This paper looks into the surface validity and reliability of online assessment through certain attributes such as structural formations and functional specifications. Moreover, the paper aims at focusing on two objectives. Firstly, how the online language learning sites are conducting the language assessment virtually and secondly, whether the assessment websites follow an inclusive mechanism for assessing learning.

Keywords: Online Language Pedagogy, Virtual Assessment, Online Test, Learner's Achievement, Feedback

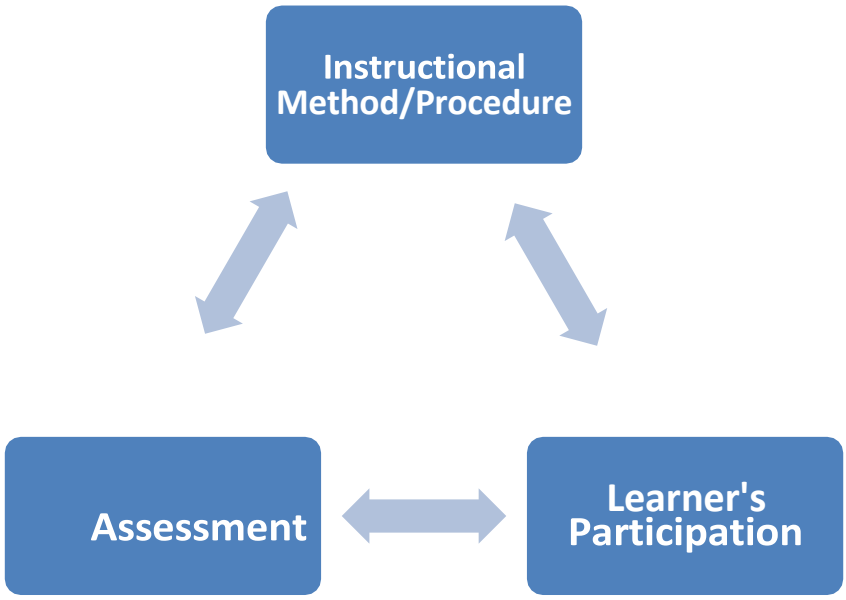
1. Introduction

Assessment is a key component in learning, which systematically collects and analyses information regarding a student's learning improvement (Stassen et al., 2001). This pedagogic tool helps in knowing a learner regarding the current achievement level and ultimately functions as a motivating factor for improving learning as well as chasing higher academic or nonacademic goals in life. The basic definition and implication of assessment hardly makes any difference between offline and online mode. If the medium difference of online and offline is removed, then assessment can be explained with the same parameters. However, there are numerous explanations available for the shape and scope of assessment. Primarily, assessment in educational context is defined as developing a deep understanding about a leaner's achievement level from multiple sources (Suskie, 2004). She further elaborated that assessment is all about evaluation and improvement of a learner. COE 1 (2020) has suggested two functions for

conduction of an assessment, such as measuring a learners' proficiency without referring to a language course, or to measure the extent of a learner's goal achievement in a particular programme of learning. However, it can be said that assessment aims at improvement of learning process as well as product.

Assessment is an important element in the pedagogical cycle, with other co-constructs like instructional method/procedure, teacher's deliberation as well as learner's participation. Pedagogical cycles are controlled and regulated by teacher as well as learner. They contribute not only to the dynamic classroom activities and processes but also regulates the generation of learning outcomes. The first construct of the pedagogical cycle is controlled and regulated by teacher; the second construct records the learner's activity. Moreover, both teacher and learner have predetermined roles in the whole course of action of assessment. Both the teacher as well as learner seek their respective benefits. Assessment guides a teacher in determining the future course of action. If a learner performs well than the teacher might continue with the methods that he/she followed before but if the performance is poor than the teacher will do necessary changes to the method used before. Hence, assessment is the core principle that regulates the pedagogical process to the maximum extent. This pedagogical cycle can further be premeditated, when we start creating instructional material for our learners, evaluation automatically follows. The instructional process initiates with certain set goals. Thereafter, assessment portrays the role for determining whether the goals of education are being met. The following diagram shows the cyclic process of the three segments, with bidirectional operations.

Figure 1



1 COE= Council of Europe

Assessment has differential effect on various domains such as grades, advancement, instructional needs, placement and curriculum. If the whole concept of assessment will be dealt in relation to online context, then also not much difference will be noticed. An online assessment also operates in the same manner as an offline test does. It evaluates a person's qualities added with abilities. According to Smith, & Johnson (2019) "Online assessments refer to the use of computer-based tests to measure an individual's cognitive abilities, behavioral tendencies, and personal characteristics." Computer does play a significant role in conducting any online test. Moreover, the digitized assessment has been conducted over the Internet by using available web technologies.

2. Attribute Detailing

Digital assessment is free of time and space limitations and computer assisted. This type of assessment provides evidence, for judging student achievement, collected through the medium of computer technology (NZQA, 2015, n.p.n). The current study focuses on the attributes of the online language assessment websites. For the ease of analysis, the attribute detailing has instrumented on structural description and functional specifications with a tabulated presentation.

2.1 Structural description:

The structural description lists out the website names and the language count for which assessment is available on a specific website.

i. Website Names:

This section enlists the name of the websites chosen for surveying the attributes of the digital language assessment. These websites are chosen on the basis of user-friendliness and accessibility. The names of the referred websites for the attribute analysis are inspera.com, languagecert.gr, cambridgeenglish.org, learnenglish.britishcouncil.org, ef.com, tracktest.eu, esl-languages.com, futurelearn.com, classtime.com, stgeorges.co.uk, and crowdmark.com. Most of the websites provide freemium service (whereby basic services are provided free of charge while more advanced features must be paid for), depending on the different types of assessments and learning levels.

ii. Number of languages available for learning:

It provides the numerical count of the languages for which the assessment service is available in a particular website. This feature captures the linguistic diversity of the website. The numerical count has got a bi-divisional representation in the upcoming analysis such as single and multiple. It also reflects the language rich as well as reach of a website. More is the accessibility and diversity of a website; more is its efficacy and pragmatically applicable.

2.2 Functional specifications:

These specifications search for the special method employed as well as the medium adopted by a particular web site and web platform for conducting language assessments. According to Conole (2013), "Web platforms differ from static websites by offering user-generated content, collaborative spaces, and tracking of learner activity." Hence web platforms provide scope and

space for learner interactivity. A learner in such online mediums functions as an active contributor but not just stay as a passive receiver.

This aspect of attribute analysis investigates the distinctive layout and deployment of assessment procedures. The functional attributes selected for the analysis are medium of digital assessment, assessment types, assistance types, certificate-based exam, availability of demo practice, scope for academical activities, method for assessment. The following section is an elaboration of the listed attributes.

i. Medium of digital assessment:

Medium refers to the mode for conducting an activity. This attribute has got a dichotomy for presentation such as online and offline. Online assessment is digitized that may happen in an immediate class environment with computers or in any other location. Contextually, the online mode carries out the conduction, attempt, and submission in a single spatial-temporal cycle. In contrast, the offline digitized assessment ignores the locative limitations. This mode provides the question paper and provides comparatively more time period then online mode, for submitting the answer script through the online mode.

ii. Types of assessment:

This attribute searches whether a particular language assessment website undertakes formative or summative or both method for evaluation. Harmer (2007:379) has provided a detailing on differentiating summative and formative assessment. Summative assessment is to evaluate student learning, once the instruction gets over, she described summative assessment as a kind of measurement that takes place to round things off or make a one-off measurement and include in the end-of year tests. She further explains that formative assessment as the kind of feedback teachers give students as a course is progressing and which in turn, helps in the improvement of performance. Black and Wiliam (2004), describes the primary concern of assessment in its very design and practice officiates the purpose of promoting learners' learning". He further claims that the developmental set up and instructional mechanism of assessment is focused enough for achieving the learning objectives. Summarily, formative assessment tracks a learner's growth continuously and supplies feedback.

iii. Assistance Type:

This attribute checks for the type of computer assisted assessment provided by a particular website. The assistance type has been divided into two categories such as academic or non-academic. The academic assistance includes the classroom-based goals and objectives. The non-academic assistance mostly talks about services such administrative performance as well as professional goals. This attribute enquires the academic and personal admittance of a website.

iv. Certificate Based Exams:

According to Longman advanced dictionary of contemporary English (2010), certificate is an official document which validates that a learner has completed a course of study or passed an examination. Furthermore, Cambridge English dictionary defines certificate as the qualification that learner receives when she/ he gets successful in an exam. Hence, this attribute enquires whether a particular website conducts certificate-based exam or not. Yes/No, dichotomy has been followed for the analysis.

v. Availability of Demo Practice:

Demo practice supplies the necessary guidelines, a simulation for the upcoming final test. Taking a demo practice for an offline exam, helps in developing familiarity with the question pattern, strengthens confidence level and develops a rough idea regarding the attempting procedure. But for an online exam, the requirement for demo practice for online practicing tools has been emphasized more. A successful attempt of an online test makes the final undertaking a breeze. It is mainly due to while in a real examination situation, a candidate should not face any inconvenience with the question type but also with the technical procedure. Hence, this attribute checks whether a particular website provides scope for demo practices or not.

vi. Other academical activities:

Primarily, academic activities are those assigned work or project, which are employed to determine an academic credit. This point sees though the academical activities which are organized to inculcate the academic zest in students in the context of language learning such as workshop, conference and webinar. All these academic attempts also certify an attendee for participation or presentation. The conduction of such academical efforts enhances the academical credibility of a website. Therefore, this attribute enquires whether a particular website facilitates such academic activities or not.

vii. Test Type:

There are numerous types of tests available for testing a particular language skill. Few of such test types are direct, indirect, diagnostic, and interim. However, in this context this attribute checks whether a particular website takes the test through oral or written mode. The oral test retrieves the aspired information in spoken form, whereas the written test elicits information in the form of a written script and is administered on paper or computer, depending on the online or offline mode. However, evaluating an oral test is quicker that a written test.

3. Analysis of the assessment websites:

This segment has given a tabulated analysis of the websites that concerns assessment, using the above parameters. The following table has got 10 columns and each column except 1st, 2nd and 3rd counts for functional specifications (medium of digital assessment, types of assessment, assistance type, certificate-based exams, availability of demo practice, other academical activities, and method of assessment). 1st, 2nd, 3rd columns provide the serial number, website names and language count respectively. The following Table 1 is the reference box for filling in the table of analysis (Table 2).

Table 1

Column No	**Features**	**Category**
3rd	Language Count	Single/ Multiple
4th	Medium of Digital Assessment	Online/Offline
5th	Assessment Type	Formative/ Summative

6th	Assistance Type	Academic/Non-Academic
7th	Certificate Based Exam	Yes/No
8th	Availability of Demo Practice	Yes/No
9th	Other Academic Activity	Yes/No
10th	Method Of Assessment	Oral/Written

Table 2[3]

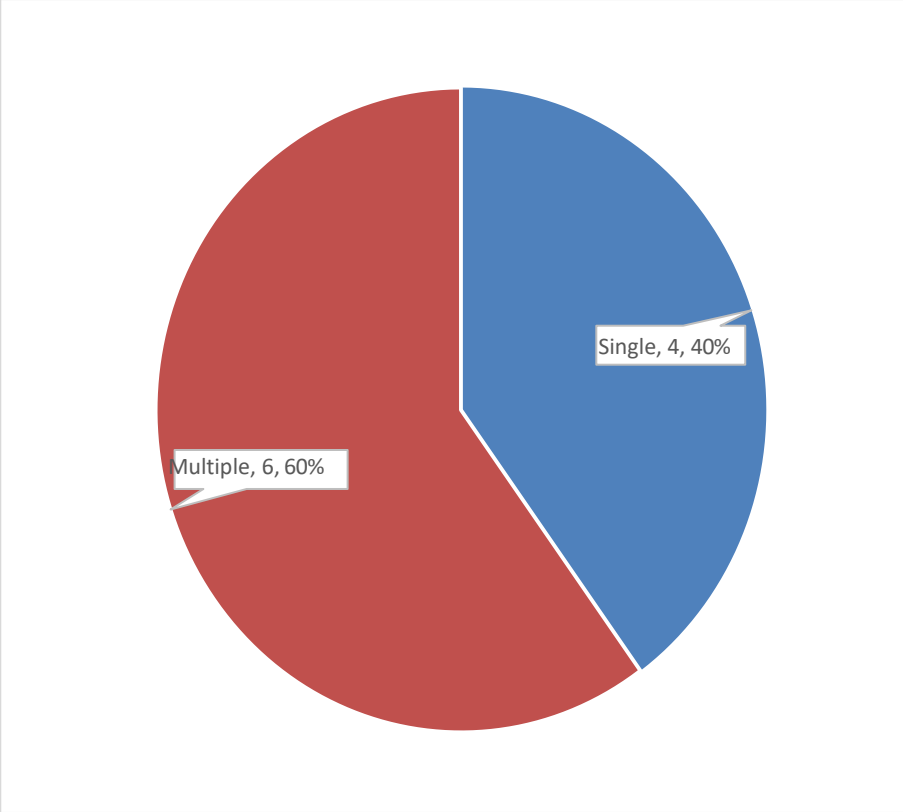
Serial No.	Website Name	nguage Count	Medium of Digital Assessment	essment Type	sistance Type	Certificate Based Exams	vailability of Demo Practice	Other Academic Activity	ype of Test
1	Inspera.com	Single	Both	Both	Both	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both
2	Languagecert.gr	Multiple (3)	Online	Both	Academic	Yes	Yes	No	Both
3	Cambridge english.org	Single	Online	Both	Both	Yes	Yes	No	Both
4	Learn English. British council.org	Single	Online	Both	Both	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both
5	Stgeorges.co.uk	Multiple (13)	Online	Both	Both	Yes	Yes	Yes	Written
6	ef.com	Multiple (12)	Online	Both	Both	Yes	Yes	No	Both
7	Tracktest.eu	Single	Online	Both	Both	Yes	Yes	No	Both
8	Esl-languages.com	Multiple (N.A.)	Online	Both	Non-Academic	Yes	Yes	No	Both
9	Classtime.com	Multiple (15)	Online	Both	Academic	No	Yes	Yes	Both
10	Crowdmark.com	Multiple	Online	Both	Academic	No	Yes	Yes	Both

[3] The websites chosen for the attribute analysis in this article are for bona-fide and fair use for academic and research purpose only

4. Findings

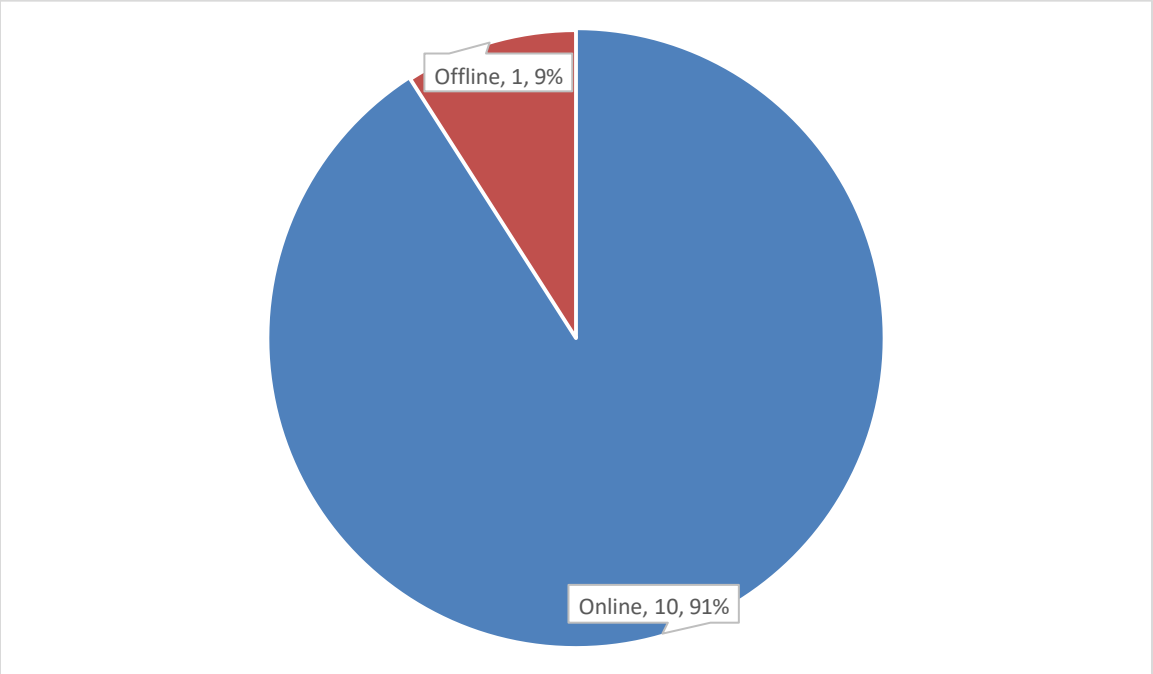
This section displays the principal outcomes of the undertaken study. Each column represents a website attribute, starting form column number 3 to 10. Against each website, its features are analysed assigning findings in different form. The mode of representation of the findings is both graphical and descriptive depending on the findings of data analysis. The Columned feature is named C3 to C12 and the corresponding findings are numbered as F3 to F10. The findings are numbered according the column numbers.

C3. This column enquires for the number of languages available for assessment in a specific website. (Single/Multiple)



F3. The above graphical presentation shows that number of websites supplying assessments in multiple languages are more in number than those websites, which are running assessments in a single language.

C4. This feature enquires into the online and offline mode of digital assessment:



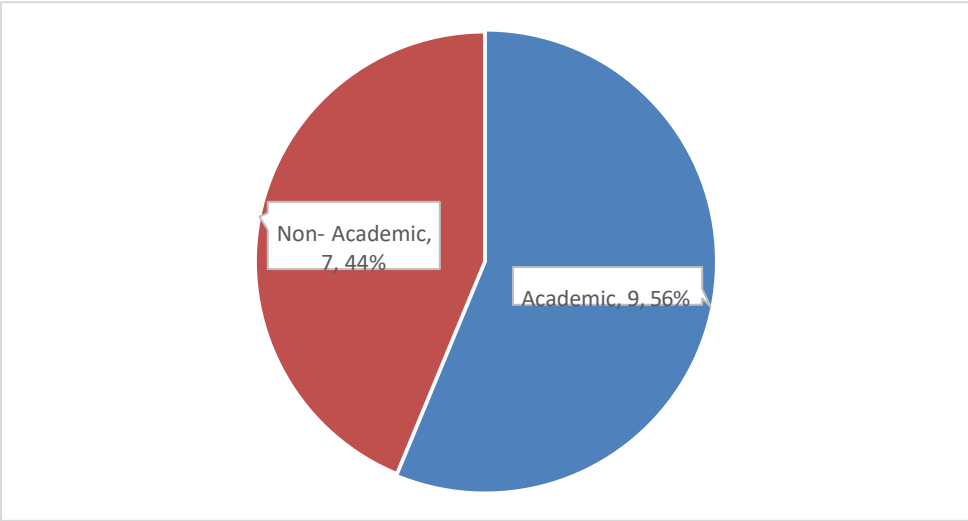
F4: The above graphical distribution displays the dominance of online medium of assessment. The ratio lies at 10:1.

C5: This attribute enquires for the type of assessment such as formative or summative conducted by the selected websites.

F5: The Findings suggested that all the websites enlisted in the table conduct both formative and summative assessment. As all the enlisted websites conduct both formative and summative, thereby it does not require any graphical representation.

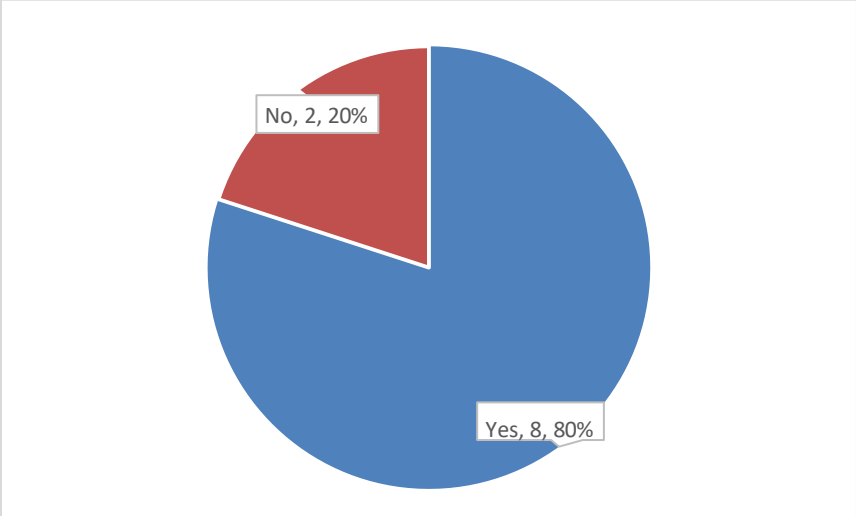
This can be instantiated with an example. As for instance, crowdmark.com, which is posited in number 10, provides the facility for administering and grading online and in-class assessments without any fixed time frame. This allows a test/examination administrator to supply unrestricted facility to undertake formative as well as summative assessment with valuable feedbacks for further improvement. Its undebatable and undisputed that more will be the rate of formative assessment, better will be the learner's performance.

C6: This attribute surveys for the assistance type (academic/ non- academic) by the mentioned websites.



F6: The graphical analysis clearly conveys that the distribution of academic and non- academic assistance lies at 56% and 44% respectively.

C7: The attribute in this specific column searches for whether a particular website certifies a learner for his/her performance or not



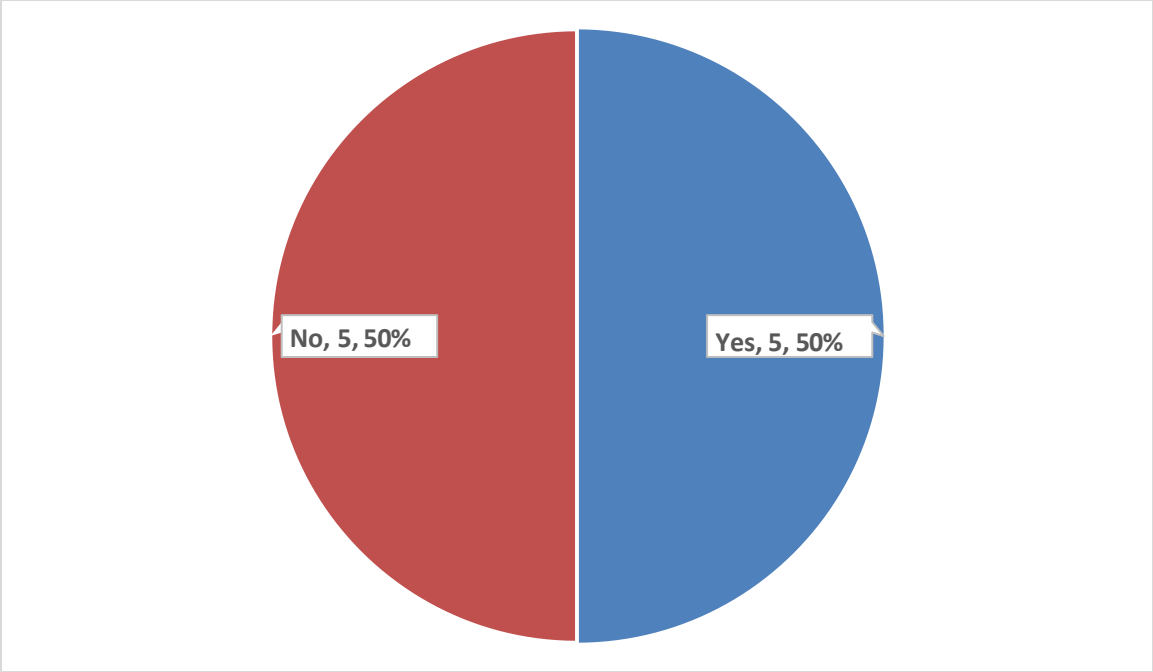
F7: The above graphical illustration in a circle, demonstrated that 80% of the websites gives certification for learners' performance, whereas 20% websites don't show any such provision.

C8: The attribute in the column-8 investigates whether, a specific website pre-supply demo practice or not before the actual test.

F8: The result show that all the websites have the facility of demo practice. Hence, it does not

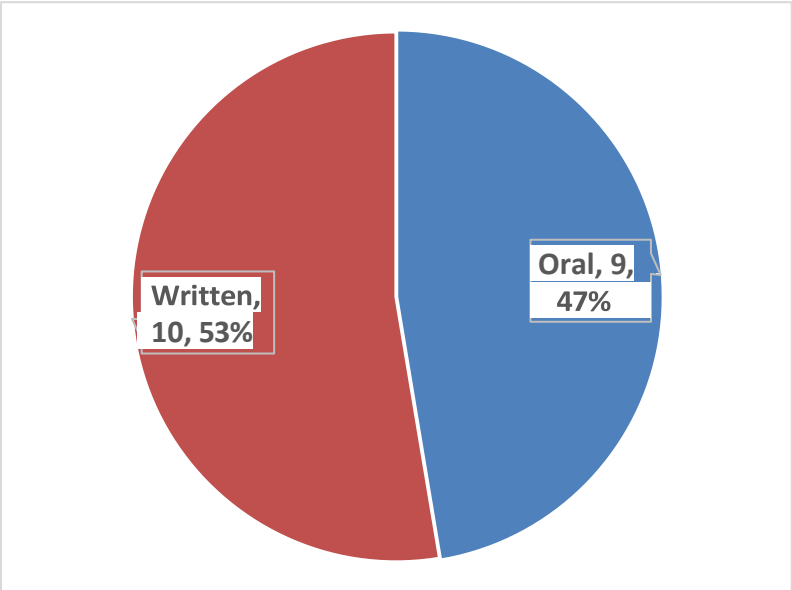
require any graphical representation.

C9: This column receives the data entry for inspecting, whether a specific website promotes other academical activities (seminar, conference, workshop) or not.



F9: The data distribution shows the numerical count of websites for providing or not providing scope for other academical activities, do display the same proportion.

C10: The data entry for the last column enquires for the test type (Oral/ Written):



F10: The pie presentation signifies that the distribution of written and oral test conducted by the websites lie at 53% and 47% respectively.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The attribute analysis of the assessment websites has supplied several derivations such as most of the websites provide assessment facility for multiple languages and still accommodating more and more. The website should necessarily take into consideration the requirement of learners with special needs while designing and executing assessment procedures which definitely make an inclusive propagation of education. More and more emphasis should be given on academical activities like webinar, online conference and workshops as it can accelerate the innovative faculty of language learning. The incorporation of both oral and written mode test should be adopted by all the websites. This in turn provides ample scope for enhancement of the oral communicative competency.

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Enhancing Vocabulary Skills through Literary Texts among Undergraduate Students: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

Vocabulary is an essential component of language learning because it enables learners to understand ideas and communicate effectively. Many undergraduate students experience difficulty in learning and using English vocabulary due to limited exposure to the language and insufficient opportunities to practice it in meaningful situations. Traditional teaching methods often emphasize memorization of word meanings, which does not always support the practical use of vocabulary in communication. In this context, literary texts can serve as an effective resource for vocabulary development. Literary texts present language in a natural and engaging context where learners encounter new words within meaningful situations. They also encourage reading habits and stimulate learners' imagination and interest in language learning. Through story based activities, students are able to understand vocabulary more clearly and apply it in different communicative contexts. Story reading also promotes deeper engagement with language and improves comprehension abilities. This paper focuses on examining how literary texts can be used to enhance vocabulary skills among undergraduate students and discusses strategies that support effective vocabulary learning in English language classrooms.

Keywords: Vocabulary Development, Literary texts, ELT, Contextual Learning, LSRW

Introduction

Vocabulary forms the foundation of language learning and plays a crucial role in the development of communication skills. Learners who possess a strong vocabulary are able to understand texts more easily and express their ideas with clarity. For undergraduate students studying English as a second language, vocabulary knowledge is particularly important because academic learning requires the ability to read complex materials and communicate effectively in writing and speech. However, vocabulary learning is often limited to memorizing definitions from textbooks, which does not always help students understand how words function in real contexts. Contemporary language teaching approaches emphasize contextual learning where vocabulary is introduced through meaningful texts and communicative activities. Literary texts serve as a valuable resource in this context because they provide interesting narratives and authentic language use. When students read and discuss stories, they encounter new vocabulary in a natural and meaningful way. This process allows learners to understand both the meaning and the usage of words more effectively. In addition, stories create an enjoyable classroom atmosphere that encourages participation and curiosity. Such an approach supports students in developing confidence while improving their language abilities.

Importance of Vocabulary Development

Knowledge in vocabulary is a key element of successful language learning and effective communication. Students with a strong vocabulary base can understand written materials, participate in discussions, and express their ideas with greater clarity. In English language teaching, vocabulary development should go beyond learning definitions and focus on understanding how words function in various contexts. Learners need opportunities to practice vocabulary through reading, writing, and interactive classroom activities. When vocabulary is introduced through meaningful situations, learners are more likely to remember and use it accurately. Teachers therefore need to design learning tasks that encourage active engagement with language. Such activities help learners connect vocabulary with real life communication and academic learning. A well developed vocabulary also increases students' confidence in using

English. Furthermore, it contributes significantly to the improvement of reading comprehension, writing ability, and overall language proficiency.

Challenges in Vocabulary Development

Undergraduate students often face several difficulties while expanding their English vocabulary. One major challenge is the limited exposure to English outside the classroom, which reduces opportunities for regular practice. Many students rely heavily on memorization techniques, which may help them, remember definitions temporarily but do not always help them use words appropriately. Another challenge is the lack of regular reading habits among learners, as academic pressure often limits their engagement with additional reading materials. Differences in linguistic background and educational experiences also influence the pace at which students acquire new vocabulary. When learners encounter unfamiliar words in academic texts, they sometimes feel discouraged and lose confidence in their reading ability. Some students also experience difficulty with the pronunciation and spelling of new words. These problems make vocabulary learning a challenging task for many undergraduate learners. Such challenges highlight the importance of adopting creative teaching strategies that make vocabulary learning more meaningful and engaging.

Using Literary texts to Enhance Vocabulary Skills

Literary texts provide a valuable resource in English language classrooms because they present language in an interesting and meaningful form. Through stories, learners encounter new vocabulary within situations that involve characters, events, and emotions. This contextual exposure helps students understand the meaning and usage of words more effectively than isolated word lists. Literary texts also stimulate imagination and curiosity, which encourages students to read actively and think critically about the text. Story based learning allows teachers to combine vocabulary instruction with other language skills such as reading, speaking, and writing. When students discuss characters, describe events, or summarize the story, they naturally use the vocabulary they have learned. This practice strengthens both recognition and usage of new words. Stories also expose learners to authentic language expressions and sentence patterns. As a result,

students gradually improve their comprehension skills and expand their vocabulary knowledge in a meaningful manner.

Literary texts are also highly effective in motivating students and increasing their interest in language learning. The engaging nature of stories captures learners' attention and encourages them to participate actively in reading and discussion activities. When students become emotionally connected to characters and events, they show greater curiosity to understand the meanings of unfamiliar words that appear in the text. This curiosity leads to a more active and meaningful process of vocabulary acquisition. Unlike traditional vocabulary learning, which often depends on memorization, story based learning allows students to discover new words naturally while following the narrative. Students also tend to remember vocabulary more easily because the words are associated with memorable situations in the story. In addition, classroom activities such as storytelling, group discussions, and role play create opportunities for learners to use new vocabulary in communication. These interactive experiences promote active learning and help students develop confidence in using newly acquired words. As a result, the use of literary texts not only improves vocabulary knowledge but also strengthens learners' interest and engagement in the language learning process.

Methods for Vocabulary Development

Contextual Vocabulary Learning

Students learn new vocabulary by understanding words within the context of the story. This method allows learners to identify meaning through situations and examples presented in the narrative. Context based learning improves long term retention of vocabulary. It also encourages learners to interpret language independently rather than relying only on memorization. Through repeated exposure to words in meaningful sentences, learners gradually develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary usage. This approach also helps students recognize how words function in different linguistic contexts.

Pre Reading Vocabulary Activities

Before reading the story, the teacher introduces important vocabulary items related to the text. This preparation helps students understand the story more easily and builds interest in the reading activity. It also activates learners' background knowledge about the topic. Such preparation supports learners in approaching the text with greater confidence. Pre reading activities may include discussions, word lists, or simple exercises that prepare students for the story. These activities create curiosity among learners and encourage them to focus on the text more attentively.

Vocabulary Guessing Strategy

Students are encouraged to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words by examining surrounding sentences and context clues. This strategy strengthens analytical thinking and promotes independent learning. Learners become more confident when they attempt to interpret language on their own. It also reduces their dependence on dictionaries. By practicing this strategy regularly, students develop the ability to understand texts without interruption. This skill is particularly useful in improving reading fluency and comprehension.

Word Mapping

Learners create visual vocabulary charts that include meanings, synonyms, antonyms, and example sentences from the story. This technique helps students understand relationships between words and improves memory retention. Word mapping encourages learners to organize vocabulary systematically. It also promotes deeper engagement with language learning. Visual representation of words makes it easier for students to recall vocabulary during reading and writing activities. Such structured learning also supports long term vocabulary development.

Vocabulary Journals

Students maintain personal vocabulary notebooks where they record new words, meanings, and example sentences. This habit encourages continuous learning and regular revision of vocabulary. It also helps learners monitor their progress in vocabulary development. Over time, vocabulary journals become a valuable personal learning resource. Students can review these

journals whenever they encounter similar words in different texts. This practice strengthens their ability to remember and apply vocabulary effectively.

Post Reading Vocabulary Activities

After reading the story, students participate in activities such as sentence formation, matching words with meanings, and writing short summaries using new vocabulary. These exercises reinforce vocabulary learning and encourage active use of words. They also help students apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Such activities strengthen both comprehension and expression. Post reading discussions and group activities further allow students to practice vocabulary in communication. These interactive tasks also promote collaborative learning in the classroom.

Conclusion

Vocabulary development is an essential aspect of language learning, particularly for undergraduate students who require strong language skills for academic and professional communication. Traditional vocabulary teaching methods that focus mainly on memorization often fail to provide meaningful learning experiences. Literary texts offer an engaging and practical approach to vocabulary instruction because they present language within interesting and relatable contexts. Through activities such as contextual learning, vocabulary guessing, word mapping, and vocabulary journals, students can gradually expand their vocabulary knowledge and improve their confidence in using English. Story based learning also encourages reading habits and promotes active participation in classroom discussions. As learners interact with stories, they develop a deeper understanding of language and its expressive potential. Therefore, integrating literary texts into English language teaching can significantly support vocabulary development among undergraduate students.

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