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Reduplication in Koireng: A Morphological and Semantic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of reduplication in the Koireng language, an endangered Tibeto-Burman language spoken by the Koireng tribe of Manipur. Reduplication, as a significant morphological and semantic process, plays a crucial role in expressing plurality, distributiveness, intensification, simultaneity, emotional expression, and contrastive meanings in Koireng. The study investigates both complete and partial reduplication and analyses their structural and functional characteristics within different grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and wh-questions. Complete reduplication is shown to be more productive in Koireng, particularly in conveying distributive and emphatic meanings, while partial reduplication appears in limited forms such as ablaut and rhyme-motivated patterns. The research also explores different lexical manifestations of reduplication, including eco words, reduplicative compounds, child language forms, expressive reduplication, contrastive constructions, and intensive reduplication. The study further situates Koireng reduplication within broader linguistic theories proposed by scholars such as Deborah Tannen, Wang, Ghomeshi, and Rastall, thereby demonstrating the

relevance of reduplication not only at the lexical level but also at the discourse and expressive levels. Through descriptive and analytical methods, the paper highlights how reduplication functions as an important linguistic strategy that enriches communication and reflects the cultural and cognitive patterns of the Koireng community. The research contributes to the documentation of the endangered Koireng language and provides insight into the morphological processes of lesser-studied Tibeto-Burman languages of Northeast India.

Keywords: Koireng; Reduplication; Tibeto-Burman Language; Morphology; Linguistic Anthropology

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the structural patterns of complete and partial reduplication in the Koireng.
2. To analyse the semantic and grammatical functions of reduplication in different word classes of Koireng.
3. To study the various lexical forms of reduplication such as eco words, compounds, expressive forms, and intensive reduplication in Koireng.
4. To contribute to the linguistic documentation and preservation of the endangered Koireng language.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research methodology to investigate reduplication in the Koireng language. Primary linguistic data were collected from native speakers of the Koireng community through informal interviews, participant observation, and oral

interactions. Secondary sources such as books, journal articles, census reports, and linguistic studies on Tibeto-Burman languages were also consulted. The collected data were classified into categories of complete and partial reduplication and analysed based on their phonological, morphological, and semantic features. Examples from natural speech were transliterated and interpreted to understand their grammatical and communicative functions within the socio-cultural context of the Koireng community.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because it documents and analyses reduplication in the Koireng language, one of the endangered languages of Manipur. It highlights the structural and semantic functions of reduplication and demonstrates its importance in expressing plurality, emphasis, intensification, and emotional meanings. The research contributes to the fields of morphology, Tibeto-Burman linguistics, and language preservation by providing valuable data on a lesser-studied tribal language. Furthermore, the study helps preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Koireng community and serves as a useful resource for future researchers interested in indigenous and endangered languages.

INTRODUCTION

The Koireng are one of the recognised Scheduled Tribes of Manipur, traditionally inhabiting regions such as Saikul, Kangpokpi, Thangmeiband, and the scenic foothill areas encircling the Imphal Valley. Nestled amidst the hills and border landscapes of the state, the Koireng community represents one of the most culturally rich indigenous groups of Manipur, preserving a distinct

linguistic and cultural heritage through generations. The community refers to itself as *Kolren*, where *kol* means “east” and *ren* means “people,” collectively signifying “eastern people.” The term *Koireng*, however, is believed to have been given by the Meitei community. The group is also known by several other names, including Kwoireng, Koren, Quoireng, Kolhrene, Korrengs, and Karen. T. C. Hodson (1911) referred to them as *Quoireng*, while John Shakespear (1913) identified them as *Kolhen*. George Abraham Grierson described them as *Korrengs* or *Kolrengs*. The Thadou community addressed them as *Kolhen*, whereas the Kom community referred to them as *Karen*.

The Koireng constitute a small indigenous community with a population of approximately 2,600 according to the 2011 Census. Their language is considered one of the endangered languages of Manipur. At present, Koireng settlements are distributed across areas such as Longa Koireng, Sadu Koireng, Kamu Koireng, Awang Koireng, Utonglok, Tarung, and Koireng Colony in Thangmeiband. According to Gangmumei Kamei (1987), the original homeland of the Koireng was known as *Koram*, or the “eastern land,” which some Koirengs associate with the Karen State of eastern Burma (Myanmar).

Several tribal communities across Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura, and Mizoram share linguistic and cultural affinities with the Koireng. In Manipur, these include the Aimol, Chiru, Kom, Puimei, Thikup, Purum, and Kharam communities, as well as certain Tangkhul villages such as Nambasi, Kumram, Ningchou, Kasom, Khampat Khullen, Nongman, Meiring, Khampi, Sorde, and Sorathang. Similar affinities are also observed among the Ranglong, Hrangkhoh, and Biate tribes of the North Cachar Hills in Assam; the Chir tribe and the inhabitants of Khelma village in Nagaland; the Hrangkol, Ranglong, Darlong, and Molsom communities in Tripura; and the Pawi

(Poi) and Mara tribes in Mizoram. Outside India, the Koireng are believed to share close linguistic and cultural affinities with certain communities in Myanmar and Thailand (Wanbe 2015). In addition, the Koireng exhibit several cultural and civilizational similarities with the Meitei and Rongmei communities. References found in the *Chronicles of Manipur*, particularly in the royal chronicles of Moirang, portray the Koireng as a powerful tribe during the ancient period. These chronicles mention several conflicts between the Koireng and the kings of Moirang, in which the latter were reportedly defeated on numerous occasions.

The language is commonly known as Koireng. Owing to variations in nomenclature and ethnolinguistic classification, scholars have placed the Koireng language under different linguistic subgroups. George Abraham Grierson (1909) classified the Koireng language under the Kuki–Chin branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. John Shakespear described the Koireng as an “Old Kuki” tribe, whereas T. C. Hodson classified them as a Naga tribe. Robert Shafer (1966) placed them under the Western branch of the Kukish section within the Burmic division. Similarly, Paul K. Benedict classified them under the Western Kuki subgroup within the transitional Kuki–Naga category, while David Bradley (1994) placed Kwoireng within the Zeiliangrong group of the Southern Naga linguistic cluster.

1.1 REDUPLICATION IN KOIRENG

Reduplication is a morphological process in which a root, stem, or part of a word is repeated to create a modified linguistic form. In many languages, reduplication functions both as an inflectional and derivational process, conveying grammatical meanings as well as generating new semantic expressions. According to Deborah Tannen (1987), reduplication serves as a limitless

resource for individual creativity and acts as a central strategy for linguistic meaning-making. Although the lexical aspects of reduplication have long attracted the attention of formalist linguistic theories, Wang (2005) observes that linguists have generally neglected its discourse-level functions. Similarly, Paul Rastall (2004) argues that many reduplicative forms appearing in the media are often treated as ephemeral wordplay that fail to “enter the language,” thereby highlighting the need for studies that move beyond purely lexical analyses of reduplication. This ambivalence among linguists may stem from the traditional emphasis on formal linguistic structures associated with classical generative approaches, which often regard reduplicative forms as theoretically marginal or awkward (Ghameshi et al., 2004). Nevertheless, recent corpus-based studies have demonstrated that reduplication in English is far more widespread and productive than previously assumed. Scholars such as Wang (2005), Ghameshi et al. (2004), Biber et al. (1998), Conrad (1999), and Sinclair (1997) reveal that the use of reduplication continues to expand among North American, British, and non-native speakers of English.

Reduplication may therefore be understood as a word-formation process in which a segment, syllable, morpheme, or entire lexical item is repeated either to the left, right, or occasionally within the base word. Although reduplication occurs across a wide range of languages and language families, the degree of its linguistic productivity varies considerably. In many instances, reduplication overlaps with the concept of repetition, and the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Repetition generally refers to the recurrence of sounds, words, or concepts for the purposes of reinforcement, emphasis, or emotional expression. Ghameshi et al. (2004), for instance, associate repetition with features commonly found in child language. Repetition also functions as an important poetic and rhetorical device in which sounds, syllables, words, phrases,

lines, or metrical patterns recur to create stylistic cohesion and emphasis. In discussing the rhetorical functions of repetition, Heinrich Lausberg (1998) suggests that repetition performs both informative and reinforcing functions. However, Wang (2005) maintains that repetition and reduplication are frequently conflated because of their overlapping structural and functional characteristics.

Formally, discursive reduplication may be broadly classified into two major categories: partial reduplication and full (or complete) reduplication. This classification depends on whether the repeated element constitutes the entire lexical item or only a subcomponent of it (Rubino, 2005; Inkelas, 2014). In full reduplication, the entire word or sound sequence is repeated without modification. In the case of the Koireng language, reduplication is not grammatically productive in the sense that it does not generally function as a mechanism for creating new lexical items. Instead, reduplication in Koireng primarily serves semantic and expressive purposes, such as indicating plurality, repetition, and intensification.

1.2 COMPLETE REDUPLICATION

In Koireng, complete reduplication is found in the grammatical categories like noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective and wh-question. The process of complete reduplication is common in Koireng like other T.B languages.

1.2.1 NOUN

Reduplication occurs in noun are known to be Nominal reduplication, where the entire word or base is reduplicated. Semantically distributive nature of the noun is signalled in this type of reduplication. For instance, we have the following word phrases:

1. k^hət k^hət hapro
one one to place
'placed one each'
2. in in lutnika kitokro
house house enter search
'search by entering every house'
3. sənde sənde cərs cero
Sunday Sunday church go
'go to church every sunday'

As can be seen, the above nouns of Koirang are reduplicated for distributive meanings.

1.2.2 VERBAL ADVERBS

Verbal adverbs are the adverbs derived from verbs. When the verb root is reduplicated it becomes an adverb because it is followed by the main verb of the sentence or phrase. Thus, these verbal adverbs implies simultinity of the two works.

4. ənui ənui-əh əcejei
laughing laughing-NZR gone
'gone with a laugh'
5. kəpnə kəpnə-əh ətorjei
crying crying-NZR finished
'done while crying'

In Koirang, the structural configuration is that any verb is reduplicated and is followed by main verb of the phrase or sentence. This example (4) employs two verbs i.e. ‘ənui’ meaning ‘laugh’ and ‘əcejei’ means ‘gone’ to show the synchronization of two events actions which get completed at the same time, like wise in second example (5) employs two verbs i.e. ‘kəpnə’ meaning ‘crying’ and ‘ətorjei’ means ‘finished’ to show the synchronization of two events actions which get completed at the same time

1.2.3 ADVERB

Reduplication of adverbs involves exact repetition of the words and modifies a verb phrase. It implies something happening gradually and thus emphasizes the base adverb. For instance, in (6) the word ‘əlek’ means ‘little’ and ‘əlek əlek’ means ‘little little’ meaning little by little and emphasises ‘little’.

6. əlek əlek caro

little little eat

‘eat little by little’

7. ətam ətam happekro

many many put/placed

‘put/ placed by large amount ’

8. əleina əleina kidei

big big like

‘likes the big, big one’

In example (6), (7), (8) the constructions such as ‘əlek əlek’, ‘ətam ətam’, ‘əleina əleina’ are the adverbs in reduplicated forms which emphasize the base verb of the reduplicant.

1.2.4 ADJECTIVE

Reduplication of adjective words can enhance the descriptive feeling of an adjective. It can denote plurality and degree of quality. This can be seen in the example below.

9. əsa əsa- əh rəypar t^həŋro

beautiful beautiful- NZR flower select

‘select beautiful flower ones’

10. əsaŋ əsaŋ- əh t^hiŋ əmoŋ

tall tall-NZR tree grow

‘many tall trees are grown’

11. əwom əwom-əh t^həŋro

black black-NZR select

‘select blacks one’

In the above constructions (9) ‘əsa əsa- əh’ is a complimentary distribution; (10) ‘əsaŋ əsaŋ- əh’ shows the magnitude of tallness and plurality, (11) ‘əwom əwom-əh’ shows distributiveness.

1.2.5 Wh-Question

In Koireng, the reduplication of wh-words indicate plurality as well as distributiveness. For example:

12. əŋ əŋ -mo

what what

‘what else is that’

13. k^hoy k^hoy - mo

who who

‘who all are that’

14. hoy hoy - mo

which which

‘which all are that’

15. hoynai hoynai ancejei

where where gone

‘where else have gone’

In Koireng, the reduplication of wh-questions implies plurality that is the answered will be plural as it is performed or done by more than one. Therefore, non-reduplicative wh-question implies singularity.

1.2.6 PARTIAL REDUPLICATION

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Partial reduplication is a type of reduplication where only a part or subconstituent of the base is reduplicated. It can be further divided into two types i.e. ablaut type and rhyme- motivated.

ABLAUT TYPE

[CVC]₁

+

[CVC]₁^I

RHYME-MOTIVATED

[CVC]₁

+

[CVC]₁^I

In ablaut type, the stress vowel of the base is changed while the rest of the word is repeated. In Koireng, partial reduplication of ablaut type is not common as only few words can be found. For example:

16. rit^{hi} rit^{ha} - waste liquid and such

Whereas the rhyme-motivated types of partial reduplication is the reduplication process in which the onset consonant of the base is change and only the remaining parts of the base is reduplicated. For example:

17. ədom ət^hon – carrying in and out

2.1 DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEXICAL REDUPLICATION

2.1.1 ECO WORDS

Eco words is a kind of reduplication in which the complete reduplication is done with a little change in the reduplicant syllable and others being overwritten as the base syllable. This word is mostly used as colloquial speech. For example:

18. nisam ninar – hair and such

19. niconj ninar – word and such

2.1.2 COMPOUNDING

Compounds in which the second constituent partially copy the first constituent are reduplicative compound. Here, the second constituent gives emphasis to the first constituent or both the constituents can have different meaning.

20. keipek kərpek – giving and taking to and fro

21. t^heirim reirim – fruit and flower fragrance

22. potsuok keisuok – pull out and pull in

2.1.3 CHILD LANGUAGE

Normal infants go through stage of reduplication or canonical babbling (Stark 198, Oller, 1980). It is characterised by repetition of identical consonant-vowel combinations and appears as infants experiment with their vocal apparatus on the sounds used in their native language. For example:

23. ba ba ba ‘ means papa or just a random sound produce by the infant’

24. ma ma ma ‘means mama or just a random sound produce by the infant’

25. ta ta ta ‘means hi or just a random sound produce by the infant’

2.1.4 EXPRESSIVE

It is the figurative speech which is the speaker adopts the tone more expressive but not exclusively iconic in meaning.

26. ənu ənu – express pain

27. ha ha - pin point suddenly

28. əh əh – express emotions of surprise or realisation

2.1.5 CONTRASTIVE MEANING

The verb word is repeated to bring about a contrastive meaning by adding a morpheme. In Koireng, the base verb is in the form of positive past participle plus a morpheme ‘-əŋ’ followed by the same base verb in the form of negative past participle and gives the meaning of ‘ignoring something’.

29. t^hounomnum-əŋ t^hounomleinum-əŋ – not willing to do want to do
does not want to do (negative meaning)

30. wanomnum-əŋ wanomleinum-əŋ – not willing to come
want to come does not want to come (negative meaning)

2.1.6 INTENSIVE REDUPLICATION

In this way of reduplication, the word is used three times (triplication) to intensify its meaning or action which can be used to mean positive meaning or a reply as a dare. For example:

31. t^horo t^horo t^horo – do do do (literal meaning)

-it can be taken as an order or as a dare or a word of

encouragement (connotative meaning)

32. əca əca əca – good good good (literal meaning)

-it can be taken as a dare or a word of encouragement (connotative meaning)

There are also some words in Koireng which is used for two times to intensify the meaning and at the same time used as a positive reply of some questions asked about one's opinion. For example:

33. sə-əte sə-əte – ok ok (intensify the approval)

34. kidei kidei – like it, like it (intensify the degree of likeness)

35. tətmək tətmək – not tired, not tired (to meant never exhausted)

CONCLUSION

Reduplication constitutes an important morphological and semantic feature of the Koireng language. Although the language is endangered and spoken by a relatively small community, it demonstrates a rich and systematic use of reduplicative forms across different grammatical categories. The study reveals that complete reduplication is more productive than partial reduplication in Koireng and is extensively employed to express plurality, distributiveness, simultaneity, emphasis, emotional intensity, and descriptive quality. Partial reduplication, though limited, contributes to expressive and rhythmic aspects of speech through ablaut and rhyme-motivated forms.

The analysis further shows that reduplication in Koireng extends beyond grammatical usage and functions as a significant expressive and communicative device in everyday speech. Lexical forms such as eco words, child-language expressions, reduplicative compounds, and intensive reduplication demonstrate the creativity and oral richness of the language. These forms also reflect

the socio-cultural identity and communicative traditions of the Koireng people.

From a broader linguistic perspective, the study supports contemporary theories that regard reduplication as more than a peripheral morphological process. Instead, it emerges as an essential strategy for meaning-making and discourse expression. The research therefore contributes not only to the understanding of Koireng morphology but also to the documentation and preservation of an endangered indigenous language of Northeast India. Further studies may explore the syntactic, phonological, and discourse-level dimensions of reduplication in Koireng in greater detail.

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Some Aspects of Kinship Terminology in Reang

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Abstract:

The aim of the present paper is to discuss on Kinship Terminology of Reang spoken in Tripura and Mizoram. The Reang are patrilineal kinship system that serves as a vital linguistic framework for organizing social and familial hierarchies. Belonging to the Bodo-Garo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family, the Reang lexicon consists primarily of monosyllabic bound roots that cannot stand alone. To form grammatically complete words, these roots strictly require pronominal possessive prefixes to mark perspective, such as the first-person prefix /a-/ or /ai-/, second-person /nə-/ or /ni-/ or /nu-/, and third-person /bə-/ or /bi-/ or /bu-/. The language rigorously categorizes consanguine, collateral, and affinal relations based on generational seniority, relative age, and strict rules of tribal endogamy. A defining feature of Reang kinship terminology is its emphasis on relative age and strict decorum-based taboos that forbid family members from addressing elders or spouses by their personal names. For instance, within one's own generation, collateral branches are merged with direct siblings and classified purely by relative seniority to Ego, using terms like *ata* for an elder brother/male cousin and *phaiyong* for a younger brother/male cousin. To avoid direct name usage between spouses, the community relies heavily on teknonymy, addressing each other through their children using phrases like *Sareti əmpha* 'father of Sareti'. The paper will focus on morphological features of the kinship words in the language. The prefix /əm-/ is also discussed in this paper where the affix can form kinship words as well as other lexical nouns.

Keywords: The Language, Basic Characteristics, Consanguine Kinship, Collateral Kinship, Affinal Kinship, Fictive Kinship, Morphosyntactic Features

1. Introduction:

The Reang is an ethnic tribe of Tripura and their language belongs to the Bodo-Garo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. It is primarily spoken in Tripura and some adjacent parts of Mizoram and Assam as well as some parts of Bangladesh and Myanmar. While ‘Reang’ is a widely recognized exonym-historically the name of the community's last ‘Kaskau’ (king)-the native endonym is Bru. Etymologically, Bru is derived from *beraiha*, meaning ‘wanderer,’ reflecting the community's ancestral history of migration in search of food and shelter (Reang, 2021). According to the 2011 Census of India, the population of this community stands at approximately 1,88,080. The Reang is used in the home domain language and in the local village markets. The language is also known as *Kau Bru* (*Kau* means language; *Bru* means people). It is closely related to other Bodo-Garo languages such as Kokborok, Dimasa and Bodo. The term ‘Reang’ is popularly known by the people of different linguistic communities. The present study of the language is Tripura variety.

1.1. Review of Literature:

The study of kinship terminology in the Reang (*Kau-Bru*) is a Tibeto-Burman tongue primarily spoken in Tripura and some adjacent parts of Mizoram. The study reveals a complex system that intertwines linguistic structure with social hierarchy. While specific scholarly works dedicated solely to ‘Reang kinship terminology’ are limited compared to those of sister languages; existing research highlights several key dimensions.

Prof. G. Baskaran (2016) mentioned in his ‘*Reang Word Book*’ regarding the lists of basic vocabulary about natural objects, body parts, housing, and household articles, numerals, adjectives verbs, and Adverbs, etc.

Singha and Singha (2017) discuss cultural and linguistic profile of the Reang briefly in the article ‘*Linguistic and Cultural Aspects of Reang*’. The paper has divided into two sections, the first part deals with the cultural aspects and the second section deals with the linguistic features of the Reang. They mentioned Reang is a tonal language and it has two lexical tones i.e. high and low tones.

Lincoln Reang (2021) discusses in the book *Arag (A social drink prevalent among the Reang (Bru) community)*. Here, the author provides a brief study of the Reang (*Bru*) community, including the language, social structure, village life, family and kinship, lifestyle, cultural life and the preparation of country wine.

Y. Arunima Singha (2017) discusses in her PhD dissertation entitled ‘*A Descriptive Grammar of Reang*’ regarding the phonology, nominal morphology, verbal morphology, word orders, phrases and sentences structures.

S. Bhattacharjee and K. Reang (2024) discuss the society and culture of the Reang language in the article ‘*Glimpses about the society and culture of the Reangs in Tripura*’.

Rotnojoy Reang (2025) in his PhD dissertation entitled ‘*Word Formation in Reang*’, here discusses grammatical categories, word orders, word formation processes i.e. affixation, compounding and reduplication processes in Reang. He mentioned some of the pronominal prefixing words of the kinship nouns in the language.

1.2. Data Methodology:

The data of this paper are collected from the native speakers in Tripura variety of the Reang during the 2nd author’s PhD research from 2020 to 2025 and now, recently cross checked it. The data are collected from both the male and female informants in different age groups. The secondary data for this paper were collected from theses published in *Shodhganga* and some online journals. The 2nd author being a native speaker of the Reang, it becomes easy to collect data in the language. All the data are cross verified.

1.3. Grammatical Information:

Phonologically, Reang has six basic vowels in Reang i.e. /i, e, a, o, u, ə/ and twenty consonants i.e. /p, p^h, b, t, t^h, d, c, k, k^h, g, m, n, ŋ, z, s, h, r, l, w, y/ (Singha, 2017). It is a tonal language that has two kinds of lexical tones i.e. high tone e.g. /ká/ ‘cry’ and low tone /kà/ ‘step’. Morphologically, Reang has three kinds of major word formation processes viz. affixation, compounding and reduplication. It has prefixation and suffixation processes where the words are formed by the affixation. Syntactically, the basic word order of the language is SOV type, and it is a verb final language. Grammatically, it has case marking system. The present paper follows the consisting of six basic vowels and twenty-one consonants (addition to glottal stop /ʔ/) for the Reang language. This paper adopts a phonological framework for the Reang language consisting of six basic vowels and twenty-one consonants, alongside the addition of the glottal stop /ʔ/. Within this twenty-one consonant inventory, specific phonetic orthography is applied for clarity, meaning the sound /c/ is represented throughout this paper as /ch/ and the sound /ŋ/ is represented as /ng/. In the Reang, the glottal stop consonant /ʔ/ rarely occurs in the final position of words. Consequently, this paper representatively applies the letter /h/ to denote this word-final glottal sound, for example- *bəsayouh* phonetically [bəsayouʔ] meaning ‘daughter’.

2. Kinship Terms in Reang:

The Reang people of Northeast India use a highly structured patrilineal kinship system; they practice strict tribal endogamy but forbid marriage within the same sub-clan to prevent inbreeding. Their kinship system relies heavily on generational seniority, using specific linguistic modifiers to distinguish relatives by relative age. To maintain traditional social decorum, their vocabulary also strictly separates direct terms of address from terms of reference. This paper focuses on Reang

consanguine kinship terms, including ego's paternal and maternal lineages, affinal relationships, and husband-wife terminology. It also examines gender distinctions, age-based classifications, fictive kinship, the difference between terms of address and reference, and the morphological features of these kinship words in the language.

2.1. Consanguine Kinship Terms:

Consanguine kinship terms are the specific names and titles used to identify relatives who are related by blood or shared ancestry. The kinship is mainly based on blood relationship. The relationships between parents and their offspring or sons or daughter, and that between siblings of the same parents are universally recognized as consanguinal kin (Majumdar & Madan, 1986). Consanguineous kinship relies on both biological ties and social recognition. This is evident in adoption, where cultural and legal validation grants an adopted child the exact same status as a biological offspring. Ultimately, kinship is a social construct requiring community acceptance to define family. Reflecting this blend of lineage and social recognition, the Reang community uses a structured system of kinship terminology to organize their families.

No. 1:	Kinship Term	Gloss	Abbreviation	Table
	<i>achu/ chuchu</i>	Father's father	FF	
	<i>achui/chuichui</i>	Father's mother	FM	
	<i>achu/ chuchu</i>	Mother's father	MF	
	<i>achui/chuichui</i>	Mother's mother	MM	
	<i>apa/əmpa</i>	Father	F	
	<i>among/əmma</i>	Mother	M	
	<i>əmsala/bəsala</i>	Son	S	
	<i>bəsayouh/əmsayouh</i>	Daughter	D	
	<i>bəsu</i>	Grandchild	CC	
	<i>bəsuchla</i>	Son's son	SS	
	<i>bəsuyouh</i>	Son's daughter	SD	
	<i>bəsuchla</i>	Daughter's son	DS	
	<i>bəsuyouh</i>	Daughter's daughter	DD	

Consanguine kinship terms

2.2. Collateral Kinship Term:

Collateral kinship terms are names for blood relatives who are not in Ego's direct genetic line. Instead of being ancestors or descendants, they belong to side branches of Ego's family tree and connect to Ego through a shared ancestor. In Reang, the collateral kinship can be divided into two types as shown below:

2.2.1. Ego's Paternal Kinship Terms:

Kinship Terms	Relation and Gloss	Abbreviation
<i>aiyongchla</i>	Father's Elder Brother (Uncle)	FeB

<i>mama</i>	Father's Younger Brother (Uncle)	FyB
<i>aiyongbroi</i>	Fathers' Elder Sister (Aunt)	FeZ
<i>atoi</i>	Fathers' Younger Sister (Aunt)	FyZ
<i>ata</i>	Elder Brother	eB
<i>phaiyong</i>	Younger Brother	yB
<i>aibi/bibi</i>	Elder Sister	eZ
<i>hanao/bahanao</i>	Younger Sister	yZ
<i>ata</i>	Father's Brother's Son (Elder Cousin)	FBS (eCB)
<i>phaiyong</i>	Father's Brother's Son (Younger Cousin)	FBS (yCB)
<i>bibi/aibi</i>	Father's Brother's Daughter (Elder Cousin)	FBD (eCZ)
<i>hanao/bahanao</i>	Father's Brother's Daughter (Younger Cousin)	FBD (yCZ)
<i>ata</i>	Father's Sister's Son (Elder Cousin)	FZS (eCB)
<i>phaiyong</i>	Father's Sister's Son (Younger Cousin)	FZS (yCB)
<i>bibi/aibi</i>	Father's Sister's Daughter (Elder Cousin)	FZD (eCZ)
<i>hanao/bahanao</i>	Father's Sister's Daughter (Younger Cousin)	FZD (yCZ)

Table No. 2 : Ego's Paternal Kinship Terms

2.2.2. Ego's Maternal Kinship Terms:

Kinship Terms	Gloss	Abbreviation
<i>aiyongchla</i>	Mother's Elder Brother (Maternal Uncle)	MeB
<i>mama</i>	Mother's Younger Brother (Maternal Uncle)	MyB
<i>aiyongbroi</i>	Mothers' Elder Sister (Aunt)	MeZ
<i>aiyongchla</i>	Mothers' Elder Sister's Husband	MyZH
<i>atoi</i>	Mothers' Younger Sister (Aunt)	MyZ
<i>achu/chuchu</i>	Mother's Father (Grandfather)	MF
<i>achui/chuichui</i>	Mother's Mother (Grandmother)	MM
<i>ata</i>	Mother's Brother's Son (Elder Cousin)	MBS (eCB)
<i>phaiyong</i>	Mother's Brother's Son (Younger Cousin)	MBS (yCB)
<i>aibi/bibi</i>	Mother's Brother's Daughter (Elder Cousin)	MBD (eCZ)
<i>hanao</i>	Mother's Brother's Daughter (Younger Cousin)	MBD (yCZ)
<i>ata</i>	Mother's Sister's Son (Elder Cousin)	MZS (eCB)
<i>phaiyong</i>	Mother's Sister's Son (Younger Cousin)	MZS (yCB)
<i>aibi/bibi</i>	Mother's Sister's Daughter (Elder Cousin)	MZD (eCZ)
<i>bahanao</i>	Mother's Sister's Daughter (Younger Cousin)	MZD (yCZ)

Table No. 3: Ego's Maternal Kinship Terms

2.3. Affinal Kinship Terms:

Affinal kinship terms are the specific titles, labels, or vocabulary words used in a society to designate relatives who are related through marriage alliances rather than bloodlines. According to Fox (1983: 33-35) “Affines are people married to our consanguine kin.” Reang traditions strictly forbid marriage within the same immediate sub-clan (bloodline family). This rule ensures that marriage partners always come from entirely separate family lines. By choosing partners from non-bloodline lineages, families build strong social bonds with outside groups. However, they practice strict tribal endogamy, meaning individuals must marry within the broader Reang community to preserve cultural cohesion. This system builds a collaborative, social bridge between independent family units across their primary clans. Reang affinal kinship terms are given below:

Kinship Terms	Gloss
<i>aibi</i>	HeZ/WeZ (address term)
<i>achui</i>	WMM (WGM)/ HMM (HGM)
<i>achu</i>	HFF (HGF) / WFF (WGF)
<i>aiyong /aiyongchla</i>	WMeZH/HMeZH/WMeB/ WFeB/ FeZH/WFeZH/ MeZH
<i>aiyong/aiyongbroi</i>	WFeZ/ HMeZ/ HMeBW/ WMeZ/ WFeBW/ MeBW/ WMeBW/ FeBW
<i>angpraorongma</i>	WyZ /yBW
<i>angpraorongha</i>	HyB/ yZH
<i>angbaigna-ha</i>	eZS/ yZS/ eBS/
<i>angbaignayouh-ma</i>	eZD/ yZD / eBD/ yBD
<i>apa</i>	HF
<i>apa /bakra/əmkra</i>	WF
<i>ata</i>	HeB/WeB/
<i>atoi</i>	FyBW/ MyBW/ HFyBW/ HFyZ/ WFyZ/ WMyBW
<i>bachoi</i>	HeBW/ eBW/ (address term)
<i>bahanao</i>	HyZ /WyZ
<i>bahainyouh</i>	SW/ yBW
<i>bihi</i>	W
<i>bihi kətoi</i>	Co-wife
<i>bakra</i>	HF/WF (reference term)
<i>among</i>	HM/WM (Address term)/
<i>bəkrayouh</i>	HM/WM/ (3 rd person reference term)
<i>bəsachla kətoi</i>	Step son
<i>bəsai/əmsai</i>	H
<i>bəsayouh kətoi</i>	Step daughter

<i>buai</i>	WeB (reference term)
<i>buaiyouh</i>	WeZ (reference term)
<i>chamai</i>	SWF/DHF
<i>chamaiyouh</i>	SWM
<i>chamaroi</i>	DH
<i>kumoi</i>	eZH/ WeZH (address term)
<i>mama</i>	FyZH/ MyZH/ HFyB/ HMyB/ WMyB/ HMyZH/ WFyZH/ WMyZH
<i>amma katoi</i>	Step mother (reference term)
<i>amkrayouh</i>	WM (reference term)
<i>ampha katoi</i>	Step father (reference term)
<i>phaiyong</i>	WyB/HyB
<i>saru/ saru-saka</i>	WZH (reference term)

Table No. 4: Affinal kinship terms

2.4. Kinship Terms Based on Gender Distinction:

The Reang people use a structured kinship system that strictly differentiates terms based on gender. Distinct vocal titles are assigned to maternal and paternal relatives, specifically separating elder siblings, parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Interestingly, this gender-based specificity gives way to a unified classification at the youngest generations, where grandchildren and great-grandchildren share the exact same kinship terms. This is illustrated in below table no. 5:

Relation	Male	Gloss	Female	Gloss
Children	<i>bāsala</i>	Male child/ Son	<i>bāsayouh</i>	Female child/ Daughter
Siblings brothers-sisters	<i>ata</i>	Elder brother	<i>aibi</i>	Elder Sister
	<i>angphaiyong</i>	Younger brother	<i>bahanao</i>	Younger Sister
Parents	<i>apa</i>	Father/my father	<i>among</i>	Mother /my mother
Parents Siblings	<i>mama</i>	Paternal Uncle	<i>atoi</i>	Father's Sister
	<i>mama</i>	Maternal Uncle	<i>atoi</i>	Mother's Sister
Grandparents	<i>bāsu</i>	Grandfather	<i>achui</i>	Grandmother
Grandchildren	<i>bāsu</i>	Grandchildren	<i>bāsu</i>	Grandchildren
Grandchildren	<i>bāsuchla</i>	Grandson	<i>bāsuyouh</i>	Granddaughter

Table No. 5: Kinship Terms Based on Gender Distinction

2.5. Relative Age-Based Kinship Terms and Birth-Order Roles:

The Reang people have different age distinction kinship term marked among siblings in all generations. The first-born son is referred to as *bāsala hogra* or *əmsala hogra* and is bestowed with several privileges. He is responsible for taking a leadership position in the absence of the father. He is also supposed to look after his younger siblings and help them in every way. The eldest daughter is referred to as *bāsayouh hogra* or *əmsyouh hogra*. She does not have the same privileges as the elder son, but she has to take responsibility for her younger siblings until she is married. The middle son is referred as *bāsala kəchar* and middle daughter is referred as *bāsayouh kəchar*. The last-born son is referred as *bāsala tuithao/thaithao* and the last-born daughter is referred to as *bāsayouh tuithao/thaithao*, which means ‘youngest son’ and ‘youngest daughter’. The term *bāsa* applies to all the children between the first-born and the last-born in Reang. The term *bāsa hogra* or *əmsa hogra* is referred both first-born son and daughter which means ‘first child’. The term ‘*bāsa tuithao*’ or ‘*əmsa tuithao*’ referred to indicate both last son and daughter which means ‘last child’.

2.6. Kinship Terms used in case of Elder and Junior Address among the Community:

The Reang kinship system structures social ties into distinct generational layers, enforcing a strict rule that elder individuals cannot be addressed by their personal names without an honorific prefix. Within the speaker’s (ego) own generation, the prefix *ata* is added for men senior to the speaker, while *aibi* is used for women of an elder sister's age. For parents' generations, the term *aiyong* is applied to both men and women older than the speaker’s parents, whereas *mama* and *atoi* address men and women younger than the speaker's father and mother, respectively. The elderly of the grandparents' generation are addressed as *achu* (male) or *achui* (female). When addressing individuals younger than the speaker, the Reang system allows for more flexibility. Younger males are referred to as *phaiyong*, while younger females are called *hanao*. Unlike with elders, speakers can address junior individuals using these specific kin terms, *tema* for female *tela*, *telaha* for male.

2.7. Husband and Wife Kinship Term:

In the Reang society, the husband is considered as head of the family. Husband and wife general reference term is used as *bihi-bāsai* or *bihi-əmsai*, which means ‘husband and wife’, *bihi* means ‘wife’ and *əmsai* means ‘husband’. Husband and wife do not allow calling each other by personal name. The Reang society does not allow addressing by personal name between the husband and wife. Because, it is strictly avoided in customary law of the Reang society. They use teknonymy addressing the spouse indirectly through their child e.g. “father of [child’s name]” and “mother of [child’s name]”. For example, *Sareti əmpha*, ‘father of Sareti, *Khasouh əmpha* ‘Father of Khasouh’, *Khumbati əmpha* ‘father of Khumbati’, *Nangsouh əmma* ‘Mother of Nangsouh’ *Sinkrung əmma* ‘mother of Sinkrung’. The second- and third-person reference terms are used to indicate such as *nin-əmsai* ‘your husband’, *bin-əmsai* ‘her husband’, *nin-nihi* ‘your wife’ and *bin-bihi* ‘his wife’.

2.8. Endearment Kinship Term:

In the Reang community, the linguistic approach to expressing affection through kinship terms is uniquely structured. While many societies restrict endearment terms strictly to close family units, Reang speakers utilize specific morphological rules, such as prefixing /a-/ or using reduplicated form of words, to signal closeness and warmth. For example, while the general reference term for a father is *əmpha*, a child will affectionately address their father as *a-pa* or *pa-pa*. This pattern extends gracefully across generations and sibling relationships. An elder brother is warmly addressed as *a-ta* or *ta-ta*, and a mother is called *a-mong* or *mo-mong*. Similarly, grandparents are enveloped in this linguistic affection; a grandfather is called *a-chu* or *chu-chu*, while a grandmother is endearingly referred to as *a-chui* or *chui-chui*. These linguistic structures highlight how the Reang language embeds emotional intimacy directly into its everyday grammatical framework. The endearment kinship is very commonly addressed by reduplicating the kinship root word for example, *bi-bi* ‘elder sister’, *yong-yong* ‘father’s elder brother and his wife’.

2.9. Fictive Kinship Term:

Fictive Kinship refers to close family-like bonds not based on blood or marriage (consanguinity). Anthropologists, sociologists, and linguists study how people extend family terms to non-relatives to build solidarity, shift social distance, or show politeness. This practice projects the rights and duties of family roles onto everyday social interactions. In Reang society, fictive kinship terms directly strengthen friendship relations. For instance, when two boys become fictive friends, they use specific terms based on grammatical person. A boy addresses his male fictive friend directly as *kəching*. If he refers to someone else's male fictive friend in the second person, he uses *nikching*, while *bikching*, serves as the third-person reference term. This structural mapping mirrors practices in other cultures, such as the Bodo language terms *suke*, *nwnsigi*, and *bisigi*. The Reang language applies a parallel framework for female friendships by adding a specific suffix. A girl addresses her female fictive friend directly as *kəchingyouh*. When speaking to or about another girl's fictive friend, the terms shift accordingly. The second-person reference form becomes *nikchingyouh*, and the third-person reference form changes to *bikchingyouh*. These systematic terms highlight how language codifies deep social bonds outside of biological ties.

3. Addressive Term & Reference Term:

In many Tibeto-Burman languages (such as Bodo, Garo, Rabha, Dimasa), addressive terms are strictly differentiated from referential terms. The Reang has also difference forms of kinship words for address terms and reference terms. Most of the addressive terms of kinship words are same formed with both the 1st person reference terms and address terms. The 2nd and 3rd person reference terms words are different from the 1st person’s address and reference terms. The details of the examples are given below in table no.6.

Addressive Term	1 st Person Reference	2 nd Person Reference	3 rd Person Reference	Gloss
-----------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------	-------

<i>achui</i>	<i>achui</i>	<i>ninachui</i>	<i>bin achui</i>	MM
<i>aiyong / aiyong broi</i>	<i>aini aiyongbroi</i>	<i>ninaiyongbroi</i>	<i>bin aiyongbroi</i>	eBWM
<i>among</i>	<i>among/ əmma</i>	<i>ninəmma /nəma</i>	<i>bin əmma/ bini əmma</i>	M
<i>apa</i>	<i>apa</i>	<i>napha/ nəpha/ ninmpaha</i>	<i>əmpaha/ bin mpha/</i>	F
<i>bachoi</i>	<i>bachoi</i>	<i>ninbachoi/ nəbachoi</i>	<i>əmbachoi /bin bachoi</i>	eBW
<i>baignayouh</i>	<i>angbaignayouh-ma</i>	<i>nəbaignayouh-ma</i>	<i>əmbaignayouh-ma</i>	eBD
<i>bibi/aibi</i>	<i>aibi</i>	<i>nəbi /ninəmbi</i>	<i>bin-əmbi</i>	eZ
<i>bukhuyouh</i>	<i>aini bukhuyouh</i>	<i>nini bukhuyouh/ nin-bukhuyouh</i>	<i>bini bukhuyouh/ bin-bukhuyouh</i>	Cousin Sister
<i>chamaroi</i>	<i>aini chamaroi</i>	<i>ninchamraoi</i>	<i>bin chamaroi</i>	DH
<i>chuchu</i>	<i>achu</i>	<i>nəchu/ ninachu</i>	<i>bəchu / bin achu</i>	FF/MF
<i>chuichui</i>	<i>achui</i>	<i>nəchui</i>	<i>bəchui</i>	FM/MM
<i>əmbaignaha</i>	<i>angbaignaha /aini əmbaignaha</i>	<i>nəbaignaha/ninəmbaignaha</i>	<i>əmbaignaha /bin əmbaignaha</i>	eBS
<i>apa/əmkra</i>	<i>apa/aini əmkra</i>	<i>nəkra/ninəmkra</i>	<i>bəkra/bin əmkra</i>	WF
<i>əmkrayouh</i>	<i>aini əmkrayouh</i>	<i>nəkrayouh /ninəmkrayouh</i>	<i>bəkrayouh /bin əmkrayouh</i>	WM
<i>əmpraorong -ha</i>	<i>aini əmpraorongha/an gpraorongha</i>	<i>ninəmpraorongha / nupraorongha</i>	<i>binəmpraorongha /bupraorongha</i>	yZH
<i>hanao</i>	<i>anghanao</i>	<i>nahanao</i>	<i>bahanao</i>	yZ
<i>hainyouh</i>	<i>aini hainyouh</i>	<i>ninhainyouh/ nahainyouh</i>	<i>bin hainyouh/ bahainyouh</i>	YBW/SW
<i>kumoi/ kəmoi</i>	<i>kumoi/ kəmoi</i>	<i>nukumoi /ninkumoi</i>	<i>bukumoi/ binkumoi</i>	eZH
<i>mama</i>	<i>aini əmmama/ mama</i>	<i>ninəmmama/ nin mama</i>	<i>bin əmmama/ bin mama</i>	MyB
<i>phaiyong</i>	<i>angphaiyong</i>	<i>nəphaiyong /ninəmphaiyong</i>	<i>əmphaiyong</i>	yB
<i>sachla</i>	<i>angsala</i>	<i>ninəmsala/ nəsala</i>	<i>bəsala /bin əmsala</i>	S
<i>saru</i>	<i>saru</i>	<i>ninsaru/</i>	<i>binsaru</i>	WZH
<i>sayouh</i>	<i>angsayouh/ aini əmsayouh</i>	<i>ninəmsayouh/ nəsayouh</i>	<i>bəsayouh/ bin əmsayouh</i>	D
<i>takhu</i>	<i>aini takhu</i>	<i>nini takhu</i>	<i>binitakhu</i>	Cousin Brother
<i>tata/ata</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>nəta /ninəmta</i>	<i>əmta /bin əmta</i>	eB

<i>toitoi</i>	<i>atoi / aini atoi</i>	<i>nətoi / ninatoi</i>	<i>bətoi / bin atoi</i>	FyZ/ FyBW/ MyZ
<i>aiyong</i>	<i>aiyongbroi</i>	<i>ninaiyongbroi/ niyongbroi</i>	<i>bin aiyongbroi/ biyongbroi</i>	FeBW/ FeZ/ MeZ/MeBW
<i>aiyong</i>	<i>aiyongchla</i>	<i>niyongchla</i>	<i>biyongchla</i>	FeB/ MeB/MeZH/F eZH/
<i>yongha</i>	<i>aiyongha</i>	<i>niyongha</i>	<i>biyongha</i>	yBS/ yZS
<i>yongma</i>	<i>aiyongma</i>	<i>niyongma</i>	<i>biyonghma</i>	yBD/yZD

Table No. 6: Addressive Term & Reference Term

4. Morphological Features of the Kinship Nouns:

Most of the kinship nouns in Reang are structurally monosyllabic bound root forms which are prefixed by the pronominal affixes to form the complete words. Only a few words are free forms which are structurally disyllabic words e.g. *kumoi* ‘elder sister’s husband’, *bachoi* ‘elder brother’s wife’, *takhu* ‘relative cousin (male)’, *hanao* ‘younger sister’ etc.

The pronominal prefixes of the Reang are /a-/, /ai-/, /nə-/, /na-/, /bə-/, /bu-/ and /əm-/etc. The prefixes add to the kinship root to indicate grammatical possession and kinship relations.

4.1. First-Person Pronominal Prefix /a-/ and /ai-/:

The prefixes /a-/ and /ai-/ are taken from the first-person pronoun *aŋ* (means ‘I’) to indicate a first-person relationship. The prefix /a-/ is very commonly used in Reang but the /ai-/ occurs specially with *bi* and *yong*. Consider the following examples:

Pronominal Prefix + Kinship Noun (root) = Kinship Word

- | | | | | | |
|-------|--------------|---|------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| (i) | <i>ai</i> | + | <i>bi</i> | > | <i>aibi</i> |
| | 1 PRON.PREF. | + | elder sister | > | ‘(my) elder sister’ |
| (ii) | <i>ai</i> | + | <i>yong</i> | > | <i>aiyong</i> |
| | 1 PRON.PREF. | + | elder uncle/aunt | > | ‘(my) elder uncle/ elder aunt’ |
| (iii) | <i>a</i> | + | <i>ta</i> | > | <i>ata</i> |
| | 1 PRON.PREF. | + | elder brother | > | ‘(my) elder brother’ |
| (iv) | <i>a</i> | + | <i>toi</i> | > | <i>atoi</i> |
| | 1 PRON.PREF. | + | aunty | > | ‘(my) aunty’ |
| (v) | <i>a</i> | + | <i>chui</i> | > | <i>achui</i> |
| | 1 PRON.PREF. | + | grandmother | > | ‘(my) grandmother’ |

(vi)	<i>a</i>	+	<i>chu</i>	>	<i>achu</i>
	1 PRON.PREF.	+	grandfather	>	‘(my) grandfather’
(vii)	<i>a</i>	+	<i>moŋ</i>	>	<i>amoŋ</i>
	1 PRON.PREF.	+	mother	>	‘mother/ (my) mother’
(viii)	<i>a</i>	+	<i>pa</i>	>	<i>apa</i>
	1 PRON.PREF.	+	father	>	‘(my) father’

4.2. Second-Person Pronominal Prefix /nə-/ , /ni-/ , /nu-/ and /na-/:

The prefixes /nə-/ , /ni-/ , /nu-/ and /na-/ taken from the second-person pronoun *nuy* (means ‘you’) to indicate a second-person relationship. The prefix /nə-/ is very commonly used in Reang as shown below in the examples (i) to (vii). The prefix /ni-/ occurs with semivowel consonants phoneme /y/ (as in IPA sound [j]). The /nu-/ specially occurs with the words *kumoi* and *praorongha* as shown below in the examples (xi) to (xii). The prefix /na-/ occurs specially with the word *hanao*. Consider the following examples.

Pronominal Prefix + Kinship Noun (root) = Kinship Word

(i)	<i>nə</i>	+	<i>ta</i>	>	<i>nəta</i>
	2 PRON.PREF.	+	brother	>	‘(your) elder brother’
(ii)	<i>nə</i>	+	<i>toi</i>	>	<i>nətoi</i>
	2 PRON.PREF.	+	aunt	>	‘(your) aunt’
(iii)	<i>nə</i>	+	<i>choi</i>	>	<i>nəchoi</i>
	2PRON.PREF.	+	grandmother	>	‘(your) grandmother’
(iv)	<i>nə</i>	+	<i>chu</i>	>	<i>nəchu</i>
	2 PRON.PREF.	+	grandfather	>	‘(your) grandfather’
(v)	<i>nə</i>	+	<i>ma</i>	>	<i>nəma</i>
	2 PRON.PREF	+	mother	>	‘(your) mother’
(vi)	<i>nə/na</i>	+	<i>pa</i>	>	<i>nəp^ha/ nap^ha</i>
	2 PRON.PREF.	+	father	>	‘(your) father’
(vii)	<i>nə</i>	+	<i>bi</i>	>	<i>nəbi</i>
	2 PRON.PREF	+	elder sister	>	‘(your) elder sister’
(viii)	<i>ni</i>	+	<i>yong</i>	>	<i>niyong</i>

	2 PRON.PREF.	+	elder uncle/aunt	>	‘(your) elder uncle/aunt’
(ix)	<i>ni</i>	+	<i>yongchla</i>	>	<i>niyongchla</i>
	2 PRON.PREF.	+	elder uncle	>	‘(your) elder uncle’
(x)	<i>ni</i>	+	<i>yongbroi</i>	>	<i>niyongbroi</i>
	2 PRON.PREF.	+	elder aunt	>	‘(your) elder aunt’
(xi)	<i>nu</i>	+	<i>kumoi</i>	>	<i>nukumoi</i>
	2. PRON.PREF.	+	brother in law	>	‘(your) brother-in-law’
(xii)	<i>nu</i>	+	<i>praorongha</i>	>	<i>nupraorongha</i>
	2. PRON.PREF.	+	younger sister’s husband	>	‘(your) brother-in-law’
(xiii)	<i>na</i>	+	<i>hanao</i>	>	<i>na-hanao</i>
	2. PRON.PREF.	+	younger sister	>	‘(your) younger sister’

4.3. Third-Person Pronominal Prefix /bə-/ , /bi-/ , /bu-/ and /ba-/:

The prefixes /bə-/ , /bi-/ , /bu-/ and /ba-/ taken from the third-person pronoun *buŋ* (means ‘he’ or ‘she’) to indicate a third-person relationship of the language. The prefix /bə-/ is frequently used in Reang as shown below in the examples (i) to (vii). The prefix /bi-/ occurs with palatal semivowel consonants phoneme /y/. The /bu-/ specially occurs with the words *kumoi* and *praorongha* as shown below in the examples (xi) to (xii). The prefix /ba-/ occurs with the initial glottal consonant /h/ words. Consider the following examples.

Pronominal Prefix + Kinship Noun (root) = Kinship Word

(i)	<i>bə</i>	+	<i>sala</i>	>	<i>bəsala</i>
	3 PRON.PREF.	+	son	>	‘(his/her) son’
(ii)	<i>bə</i>	+	<i>sayouh</i>	>	<i>bəsayouh</i>
	3 PRON.PREF.	+	daughter	>	‘(his/her) daughter’
(iii)	<i>bə</i>	+	<i>chui</i>	>	<i>bəchui</i>
	3PRON.PREF.	+	grandmother	>	‘(his/her) grandmother’
(iv)	<i>bə</i>	+	<i>chu</i>	>	<i>bəchu</i>
	3PRON.PREF.	+	grandfather	>	‘(his/her) grandfather’
(v)	<i>bə</i>	+	<i>kra</i>	>	<i>bəkra</i>
	3PRON.PREF	+	father-in-law	>	‘(his) father-in-law’

(vi)	<i>bə</i> 3PRON.PREF	+	<i>krayouh</i> mother-in-law	>	<i>bəkrayouh</i> '(his) mother-in-law'
(vii)	<i>bə</i> 3PRON.PREF.	+	<i>toi</i> father's younger sister	>	<i>bətoi</i> '(his/her) aunt'
(viii)	<i>bi</i> 3PRON.PREF.	+	<i>yong</i> elder uncle/aunt	>	<i>biyong</i> '(his/her) elder uncle/aunt'
(ix)	<i>bi</i> 3PRON.PREF.	+	<i>yongchla</i> elder uncle	>	<i>biyongchla</i> '(his/her) elder uncle'
(x)	<i>bi</i> 3PRON.PREF.	+	<i>yongbroi</i> elder aunt	>	<i>biyongbroi</i> '(his/her) elder aunt'
(xi)	<i>bi</i> 3PRON.PREF.	+	<i>yongha</i> younger brother's son	>	<i>biyongha</i> '(his/her) nephew'
(xii)	<i>bu</i> 3 PRON.PREF.	+	<i>kumoi</i> elder sister's husband	>	<i>bukumoi</i> '(his/her) brother-in-law'
(xiii)	<i>bu</i> 3PRON.PREF.	+	<i>praorongha</i> younger sister's husband	>	<i>bupraorongha</i> '(his/her) brother-in-law'
(xiv)	<i>ba</i> 3.PRON.PREF.	+	<i>hanao</i> younger sister	>	<i>ba-hanao</i> '(his/her) younger sister'
(xv)	<i>ba</i> 3.PRON.PREF.	+	<i>hainyouh</i> younger brother's wife	>	<i>ba-hainyouh</i> '(his) sister-in-law'

4.4. The Word Formative Prefix /əṁ-/:

In the Reang language, the bound morpheme /əṁ-/ functions as a highly productive word-formative prefix. Because most of the monosyllabic roots in Reang- including kinship roots and other nominal bases are inherently bound, this prefix is essential for generating independent and complete words. Beyond its frequent occurrence with general bound nouns, the prefix /əṁ-/ plays a specialized role when attached to kinship roots, where it grammatically transforms the bound base into a common reference kinship term word. Consider the following examples:

	Formative Prefix	+	Kinship Root/Base	>	Kinship Word
(i)	<i>əṁ</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>pa</i> father	>	<i>əṁp^ha</i> 'father (reference term)'

(ii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>kra</i> father-in-law	>	<i>mkra</i> 'father-in-law'
(iii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>kra-youh</i> mother-in-law	>	<i>mkrayouh</i> 'mother-in-law'
(iv)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>bi</i> elder sister	>	<i>əmbi</i> 'elder sister'
(v)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>phaiyoung</i> younger brother	>	<i>əmphaiyong</i> 'younger brother (reference)'
(vi)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>ta</i> elder brother	>	<i>əmta</i> 'elder brother'
(vii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>toi</i> aunty	>	<i>əmtoi</i> 'aunty'
(viii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>chui</i> grandmother	>	<i>əmchui</i> 'grandmother'
(ix)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>chu</i> grandfather	>	<i>əmchu</i> 'grandfather'
(x)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>ma</i> mother	>	<i>əmma</i> 'mother'
(xi)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>sa-la</i> son	>	<i>əmsala</i> 'son'
(xii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>sa-youh</i> daughter	>	<i>əmsayouh</i> 'daughter'

The prefix /əm-/ is used to form a complete word in Reang. It is not only prefixed to the kinship root but also affixed to the bound nouns to form complete words. For example, the root *t^hai* denotes 'fruit' and the /əm-/ prefixes to make complete word as *əm-t^hai* denotes the meaning 'fruit'. Although the core word *t^hai* does not appear individually to identify the noun fruit, the prefix /əm-/ does not have a clear meaning.

	Formative Prefix	+	Bound Noun	>	Noun
(i)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>t^hai</i> fruit	>	<i>əmt^hai</i> 'fruit'

(ii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>k^ha</i> liver	> >	<i>əmk^ha</i> 'liver'
(iii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>blai</i> fruit	> >	<i>əmblai</i> 'leaf'
(iv)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>kur</i> skin	> >	<i>əmkur</i> 'skin'
(v)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>kloi</i> seed	> >	<i>əmkloi</i> 'seed'
(vi)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>koŋ</i> sheaf	> >	<i>əmkon</i> 'sheaf'
(vii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>tao</i> itch	> >	<i>əmtao</i> 'itch'
(viii)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>tui</i> water	> >	<i>əmtui</i> 'gravy'
(ix)	<i>əm</i> FORM.PREF.	+	<i>bu</i> intestine	> >	<i>əmbu</i> 'intestine'

4.5. Morphosyntactic Features of Kinship Noun:

In the syntax of the Reang, when kinship nouns are used in close proximity with possessive pronouns, a process of morphophonemic fusion can be observed between certain words. Notably, the possessive pronouns in Reang are formed by attaching a genitive case marker */-ni/* to personal pronouns, resulting in a morphophonically fused possessive pronoun. Furthermore, when these possessive pronouns are placed immediately adjacent to kinship nouns, their phonetic form undergoes an additional morphophonemic fusion or structural modification within the sentence.

Morphophonemic fusion in Word Level	Morphophonemic fusion in Phrase Level
(i) <i>aini</i> <i>apa-le</i> <i>miya-wo</i> <i>phai-ha</i> my father-NOM yesterday-LOC come-PST 'My father came yesterday.'	(i) <i>aini əmp^ha-le</i> <i>miya-wo</i> <i>phai-ha</i> my father-NOM yesterday-LOC come-PST 'My father came yesterday.'
(ii) <i>bini</i> <i>əmp^ha-le</i> <i>miya-wo</i> <i>phai-ha</i> his father-NOM yesterday-LOC come-PST 'His/her father came yesterday.'	(ii) <i>bin-əmp^ha-le</i> <i>miya-wo</i> <i>phai-ha</i> his-father-NOM yesterday-LOC come-PST 'His/her father came yesterday.'
(iii) <i>nini</i> <i>nəp^ha-le</i> <i>miya-wo</i> <i>phai-ha</i> your father-NOM yesterday-LOC come-PST	(iii) <i>nin-əmp^ha-le</i> <i>miya-wo</i> <i>phai-ha</i> your-father-NOM yesterday-LOC come-PST

‘Your father came yesterday.’ (iv) <i>chini əmpʰa miya-wo phai-ha</i> our father yesterday-LOC come-PST ‘Our father came yesterday.’ (v) <i>bini para-le betha naithao-wo</i> his village-NOM very beautiful-PRS ‘His/her village is very beautiful.’ (v) <i>nini para-le betha naithao-wo</i> your village-NOM very beautiful-PRS ‘Your village is very beautiful.’	‘Your father came yesterday.’ (iv) <i>chin-əmpʰa miya-wo phai-ha</i> our-father yesterday-LOC come-PST ‘Our father came yesterday.’ (v) <i>bin-para-le betha naithao-wo</i> his -village-NOM very beautiful-PRS ‘His/her village is very beautiful.’ (v) <i>nin-para-le betha naithao-wo</i> your-village-NOM very beautiful-PRS ‘Your village is very beautiful.’
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Table No. 7: Morphophonemic fusion

The generation of possessive pronouns in this language relies on a highly systematic pronominal mutation triggered by the attachment of the genitive case suffix */-ni/*. When personal pronouns combine with this genitive marker, the underlying velar nasal coda */ng/* of the singular and first-person plural bases—namely *ang* (1SG), *nung* (2SG), *bung* (3SG), and *chung* (1PL) undergoes a total regressive vowel and consonant mutation. Specifically, the base vowels shift and the final velar nasal is lost, resulting in the high-front vowel variants *ai-ni* ‘my’, *ni-ni* ‘your’, *bi-ni* ‘his/her’, and *chi-ni* ‘our’. This elegant morphophonological process creates a tightly unified paradigm where the possessive stems are completely distinct from their independent subject pronoun roots before they interact with subsequent head nouns. The formations of possessive pronouns are given below:

Personal Pronoun + Genitive Case > Possessive Pronoun

(i)	ang	+	ni	>	ai-ni	
	1SG	+	GEN	>	'my'	
(ii)	nung	+	ni	>	ni-ni	
	2SG	+	GEN	>	'your'	
(iii)	bung	+	ni	>	bi-ni	
	3SG	+	GEN	>	'his/her'	
(iv)	chung	+	ni	>	chi-ni	
	1PL	+	GEN	>	'our'	
(v)	nung	+	rao	+	ni	> nərao-ni
	2SG	+	PL	+	GEN	> 'your'

(vi)	bung	+	rao	+	ni	>	brao-ni/bərao-ni
	3SG	+	PL	+	GEN	>	‘their’

The nominal system of this language features a highly regular process of phonological conditioning where possessive pronouns fuse with following kinship and common nouns. When singular genitive pronouns *ai-ni*, *ni-ni*, *bi-ni* or the first-person plural *chi-ni* serve as nominal modifiers, the final high front vowel /i/ of the genitive suffix /-ni/ undergoes elision. This apocope eliminates the word boundary, driving the remaining alveolar nasal /n/ to re-syllabify as a coda that anchors the pronominal modifier directly to its head noun. Speakers can choose between the fully realized, analytical forms such like ‘*nəraoni para*’, ‘*bəraoni para*’ or the rapid, phonetically reduced variants ‘*nəraon para*’, ‘*braon para*’. This structural dichotomy reveals that while the loss of the /i/ sound is deeply grammaticalized into a tight word-internal boundary for singular markers, it transitions into an optional post-lexical process within complex plural nominal environments.

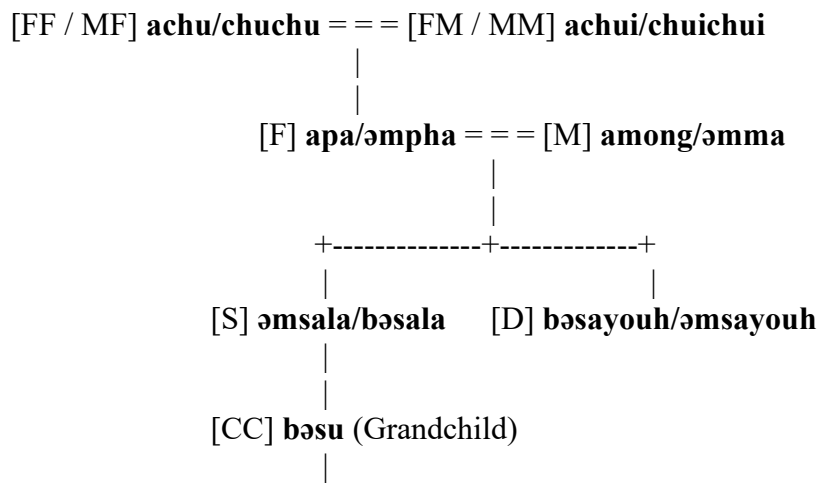
	Possessive Pronoun	+	Kinship Noun	>	Noun Phrase
(i)	<i>ai-ni</i>	+	<i>a-pa</i>	>	<i>ain apa</i> { <i>ai-n-a-pa</i> }
	1SG-GEN	+	1.PREF-father	>	‘my father’
(ii)	<i>ai-ni</i>	+	<i>a-ta</i>	>	<i>ain ata</i> { <i>ai-n-a-ta</i> }
	1SG-GEN	+	1.PREF-elder brother	>	‘my elder brother’
(iii)	<i>ni-ni</i>	+	<i>əm-pha</i>	>	<i>nin əmpha</i> { <i>ni-n-əm-pha</i> }
	2SG-GEN	+	FORM.PREF-father	>	‘your father’
(iv)	<i>ni-ni</i>	+	<i>əm-ta</i>	>	<i>nin əmta</i> { <i>ni-n-əm-ta</i> }
	2SG-GEN	+	FORM.PREF-brother	>	‘your elder brother’
(v)	<i>ni-ni</i>	+	<i>bachoi</i>	>	<i>nin bachoi</i> { <i>ni-n-bachoi</i> }
	2SG-GEN	+	sister-in-law	>	‘your sister-in-law’
(vi)	<i>bi-ni</i>	+	<i>əm-pha</i>	>	<i>bin əmpha</i> { <i>bi-n-əm-pha</i> }
	3SG-GEN	+	FORM.PREF-father	>	‘his/her father’
(vii)	<i>bi-ni</i>	+	<i>əm-ta</i>	>	<i>bin əmta</i> { <i>bi-n-əm-ta</i> }
	3SG-GEN	+	FORM.PREF-brother	>	‘his/her elder brother’
(viii)	<i>bi-ni</i>	+	<i>bachoi</i>	>	<i>bin bachoi</i> { <i>bi-n-bachoi</i> }
	3SG-GEN	+	sister-in-law	>	‘his/her sister-in-law’
(ix)	<i>bi-ni</i>	+	<i>hanao</i>	>	<i>bin hanao</i> { <i>bi-n-hanao</i> }
	3.PREF-GEN	+	younger sister	>	‘his/her younger sister’

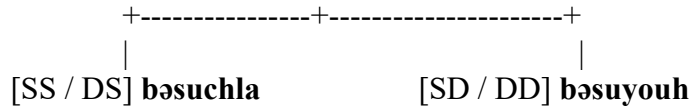
(x)	<i>chi-ni</i> 1PL-GEN	+	<i>para</i> village	>	<i>chin para</i> { <i>chi-n-para</i> }	'our village'
(xi)	<i>nə-rao-ni</i> 2.PREF-PL-GEN +	+	<i>para</i> village	>	<i>nəraoni para</i> / <i>nəraon para</i>	'your village'
(xiii)	<i>bə-rao-ni</i> 3.PREF-PL-GEN +	+	<i>para</i> para	>	<i>bəraoni para</i> / <i>braon para</i>	'their village'

5. Summarization and Conclusion:

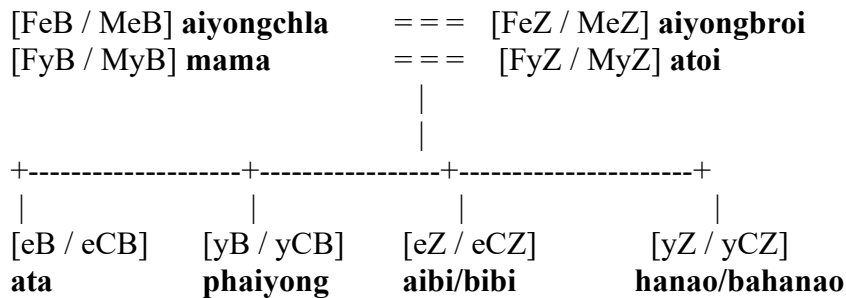
The Reang are a Patrilineal kinship system, their language belong to the Bodo-Garo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages and the people practicing tribal endogamy and forbid marriage within the same sub-clan to prevent inbreeding. Their highly structured kinship terminology emphasizes generational seniority, relative age, and a strict decorum-based separation between terms of address and reference. This paper analyzes the morphological features and classification of these kinship words, covering paternal, maternal, affinal, and marital relationships, alongside gender, age, and fictive distinctions.

Consanguine kinship terms identify blood relatives based on shared ancestry, such as parents, children, and siblings, though this biological foundation relies on social recognition and community acceptance to define a family. The Reang community utilizes a structured system of kinship terminology to organize these relations across generations. Key Reang consanguine terms include grandparents (*achu/chuchu* for grandfathers; *achui/chuichui* for grandmothers), parents (*apa/əmpa* for father; *among/əmma* for mother), and direct descendants (*əmsala/bəsala* for son; *bəsayouh/əmsayouh* for daughter; *bəsu* for grandchild), with specific gender-based modifiers distinguishing grandsons (*bəsuchla*) from granddaughters (*bəsuyouh*). Consider the following diagram.



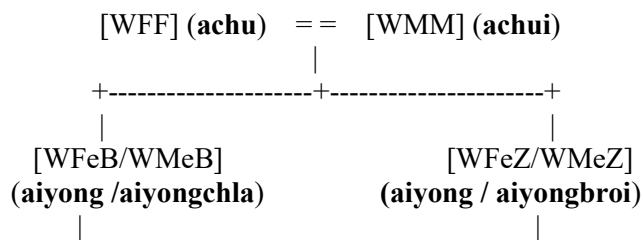


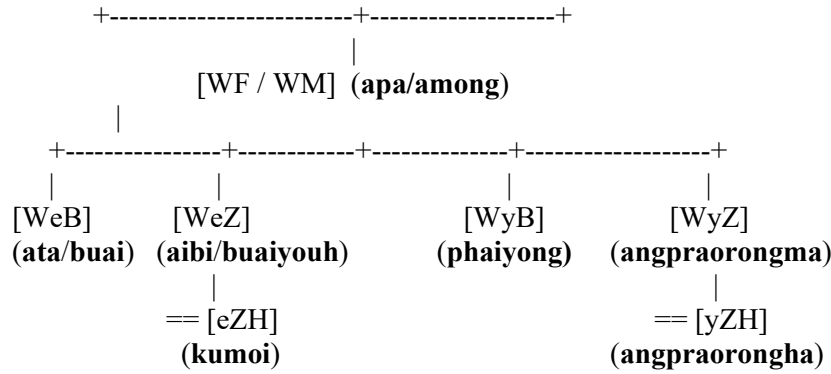
The Reang collateral kinship system divides relatives into paternal and maternal lineages based on generational seniority and relative age. Rather than separating direct siblings from extended cousins, the language groups all peers into shared linguistic categories based strictly on gender and relative seniority to Ego. Consequently, identical terms such as *ata* (elder brother/male cousin), *phaiyong* (younger brother/male cousin), *aibi/bibi* (elder sister/female cousin), and *hanao/bahanao* (younger sister/female cousin) are applied uniformly across all paternal (FBS, FBD, FZS, FZD) and maternal (MBS, MBD, MZS, MZD) side branches. The Reang collateral terms are explained below with the help of diagram.



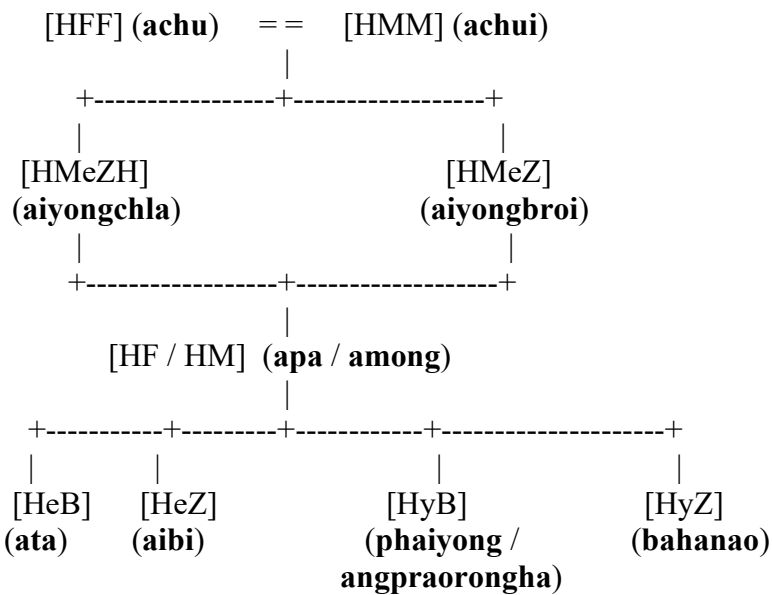
Reang affinal kinship terminology reflects the community's strict adherence to tribal endogamy and sub-clan exogamy. Reang society strictly forbids marriage within the same immediate sub-clan. This rule ensures that marriage partners always come from entirely separate family lines. At the upper generational levels, the system extends core bloodline words to direct in-laws and grandparents-in-law, while categorizing aunts and uncles by marriage (*aiyong*, *mama*, *atoi*) based strictly on whether they are older or younger than the parents. Within Ego's own generation, terms cleanly divide peers by relative age and biological sex, using specific markers like *ata* and *aibi* for elder siblings-in-law, *phaiyong* for younger brothers-in-law, and descriptive vocabulary such as *angpraorongma* and *angpraorongha* to navigate marital peer roles. Finally, descending generational ties trace downstream alliances uniformly, employing dedicated root words for direct children-in-law (*bahainyouh*, *chamaroi*) and merging extended nieces and nephews under collective titles.

Male Ego Perspective (Affinal Kinship Terms) is as follow:





Female Ego Perspective (Affinal Kinship Terms) is as follow:



The Reang kinship system enforces strict gender boundaries for older generations, assigning distinct terms for parents, siblings, and grandparents while simplifying collateral relations by merging maternal and paternal aunts and uncles into the shared terms *atoi* and *mama*. A unique feature of this system is the linguistic mirroring between the oldest and youngest generations, where the term *basu* serves as a reciprocal link meaning both ‘grandfather’ and ‘grandchildren.’ This structural collapse suggests a cyclical view of lineage, where gender distinctions briefly disappear in collective terms for the youth before reappearing in specific gendered suffixes for grandsons (*basuchla*) and granddaughters (*basuyouh*).

The Reang people use strict birth-order titles that dictate familial responsibilities across generations. The eldest son (*basala hogra*) holds unique privileges and assumes family leadership in the father's absence, while the eldest daughter (*basayouh hogra*) shares the duty of caring for younger siblings until marriage without the same status. Middle children are designated as *kəchar*,

and the youngest are termed *tuithao* or *thaithao*. Gender-neutral terms like *basa hogra* ‘first child’ and *basa tuithao* ‘last child’ anchor these birth-hierarchy boundaries.

The Reang kinship system prohibits addressing elders by personal names, requiring specific honorific prefixes based on generation and seniority. Within one's own generation, seniors are addressed as *ata* (male) or *aibi* (female), while the parents' generation uses *aiyong* for individuals older than the parents, and *mama* (male) or *atoi* (female) for those younger. Grandparents are honored as *achu* (male) or *achui* (female). Conversely, addressing younger individuals allows for more flexibility, using terms like *phaiyong* (male), *hanao* (female), *tela/telaha* (male), or *tema* (female).

In Reang society, where the husband is the patriarchal head of the family, couples are forbidden by customary law from addressing each other by their personal names. To strictly avoid this taboo, spouses use teknonymy to address one another indirectly through their children, using phrases like *Sareti ampha* ‘father of Sareti’ or *Nangsouh amma* ‘mother of Nangsouh’. When speaking to others, specific second- and third-person reference terms like *nin-amsai* ‘your husband’ and *bin-bihi* ‘his wife’ are utilized to maintain proper social decorum.

In the endearment kinship term, the Reang language embeds emotional intimacy into its grammatical framework by prefixing /a-/ or reduplicating kinship root words to express warmth across generations. Through these morphological rules, general references transform into affectionate addresses, enabling family members to call a father *apa* or *papa*, and an elder brother *ata* or *tata*.

Fictive kinship allows individuals to build social solidarity by extending family-like bonds and roles to non-relatives outside of biological ties. In Reang society, these deep friendship bonds are systematically codified through precise grammatical shifts based on person. Consequently, male friends use *kaching* (first person), *nikching* (second person), and *bikching* (third person), while female friendships apply a parallel framework by adding the suffix /-youh/ to indicate gender such as *kachingyouh*, *nikchingyouh* and *bikchingyouh*.

The Reang language organizes its kinship lexicon primarily through monosyllabic bound roots that cannot stand alone as independent words. While a few exceptions exist as structurally disyllabic free forms such as *kumoi* ‘elder sister’s husband’ and *hanao* ‘younger sister’ the vast majority of kinship terms require the attachment of a pronominal or word-formative prefix to become grammatically complete.

The pronominal prefixes of the Reang are:

First-Person Pronominal Prefix:	/a-/	/ai-/		
Second-Person Pronominal Prefix:	/nə-/	/ni-/	/nu-/	/na-/
Third-Person Pronominal Prefix:	/bə-/	/bi-/	/bu-/	/ba-/

In the Reang, the pronominal prefix system utilizes distinct personal vowel and syllable markers to denote specific possessive relationships directly on kinship roots. The first-person prefix surfaces as /a-/ or /ai-/ to indicate ‘my’, as seen in *a-ta* ‘my elder brother’ and *ai-bi* ‘my elder sister’. Second-person ‘your’ indicators display widespread vowel graduation based on the following root, utilizing variants like /nə-/ , /ni-/ , /nu-/ , or /na-/ to generate terms such as *nə-ta* ‘your elder brother’ and *na-hanao* ‘your younger sister’. Similarly, the third-person prefix marking ‘his/her’ undergoes parallel phonetic alternation between /bə-/ , /bi-/ , /bu-/ , and /ba-/ , anchoring to roots to form words like *bə-sala* ‘his/her son’, *bu-kumoi* ‘his/her brother-in-law’, and *ba-hanao* ‘his/her younger sister’.

It is to be noted that the word formative prefix /əm-/ can also be added to the kinship noun (root) to make complete the kinship word in Reang. The kinship word formation process of the Reang is given below.

Pronominal Prefix + Kinship Noun (Root) = Kinship Word

(i)	<i>ai</i>	+	<i>bi</i>	>	<i>aibi</i>
	1 PRON.PREF.	+	elder sister	>	‘(my) elder sister’

Formative Prefix + Kinship Root/Base > Kinship Word

(ii)	<i>əm</i>	+	<i>bi</i>	>	<i>əmbi</i>
	FORM.PREF.	+	elder sister	>	‘elder sister (reference term)’

The prefix /əm-/ is not only attached to the kinship root but also prefixed to the bound nouns to form complete words. For example: *əm-k^ha* ‘liver’, *əm-blai* ‘leaf’, *əm-kur* ‘skin’ and *əm-kloi* ‘seed’. Without this prefix, these dependent roots remain grammatically incomplete.

In Reang syntax, possessive pronouns are formed through a systematic morphophonemic fusion where the genitive case marker /-ni/ attaches to personal pronouns, triggering a total regressive mutation of the underlying velar nasal coda /ng/ and base vowels. This process alters the singular and first-person plural bases *ang* (1SG), *nung* (2SG), *bung* (3SG), and *chung* (1PL) into the distinct phonetic variants *ai-ni* ‘my’, *ni-ni* ‘your’, *bi-ni* ‘his/her’, and *chi-ni* ‘our’, alongside plural forms like *nərao-ni* ‘your’ and *brao-ni* or *bərao-ni* ‘their’. When these tightly unified possessive pronouns are placed immediately adjacent to kinship nouns, they undergo an additional layer of structural modification and phonetic fusion within the sentence.

In the Reang nominal system, possessive pronouns fuse with subsequent kinship and common nouns through a process of phonological conditioning. When singular genitive pronouns (*ai-ni*, *ni-ni*, *bi-ni*) or the first-person plural (*chi-ni*) modify a head noun, the final high front vowel /i/ of the genitive suffix /-ni/ undergoes elision (apocope). This drives the remaining alveolar nasal /n/ to re-syllabify as a coda that binds the pronominal modifier directly to the noun, creating fused phrases

like *ain-apa* ‘my father’, *nin-əmpha* ‘your father’, and *chin-para* ‘our village’. While this vowel loss is deeply grammaticalised into a strict word-internal boundary for singular modifiers, it remains an optional, rapid speech variant in complex plural environments, allowing speakers to alternate between fully realized forms like *nəraoni para* and phonetically reduced variants like *nəraon para* ‘your village’.

Abbreviation:

1/ 1SG	=	1 st Person Singular	1PRON.PREF	=	1 st Person Pronominal Prefix
2/ 2SG	=	2 nd Person Singular	2 PRON.PREF	=	2 nd Person Pronominal Prefix
3/ 3SG	=	3 rd Person Singular	3 PRON.PREF	=	3 rd Person Pronominal Prefix
FORM.PREF	=	Formative Prefix	GEN	=	Genitive Case
LOC	=	Locative Case	NOM	=	Nominative Case
PL	=	Plural	PST	=	Past Tense
PRS	=	Present Tense			

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**Rewriting Kashmir: History, Memory and Historiographic Metafiction in
Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown***

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Abstract

This article examines Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005) as a major example of historiographic metafiction that reimagines the relationship between history, memory and narrative. Employing Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction as its principal analytical framework, the study argues that Rushdie deliberately blurs the boundaries between documented history and fictional invention to expose the instability of official historical narratives. Through nonlinear narration, metafictional self-consciousness, intertextual engagement and the incorporation of historical figures and events, the novel interrogates the possibility of representing historical truth in any objective or unmediated form. At the same time, it reconstructs the troubled history of Kashmir by foregrounding experiences marginalised within dominant political discourses and by exploring the interconnected forces of colonialism, nationalism, religious extremism and global terrorism. The analysis further demonstrates that the novel transforms private experiences of love, betrayal, exile, and revenge into narratives that illuminate wider geopolitical conflicts, thereby revealing the inseparability of individual lives and historical processes. Rather than presenting history as a fixed body of facts, *Shalimar the Clown* portrays it as a contested field of competing narratives shaped by ideology, memory and representation. Ultimately, the article contends that Rushdie employs historiographic metafiction not only to recover suppressed histories but also to challenge readers to recognise the interpretative nature of historical knowledge and the ethical responsibility involved in reconstructing the past.

Keywords:

Metafiction, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism, Parody, Intertextuality, Magic Realism

Introduction:

“She heard the voice on the tape, its death’s-head ugliness, which was somehow both familiar and alien” (Rushdie 3). These opening lines of Salman Rushdie’s ninth novel immediately establish the eerie, unsettling atmosphere permeating *Shalimar the Clown*. The voice belongs to Shalimar, once a Kashmiri tightrope performer and village entertainer, who has transformed into a terrorist and assassin. The recording is made shortly before he kills Maximilian Ophuls, the former United States ambassador to India, outside his residence in Los Angeles in 1993 (Rushdie 3). At first glance, the murder of a Western diplomat by his Muslim chauffeur appears reminiscent of narratives associated with global terrorism. However, Rushdie’s novel transcends the conventions of a political thriller or journalistic account. Instead, it becomes a complex exploration of the forces that turn an innocent and joyful village clown into a violent killer, revealing how intimate personal betrayals become deeply entangled with larger geopolitical conflicts.

This inquiry is conducted through a narrative architecture that is quintessentially postmodern: multiple perspectives shuttle between Kashmir, Los Angeles, Strasbourg and London; time is folded and refolded across six decades; the dead speak, the future is foreseen, and the boundaries between history and fiction are systematically dissolved. The result is a novel that, as Florian Stadler observes, “cuts across different time periods and territories, challenging the legacies of empire, nationhood and emergent new empires” (Stadler 194). To understand the novel’s peculiar combination of historical engagement and formal self-reflexivity, it is necessary to turn to a theoretical framework that addresses precisely this conjunction: Linda Hutcheon’s concept of ‘historiographic metafiction’.

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon writes that postmodernism is characterised by “the paradox of the pastiche, the parody, the self-reflexivity, and the historical ‘nudge’” (Hutcheon 3). Pertinently, historiographic metafiction represents the most sophisticated expression of these tendencies, for it rejects both the naive realism of traditional historical fiction (which treats the

past as transparently recoverable) and the radical textualism of some poststructuralist theories (which dissolve history into language). Instead, Hutcheon argues, historiographic metafiction occupies a middle ground: these novels are “both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (Hutcheon 5). They acknowledge that the past is accessible only through textual representations- narratives, documents, archives, testimonies- and that these representations are inevitably shaped by the ideologies and conventions of their production. Yet they do not conclude that history is nothing but a fiction. On the contrary, they engage seriously with the material realities of the past while simultaneously exposing the constructedness of all historical accounts.

This dual orientation has profound implications for how we read *Shalimar the Clown*. Hutcheon’s category is not merely descriptive; it is, as she insists, politically charged. Historiographic metafiction does not abandon history to pure textual play. Rather, it engages in what she calls a “reinscription of history,” an attempt to “rewrite a history that includes the voices the traditional texts exclude” (Hutcheon 228-238). In Rushdie’s novel, this reinscription operates on multiple levels: the novel gives fictional voice to the silenced history of Kashmir, a region “torn back and forth by the military power of two warring nations” (Rushdie, “Kashmir. Paradise Lost”). It challenges official narratives of terrorism that isolate individual acts of violence from their historical contexts. And it subjects its own storytelling to constant interrogation, reminding readers that the history we receive is always mediated- by power, by language and by the inescapably subjective act of narration.

The theoretical resonance of Rushdie’s project extends beyond Hutcheon. Hayden White, in his influential essay “The Historical Text as Literary Artefact,” argues that historical narratives are shaped by the same literary devices and narrative structures that characterise fiction. According to White, historical writing does not simply reproduce the past objectively; rather, “the historical narrative does not image the things it indicates; it calls to mind images of the things it indicates” (White 122). Through this argument, White emphasises that history, like literature, is mediated through language, representation, and narrative construction. For White, the distinction between history and fiction is not a difference in kind but a difference in the degree to which each acknowledges its own constructedness. Rushdie’s novel takes White’s insight to its logical extreme: by self-consciously deploying the devices of fiction to represent historical events,

Shalimar the Clown forces readers to confront the literary nature of all historical representation. The novel does not abandon historical truth but insists that truth can only be approached indirectly, through the very fictional means that historiographic metafiction foregrounds.

Patricia Waugh's foundational study of metafiction provides an additional theoretical lens. Waugh defines metafiction as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2). *Shalimar the Clown* exemplifies this definition at every turn. The novel repeatedly reminds readers that it is a constructed narrative: characters reflect on the stories they inhabit, the narrator comments on the act of narration, and the boundaries between different genres and discourses are systematically blurred. Yet unlike purely experimental metafiction, Rushdie's self-consciousness is always directed outward, toward the historical world. The novel's formal play serves not to escape history but to engage it more deeply, by exposing the narrative strategies through which official histories are built and maintained.

One of the most striking passages in *Shalimar the Clown* occurs when Abdullah Noman, the village headman of Pachigam, witnesses the deliberate destruction of a power station that plunges his village into darkness. Rushdie's narrator describes Noman's experience as "the bizarre sensation of living through a metaphor made real. The world he knew was disappearing; this blind, inky night was the incontestable sign of the times" (Rushdie 88). This is a moment of profound metafictional self-awareness. Noman is not merely experiencing a blackout; he is experiencing the collapse of the distinction between figurative language and material reality. The darkness that envelops him is both a literal event (an act of sabotage) and a metaphor for the historical darkness descending upon Kashmir. The metaphor has become real, and reality has become metaphorical. As Priscilla Wald observes in her review of Anjuli Fatima Raza Kolb's *Epidemic Empire*, Noman's experience "resembles the feeling of crisis—literally, a turning point in which change is at once inevitable and uncertain" (Wald). Wald further notes that "the intensity of living through this moment of change is like looking blindingly into the sun and therefore 'must,' Rushdie's narrator explains, 'be looked at indirectly'" (Wald). This emphasis on indirection complements Linda Hutcheon's conception of historiographic metafiction, which approaches history through self-conscious narrative mediation rather than transparent representation (Hutcheon 105–23).

The novel's manipulation of narrative time is another dimension of this metafictional self-consciousness. The plot does not unfold chronologically. Instead, the reader encounters the murder of Max Ophuls in the opening pages- in 1993 Los Angeles- and then is carried backwards and forward across decades: to the idyllic Kashmir of the 1940s and 1950s, to the French Resistance during World War II, to Strasbourg and London in the intervening years, and finally back to the present of the narrative. This temporal fragmentation is not arbitrary. It enacts the novel's central claim: that the present is always haunted by the past and that the causal chains connecting personal betrayal, geopolitical conflict, and political violence cannot be understood through linear chronology. As one reviewer noted, "Time becomes a Mobius strip in' Shalimar's Clown, 'advancing across continents and straddling the millennium to reach a cliffhanger close" (Ciag 2). The Mobius strip is a fitting metaphor: a surface with only one side, where inside and outside, past and present, become continuous with each other. Rushdie's narrative time refuses the conventional distinction between background and foreground, cause and effect. The love triangle between Shalimar, Boonyi and Max is not a private drama played out against the backdrop of public history; rather, the personal and the political are shown to be mutually constitutive, each inhabiting the other's territory. By making the processes of narration visible- by drawing attention to how stories are told, how time is ordered, how events are selected and arranged- the novel reminds us, in true historiographic metafictional fashion, that all histories are narratives and all narratives are choices. As Stephen Morton observes, "Rushdie explodes the conventions of national allegory that he established in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* to represent the conflict in Kashmir" (Morton 337-345). That explosion of convention is not a rejection of politics but a refinement of it: a recognition that representing the complexity of Kashmir requires more than the simple allegorical equations of an earlier moment.

The novel's engagement with parody and intertextuality further deepens its historiographic metafictional project. Hutcheon emphasises that parody is central to the mode, describing it as a form of "critical distance" that involves both "repetition with difference" and "ironic inversion" (Hutcheon 101). Parodic texts simultaneously adopt and subvert the conventions of earlier genres, turning parody into a form of critique that questions and complicates those conventions. *Shalimar the Clown* is saturated with such parodic and intertextual gestures, drawing on everything from

Shakespearean tragedy and the *Ramayana* to the conventions of the spy thriller and the Hollywood melodrama.

The novel's title itself is intertextual. Shalimar Gardens in Srinagar, one of the Mughal gardens laid out when the Mughals reigned over the subcontinent, provides the name to the novel. (Rushdie 398) But the gardens also evoke a history of syncretic cultural achievement, of Persian and Islamic aesthetics transplanted to the Kashmiri landscape. To name a novel after these gardens- and to bestow that name on a character who will transform from clown to jihadist- is to invoke a lost paradise, an Edenic Kashmir that the narrative will then proceed to destroy. The title thus functions as an elegy, a lament for what has been lost and a reminder that the destruction of Kashmir is, among other things, the destruction of a particular form of cultural hybridity.

The most extended intertextual engagement in the novel, however, is with the *Ramayana*, the great Hindu epic. Shalimar and Boonyi are presented as a kind of tragic Rama and Sita, but inverted: their love is transgressively interfaith (Muslim and Hindu), their separation is not the result of demonic abduction but of human betrayal, and the demonic figure is not a monster but the cosmopolitan ambassador Max Ophuls. As Nona Walia observes in her *Times of India* feature, *Shalimar the Clown* draws upon "Indian mythology, Los Angeles fakery and Hindu culture" (Walia). The result is a systematic parodic rewriting of the epic's moral architecture. Where the *Ramayana* is structured around clear categories of good and evil, hero and villain, *Shalimar the Clown* offers a world in which victims become perpetrators, and perpetrators victims, in dizzying succession. This parodic inversion is precisely the kind of critical engagement that Hutcheon identifies as central to historiographic metafiction: by repeating the epic form with a difference, Rushdie questions the moral certainties that underwrite both religious fundamentalism and nationalist historiography.

Parodic engagement with Shakespeare is equally pervasive. The novel's epigraph is drawn from *The Tempest*: "Hell is empty, / And all the devils are here." This citation announces the novel's descent into a world without transcendence, where evil is not an external force but an immanent product of human relationships. Pei-chen Liao's chapter on the novel foregrounds another Shakespearean resonance: her title, "The Uncanny Violence of Strangers," parodies Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*- "Whoever you are, I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (Liao 1)- and through Williams, it gestures back toward the stranger-as-enemy figure

in Shakespearean drama (Liao 23-25). In Rushdie's novel, the stranger is always ambiguous: Max is a stranger to Kashmir and to Boonyi, yet he depends on the kindness of his Kashmiri driver; Shalimar is a stranger to the West, yet he becomes intimately embedded within it. This ambiguity reflects the broader historiographic metafictional concern with the instability of identity categories and the impossibility of drawing clean lines between self and other, past and present, fact and fiction.

As Nona Walia playfully suggests in her *Times of India* feature "Our Sheikhspeare?" Rushdie's fiction invites comparison with Shakespeare because of its dramatic scope, linguistic inventiveness, and engagement with universal questions of power, identity, and betrayal (Walia). The nickname aptly captures the dual character of Rushdie's intertextual practice: he appropriates and reworks elements of the Western literary canon while simultaneously grounding them in South Asian cultural, historical, and religious traditions. This process is not a matter of simple imitation or pastiche. Rather, it exemplifies what Linda Hutcheon describes as "critical parody," whereby inherited literary forms are both invoked and subjected to critical revision (Hutcheon 101). By bringing Elizabethan tragedy, the *Ramayana*, and the conventions of the contemporary political thriller into dialogue, Rushdie fashions a hybrid narrative form that reflects the transnational realities of globalisation, migration and diaspora.

Hutcheon argues that historiographic metafiction distinguishes itself by simultaneously foregrounding its fictional status while still "lay[ing] claim to historical events and personages" (5). Rather than reproducing the past as an objective record, such narratives interrogate the processes through which history is remembered, narrated, and authorised. *Shalimar the Clown* exemplifies this strategy by integrating recognisable historical figures into an otherwise fictional narrative. Among those who appear briefly are Osama bin Laden and Heinrich Himmler, figures whose presence immediately situates the novel within broader histories of political violence. Theo Tait likewise observes that Rushdie's narrative "features Osama bin Laden, Heinrich Himmler, Rodney King and Lord Lucan too," highlighting the novel's remarkable juxtaposition of disparate historical personalities (Tait). Although these appearances occupy only a small portion of the narrative, they function as important points of reference that connect Rushdie's fictional world to documented historical realities.

The inclusion of Osama bin Laden is particularly significant because it places the novel firmly within the intellectual and political climate that followed the attacks of 11 September 2001. Rather than presenting terrorism as an isolated phenomenon associated exclusively with contemporary Islamic extremism, Rushdie situates it within a longer genealogy of violence that also encompasses fascism, war, colonial conflict, and geopolitical intervention. By allowing twentieth-century atrocities and post-9/11 anxieties to coexist within the same narrative framework, the novel questions simplified explanations of terrorism and instead emphasises historical continuities across different political eras. This perspective is reinforced by the epigraph from *The Tempest*: “Hell is empty, / And all the devils are here” (Shakespeare 1.2.214–15). Within the context of *Shalimar the Clown*, Shakespeare’s lines suggest that violence originates not from supernatural evil but from human actions, ideological conflicts, and the accumulated consequences of historical choices.

While historical individuals appear only intermittently, the novel’s most enduring historical presence is Kashmir itself. Rushdie transforms the region into both a geographical setting and a historical protagonist whose fractured past shapes every major narrative development. The fictional world draws extensively upon documented events, including the Partition of 1947, the subsequent territorial dispute between India and Pakistan, prolonged militarisation, insurgency, the displacement of Kashmiri Pandits, and the growth of militant movements. Consequently, the novel’s representation of Kashmir remains firmly grounded in historical experience even as it adopts the formal strategies of fiction.

Contemporary criticism has similarly recognised that the novel mourns the disappearance of an earlier culture of coexistence. A review in *Frontline* characterises *Shalimar the Clown* as a narrative “about a lost paradise,” capturing the elegiac quality that pervades Rushdie’s reconstruction of Kashmir. Developing this idea further, Javaid Bhat argues that Pachigam, the novel’s central village, should be understood as a symbolic representation of Kashmir itself. He describes the village as “hybrid, fluid, and a space marked by difference,” while also identifying it as “a microcosm of Kashmir” that reflects the region’s “ambiguous relationship with the larger ‘postcolonial,’ ‘post-imperial’ entities of India and Pakistan” (Bhat 2). Read in this light, Pachigam represents more than a fictional community; it embodies the pluralistic traditions historically associated with Kashmir before they were fractured by nationalism, external political intervention, and religious extremism. Rushdie’s reconstruction of this lost social world illustrates how

historiographic metafiction can recover marginalised historical experiences while simultaneously questioning the authority of official historical narratives.

Rushdie's engagement with Kashmir's history is not, however, a straightforward act of documentary fidelity. The novel explicitly thematises the difficulty of representing Kashmir at all.

At one point, a character reflects:

He closed his eyes and pictured his Kashmir. He conjured up its crystal lakes, Shishnag, Wular, Nagin, Dal; its trees, the walnut, the poplar, the chinar, the apple, the peach; its mighty peaks, Nanga Parbat, Rakaposhi, Harmukh. The Pandits Sanskritised the Himalayas ... O! Those days of peace when we all were in love, and the rain was in our hands wherever we went... Everyone carries his address in his pocket so that at least his body would reach home (Rushdie 305).

This passage is at once lyrical and poignant. It evokes the beauty of Kashmir in a litany of proper names, yet it is haunted by the knowledge that "everyone carries his address in his pocket"- that death is always present, and that the body may need to be identified after violence. The passage also contains a subtle historiographic gesture: "The Pandits Sanskritised the Himalayas" (Rushdie 61) is a compressed reference to the long history of cultural and religious contestation over the region, a history that pre-dates and exceeds the postcolonial conflict between India and Pakistan. By incorporating such historically informed details into a fictional narrative, Rushdie performs the central operation of historiographic metafiction: he makes history visible as a matter of lived experience, while simultaneously insisting that history is always a matter of representation. The novel does not claim to tell the final truth about Kashmir; it claims, more modestly and perhaps more powerfully, to imagine a truth- one that official histories have excluded.

At the level of plot, *Shalimar the Clown* is structured around two betrayals. The first, and most direct, is Shalimar's betrayal of his innocent origins. The novel traces his transformation from Noman Sher Noman, a sweet-natured tightrope walker, to *Shalimar the Clown*, a cold-blooded assassin and jihadist. As one reviewer summarises, "The shy, romantic boy enraptured by myth becomes a cold-blooded combatant" (Oli 54). This transformation is not, Rushdie insists, a simple conversion to ideology. It is driven by personal betrayal: Max Ophuls's seduction of Boonyi, and her willing departure from Kashmir. Ideology- the rhetoric of jihad, of resistance, of religious duty- provides the language for Shalimar's rage, but the rage itself is rooted in the most elemental of human emotions: jealousy, humiliation, the desire for revenge. In an interview with NPR, Rushdie

reflected on the central metaphor of the novel, explaining that *Shalimar the Clown* is “about paradise smashed up” rather than merely “paradise lost” (Rushdie, “Shalimar the Clown Takes Rushdie Back to Kashmir”). The destruction of paradise is therefore presented not as an act of divine will or historical inevitability but as the consequence of human choices operating simultaneously at the intimate and geopolitical levels. This refusal to separate personal motivation from political history exemplifies historiographic metafiction's commitment to reconstructing history from the lived experiences of individuals.

A second and more far-reaching betrayal in *Shalimar the Clown* is the erosion of Kashmir's long-standing culture of communal coexistence. At the beginning of the novel, Pachigam is depicted as a village where religious identities do not prevent social intimacy. Muslims and Hindus participate in one another's festivals and rituals, and the marriage of Shalimar and Boonyi is solemnised according to both Islamic and Hindu traditions, reflecting a shared cultural ethos rather than sectarian division (Rushdie 76–82). Rushdie presents this inclusive social order as an embodiment of *Kashmiriyat*, the historically rooted ideal of religious pluralism and cultural harmony that once characterised the region.

The gradual disintegration of this pluralistic world constitutes one of the novel's deepest tragedies. Rushdie attributes this collapse to a convergence of external political interventions and internal ideological transformations. State militarisation, cross-border militancy, global geopolitical interests, and the rise of religious fundamentalism collectively dismantle the social fabric that had sustained communal coexistence for generations. Significantly, however, the novel does not portray the destruction of Pachigam as the consequence of outside forces alone.

Javaid Bhat argues that Pachigam functions as “a microcosm of Kashmir,” a community that is initially “hybrid, fluid, and a space marked by difference” before it gradually succumbs to sectarian divisions (Bhat). His reading emphasises that the village's downfall results not merely from political intervention but also from the willingness of its inhabitants to internalise competing nationalist and religious ideologies. As mutual trust gives way to suspicion and exclusion, the social bonds that once united the community begin to unravel. In this respect, Pachigam reflects the historical transformation of Kashmir itself—from a culturally plural society into a landscape increasingly fractured by competing nationalisms, communal polarisation, and extremist politics. Rushdie's representation of this process reinforces the novel's historiographic project by

illustrating how large-scale historical conflicts reshape everyday lives and permanently alter collective memory.

Florian Stadler argues that *Shalimar the Clown* fundamentally reconsiders the language through which terrorism is understood and represented. Rather than accepting the category of “terrorist” as self-evident, Rushdie exposes it as a politically contingent designation shaped by competing historical and ideological perspectives. Shalimar, whose assassination of Maximilian Ophuls invites immediate condemnation, is readily identified as a terrorist. Yet the novel simultaneously complicates this judgment by presenting Max as a diplomat deeply implicated in the geopolitical structures and state policies that have contributed to large-scale violence. Through this juxtaposition, Rushdie shifts attention from isolated acts of political violence to the broader historical systems that enable and legitimise them.

Stadler contends that Rushdie “subverts” conventional understandings of “terror” and “terrorism” by examining their relationship to identity, violence, and the lived consequences of transnational political conflict (Stadler 197–99). In doing so, *Shalimar the Clown* moves beyond narrowly national or regional interpretations of terrorism and instead situates it within interconnected global histories of empire, nationalism and militarisation. As Stadler concludes, the novel “reroutes postcolonial paradigms by examining transnational terror networks, and their regional and international impact on politics, cultures and identities” (199).

Rushdie’s interrogation of terrorism also resonates with Linda Hutcheon’s conception of historiographic metafiction, which questions the apparently stable categories through which historical narratives are constructed and legitimised (Hutcheon 105). By refusing to draw an uncomplicated distinction between the terrorist and the statesman, the novel invites readers to examine how political authority, historical memory, and ideological power shape the moral language through which violence is interpreted. Rather than absolving Shalimar of responsibility, Rushdie situates his actions within a wider historical context, thereby exposing the ethical ambiguities that conventional political narratives often conceal.

One of the most disturbing episodes in *Shalimar the Clown* is Boonyi’s death after her return to Kashmir following her relationship with Max Ophuls. Rather than being killed by Shalimar, whose

desire for revenge has driven much of the narrative, she is executed by the elders of her own community in what amounts to a ritualised honour killing. Rushdie depicts the execution with unsettling restraint: the punishment is carried out not by an anonymous crowd but by members of the village who had once accepted and cared for her (Rushdie 286–90). This inversion transforms the scene into a devastating commentary on the collapse of communal ethics and the violence that can emerge from the very structures meant to preserve social order.

Importantly, Rushdie avoids reducing Boonyi to either an innocent martyr or a wholly culpable transgressor. Her decision to leave Pachigam with Max, her subsequent disillusionment, and her eventual return are all portrayed as personal choices. Yet those choices unfold within a political and patriarchal environment that severely restricts female autonomy. Boonyi's fate therefore illustrates the complex relationship between individual agency and the larger historical, cultural, and ideological forces that shape human action. Her tragedy cannot be understood solely in terms of personal responsibility or communal punishment; instead, it reflects the destructive convergence of gendered power, social honour, and political instability.

Such moral complexity aligns closely with Linda Hutcheon's understanding of historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon argues that postmodern historical fiction does not reinforce fixed ethical or historical certainties but instead "problematizes" the assumptions through which historical meaning is constructed (101). Rushdie's representation of Boonyi's death exemplifies this principle by refusing straightforward judgments of innocence and guilt. The episode invites readers to confront the ambiguities of violence, responsibility and historical circumstance rather than offering the reassurance of a simple moral resolution.

This ambiguity extends to the question of justice. The novel offers no resolution, no final reckoning. Shalimar kills Max, but that killing does not restore his honour or bring back Boonyi. India, Max's daughter, is left to piece together the fragments of a story she cannot fully comprehend. Kashmir remains contested, its people caught between India and Pakistan, between tradition and modernity, between the dream of peace and the reality of violence. As the abstract of one study notes, "Although the novel ends as if an entangled knot of ideologically driven violence is followed by counter-violence, I suggest that Rushdie proposes instead an ethical reconsideration of violence that requires a crucial recognition/negotiation of self and other" (Bhat 2). In Hutcheon's terms, this refusal of closure is a hallmark of historiographic metafiction. These novels

do not offer the comfort of a well-made plot, with clear heroes and villains, clear causes and effects. They offer instead a recognition of the messiness of history, the impossibility of clean moral accounting and the necessity of continuing to ask questions even when answers are not forthcoming.

In the end, *Shalimar the Clown* is a novel about the limits and possibilities of narrative. It is deeply aware that history cannot be told directly- that the complexity of Kashmir, the tangled roots of terrorism, the interplay of personal betrayal and geopolitical catastrophe, exceed the capacities of any simple story. Hence the narrator's insistence that the crisis "must be looked at indirectly" (Rushdie 88). The indirection of metafiction, of parody, of temporal fragmentation, is not a literary game. It is an ethical and epistemological necessity. Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction provides a framework for understanding this necessity. By simultaneously embracing and questioning the conventions of historical fiction, the novel acknowledges that the past is accessible only through representation, while refusing to abandon the effort to represent it. By incorporating actual historical figures and events, it anchors its fictional universe in the real world. By making the processes of its own narration visible, it reminds us that all histories are told from a point of view- and that the point of view of the marginalised, the displaced, the voiceless, must be imagined if it is to be heard at all.

Critics have occasionally suggested that Salman Rushdie's fiction privileges stylistic innovation at the expense of political commitment. *Shalimar the Clown*, however, challenges such assessments by demonstrating that formal experimentation can itself become a means of historical and political inquiry. Through its fragmented chronology, shifting narrative perspectives, and metafictional strategies, the novel confronts the intertwined histories of Kashmir, colonialism, terrorism, and global violence without reducing them to simplistic ideological narratives. Rushdie does not offer historical certainty or political solutions; instead, he invites readers to engage critically with the complexities and contradictions that shape historical experience.

The novel also acknowledges the ethical limitations of representation. Narrative alone cannot undo political violence or restore fractured communities, yet storytelling remains indispensable because it preserves memories that might otherwise disappear from public consciousness. By recovering silenced histories and resisting reductive explanations, *Shalimar the Clown* affirms literature's

capacity to challenge official versions of the past and to keep contested histories open to interpretation.

This commitment to memory is encapsulated in the symbolic significance of the novel's title. Near the conclusion, the narrator explains that the word "Shalimar" means "abode of joy," a meaning that evokes the celebrated Mughal gardens of Kashmir and an earlier vision of cultural harmony (Rushdie 398). The irony is profound. By the novel's end, the name is inseparable from loss: the village performer has become an assassin, communal coexistence has collapsed, and the landscape once associated with joy has been transformed by violence and grief. The symbolic movement from paradise to devastation mirrors the historical trajectory that Rushdie reconstructs throughout the narrative.

In this respect, *Shalimar the Clown* exemplifies what Linda Hutcheon identifies as historiographic metafiction, a mode of writing that simultaneously questions historical authority while insisting upon the importance of remembering the past (Hutcheon 5, 105). Rather than claiming to recover an uncontested historical truth, the novel foregrounds the interpretative nature of both history and fiction. Its achievement lies not in resolving historical conflicts but in preserving their complexity, reminding readers that the histories of Kashmir are composed of competing memories, unresolved wounds and narratives that resist closure. Rushdie's novel ultimately demonstrates that storytelling is itself an ethical act: by refusing silence, it preserves the possibility of historical understanding while acknowledging that every account of the past remains partial, contested and open to revision.

Conclusion

Shalimar the Clown stands as one of Salman Rushdie's most compelling engagements with history, violence, and memory, demonstrating the full complexity of historiographic metafiction as theorised by Linda Hutcheon. Through its fragmented narrative structure, intertextual richness, metafictional self-consciousness, and deep historical engagement, the novel resists any singular or authoritative version of truth. Instead, it presents history as contested, mediated and inseparable from the stories through which it is narrated. Rushdie reconstructs Kashmir not merely as a geopolitical site of conflict but as a symbolic landscape of lost pluralism, fractured identities, and betrayed human relationships. By intertwining personal tragedy with global political violence, the

novel reveals how intimate lives are shaped and often destroyed by larger historical forces. At the same time, *Shalimar the Clown* challenges reductive discourses surrounding terrorism, nationalism, and religious identity, insisting upon moral ambiguity and historical complexity. Ultimately, Rushdie's novel affirms the ethical necessity of storytelling in times of violence. Even when history cannot be represented directly or completely, historiographic metafiction enables literature to recover suppressed voices, question dominant narratives and preserve the memory of worlds that political conflict seeks to erase.

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Erasure and Reconstruction of Identity in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*

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Abstract:

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* offers a profound exploration of identity, memory, and loss through its fragmented narrative and complex characters. This paper investigates the processes of erasure and reconstruction of identity experienced by the novel's central characters within the context of war, love, and displacement. Employing a close textual analysis and critical theoretical perspectives, the study examines how Ondaatje portrays identity as fluid and fragmented. The findings reveal that identity in *The English Patient* is not a fixed construct but a dynamic process shaped by personal and historical trauma.

Keywords: Identity, Reconstruction, Post-colonialism, Erasure, Trauma, Memory, Narrative Fragmentation.

Introduction:

Identity, a fundamental aspect of human experience, is often disrupted in times of crisis. In *The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje delves into the multifaceted way's identity is erased and reconstructed amid the turbulence of World War II. The novel's characters navigate fractured

selves as they grapple with love, loss, and memory. This novel employs a non-linear narrative to explore identity as fluid, multifaceted, and shaped by historical trauma. This paper aims to analyze how Ondaatje represents identity as both a site of erasure and a canvas for reconstruction. It also investigates how the novel's characters erase and reconstruct their identities as they cope with war's aftermath.

Literature Review:

Research on *The English Patient* has extensively discussed its thematic concerns, narrative structure, and historical context. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) argue that the novel reflects postcolonial anxieties about identity and displacement. Similarly, D'Haen (1999) highlights the text's exploration of memory and the interplay between personal and collective histories. Psychoanalytic readings, such as those by Bowie (2000), have emphasized the role of trauma and amnesia in the characters' identity crises. Count László Almásy, for instance, rejects national affiliations and declares that nations are artificial constructions, while characters such as Kip negotiate conflicting identities between colonial allegiance and indigenous heritage. The novel thus reflects what Homi K. Bhabha identifies as the 'Third Space,' where identities are continuously negotiated rather than permanently fixed (Bhabha, 1994). Edward Said's critique of Orientalism also informs many readings of the novel. Said argues that Western colonial discourse constructs the East as an exotic and inferior 'Other' in order to legitimize imperial domination (Said, 1978). Stephen D'Haen (1999) emphasizes the novel's concern with history and memory, arguing that Ondaatje challenges conventional historical narratives by privileging fragmented personal memories over official historical records. This study builds on these insights but focuses specifically on the interplay between erasure and reconstruction of identity, contributing a unique perspective to the ongoing discourse.

Methodology:

This study uses a research approach that looks really closely at the text to understand how identity is erased and rebuilt in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*. This kind of research is about interpreting and analyzing the book and we want to see how Michael Ondaatje uses language, pictures, memories and history to create identity. The primary source for this study is

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* (1992). This study is focusing on the characters like Almásy, Hana, Kip and Caravaggio because they all go through things like war, trauma and displacement which shows how identity can be broken. It analyses parts of the book where characters get hurt forget things tell stories have relationships with people from other cultures and experience violence because these parts show how identities are erased and then rebuilt. Close reading lets us look really closely at how Michael Ondaatje uses words, pictures, symbols and story structure. The way the story is told, with lots of parts is also important because it shows how memories and identities can be unstable. This article is looking at symbols, like the desert, maps, books, fire and the ruined villa to see how places and things can help rebuild a person's identity. Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* is a book that shows how identity is rebuilt. Postcolonial theory provides a lens for understanding the characters' experiences of displacement and cultural hybridity, while psychoanalytic theory sheds light on the psychological dimensions of memory and trauma. The study also incorporates secondary sources to contextualize the analysis within broader literary and theoretical frameworks.

Theoretical Framework:

This analysis draws on postcolonial and psychoanalytic theories to contextualize the erasure and reconstruction of identity. The postcolonial framework primarily draws upon the works of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism is used to examine how colonial discourse constructs cultural identities and represents geographical spaces through imperial ideology (Said, 1978). Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, liminality, and the Third Space are employed to analyze the fluid identities of characters who negotiate multiple cultural affiliations, particularly Kip and Almásy (Bhabha, 1994). Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity and Sigmund Freud's theory of trauma provide critical tools for examining the liminality and fragmentation experienced by the characters. These theoretical perspectives illuminate how Ondaatje's narrative portrays identity as a palimpsest, constantly overwritten by historical and personal events.

Erasure of Identity:

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* explores themes of identity erasure through its fragmented narrative, complex characters, and interwoven historical backdrop. The novel portrays characters who grapple with the loss, concealment, or transformation of their identities, symbolizing the broader disruptions caused by war and colonialism. Here's an analysis of how identity erasure is depicted. A name is something that accompanies everyone, no matter where they go. Almásy tries to lose his identity by erasing his name. "Ain, Bir, Wasi, Foggra, Khottara, Shaduf. I didn't want my name against such beautiful names. Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert" (Ondaatje 139).

Names in *The English Patient*:

Names in *The English Patient* function as both identifiers and erasers of individuality. Characters are often introduced without their names, emphasizing their detachment from traditional identities. For example, Kip is initially referred to as "the sapper," and Almásy is known only as "the English patient" until later revelations. Hana's refusal to name her patients underscores her attempt to maintain emotional detachment. A Nameless Figure The eponymous character, referred to only as the English patient, embodies the ultimate erasure of identity. His anonymity, caused by severe burns that obliterate his physical features, symbolizes the loss of personal and national identity. "I am a man with no face, no name, no country," he declares, underscoring the disintegration of self (Ondaatje 4).

Hana:

Fragmented by loss, Hana's identity is deeply impacted by the trauma of war and the deaths of loved ones. Her retreat into the ruined villa and her caregiving role represents an attempt to navigate her fragmented sense of self. Ondaatje writes, "She was a woman who had buried her father and her innocence in the same grave" (Ondaatje 34), highlighting the erasure of her previous identity. "Hana was born in Toronto, Kip in Lahore, Caravaggio was from Canada but was of Italian origin, the English patient had a Hungarian origin although he actually belongs nowhere; Ondaatje alludes to his multiethnicity to present the relationship between these characters" (Mittapalli 54).

Kip:

The character of Kip, an Indian sapper, is introduced. He comes to the villa to clear it of mines. Kip is strongly attracted to Hana and they fall in love. It is then the story of the English patient is revealed. His real name is Almásy and he is a Hungarian by birth. He tells the other three about his love affair with Katherine, wife of Geoffrey Clifton. His love ultimately leads to plane crash that has made him unrecognizable. Cultural Displacement Kip's experience as a Sikh sapper in the British army epitomizes the erasure of cultural identity. Torn between his Indian heritage and his role in the colonial military, Kip experiences a profound sense of alienation. His eventual rejection of the West, triggered by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, signifies his refusal to let his identity be entirely subsumed by colonial forces. In an interview, Ondaatje states that, "there are a lot of international bastards roaming around the world today. That's one of the book's main stories; those migrants don't belong here but want to belong here" (Wachtel 10). The characters in the novel become refugees and attempt to escape their names and environment in order to belong to the villa that becomes their temporary residence.

Reconstruction of Identity:

The characters in *The English Patient* navigate personal and historical traumas, striving to regain control over their lives amidst the chaos of war. Despite their efforts to erase themselves, the characters ultimately reconstruct their identities. Hana's letter to her stepmother, expressing her desire to return to Canada, signifies her reconnection with her roots. Kip's return to India and his new life as a doctor reflect his reclamation of his native identity. Even Almásy, though irreparably damaged, contributes to the collective narrative, preserving his legacy through storytelling.

Reclaiming Agency:

Despite the erasure they endure, the characters in *The English Patient* undertake journeys of self-reconstruction. The English patient's recounting of his love affair with Katharine serves as an act of reclaiming his narrative identity. Similarly, Hana's care for the patient becomes a means of rediscovering her sense of purpose and autonomy. As a nurse caring for the burned and dying English patient, Hana reclaims agency by immersing herself in her caregiving role. Her decision

to stay in the bombed-out villa reflects her attempt to forge meaning in a world torn apart by loss. As a Sikh sapper, Kip embodies the tension between colonial expectations and his personal autonomy. His rejection of Western ideals following the atomic bombings shows his assertion of his agency against imperialist powers. Stripped of his identity by war and injury, Almásy struggles with the boundaries of his agency. His love affair with Katharine and his choice to recount his past can be seen as acts of reclaiming his fragmented self.

Hybridity and New Selves:

The novel examines the fluidity of identity, emphasizing hybridity both cultural and personal as a response to the fragmentation caused by war. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is exemplified in Kip's character, whose identity reflects a dynamic synthesis of Indian and Western cultural influences. While this hybridity initially causes tension, it ultimately facilitates his reconstruction of a self that honors his cultural roots. Ondaatje's portrayal of Kip suggests that identity reconstruction involves embracing multiplicity rather than seeking a return to a singular past. The villa itself becomes a space where diverse individuals—Hana (Canadian), Kip (Indian), Almásy (Hungarian), and others—interact and form an unconventional family. Their connections transcend national and cultural boundaries, symbolizing the potential for new identities in a postcolonial context. Characters evolve through their interactions with each other. Kip's growing disillusionment with the West and Hana's resilience in the face of grief highlight the emergence of new selves shaped by shared experiences.

Memory as Reconstruction:

Memory plays a crucial role in the process of identity reconstruction. The fragmented narratives of the characters reflect the fragmented nature of memory itself. Ondaatje's non-linear storytelling mirrors the characters' attempts to piece together their identities from the shards of their pasts. The novel suggests that memory is not static but a process of reconstruction, influenced by emotion, trauma, and perspective. As he recounts his affair with Katharine, Almásy's memories blur the line between fact and interpretation, reflecting the subjective nature of recalling the past. His narrative reconstructs his identity and offers insight into the human cost of war. Hana's memories of her father and her experiences during the war illustrate how she reconstructs her

understanding of loss, using it as a foundation for survival. Kip's memories of his training in England and his eventual betrayal by the West highlight the tension between personal and collective memory in the context of colonialism.

Findings:

The novel vividly portrays the erasure of identity caused by war. The eponymous English patient, later revealed as László Almásy, suffers physical and psychological scars that strip him of his national and personal identity. His amnesia symbolizes the broader loss of self-experienced by individuals uprooted by war. Similarly, Kip, the Indian sapper, grapples with the erasure of his cultural identity as he navigates the British colonial system. Despite the forces of erasure, the characters engage in acts of reconstruction. For Almásy, storytelling becomes a means to reclaim fragmented memories and reconstruct a sense of self. Hana, the Canadian nurse, reconstructs her identity through caregiving and her relationships with the other villa inhabitants. Kip's eventual rejection of Western influences represents an assertion of his cultural identity. Ondaatje's depiction of identity challenges the notion of a unified self. The characters' identities are fluid, influenced by their interactions and the historical forces surrounding them. The novel's non-linear narrative structure reinforces this theme, mirroring the fragmented nature of identity and memory. The findings reveal that identity in *The English Patient* is not static but a dynamic process shaped by historical, cultural, and personal factors. The interplay between erasure and reconstruction underscores the resilience of the human spirit in the face of trauma. Ondaatje's use of fragmented narratives and multiple perspectives highlights the complexity of identity formation, inviting readers to question traditional notions of selfhood and belonging.

Conclusion:

Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* offers a profound exploration of the themes of identity erasure and reconstruction. Through its richly drawn characters and layered narrative, the novel demonstrates how identity is simultaneously shaped by external forces and personal agency. Although the characters attempt to erase their identities, their roots and experiences ultimately compel them to reconstruct their sense of self. The characters' journeys reveal that identity is not a static essence but a dynamic interplay of loss and recovery, erasure and inscription. By examining

these themes, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the novel's engagement with the complexities of identity in a postcolonial and wartime context.

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Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice: The Role of Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

Linguistic theories provide valuable insights into the nature and structure of language. The relationship between linguistic theory and practice has always been a major concern in language studies. This paper examines the role of applied linguistics in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and language related practices. Applied linguistics is a dynamic field of study linking linguistic theory to practical use of language in real life contexts. The main task of applied linguistics is to transform abstract linguistic theories and concepts into effective concrete practical techniques and strategies to address language related issues and problems in varied real-world contexts. Over the years, applied linguistics has emerged as an important interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary subject that connects theory to practical applications in varied areas such as language teaching and learning, translation, discourse analysis, stylistics, forensic linguistics, corpus linguistics, lexicography, language policy, bilingualism, multilingualism and communication.

Keywords: linguistic theory, practice, applied linguistics, language use

1. Introduction

Language plays the key role in all domains of life and it is central to communication, education, culture, trade and business, science and technology and so on. Linguistics focuses on understanding how language works, whereas applied linguistics is concerned with applying linguistic knowledge and theories to practical issues related to language use in real life contexts.

In the beginning, applied linguistics dealt only with language learning and teaching. Gradually, it has evolved into a significant interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary area of study connecting theory to practice covering wide range of areas of study like language teaching and learning, translation, discourse analysis, stylistics, forensic linguistics, corpus linguistics, lexicography, language policy, bilingualism, multilingualism and communication. This article examines how applied linguistics bridges the gap between linguistic theory and its practical application in various real-life contexts.

2. Linguistics

Linguistics is “the scientific study of language... (whose goal) is the construction of a general theory of the structure of language or of a general theoretical framework for the description of languages” (Ivić et al., 2026). It deals with the form, meaning, and content of language (Mukherjee, 2022). Linguistics also examines the origin of language, its history, structure, meaning, acquisition, uses and changes happened over the years and happening now. The main purpose of linguistics is to study language objectively and to understand the nature of language as an abstract system. “Like any discipline, linguistics looks for generalities underlying actual appearances, and so in some degree is bound to represent an abstract idealization of language rather than the way it is experienced in the real world” (G. Cook, 2003, p. 9). Interestingly, the abstract nature of linguistics became one of the reasons for the emergence of applied linguistics.

3. Applied Linguistics

Applied linguistics is one of the youngest disciplines since it originated in the 1940s (Grabe, 2010). It “derives from the involvement of linguists in America, particularly Leonard Bloomfield and Charles C. Fries, in specialized language-teaching programs during and immediately after the second World War” (Howatt, 1984, p. 265). It is not easy to define the term as “Applied Linguistics means many things to many people” (V. Cook, 2006) and because of the broad areas that it encompasses, varieties of activities that it does and multiple perspectives that it accommodates. According to Grabe (2001) “applied linguistics is trying to resolve language-based problems that people encounter in the real world” (p. 25). Similarly, Brumfit (1997) defined it as “the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue” (p. 93) and Davies and Elder (2004) point out “Applied Linguistics is... a coherent activity which

theorizes through speculative and empirical investigations real-world problems in which language is a central issue” (p.11). Applied linguistics “is the utilisation of the knowledge about the nature of language achieved by linguistic research for the improvement of the efficiency of practical task in which language is a central component” (Corder, 1974, p.24) and employs linguistic theory in real world contexts and the main focus of applied linguistics is language use. It is “a cover term for a sizeable group of semi-autonomous disciplines, each dividing its parentage and allegiances between the formal study of language and other relevant fields, and each working to develop its own methodologies and principles” (Spolsky, 2005, p.36). Furthermore, applied linguistics “opens up a whole new array of questions and concerns, issues such as identity, sexuality, access, ethics, disparity, difference, desire, or the reproduction of Otherness that have hitherto not been considered as concerns related to applied linguistics” (Pennycook, 2004, pp. 803–4). In nutshell, it is a “multi-disciplinary approach to the solution of language-related problems” (Strevens, 1989, p. 9) and an “independent and coherent discipline, which, like similar vocational activities (for example general medicine, business studies, applied psychology, legal studies) seeks to marry practical experience and theoretical understanding of language development and language in use” (Davies and Elder, 2004, p.11) and above all, it is an:

interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of research and practice dealing with practical problems of language and communication that can be identified, analysed or solved by applying available theories, methods and results of Linguistics or by developing new theoretical and methodological frameworks in Linguistics to work on these problems (Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée, n. d.).

4. Bridging Theory and Practice through Applied Linguistics

The relation between linguistics and applied linguistics is complementary. Linguistics mainly focuses on describing and analysing language, whereas applied linguistics is concerned with the practical use of linguistic knowledge in solving real life issues and problems and it applies linguistic theories, methods, and findings to language related issues. In practice, applied linguistics acts as a bridge between abstract linguistic concepts and real-life practical uses of such concepts.

4.1.Connecting Theory to Language Use

Applied linguistics connects linguistic theory to practical language use. Theoretical linguistics focuses on understanding the structure and functions of language while applied linguistics attempts to use them to solve issues and problems related to language in real life contexts. Applied linguistics is a “mediation between theory and practice (Kaplan and Widdowson 1992, p. 76) and “the task of applied linguistics is to mediate’ between linguistics and language use” (G. Cook, 2003, p. 20). Furthermore, “applied linguistics is trying to resolve language-based problems that people encounter in the real world” (Grabe, 2001, p. 25) “whether they be learners, teachers, supervisors, academics, lawyers, service providers, those who need social services, test takers, policy developers, dictionary makers, translators, or a whole range of business clients” (Grabe, 2002, p. 9). In other words, applied linguistics helps different professionals like teachers, translators, lexicographers, police officers, researchers, policy makers, decision makers, learners and anyone who uses language and interacts with human language and AI generated language and text in this era of Artificial Intelligence.

4.2.Integrating theory into Language Teaching and Learning

Linguistic theories are blended in language teaching and learning. English Language Teaching Approaches and Methods have roots in linguistic theories. For example, the impact of structural linguistics on Grammar Translation Method can be seen as the method focuses on deconstructing literary texts into their structural and grammatical components. Structural linguistics contributed to the development of the Audio-Lingual Method which leads to habits formation of spoken structures through repetition and substitution drills. Behaviouristic learning theory is applied in classroom techniques like drilling, imitation and immediate feedback. Introduction of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) in English language teaching shifted the focus of teaching from grammatical accuracy to meaningful communication which caused to emerge Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that replaced rigid grammatical drills with communicative tasks like role plays and information gap activities. Socio cultural theories (Vygotsky, 1962) use cooperative learning, pair work and group work in which teachers act as facilitators. Krashen (1982) emphasizes the importance of meaningful input and natural communication which have influenced classroom practices, teaching methodologies, and learner centred approaches around the world. Furthermore, applied linguistics contributes to syllabus design, curriculum development, and language assessment and it has even changed the focus of

classroom practice. For instance, pragmatics and discourse analysis enable teachers to teach language in authentic social contexts and develop learners' effective communicative skills. Applied linguistics addresses practical challenges and the requirements of modern language classrooms.

4.3.Using Technology

Technological advancement and digital innovations have reinforced the relationship between the theory and the practice in applied linguistics. To demonstrate, ICT, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), digital learning platforms and AI powered learning apps and devices integrate linguistic theories with technology to provide learners with innovative language learning experiences. Applied linguistics also plays a significant role in responding to the changing needs of language use in this modern digitalized AI controlled world since Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed language learning, language teaching, and language use, created new types of discourse and redefined the notions of communication. Communication now involves intelligent machines and Artificial Intelligence which function as communication partners. Furthermore, applied linguistics in the age of Artificial Intelligence is shifting from the traditional field of study that deals with only human language use to a modern discipline that investigates blended language model integrating human language and machine language and examines the language cocreated by both human and AI. Corpus linguistics helps researchers and teachers analyse authentic language use and develop teaching materials based on real communication patterns as it uses large collections of authentic language data to identify patterns of actual communication.

4.4.Linking Theory to Address Language Issues

Applied linguistics addresses social and cultural issues related to language using sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, educational psychology and Artificial Intelligence. Studies in sociolinguistics, bilingualism, multilingualism and language policy help researchers understand how language functions in multilingual societies and it examines issues such as migration, identity, globalization, and intercultural communication. Due to the integration of technology, artificial intelligence and AI tools and platforms in language teaching, language learning and language use, applied linguistics now deals with human language, machine language and the interaction between

human beings and machines. In fact, applied linguistics goes beyond classroom teaching and learning to include issues related to identity, migration, intercultural communication, digital communication and language planning by transforming theoretical knowledge into practical applications. In short, “all linguistic study is basically applied linguistics, with applied linguistics seeking out and working on language problems which linguistics responds to by idealising and then analysing in terms of current linguistic theory” (Davies, 2007, p.12). On the whole “‘Applied Linguistics’ is using what we know about (a) language, (b) how it is learned, and (c) how it is used, in order to achieve some purpose or solve some problem in the real world” (Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2002, p.1) and applied linguists “are likely to move toward the analysis of new data, rather than continue to argue new theory” (Kaplan, 2002, p. 514).

Applied linguistics functions as a bridge between linguistic theory and practice by integrating knowledge, ideas and concepts from multiple disciplines to address real world language problems and adapt to changing social and linguistic needs.

5. Conclusion

Applied linguistics has emerged as a multidisciplinary field that connects linguistic theory to practical language use in real world contexts. While linguistics provides scientific knowledge about the structure and functions of language, applied linguistics transforms these theoretical concepts into practical solutions for language related issues in education, communication, policy making, language planning and language use in real world contexts. Thus, applied linguistics acts as a bridge between theory and practice.

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Numerals in Mangar

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Abstract

The paper provides a description of numeral system used in Mangar (aka Magar ~Magari), focusing on its formation. It primarily examines the patterns of numerals formation and the various categories of numerals within the numeral system. The data is collected from the native speakers of the west Sikkim district of Sikkim, where majority of the speakers are found. The paper deals with cardinal, ordinal, multiplicative, distributive, fractional and restrictive numerals; that is, it describes the morphological processes employed in the formation of numerals in Mangar. The findings discovered that the Mangar has decimal numeral system. The cardinal number in Mangar can be classified into three sub types: i) additive compound numerals, ii) multiplicative compound numerals and iii) multiplicative cum additive compound numerals. Here, we can also categories multiplicative compound numerals into two sub types: i) lower multiplicative compound numerals and ii) higher multiplicative compound numerals. In lower multiplicative the lexical form *-tsu* ‘ten’, is compound with the basic lower cardinal numerals, and in higher multiplicative compound numerals the lexical form *kia* and *waj* ‘hundred’ and thousand’ respectively. The multiplicative-cum-additive compound are achieved by multiplication of first two digits followed by addition of the third digit, such as $3 \times 10 + 1 = 31$. Ordinal are derived from cardinal by suffixing the bound morpheme *-sara* to the cardinal numerals to make it ordinal. Multiplicative numerals are formed by suffixing *-khep* to the cardinal numerals. Distributive numerals in Mangar can done by two ways either by suffixing *-wata* to the cardinal numerals or by reduplicating the base form of cardinal numerals. The restrictive numerals in Mangar are formed by postponing disyllabic free

form *matri*, ‘only’ to the cardinal numerals. Lastly the fractional numerals are formed by borrowing Indic words.

Key words: Mangar, numerals, decimal, Tibeto-Himalayan

1. Introduction

In India, speakers of Mangar are mostly found in Sikkim and extensively in its neighbouring country called Nepal. Mangar is classified under the non-pronominalized Himalayan sub-group of the Tibeto-Himalayan branch within the Tibeto-Burman language family (Grierson 1903). Shafer (1966-73) did not recognize Tibeto-Burman as a primary branch. In his tentative classification of Sino-Tibetan languages, he placed Mangar within the West central branch of the Bodic subgroup, which he classified directly under Sino-Tibetan. According to Benedict (1972) Mangar is more closely affiliated with the Tibeto-Kanauri (also known as Bodish-Himalayish) group than to any other group. He further observed that Mangar exhibits significant lexical correspondences with Bahing-Vayu, suggesting that it serves as a linguistic link between the Bodish-Bahing link. The population of Mangar is not reflected in the Census of India 2011 implying that their population was below 10,000. Previously in the 2001 Census of India, it was clearly reported that the population of Mangar was below 10,000. This work provides a description of numeral system in Mangar a lesser-known Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Sikkim. The report covers the matters of cardinal, ordinal, multiplicative, distributional, fractional and restrictive numerals.

2. Typological Overview of Mangar

- (i) The occurrence of velar nasal η in word initial position is frequently noticed in the language.
- (ii) Most of the words in the language are disyllabic in nature, however some monosyllabic and trisyllabic lexical forms are found in the language, as well.
- (iii) Gender distinction in Mangar is based on the natural recognition of sex rather than on grammatical marking. Therefore, Mangar exhibits a natural gender system.

- (iv) Number is not a grammatically significant category in Mangar, as verbs do not agree with their subjects in number. Consequently, the same verb is used regardless of whether the subject is singular or plural.
- (v) Negation in Mangar is done by affixation, mainly prefix.
- (vi) The basic word order in Mangar is SOV.

3. Numerals in Mangar

According to Hartmann and Stork (1972), “Numerals mostly function as an adjective or pronoun, which convey a number and a relation to the number such as sequence, fraction, quantity, and frequency.” Numerals system in Mangar is based on decimal system. The numerals in Mangar may be classified into six types as follows.

- i. Cardinal numerals
- ii. Ordinal numerals
- iii. Multiplicative numerals
- iv. Distributive numerals
- v. Fractional numerals and
- vi. Restrictive numerals

3.1. Cardinal numerals

Morphologically, cardinal numerals in Mangar can be further classified into following types.

- i. Basic cardinal numerals and
- ii. Compound cardinal numerals

3.1.1. Basic cardinal numerals

Basic numerals are non-derived ones denoting numbers from one to ten, hundred and thousand. The cardinal numerals in Mangar are predominantly monosyllabic; only the words denoting ‘four’ and ‘five’ are disyllabic. The basic numerals found in Mangar are shown in Table 1.

Basic cardinal numeral	Gloss
<i>kat</i>	‘One’
<i>nis</i>	‘Two’
<i>som</i>	‘Three’
<i>buli</i>	‘Four’
<i>baya</i>	‘Five’
<i>tu</i>	‘Six’
<i>tun</i>	‘Seven’
<i>ke</i>	‘Eight’
<i>ku</i>	‘Nine’
<i>tsu</i>	‘Ten’
<i>kia</i>	‘Hundred’
<i>way</i>	‘Thousand’
Table 1: Basic cardinal numerals	

3.1.2. Compound cardinal numerals

Compound numerals in Mangar are formed by the juxtaposition of two or more independent numeral morphemes. Compound numerals in Mangar can be further classified into:

- i. Additive compound numerals
- ii. Multiplicative compound numerals
- iii. Multiplicative-cum-additive compound numerals

3.1.2.1. Additive compound numerals

In Mangar, the numerals, from 11/eleven to 19/nineteen are formed through the summation of basic numerals from 1/one to 9/nine to decade *tsu* ‘10’. It is observed that the *tsu* is prefixed to the basic cardinal numerals as demonstrated in the Table 2.

Compound cardinal	Gloss
<i>tsu-kat</i>	‘Eleven’

10+1	11
<i>tsu-nis</i> 10+2	‘Twelve’ 12
<i>tsu-som</i> 10+3	‘Thirteen’ 13
<i>tsu-buli</i> 10+4	‘Fourteen’ 14
<i>tsu-baŋa</i> 10+5	‘Fifteen’ 15
<i>tsu-tu</i> 10+6	‘Sixteen’ 16
<i>tsu-tun</i> 10+7	‘Seventeen’ 17
<i>tsu-ke</i> 10+8	‘Eighteen’ 18
<i>tsu-ku</i> 10+9	‘Nineteen’ 19
Table 2: Additive compound numerals	

3.1.2.2. Multiplicative compound numerals

In Mangar, all the numerals which end up with 0 from 20 upwards are all multiplicative compound numerals. In this language, multiplicative compound numerals can be divided into two: first, lower multiplicative compound numerals, and second, higher multiplicative compound numerals

3.1.2.2.1. Lower multiplicative compound numerals

The lower multiplicative compound numerals in Mangar are 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90. These numerals are purely multiplication of *tsu* ‘10’ with the basic numerals as manifested in the Table 3.

<i>nis-tsu</i> 2x10	‘Twenty’ 20
<i>som-tsu</i> 3x10	‘Thirty’ 30
<i>buli-tsu</i> 4x10	‘Forty’ 40
<i>baŋa-tsu</i> 5x10	‘Fifty’ 50
<i>tu-tsu</i> 6x10	‘Sixty’ 60
<i>tun-tsu</i> 7x10	‘Seventy’ 70
<i>ke-tsu</i> 8x10	‘Eighty’ 80
<i>ku-tsu</i> 9x10	‘Ninety’ 90
Table 3: Lower multiplicative compound numerals	

3.1.2.2.2. Higher multiplicative compound numerals

Higher multiplicative compound numerals are formed through multiplication of *kia* ‘hundred’ and *waŋ* ‘thousand’ to a cardinal numeral as exemplified in Table: 4.

<i>kia</i>		<i>waŋ</i>	
<i>nis-kia</i> 2x100	‘Two hundred’ 200	<i>nis-waŋ</i> 2x1000	‘Two thousand’ 2000
<i>som-kia</i> 3x100	‘Three hundred’ 300	<i>som-waŋ</i> 3x1000	‘Three thousand’ 3000
<i>buli-kia</i> 4x100	‘Four hundred’ 400	<i>buli-waŋ</i> 4x1000	‘Four thousand’ 4000

<i>baṇa-kia</i> 5x100	‘Five hundred’ 500	<i>baṇa-waṇ</i> 5x1000	‘Five thousand’ 5000
<i>tu-kia</i> 6x100	‘Six hundred’ 600	<i>tu-waṇ</i> 6x1000	‘Six thousand’ 6000
<i>tun-kia</i> 7x100	‘Seven hundred’ 700	<i>tun-waṇ</i> 7x1000	‘Seven thousand’ 7000
<i>ke-kia</i> 8x100	‘Eight hundred’ 800	<i>ke-waṇ</i> 8x1000	‘Eight thousand’ 8000
<i>ku-kia</i> 9x100	‘Nine-hundred’ 900	<i>ku-waṇ</i> 9x1000	‘Nine thousand’ 9000
Table 4: Higher multiplicative compound numerals			

3.1.2.3. Multiplicative-cum-additive compound

The multiplicative-cum-additive compounds are formed through the multiplication of first two numerals and summation of the third ones. So the normal order is multiplication of the first two numerals and the summation of the third ones. Consider the examples as shown in the Table 5.

<i>nis-tsu-kat</i> 2x10+1	‘Twenty-one’ 21
<i>nis-tsu-nis</i> 2x10+2	‘Twenty-two’ 22
<i>nis-tsu-som</i> 2x10+3	‘Twenty-three’ 23
<i>som-tsu-nis</i> 3x10+2	‘Thirty-two’ 32
<i>som-tsu-som</i> 3x10+3	‘Thirty-three’ 33

<i>som-tsu-buli</i> 3x10+4	‘Thirty-four’ 34
<i>buli-tsu-som</i> 4x10+3	‘Forty-three’ 43
<i>buli-tsu-buli</i> 4x10+4	‘Forty-four’ 44
<i>buli-tsu-five</i> 4x10+5	‘Forty-five’ 45
<i>baŋa-tsu-baŋa</i> 5x10+5	‘Fifty-five’ 55
Table 5: Multiplicative-cum-additive compound	

3.2. Ordinals

Ordinal numbers are derived from the cardinal numbers by means of the suffixation, specifically by attaching a bound morpheme *-sara*, as shown in the Table 6.

Ordinal	Gloss
<i>kat-sara</i>	‘First’
<i>nis-sara</i>	‘Second’
<i>som-sara</i>	‘Third’
<i>buli-sara</i>	‘Fourth’
<i>baŋ-sara</i>	‘Five’
<i>tu-sara</i>	‘Six’
<i>tuŋ-sara</i>	‘Seven’
<i>ke-sara</i>	‘Eight’
<i>ku-sara</i>	‘Nineth’
<i>tsu-sara</i>	‘Tenth’
Table 6: Ordinals	

3.3. Multiplicative numerals

Multiplicative numerals in Mangar are formed by suffixing *-k^hep* to the cardinal numerals as shown in the Table7.

Multiplicative	Gloss
<i>kat-k^hep</i>	‘Once’
<i>nis-k^hep</i>	‘Twice’
<i>som-k^hep</i>	‘Thrice’
<i>buli-k^hep</i>	‘Four times’
<i>baŋa-k^hep</i>	‘Five times’
<i>tu-k^hep</i>	‘Six times’
<i>tun-k^hep</i>	‘Seven times’
<i>ke-k^hep</i>	‘Eight times’
<i>ku-k^hep</i>	‘Nine times’
<i>tsu-k^hep</i>	‘Ten times’
Table 7: Multiplicative numerals	

3.4. Distributive numerals

Distributive numerals are very common in Mangar. They are formed either by adding the distributive marker *-wata* (marking the meaning 'each') to cardinal numerals or by reduplicating the base form, i.e., the cardinal numerals. Thus, Mangar employs two strategies in distributive numerals: first, by suffixing the bound morpheme *-wata* to cardinal numerals, and second, by reduplicating the cardinal numerals as shown in the Table: 8 and Table: 9.

- (i) Adding the distributive marker-*wata*

Distributive	Gloss
<i>kat-wata</i>	‘One each’
<i>nis-wata</i>	‘Two each’
<i>som-wata</i>	‘Three each’
<i>buli-wata</i>	‘Four each’
<i>baŋa-wata</i>	‘Five each’
<i>tu-wata</i>	‘Six each’
<i>tun-wata</i>	‘Seven each’
<i>ke-wata</i>	‘Eight each’
<i>ku-wata</i>	‘Nine each’
<i>tsu-wata</i>	‘Ten each’
Table 8: Distributive through suffixation	

(ii) Reduplicating the base form.

Distributive	Gloss
<i>kat- kat</i>	‘One by one’
<i>nis-nis</i>	‘Two by two’
<i>som-som</i>	‘Three by three’
<i>buli-buli</i>	‘Four by four’
<i>baŋa-baŋa</i>	‘Five by five’
<i>tu-tu</i>	‘Six by six’

<i>tun-tun</i>	‘Seven by seven’
<i>ke-ke</i>	‘Eight by eight’
<i>ku-ku</i>	‘Nine by nine’
<i>tsu-tsu</i>	‘Ten by ten’
Table 9: Distributive through reduplication	

3.5. Restrictive numerals

The restrictive numerals in Mangar are formed by postponing disyllabic free form *matri*, marking the meaning 'only' to the cardinal numerals. As shown in the Table: 10.

Restrictive numerals	Gloss
<i>kat matri</i>	‘One only’
<i>nis matri</i>	‘Two only’
<i>som matri</i>	‘Three only’
<i>buli matri</i>	‘Four only’
<i>baŋa matri</i>	‘Five only’
<i>tu matri</i>	‘Six only’
<i>tun matri</i>	‘Seven only’
<i>ke matri</i>	‘Eight only’
<i>ku matri</i>	‘Nine only’
<i>tsu matri</i>	‘Ten only’
Table 10: Restrictive Numerals	

3.6. Fractional numerals

Fractional numerals are not much rich in Mangar. Indic loan words are employed for fractional numerals as illustrated in the Table: 11.

Fractional Numerals	Gloss
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<i>adha</i>	‘One-two’
<i>kat-poa</i>	‘One-fourth’
Table 11: Fractional Numerals	

Conclusion

This study indicates that the numeral system of Mangar is of decimal type. The numerals in Mangar can be classified broadly into six types: cardinal, ordinal, multiplicative, distributive, restrictive and fractional.

Cardinal numerals can be subcategories into two types – basic and compound cardinal numerals. In the basic cardinal category, only the numeral forms for ‘four’ and ‘five’ are disyllabic and rest are monosyllabic forms, that is, monosyllable forms are predominate in basic cardinals. Compound cardinal can be further divided into three different kinds; additive compound, multiplicative compound, and multiplicative and additive compound.

We can further classify multiplicative compound numerals into two sub types: i) lower multiplicative compound numerals and ii) higher multiplicative compound numerals. Here in lower multiplicative compound numerals, the suffix *-tu* is added to the basic cardinal numerals whereas in higher multiplicative compound numerals the suffix *-kia* and *-wan* is added to the basic cardinal numerals.

In Mangar, ordinal, distributive, and multiplicative numerals are formed by suffixing the bound morphemes *-sara*, *-wata*, and *-khep* to cardinal numerals, respectively. In addition to suffixation, distributive numerals are also formed by reduplicating the cardinal numerals. Fractional numerals are formed in Mangar by employing Indic Loan words. Restrictive numerals are formed by postpositioning the free morpheme *matri* ‘only’ to cardinal numerals. Thus, the formation of numerals in Mangar involves several morphological processes, such as compounding, suffixation, post positioning, reduplication, and the borrowing, as well.

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Semantic Intention in Typical English-Speaking Children

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ABSTRACT

Semantic intention refers to the meanings children express through words, gestures or vocalizations during communication. Understanding semantic intentions is important for evaluating language development and identifying language disorders. This study compared the semantic intentions of thirty-two typical English-speaking children aged 4-6 years from ICSE school in Kerala across two distinct contexts: general conversation and picture description tasks. The findings revealed that existence, location, agent, object, and action were consistently expressed across both communicative contexts. Attribution was more frequently observed during

picture description whereas possession, rejection, disappearance and non-existence occurred more often during general conversation. Recurrence was present in both contexts, while cessation was not observed in either task. Significant differences were found for attribution, possession, rejection and non-existence between the two tasks. The results suggest that communicative context influences the expression of semantic intentions in children.

Keywords: Semantic intention, language development, English-speaking children, ICSE school, general conversation, picture description.

INTRODUCTION

Language functions as an essential social tool as it cannot be separated from the context of human interaction (Austin 1962, Searle 1969). It functions as a complex, multifaceted system for communication and self-expression that relies on the structured and predictable application of sounds. A fundamental component of this system is semantics, which refers to the set of rules dictating how meaning is derived both individual words and their arrangement (Crystal, 1995).

Language can be organized into three primary dimensions: grammar, which relates to structure; semantics, which pertains to meaning; and pragmatics, which concerns its social application. This structural model is often classified as form, content and use (Bloom & Lahey, 1978). Specifically, the semantic aspect addresses how language carries meaning through the perceptual and conceptual qualities inherent in words (McLaughlin, 1952).

Semantic language skills involve the ability to understand and effectively use meaning across various levels of language, ranging from individual words to complete sentences and complex discourse. This developmental process includes several key competencies, such as identifying labels, categorizing objects, applying descriptive terminology and explaining the functions of items. Furthermore, these skills require a grasp of vocabulary relationships, including synonyms and antonyms as well as an understanding of advanced linguistic elements like figurative language and words with multiple meanings. Ultimately, acquiring strong semantic abilities is essential for interpreting the world accurately and communicating ideas with clarity and precision (Paul, 2001).

Semantic intention is defined as the meanings intended by children by using words or gestures.

The common intentions expressed by children are given below:

Existence: The child recognizes the existence of an object or an event and expresses through a look, gesture, vocalization or a sign or a word. For example, on seeing mother he may say “mamma” on seeing milk he may say “milk”.

Disappearance: The child comments on the disappearance of a person or object by a look gesture or a word. For example, the child says all gone when milk is over (gone), when father goes for work.

Recurrence: Child expresses that an object disappeared and reappeared. The child may request for repetition of an action. For example, the child says “I want it again”.

Non-existence: The child indicates that object does not exist where he/she expects it to be present verbally or non-verbally. For example, child opens chocolate box and finds no chocolates in it, remarks “no chocolate”.

Location: The child comments on the position of an object, person or an event or spatial relationship between two objects or requests that an object be placed in a certain location. For example, when after a search finds his toy car may say “that” and simultaneously pointing and looking at adult vigorously.

Possession: A child comments on a relationship between an object person and themselves. For example, when he and another child are playing, he may suddenly pick the toy and may say “mine”.

Rejection: The child comments that he does not want an object or that he wants an object to cease an activity by look, gesture, vocalization, sign or word such as no, stop, bye-bye.

Denial: Child denies a proposition verbally or nonverbally. For example, the child takes chocolate when adults are not watching later when the adult blames the child nods his head with full mouth in disagreement to say no.

Agent: The child tries to communicate about the person or object doing the action. This may be by a look, gesture, or word or even by vocalizations. For example, when she wants to show her mother that her brother spills the milk, she will scream “mom” and point at the milk on the floor and says “brother”.

Object: The child comments on the object or person that may be affected by an action. For example, when showing toothbrush, the child points to teeth saying “teeth”.

Attribution: The child comments on the property of an object verbally or non-verbally. For example, when a child sees a dirty dog may say “yuck!” to communicate that it is dirty and needs a wash.

Cessation: The child indicates stoppage of an activity. For example, the child will say “that’s all”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Roger Brown (1973) studied the early stages of language acquisition and observed that children’s first utterances are semantically organized. Brown reported that children initially produce simple semantic relations such as agent-action, action-object, possession and location before developing complex syntax. His findings suggested that semantic understanding precedes grammatical mastery and that children progressively learn to express intended meanings through language

Katherine Nelson (1973, 1974) explained that semantic development is closely associated with conceptual and cognitive growth. Nelson emphasized that children acquire meanings through interaction with their environment and through experiences with objects, events and people. According to her, vocabulary development reflects the child’s growing conceptual organization and semantic representation.

Elizabeth Bates and colleagues (1979) investigated intentional communication during the prelinguistic stage. Their studies demonstrated that children communicate intentionally even before the emergence of spoken language. Behaviors such as eye gaze, gestures, pointing and vocalizations were considered early indicators of communicative intention. Bates emphasized that intentional communication forms the foundation for later semantic and linguistic development.

Jerome Bruner (1983) highlighted the importance of social interaction in semantic intention development. Bruner proposed that caregiver-child interactions provide a supportive framework for language learning. Through routines, joint attention and scaffolding caregivers help children associate linguistic forms with meanings. His concept of the Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) explained how social contexts facilitate semantic and communicative growth in children

Mahesh, Merlin, and Rao (2008) examined the semantic intentions of children with severe intellectual disabilities involving 12 participants divided into two cohorts: a younger group (ages 5-9) and an older group (ages 10-17). Researchers assessed the children's performance across 13 specific semantic intentions, rating each response as present, absent or inaccurate. The findings indicated that semantic expression was compromised in both groups when compared to typically developing children. Notably, the younger cohort demonstrated significant deficits in specific areas with a particular deficiency observed in the expression of recurrence.

Krupa (2009) investigated the influence of cognitive ability on semantic intention development in children with intellectual disabilities. By comparing mental-age-matched and chronological-age-matched groups, the study demonstrated that children with higher mental age capabilities achieve semantic milestones similar to typically developing peers by age four. The results highlight a strong but a complex association between cognitive maturity and language development.

Mohan (2011) investigated the semantic intentions of Malayalam-speaking children aged 8-13 years using a variety of tasks, including conversations, topic descriptions and picture story narrations. The study concluded that typically developing children in this age range demonstrate a diverse array of semantic intentions, which they apply for various purposes, such as expressing interest in objects or providing information.

Shetty, Hariharan and Rao (2014) reported Performance of Verbal Autistic Children Relating to Semantic Intentions and Relations; this study supports the view that meaning intentions both at word and phrase level are present in the conversational samples of 4-5 year mental aged verbal autistic children. The challenge for SLP's is to provide aspects of morphology and syntax, to use the semantic aspects and also to expand the nature of social

communication of pragmatic skills.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Understanding the development of semantic intention is essential for the effective screening, diagnosis and intervention of language disorders. As there is a lack of research on this development process in English-speaking children. This study aims to establish normative data for typical English-speaking children in ICSE school in Kerala. These finding will provide a critical baseline for screening, diagnosing and treating language disorders in this population.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study

The study aimed to understand the usage of semantic intention in 4 to 6 years old English-speaking children and to find the usage of the semantic intention in context to general conversation and picture discrimination.

Participants

Thirty-two typical children in the age range of 4-6 years participated in the study and were from ICSE schools in Trivandrum district, Kerala.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Children and their parents using English at home
- Children studying in ICSE syllabus school
- No history of speech, language, or hearing impairment
- No neurological impairment
- No otological, psychological, or ophthalmic problems

Exclusion Criteria:

- History of speech, language, hearing, or neurological disorders
- No exposure to the English language

Procedure

The stimuli were presented orally and the responses of each child were documented in a quiet, well-lit environment. Below are the clear instructions for each subsection. There was about a foot distance between each child's seat and the laptop microphone. Before recording of the sample, the clinician had an informal interaction with every child in order to build rapport.

Stimulus used

List of Pictures:

Day at the park

Rainy Day

Onam celebration

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Independent Sample Proportion Test to compare the semantic intentions expressed by typical English-speaking children across two elicitation contexts General Conversation and Picture Description. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant and all analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 27.0.

RESULT

The aim of the study was to analyze semantic intention in English-speaking Indian children. The results obtained are discussed below.

TABLE 1

Shows the percentage score of semantic intention for conversation and picture description task.

	SEMANTIC INTENTION			
	General Conversation		Picture Description	
	N=32	%	N=32	%
Existence	32	100.00%	32	100.00%

Location	32	100.00%	32	100.00%
Agent	32	100.00%	32	100.00%
object	32	100.00%	32	100.00%
Action	32	100.00%	32	100.00%
Attribution	27	84.38%	32	100.00%
Possession	30	93.75%	14	43.75%
Recurrence	9	28.13%	13	40.63%
Rejection	24	75.00%	12	37.50%
Disappearance	14	43.75%	7	21.88%
Non existence	6	18.75%	0	0.00%
Cessation	0	0.00%	0	0.00%

From table 1, it can be inferred that existence, location, agent, object and action were observed in all participants across both tasks. Attribution was more frequent during picture description, while possession, rejection, disappearance and non-existence occurred more often during general conversation. Recurrence was observed in both tasks, with a slightly higher occurrence during picture description. Cessation was not observed in either task.

TABLE 2

Shows the comparison of semantic intention for general conversation and picture description.

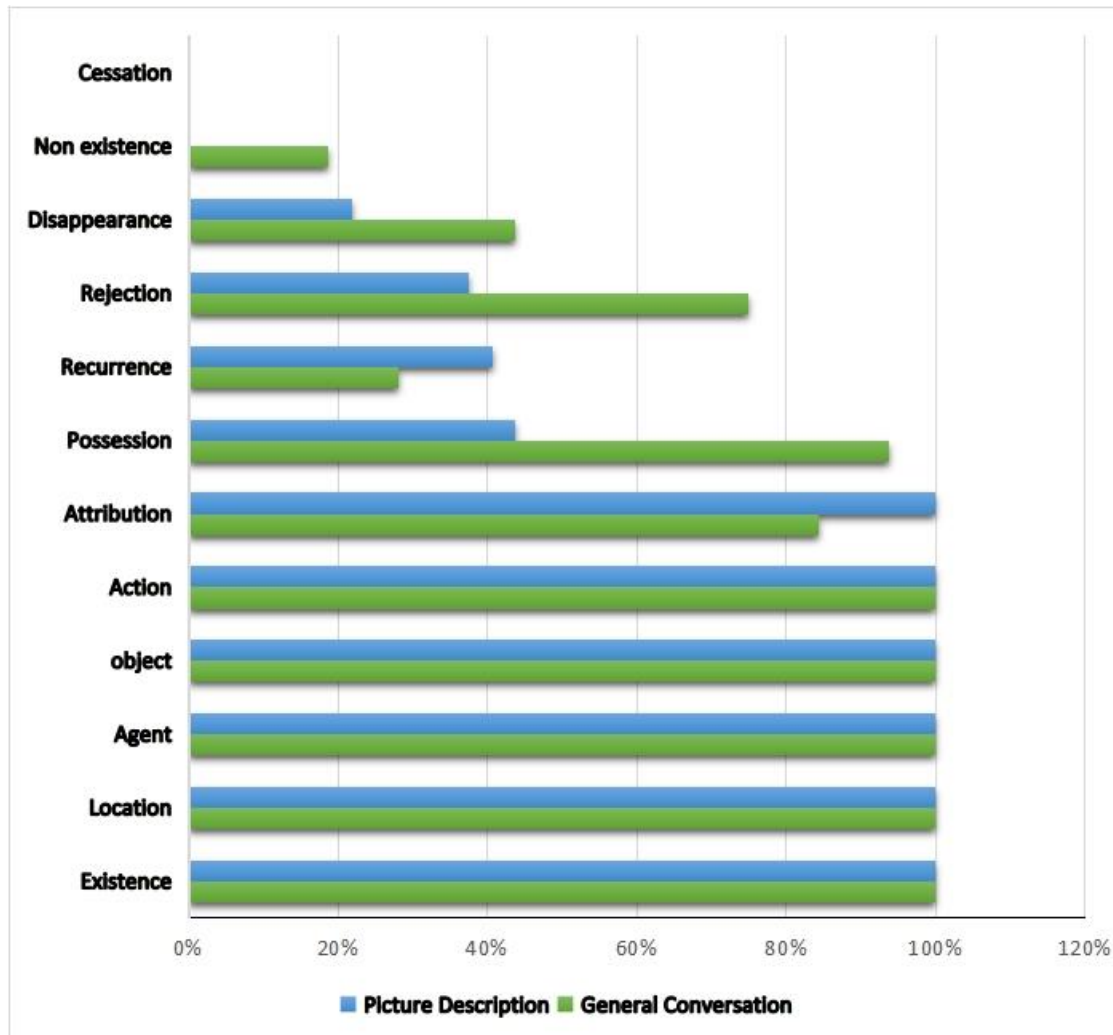
	General Conversation		Picture Description		p-value	Significance
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Existence	32	100.00%	32	100.00%	-	-
Location	32	100.00%	32	100.00%	-	-
Agent	32	100.00%	32	100.00%	-	-
object	32	100.00%	32	100.00%	-	-
Action	32	100.00%	32	100.00%	-	-
Attribution	27	84.38%	32	100.00%	0.020	S

Possession	30	93.75%	14	43.75%	<0.001	HS
Recurrence	9	28.13%	13	40.63%	0.292	NS
Rejection	24	75.00%	12	37.50%	0.002	S
Disappearance	14	43.75%	7	21.88%	0.062	NS
Non existence	6	18.75%	0	0.00%	0.010	S
Cessation	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	-	-

Table 2 reveals the differences in semantic intention between general conversation and picture description tasks. Significant differences were observed for attribution, possession, rejection and non-existence. No significant differences were found for recurrence and disappearance. Existence, location, agent, object and action were present in all participants across both tasks, while cessation was absent in both contexts.

FIGURE 2

Shows the percentage score of Semantic Intention for General Conversation and Picture Description.



From figure 2 it can be inferred that existence, location, agent, object, and action were consistently observed across both tasks. Attribution was more prominent during picture description, whereas possession was more frequently expressed during general conversation. Recurrence occurred in both contexts and was slightly more common in picture description. Rejection and disappearance were observed more often during general conversation. Non-existence was present only in general conversation, while cessation was not observed in either task.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the semantic intentions expressed by English-speaking Indian children during general conversation and picture description tasks. Findings showed that basic semantic intentions such as existence, location, agent, object and action were consistently expressed across both contexts, indicating their fundamental role in language development. Context-specific variations were observed, with possession, rejection, disappearance and non-existence occurring more frequently in general conversation likely due to its personal and interactive nature. In contrast, attribution was more common during picture description, reflecting the descriptive demands of visual stimuli. Recurrence was observed in both contexts, while cessation was absent in both tasks. These findings align with the view of Bruner (1983) that communicative context and social interaction influence children's semantic expression, suggesting that while children possess a broad range of semantic intentions, the context of communication shapes the types of meanings they are most likely to express.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Language is a system of communication using words, sounds and rules to express thoughts and ideas. Language development refers to the process by which children learn to understand and use language to communicate with others. Encompassing receptive and expressive language alongside syntactic and semantic development, the language acquisition process serves as a cornerstone for cognitive, social and literacy growth empowering children to interact with their environment and articulate their internal experiences. Unlike the acquisition of syntax and phonology, semantic development persists throughout life, requiring individuals to actively construct their own meaning rather than passively absorbing it from their surroundings.

The study examined semantic intentions in 4 - 6year old typical English-speaking Indian children across two communicative contexts general conversation and picture description. Thirty-two children with no history of speech language disorder and hearing problems were selected for the study from ICSE school in Kerala. Semantic intentions such as existence, location, agent, object,

and action were universally expressed across both tasks, indicating that these meanings are firmly established in children of this age group. Other intentions such as possession, rejection, and non-existence were more characteristic of general conversation, while attribution was more prominent in picture description. Cessation was not observed in either context. These patterns demonstrate that communicative context meaningfully shapes the range and frequency of semantic intentions a child expresses, and that no single task alone can fully represent a child's semantic competence. The findings are relevant to speech-language professionals, as they underscore the importance of assessing children across varied communicative settings to obtain a complete and accurate picture of their semantic abilities. Establishing normative data of this nature lays a valuable foundation for the early identification and management of language disorders in English-speaking Indian children.

Limitations of the study

- The study included a small sample of participants.
- Participants were selected only from ICSE schools in Kerala.
- Only two communicative contexts, general conversation and picture description, were examined.
- The study focused only on typically developing children aged 4-6 years.
- Children with communication disorders were not included.

Future Directions

- Include a larger and more diverse sample of children.
- Study children from different regions and educational backgrounds.
- Use additional tasks such as storytelling and play-based interactions.
- Compare semantic intentions in typically developing children and children with communication disorders.
- Investigate semantic intentions across different age groups.

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Rethinking Tamil Nadu's Two-Language Policy: Diglossia, Learning Outcomes, and the Limits of Language Count

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Abstract

The renewed conflict between the Union government's three-language formula under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 — operationalised in 2026 through the Central Board of Secondary Education's mandate that every Class IX student study three languages, designated R1, R2, and R3 — and Tamil Nadu's decades-old two-language policy has been argued almost entirely in terms of language count. This article contends that language count is not the primary explanatory variable. State-level comparisons of English Proficiency Index scores, employability rankings, and foundational-literacy data (ASER, NAS) show that Kerala's trilingual formula produces learning and proficiency outcomes comparable to, and on some measures better than, Tamil Nadu's bilingual formula, while several trilingual Hindi-belt states perform far worse than either. The article relocates the genuine pedagogical burden facing the Tamil-medium learner in the diglossic gap between written Tamil (*Eluttut Tamil*) and spoken Tamil (*Pēccut Tamil*) — a burden documented in the reading-acquisition literature and, following Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1967), structurally comparable to but wider than the High–Low register gaps of Swiss German and Arabic. A second, independently evidenced critique concerns implementation capacity: teacher shortages, compressed timelines, and incomplete materials, illustrated by Karnataka's third-language staffing and failure statistics and by the Supreme Court's scrutiny of the CBSE's 2026 rollout. The article proposes a framework relating three analytically distinct burdens — cognitive, diglossic, and administrative — and shows that the empirical record supports only the latter two. The analysis suggests that policy attention is better directed toward the quality of first-language literacy instruction across Tamil's register gap, and toward implementation readiness, than toward the number of languages specified in policy — though the pedagogical response indicated by the diglossic account itself remains to be validated empirically.

Keywords: three-language formula, two-language policy, Tamil Nadu, diglossia, Ferguson, National Education Policy, language planning, sociolinguistics, learning outcomes

1. Introduction

On 15 May 2026 the Central Board of Secondary Education issued Circular Acad-33/2026, making the study of three languages compulsory for Class IX students from 1 July 2026. The circular designates the three as R1, R2, and R3 — the student's first, second, and third curricular languages respectively — and requires that at least two of the three be drawn from the officially recognised Bhārtīya Bhāṣās. It is the latest operational form of a policy lineage stretching back to 1968, and it has reopened a dispute Tamil Nadu has sustained for almost sixty years. The state's Education Minister, under the newly formed government of Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, moved swiftly to reaffirm that Tamil Nadu would continue teaching only Tamil and English. The Supreme Court has since declined interim relief against the CBSE circular. It has, however, tagged the matter for detailed hearing and required the Union government to submit a readiness report — an indication that the dispute remains legally as well as politically unsettled at the time of writing.

The public argument has proceeded almost entirely on a single axis: whether the correct number of languages for a Tamil Nadu schoolchild is two or three. Proponents of the three-language formula invoke national integration, labour mobility, and the cognitive benefits of multilingual education. Opponents invoke cognitive overload and the state's founding anti-Hindi agitations. Both sides treat language count as the operative causal variable. This article tests that assumption against comparative evidence and finds it wanting.

The article makes one negative claim and two positive claims. The negative claim is that language count, considered on its own across the major comparator states, fails even a basic sorting test in which policy predicts outcome; it therefore cannot carry the causal weight both sides of the public debate assign to it. The first positive claim is that the genuine linguistic burden facing the Tamil-medium learner is better located in Tamil's own diglossia — the structural gap between the literary register of the textbook and the spoken register of the home. The second positive claim is that the strongest practical objection to the 2026 mandate is administrative: a compulsory third language is being introduced without adequate lead time, trained teachers, or materials, in a school system whose general implementation capacity is already well documented as strained.

It is worth stating what would count as evidence for the positive causal claim this article does not make — namely, that language count causes better or worse outcomes. A defensible claim of that kind would require a comparison holding constant, or statistically controlling for, prior socioeconomic and infrastructural investment across states. It would require longitudinal or quasi-experimental data tracking the same cohort before and after a language-policy change, rather than

cross-sectional snapshots of states that differ on many dimensions at once. And it would require a specified mechanism — instructional-time displacement, genuine cognitive load, or some other pathway — through which an additional language would produce the outcome in question. None of the evidence reviewed in Section 3 meets this bar. What that evidence does establish is the weaker but still useful negative finding above, which is sufficient to shift the burden of proof back onto those who invoke language count causally.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 traces the three-language formula's history and Tamil Nadu's recurrent refusal of it. Section 3 tests the language-count hypothesis against comparative state data, including a direct engagement with Kerala as the strongest challenge to this article's own argument. Section 4 develops Tamil diglossia as the better-evidenced linguistic account of the burden Tamil-medium learners face. Section 5 examines the administrative evidence, which this article treats as the strongest current basis for state resistance to the 2026 mandate. Section 6 briefly situates the dispute within Tamil Nadu's constitutional and fiscal relationship with the Union and explains why the political contest persists despite the weakness of its pedagogical framing. Section 7 proposes a framework relating the cognitive, diglossic, and administrative burdens to one another. Section 8 concludes with the article's policy implications, and Section 9 states its limitations and the studies that should follow.

2. The Three-Language Formula: History and Recurring Contestation

The idea that Indian schoolchildren ought to study three languages predates the Republic's education-policy apparatus. The University Education Commission first proposed a three-language requirement in its 1949 report, comparing it to the multilingual education systems of Belgium and Switzerland. The Commission acknowledged that Hindi held no inherent linguistic superiority over Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, or the other scheduled languages — several of which it recognised as possessing a longer literary history than Hindi — while nonetheless anticipating Hindi's eventual primacy as the medium of inter-state communication. This tension, formal acknowledgment of linguistic parity alongside an assumption of Hindi's eventual national role, recurs with little modification in the 2026 dispute over whether CBSE policy treats English as a “foreign” language relative to Hindi and the other scheduled languages.

The Education Commission of 1964–66 (the Kothari Commission) recommended a graduated three-language formula, adopted in the 1968 National Policy Resolution: Hindi, English, and a modern Indian language in Hindi-speaking states; the regional language, Hindi, and English elsewhere. Tamil Nadu, under Chief Minister C. N. Annadurai, declined to implement it. Annadurai's objection turned on an asymmetry: non-Hindi states would be required to learn a link language that Hindi-speaking states were not symmetrically required to learn in return, and he

reportedly indicated willingness to accept the formula only if every state adopted it uniformly — a condition that has never obtained. Tamil Nadu's enduring two-language policy dates from this refusal. Schiffman (1998) later observed that the formula has been honoured more in the breach than in practice nationally — that is, most states have implemented it partially, unevenly, or nominally — with English consolidating as India's de facto instrumental language in the absence of a genuinely national one. The 1986 National Policy on Education reiterated the 1968 formula without substantive revision; NEP 2020 supplanted it with a restated commitment to multilingual education, now operationalised through the CBSE's R1–R2–R3 framework. Tamil Nadu's institutional response in 2026 — immediate and framed as a non-negotiable commitment rather than a policy under review — reproduces Annadurai's posture almost without modification, despite a complete change of ruling party between the 2021 and 2026 assemblies. This continuity across party lines suggests the opposition draws on a stable stratum of the state's political culture, a point Section 6 returns to.

Karnataka and Kerala are the two principal comparator cases within the same NEP 2020 framework, and they diverge sharply from Tamil Nadu and from each other. Karnataka formally implements the three-language formula but has experienced acute friction specifically over Hindi: in the 2024–25 SSLC examinations, 1.42 lakh students — 19.72 per cent of those who sat the Hindi paper — failed. Kerala implements the same formula (Malayalam, Hindi, English) with markedly less political friction, a divergence observers attribute to Kerala's particular history of educational reform rather than to any difference in the formula's inherent difficulty. As Section 3 shows, this divergence in political friction is not matched by a corresponding divergence in learning outcomes between Kerala and Tamil Nadu — which is already suggestive that the causal weight commonly assigned to language count is misplaced.

Why, then, has this specific dispute remained unresolved for almost sixty years, surviving changes of government, party, and — as of May 2026 — the entry of an entirely new political formation into power in Tamil Nadu? The political science literature supplies a more adequate answer than pedagogy can. Brass (1974) treats language demands in India as a durable instrument of elite mobilization and centre–state bargaining, one whose political utility does not depend on its pedagogical correctness. Ramaswamy (1997) goes further, showing that Tamil has functioned in the state's political culture since the late nineteenth century as an object of affective devotion in its own right — a mother-figure to be protected — rather than merely an instrumental medium whose adequacy could be settled by literacy data. Read against this literature, Tamil Nadu's opposition to the three-language formula is not best modelled as a policy position awaiting better data, but as an identity claim for which pedagogical argument, including the argument advanced here, is unlikely to be dispositive on its own. The remainder of this article nonetheless works through the empirical

and sociolinguistic terrain that public argument has largely bypassed, on the grounds that clarifying what the pedagogical evidence does and does not show remains worthwhile even where it will not settle the underlying political contest.

3. Testing the Empirical Claim: Does Language Count Predict Outcomes?

If the three-language formula imposes the cognitive burden its critics allege, trilingual states should show measurably worse outcomes than bilingual Tamil Nadu on comparable measures. If it confers the advantages its proponents allege, trilingual states should outperform Tamil Nadu. Table 1 assembles the comparative evidence needed to test both predictions.

A word on method is required before the data are read. The comparative state evidence is used here not to estimate the causal effect of language count, but to test a much weaker proposition: whether language count is at least a plausible first-order *sorting* variable — whether knowing a state's formal language policy allows one to predict, even coarsely, where it falls among high-performing and low-performing states. If a variable fails even this coarse sorting test, the burden shifts to its defenders to show why it should nonetheless be treated as causally primary. This is a plausibility test, not a regression exercise, and Section 3.4 explains why a formal regression is not statistically meaningful for this variable.

The outcome measures in Table 1 are of three distinct kinds, and they are not interchangeable. First, English-related outcomes — the EF English Proficiency Index and graduate-employability rankings — bear on the claim that a state's language policy affects its students' eventual command of English and labour-market readiness; they say nothing directly about first-language literacy. Second, foundational-literacy outcomes — ASER's reading assessments — bear on early reading acquisition in the child's first language; they say nothing about English or employability. Third, school-achievement outcomes — the National Achievement Survey (NAS) — measure subject-matter learning across the curriculum, which is affected by language policy only indirectly, through the medium and quality of instruction. Each measure is used below only for the claim it can actually support, and conclusions are not transferred across the three kinds.

Table 1. State-Level Comparative Indicators by Formal Language Policy

State	Formal Policy	EF EPI Score	ASER 2024: Class 5 Govt. Reading (%)	NAS 2021 Relative Standing
Tamil Nadu	Two (Tamil, English)	540	37%	Below national average (Class 8 mathematics/science; Class 10 science)
Kerala	Three (Malayalam, Hindi, English)	537	>64%	Above national average
Punjab	Three	498	66%	Above national average; top-ranked in several subjects
Karnataka	Three (Kannada, Hindi, English)	517	— (not separately reported in sources reviewed)	— (not separately reported)
Uttar Pradesh	Three	399	Below national average despite 2022–24 improvement	Below national average
Bihar	Three	445	— (qualitatively “struggling” in sources reviewed)	Below national average
Madhya Pradesh	Three	460	— (qualitatively “struggling” in sources reviewed)	— (not separately reported)
National average	—	490	44.8%	—

Note. EF EPI figures are drawn from a single edition's state fact sheet to preserve internal comparability across rows; other editions place Tamil Nadu and Kerala within a few points of one another but occasionally reverse their relative order, which does not affect the argument made here. ASER figures denote the percentage of Class 5 government-school students able to read a Class 2-level text; all ASER and NAS figures cited in this article refer to government schools unless otherwise stated. The national-average row is included as the reference point against which the state figures are read in Sections 3.1–3.2. A dash indicates that the sources reviewed did not report a directly comparable disaggregated figure for that cell; these gaps are noted rather than filled by estimation.

3.1 English proficiency and employability

Kerala and Tamil Nadu occupy adjacent positions at the top of the EF EPI state ranking, separated by single-digit margins, and both stand far ahead of the Hindi-belt states implementing the same trilingual formula as Kerala: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh together occupy the bottom of Table 1's EPI column. This pattern does not support language count as an explanatory variable in either direction. If trilingualism depressed English acquisition, Kerala's proximity to Tamil Nadu would be hard to explain. If trilingualism enhanced it, Uttar Pradesh's position near the bottom — despite nominally studying the same three languages as Kerala — would be equally hard to explain.

The India Skills Report 2025 shows the same pattern for graduate employability. Kerala ranks first among Indian states; Tamil Nadu sits immediately behind it. Two states at the top of this ranking hold opposite positions on the R1–R2–R3 question, which is difficult to reconcile with any strong claim that language count primarily determines graduate employability.

3.2 Foundational learning outcomes: the inconvenient finding

Here the pattern complicates any straightforward defence of the two-language policy on efficiency grounds. ASER 2024 found that only 37 per cent of Tamil Nadu's Class 5 government-school students could read a Class 2-level text, well below the national average shown in Table 1. Kerala, by contrast, is reported in the same survey round as leading the country in foundational literacy, with more than 64 per cent of its Class 5 government-school students reading at or above the benchmark; Punjab reaches 66 per cent.

One interpretive caution should be entered immediately, because it anticipates the argument of Section 4. What ASER's Tamil reading task assesses is, unavoidably, reading in the *literary* register of Tamil — the register of the printed test card — not the spoken register the child commands natively. To the extent that Tamil's High–Low register gap is as wide as the sociolinguistic literature holds it to be, a low score on such a task is compatible with two quite different situations: children who cannot read, and children who can decode but stumble at the register boundary. The composite figure cannot distinguish them. Tamil Nadu's strikingly low ASER figure is therefore at least consistent with the diglossic account developed in Section 4 — though the measure itself cannot distinguish diglossic difficulty from broader literacy failure, and the figure is read here as compatible with that account rather than as evidence for it.

NAS 2021 places Tamil Nadu among the lowest-scoring states nationally in Class 8 mathematics and science, and among the states recording sub-200 mean scores (out of 500) in Class 10 science. Kerala was among a small group of states — with Punjab and Rajasthan — that outperformed the national average across most subjects in the same survey. Two qualifications matter. First, NAS 2021 excluded several Tamil Nadu districts from sampling owing to a natural calamity that year, a data-quality concern independent of any policy question; the Tamil Nadu NAS figures should be read as suggestive rather than definitive pending a methodologically unimpaired round (this limitation is restated in Section 9). Second, and more important for this article's argument, neither ASER nor NAS supports attributing Tamil Nadu's foundational-literacy shortfall to its own language policy, since the weakest-performing comparator on the same measures — Uttar Pradesh — implements the three-language formula, not the two-language policy.

What ASER and NAS most plausibly indicate is a literacy problem internal to Tamil Nadu's own primary-school system. Two levels of that problem must be kept apart. The state may have a

general, system-level weakness in early literacy instruction, of the kind the state-capacity literature reviewed in Section 5 documents across much of India; and within that general weakness, Tamil's own register structure may impose an additional, language-specific burden that composite reading measures cannot isolate. Section 4 argues for the second claim without denying the first — and neither is a claim about the state's language-count policy as such.

3.3 The strongest challenge to this argument: Kerala

Kerala is the strongest available challenge to the position defended here, and it deserves direct engagement rather than passing mention. A defender of the three-language formula could argue that Kerala's strong outcomes do not show language count is irrelevant; they show that a well-resourced, well-sequenced trilingual implementation works, and that Tamil Nadu's own weaker foundational-literacy figures might be still weaker under a comparably imposed trilingual mandate. On this reading, the two-language policy functions as a mitigating factor rather than a neutral one, and Kerala's success is evidence for trilingualism done well rather than evidence against language count as a variable.

This is a coherent counter-hypothesis, and it cannot be excluded definitively; no dataset reviewed here permits a counterfactual estimate of how Tamil Nadu would perform under a different formula, imposed at a different pace, with different resourcing. Three considerations nonetheless weigh against it. First, if trilingualism per se were the operative mechanism behind Kerala's strong outcomes, the same mechanism should also lift Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, which have implemented the identical formula for far longer than the current dispute has existed; it manifestly has not. Second, Kerala's comparative advantage over Tamil Nadu is strongest precisely on the measure — foundational literacy in the child's first language — that the diglossia argument of Section 4 predicts would be least affected by the number of additional languages studied and most affected by prior investment in first-language pedagogy; and Kerala's literacy achievements substantially predate NEP 2020. Third, the burden-of-proof asymmetry noted in Section 1 applies symmetrically: a claim that trilingualism causes Kerala's strong outcomes requires a specified mechanism and a comparison controlling for Kerala's much longer institutional investment in literacy infrastructure, which the proponents of that claim have not supplied any more than this article has supplied a mechanism for the opposite claim.

The conclusion to draw from the Kerala case should therefore be stated without ambiguity: Kerala does not demonstrate that trilingualism causes superior outcomes; it demonstrates only that strong outcomes are compatible with trilingual schooling when supported by stronger literacy infrastructure. That is precisely the negative finding this article defends, not a refutation of it.

3.4 Descriptive statistics and the limits of formal testing

Table 1's EF EPI column also supports simple descriptive comparison. Among the six three-language comparator states (Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh), the mean EF EPI score is 476.0, with a range of 138 points (399 to 537). The width of that range is itself the interpretively significant fact: it shows that formal language policy is compatible with radically different outcomes, which is exactly what one would expect if implementation quality rather than policy content were doing the causal work. Tamil Nadu's own score of 540 sits 64 points above the six-state trilingual mean — but only 3 points above Kerala, the strongest performer within that cohort. Tamil Nadu does not outperform the three-language formula so much as it performs at the level of that formula's best-implemented case and well above its worst-implemented cases.

A natural further step would be a formal correlation or regression of the indicators in Table 1 against language count. That step is not attempted here. Among India's twenty-eight states, only Tamil Nadu formally implements a two-language policy; every other major state, whatever the friction over its implementation, nominally follows some version of the three-language formula. A predictor variable with this little cross-sectional variance — effectively one treated unit against many controls that are not themselves uniform in outcome — cannot support a meaningful regression coefficient, and a coefficient computed from it would create a false impression of statistical rigour. Because Tamil Nadu is the only major state that varies on the policy variable, the correct comparison is the qualitative best-versus-worst comparison *within* the three-language cohort that Sections 3.1–3.3 undertake — a comparison that isolates implementation quality as the operative variable precisely because language count is held constant across it.

4. Relocating the Burden: Tamil Diglossia as a Linguistic Fact Independent of Language Count

If language count does not adequately explain the outcome pattern in Section 3, a more linguistically precise account of whatever genuine burden Tamil-medium schoolchildren experience is required. Tamil sociolinguistics supplies one directly relevant to Tamil Nadu's foundational-literacy figures: the diglossic relationship between written Tamil (*Eluttut Tamil*, எழுத்துத் தமிழ்), the register of textbooks, formal writing, broadcast news, and public speech, and spoken Tamil (*Pēccut Tamil*, பேச்சுத் தமிழ்), the register acquired natively in the home. Diglossia is offered here as the best available language-specific account of that burden — a ground for reframing the debate — not as a completed causal demonstration, and not as a monocausal explanation of Tamil Nadu's literacy figures, which Section 3.2 has already located partly at the system level.

Ferguson's foundational 1959 paper coined “diglossia” for communities in which two varieties of a language serve complementary social functions: a High (H) variety reserved for writing, formal education, and public discourse, and a Low (L) variety used in ordinary conversation, the two differing not merely in style but in grammar, lexicon, and often phonology. Ferguson's four original cases were Arabic, Modern Greek, Swiss German, and Haitian Creole/French; Tamil was not among them, but Britto's (1986) dedicated monograph and Schiffman's (1998, 1999) subsequent work have established Tamil as a well-documented additional case, with an H–L structural distance both scholars treat as unusually wide relative to Ferguson's original examples. Fishman's (1967) extension of the concept — to cases where H and L interact with bilingualism within a single community, and where the child acquires L natively and meets H substantially through schooling — describes the Tamil situation exactly: Tamil's diglossia is not a static sociolinguistic backdrop but an active feature of the child's early literacy experience.

This is not merely an impressionistic observation. Comparative reading-acquisition research on Tamil- and Malay-speaking children in Singapore — drawing on Annamalai and Steever's (1998) description of Tamil phonology and morphology, and extended by Nag and Narayanan (2019) on orthographic knowledge and early reading and spelling development — characterises Tamil as a case of “extreme diglossia,” a designation reflecting the unusually wide gap between the child's home register and the school register relative to comparable diglossic languages. The same body of work notes a striking asymmetry of scholarly attention: spelling errors attributable to diglossic interference have been documented in depth for Malay-speaking children, while comparable published work on Tamil-speaking children remains sparse, notwithstanding a linguistic burden that is, on the account above, at least as severe in the Tamil case.

The evidentiary standard applied to the language-count claim in Section 1 should be applied here as well. A defensible causal claim that diglossia *impairs* Tamil literacy acquisition — rather than merely coinciding with weak literacy outcomes — would require: (a) an error-classification scheme distinguishing reading and spelling errors attributable specifically to the H–L gap from errors attributable to orthographic complexity, instructional quality, or other confounds; (b) a longitudinal comparison of children receiving explicit H–L bridging instruction against a matched control group; and (c) a cross-linguistic benchmark — for instance, an effect-size comparison against the better-documented Malay case — locating Tamil's H–L gap on a common scale rather than describing it only qualitatively as “extreme.” This article does not supply that evidence, and no dataset gathered for it does. What the cited literature does establish is that Tamil diglossia is real, structurally wide, and plausibly consequential for early literacy — which makes the diglossic account both better evidenced and considerably more specific than the generic cognitive-overload account it is offered in place of. The generic account is contradicted by the comparative data of

Section 3 and by the mainstream developmental literature on childhood multilingualism (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010; Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012); the diglossic account is supported by a dedicated, if still thin, reading-acquisition literature. Closing the remaining evidentiary gap requires the study designs specified in Section 9.

4.1 Illustrating the H–L gap

The abstract description above is easier to evaluate against concrete minimal pairs. Table 2 sets out representative High–Low contrasts across several linguistic levels, each given in Tamil script, in transliteration (following the Lehmann–Schiffman–Zvelebil conventions used throughout this article: macrons mark long vowels; subscript dots mark the retroflex consonants *ṭ*, *ṇ*, *ḷ*; *ṇ* and *ṟ* mark the alveolar nasal and rhotic respectively; and *ḷ* marks the retroflex approximant distinctive to Tamil), and in gloss. These conventions are standard in Tamil linguistics and are provided for reference; the Tamil script forms are the primary source for readers familiar with the script. The examples are based on the author's native-speaker knowledge and on the descriptions in Schiffman (1999) and Britto (1986); they illustrate the general pattern and are not phonetic transcriptions. Spoken forms are given in a broadly supra-regional colloquial variety; regional colloquials diverge further still.

Table 2. The High–Low Register Gap in Tamil: Representative Minimal Pairs

Linguistic level	Written Tamil (H)	Spoken Tamil (L)	What the contrast shows
Finite verb morphology ('he is coming')	அவன் வருகிறான் avaṇ varukirāṇ	அவன் வர்றான் avaṇ varrāṇ	The H present-tense marker -kiṟ- is reduced in L; the child who says varrāṇ must learn varukirāṇ as a partly new form at school.
Neuter verb ('it is coming')	அது வருகிறது atu varukiratu	அது வருது atu varutu	H and L differ in both stem and ending; the L form is not derivable by simple sound substitution.
Negation ('he did not come')	அவன் வரவில்லை avaṇ varavillai	அவன் வரலே avaṇ varalē	The H negative -villai and the L negative -lē are distinct morphemes, not pronunciation variants of one another.
Case marking (locative, 'in the house')	வீட்டில் vīṭṭil	வீட்டே vīṭḷē	The H locative -il corresponds to L -lē, with concomitant reduction of the stem-final geminate.
Pronoun and agreement ('when')	நீங்கள் எப்போது வருவீர்கள்? nīṅkaḷ eppōtu varuvīrkaḷ?	நீங்க எப்ப வருவீங்க? nīṅka eppa varuvīṅka?	Pronoun, interrogative, and agreement suffix all differ;

Linguistic level	Written Tamil (H)	Spoken Tamil (L)	What the contrast shows
will you (pol.) come?')			the whole clause must be re-learned as an H template.
Lexicon ('very'; 'water')	மிகவும் mikavum; தண்ணீர் taṇṇīr	ரொம்ப rompa; தண்ணி taṇṇi	Some H–L pairs are related by regular reduction (taṇṇīr ~ taṇṇi); others are lexically unrelated (mikavum ~ rompa).

Note. The pedagogically important point is not any single pair but their cumulative distribution: the H–L contrast in Tamil runs through inflectional morphology, negation, case, agreement, and core lexicon simultaneously, so that the literary register confronts the beginning reader not as a spelling convention over the language she speaks but as a partly distinct grammatical system.

4.2 Diglossia beyond Tamil: a comparative typology

Situating Tamil within Ferguson's broader typology shows that the H–L phenomenon is not uniquely Tamil, even as it highlights the unusual width of the Tamil gap. Table 3 places Tamil alongside two of Ferguson's classic cases.

Table 3. Diglossia Across Language Communities (after Ferguson 1959)

Speech community	High (H) variety	Low (L) variety	Typical domains of H	Typical domains of L
German-speaking Switzerland	Standard (written) German	Swiss German (Schweizerdeutsch)	Writing, formal education, national broadcasting	Home, everyday conversation, informal local media
Arabic-speaking communities	Classical / Modern Standard Arabic (fuṣḥā)	Colloquial dialectal Arabic ('āmmiyya)	Religious and formal text, pan-Arab broadcasting	Home, street, informal conversation
Tamil-speaking communities	Written Tamil (Eḷuttut Tamil)	Spoken Tamil (Pēccut Tamil)	Textbooks, formal writing, public speech, news broadcasting	Home, informal conversation, most spoken media

Note. Both Britto (1986) and Schiffman (1998) treat the Tamil H–L structural distance — extending to morphology and syntax, not only phonology and lexicon, as Table 2 illustrates — as wider than the Swiss German case and broadly comparable in scope to the Arabic case, though systematic cross-linguistic measurement of H–L “distance” remains methodologically underdeveloped across all three.

4.3 Pedagogical implications

Treating diglossia rather than language count as the primary linguistic variable carries implications the current policy debate has not explored. Cummins's (1979) linguistic-interdependence hypothesis, developed originally for bilingual education, holds that strong literacy development in the child's first language and register provides the foundation on which additional-language literacy is subsequently built, rather than competing with it for a fixed cognitive resource. Applied

to the Tamil case, this suggests that strengthening H-variety literacy instruction within Tamil itself — rather than reducing exposure to other languages — is the intervention most directly indicated by the ASER and NAS shortfalls documented in Section 3. Skutnabb-Kangas's (2000) work on mother-tongue education and Hornberger's (2002) continua-of-biliteracy framework point to a further implication: assessment instruments such as ASER and NAS, which report a single composite “Tamil” reading score, may be obscuring exactly the H–L distinction this section identifies as pedagogically central — the possibility already raised in Section 3.2. Disaggregating H-variety literacy from L-variety oral competence as separate assessment targets would make future survey rounds considerably more diagnostically useful.

If the diglossic burden is real, the obvious pedagogical response is explicit bridge-register instruction: teaching the systematic correspondences between spoken and written Tamil directly — as register, not as error — rather than requiring children to induce them unaided from exposure to literary texts. The design, sequencing, and empirical validation of such an intervention, however, lie beyond the scope of the present article; Section 9 specifies the study that would be required before any such curriculum could responsibly be adopted.

5. The Administrative Burden: Implementation Deficits as the Empirically Strongest Critique

The cognitive burden, then, is poorly evidenced, and the diglossic burden is real but misattributed to language count. A third burden withstands scrutiny on its own terms: the administrative cost of introducing a compulsory third language without adequate lead time, trained teachers, or materials. This is a claim about implementation capacity, not about trilingualism as a linguistic matter, and the evidence for it is considerably more direct than for either of the other two burdens.

Table 4. Karnataka's Third-Language (Hindi) Implementation Indicators

Indicator	Figure
Sanctioned Hindi-teacher posts, government schools	5,060
Vacant posts	1,528 (approx. 30%)
Class X (SSLC) Hindi failure rate, 2024–25	19.72% of students who sat the paper (approx. 1.42 lakh students)
Subsequent policy response	Third-language (R3) evaluation moved to a non-aggregated grading system from 2025–26, itself contested by the state Governor

Against a 30 percent staffing shortfall, the SSLC Hindi failure rate is easier to attribute to instructional capacity than to any intrinsic difficulty of trilingual acquisition. Other explanations deserve acknowledgment: low student motivation toward a subject perceived as externally imposed, curriculum and assessment design, and the well-known tendency of pass rates to reflect examination policy as much as learning. None of these can be excluded on the available data. Teacher shortage is nonetheless the most directly evidenced contributor, and likely one of the central drivers of the failure pattern, for two reasons: it is the only candidate explanation directly measured (the vacancy figures are administrative fact, not inference), and it is the explanation contemporaneous Karnataka reporting itself converges on — parents and educationists describing Hindi treated by under-resourced schools as a low-priority examination subject rather than a genuinely taught language, a description of pedagogical neglect rather than cognitive overload.

Karnataka's vacancy rate is, moreover, not an idiosyncratic failure specific to third-language instruction; it instantiates a documented general pattern in Indian state capacity for education delivery — chronic teacher absenteeism, persistent sanctioned-post vacancies, and a recurring gap between enacted curricula and classroom-level implementation. Kremer, Chaudhury, Rogers, Muralidharan, and Hammer (2005) found roughly a quarter of government schoolteachers absent on any given day across the states surveyed; Muralidharan and Sundararaman's (2011) experimental work in Andhra Pradesh, and Pritchett's (2013) broader diagnosis of Indian schooling as a system in which formal enrolment has outpaced actual instructional capacity, point to the same structural condition. Read against this literature, Karnataka's third-language experience is not evidence that trilingual curricula are administratively harder than other curricular content; it is evidence that *any* curricular addition introduced into a system with this level of implementation capacity will tend to underperform its formal design. This reframing strengthens the administrative argument: the CBSE's 2026 rollout is exposed to a well-documented general vulnerability of Indian education administration, which is precisely why the seven-week implementation timeline in Table 5 is analytically significant — it affords none of the slack that a system already known to underperform its formal design would need to meet even a well-designed mandate.

Table 5. Implementation Timeline of the CBSE 2026 Three-Language Mandate

Date	Event
15 May 2026	Circular Acad-33/2026 issued; three languages (R1–R2–R3) made compulsory for Class IX, effective 1 July 2026
27 May 2026	Supreme Court issues notice to the Centre, CBSE, and NCERT; seeks a logistical-readiness report; declines to stay the circular

Date	Event
30 June 2026	Deadline for schools to update R1–R3 language offerings on the CBSE's OASIS portal
1 July 2026	Mandate takes effect for Class IX; schools directed to use Class VI R3 textbooks as interim material pending dedicated Class IX texts
14–16 July 2026	Supreme Court scheduled to hear detailed arguments, including the Centre's readiness report

A coalition of parents and educators, organised as the petitioner Friends of People for Active Democracy, brought this implementation gap before the Supreme Court, arguing not against the three-language policy in principle but specifically against the adequacy of its preparation. The bench under Chief Justice Surya Kant, while declining to stay the circular, required a formal readiness report from the Union government — a judicial acknowledgment, short of injunctive relief, that the implementation concern has sufficient substance to warrant scrutiny.

5.1 The counterfactual of a well-resourced rollout

Kerala's comparatively low level of political friction over its own three-language implementation, noted in Section 2, is instructive here. Kerala did not introduce Malayalam, Hindi, and English on a seven-week timeline against teacher-vacancy rates comparable to Karnataka's. Its implementation, whatever its imperfections, has been sufficiently gradual and resourced that Kerala's political class has not needed to make administrative failure central to its position — unlike Karnataka, where prominent educationists and the Kannada Development Authority have explicitly framed opposition around teacher shortages and falling pass rates rather than around trilingualism as a linguistic proposition. The comparison suggests that political resistance to the three-language formula across India's southern states correlates more closely with implementation adequacy than with any state-level difference in underlying attitudes toward multilingual education. Tamil Nadu's deeper and more consistent resistance is the evident exception, rooted in a political history considerably older than NEP 2020 and not resolvable by improved administration alone. Separating the administrable objection from the historically entrenched one therefore matters: the former is, in principle, curable by better sequencing and staffing; the latter is not and treating them as a single undifferentiated grievance makes the curable objection appear as intractable as the political one.

Finally, the administrative argument applies to Tamil Nadu with particular force, and not merely by Karnataka's proxy. Because the state has taught only Tamil and English for nearly six decades, it possesses no routine third-language infrastructure across its school system: no cadre of trained third-language teachers in government schools, no timetable slots, no graded materials, and no

assessment apparatus for an R3 subject. Any rapid transition would therefore require teacher recruitment or redeployment at scale, timetable restructuring, materials development, and multi-year sequencing — a heavier lift than in states that already nominally operate the formula. The administrative objection accordingly stands on its own: even a reader who accepted the three-language policy in principle, and who rejected every other argument in this article, would still confront an implementation problem that a seven-week circular cannot answer.

6. Why the Dispute Persists: The Constitutional Frame in Brief

If the pedagogical evidence for the language-count framing is as weak as Sections 3–5 suggest, why has the dispute proved so durable? The answer is that the schooling question functions, for both the Union and the state, substantially as a proxy for a longer-running and more consequential argument about the constitutional distribution of authority over language itself — an argument that, as the Brass and Ramaswamy literature reviewed in Section 2 indicates, has never primarily been about children's cognition at all.

The constitutional architecture can be stated briefly. Education moved from the State List to the Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule, List III, Entry 25) under the Forty-Second Amendment of 1976, the basis on which the Union claims authority to prescribe curricular content, including language requirements, even for state-administered schools. Against this, Article 350A obliges the state to endeavour to provide primary-stage instruction in the mother tongue of linguistic-minority children, and Articles 29 and 30 protect minority educational and cultural rights — provisions Tamil Nadu's advocates have periodically invoked against centrally imposed curricular language mandates. No Supreme Court ruling has yet addressed the specific question the 2026 dispute raises: whether a school-curriculum language requirement imposed through a board circular, rather than primary legislation, is a permissible exercise of Concurrent List authority. The question remains open not because earlier rulings were ambiguous but because it has never been squarely litigated — prior language-education cases have turned on medium of instruction or minority rights rather than on the Union's authority to mandate curricular languages. The pending petitions are framed narrowly around implementation readiness, which means the 2026 litigation is unlikely, on its current framing, to resolve the underlying federal question even if it addresses the administrative one.

The fiscal dimension operates alongside this constitutional uncertainty. Tamil Nadu's refusal to enrol its schools in the PM SHRI scheme — a centrally sponsored programme exceeding ₹27,000 crore tied to NEP 2020 standards — has been met, according to state officials, with delays in Samagra Shiksha disbursements conditioned on PM SHRI participation; Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi, and Punjab have reported comparable friction in the same funding cycle. Tamil Nadu's

resistance to the 2026 CBSE mandate is best read as one instance of this broader and older federal contest — which is why a dispute that the learning-outcome evidence of Section 3 suggests could be de-escalated through better implementation has instead endured across six decades and every change of government. A fuller constitutional-law treatment falls outside this article's scope and is noted in Section 9 as a matter for separate study.

7. Disaggregating the Burdens: A Framework

The preceding sections have treated the cognitive, diglossic, and administrative burdens as analytically distinct, but their relationship to one another has so far been implicit. Table 6 makes that relationship explicit.

Table 6. A Framework Relating the Cognitive, Diglossic, and Administrative Burdens

Burden	Locus	Strength of supporting evidence	Relationship to the other burdens
Cognitive (language-count)	Number of languages studied	Weak — not supported by the state-level comparisons in Section 3 or by mainstream findings on childhood multilingualism (Adesope et al., 2010; Bialystok et al., 2012)	Frequently conflated with the diglossic burden in public debate, though empirically distinct from it
Diglossic	Internal to Tamil (the H–L register gap)	Strong — supported by dedicated sociolinguistic and reading-acquisition research (Britto 1986; Schiffman 1998, 1999; Nag & Narayanan 2019)	Exists independently of language count; not created and not obviously relieved by adding or removing a second or third language, although curricular time pressure can affect how much bridging instruction is feasible
Administrative	Implementation capacity: teachers, materials, timeline	Strong — supported by Karnataka staffing and failure data and by the Supreme Court's own readiness concerns	In principle resolvable independently of the other two, through better sequencing and resourcing, as the Kerala comparison in Section 5.1 suggests

The framework is not additive — this article does not claim the three burdens sum to a total “burden score” — but it clarifies three relationships public argument currently obscures. First, the diglossic and administrative burdens are largely independent in origin: a state could resolve its administrative burden through better sequencing while the diglossic burden persisted untouched, since the latter originates in Tamil's own register structure rather than in curricular administration. Second, the two nonetheless interact in one consequential direction: the diglossic burden is *magnified* by administrative deficits, because under-prepared and under-supported teachers are

precisely those least able to provide the explicit H–L bridging instruction that Section 4 identifies as the indicated response — so implementation failure does not merely add a separate cost, it compounds the linguistic one. Instructional time is the related channel through which language count could touch the diglossic burden indirectly: a third language that displaces Tamil instructional hours does not create the H–L gap, but it narrows the curricular room available for bridging it — the sense in which Table 6's caveat about curricular time pressure should be read. Third, the cognitive burden, being weakly evidenced on its own terms, functions in public debate primarily as a rhetorical amplifier for the other two: objections that are actually about diglossia or administration are routinely phrased as “three languages will overload the child,” because that framing carries more immediate emotional purchase than a claim about register distance or teacher-vacancy rates, even where the latter are the better-evidenced grounds available. Recognising this substitution is a precondition for arguing Tamil Nadu's strongest case — the diglossic and administrative burdens — on its own considerable merits.

8. Conclusion and Policy Implications

This article has tested, against comparative state-level evidence, the assumption shared by both sides of the 2026 dispute over Tamil Nadu's language policy: that the number of languages a child studies is the decisive variable for learning outcomes. Kerala's trilingual outcomes on English proficiency and employability rival Tamil Nadu's bilingual outcomes on the same measures, while several trilingual Hindi-belt states perform far worse than either. Tamil Nadu's own foundational-literacy figures show no advantage attributable to its bilingual policy, and on several NAS measures show a marked disadvantage, subject to the sampling caution stated in Sections 3.2 and 9. Section 3.3 engaged the strongest challenge to this reading — that Kerala succeeds because of, not despite, a well-implemented trilingual formula — and found it not decisively excludable but considerably less parsimonious than the account offered here.

In place of the language-count framing, Section 7's framework disaggregates three burdens currently treated as one. The cognitive burden receives little support from either the comparative data or the developmental literature on childhood multilingualism. The diglossic burden is well supported by the sociolinguistic and reading-acquisition literature on Tamil's H–L register distance, but it originates within monolingual Tamil literacy acquisition and is neither created by nor substantially relieved by any particular choice about a second or third language. The administrative burden is the most directly evidenced of the three, illustrated by Karnataka's Hindi-teacher vacancy figures and SSLC failure rates and by the Supreme Court's own request for a CBSE readiness report ahead of its July 2026 hearing.

Three implications follow, stated as implications of the analysis rather than as a policy programme. For Tamil Nadu, the analysis points inward: the most promising line of intervention on the evidence reviewed lies in explicit bridge-register instruction between spoken and written Tamil in the primary grades, and in assessment instruments that disaggregate H-variety literacy from L-variety oral competence — proposals whose direction the diglossic account indicates, but which require the empirical testing specified in Section 9 before adoption. For the Union, any language mandate, whatever its merits, requires realistic lead time, funded teacher recruitment, and completed materials before enforcement; a seven-week timeline against interim textbooks converts even a defensible policy into an administrative imposition. For Tamil linguistics, scholarly attention is more productively directed toward the diglossia question — where the literature remains thin relative to its pedagogical significance — than toward re-litigating the two-versus-three-language question on cognitive-load grounds.

The core claim can be stated concisely: the two-versus-three-language debate is analytically misframed insofar as it treats language count as the primary pedagogical variable; disaggregating the burdens would allow Tamil Nadu's genuine and well-evidenced objections — a compressed implementation timeline, conditional funding used as a compliance instrument, and a persistent literacy shortfall within Tamil itself — to be argued on their own merits, rather than routed through a language-count framing that the comparative evidence reviewed here does not sustain.

9. Limitations, Anticipated Objections, and Directions for Further Research

Several limitations should be stated plainly, both for scholarly candour and because they mark the most useful directions for follow-up work.

First, the state-level comparisons in Section 3 are correlational, not causal, and Section 3.4 explains why a formal regression across the language-count variable is not statistically meaningful given the near-absence of cross-sectional variance outside Tamil Nadu. A properly controlled study, ideally exploiting within-state or within-district variation in the timing or intensity of three-language implementation, would be necessary to make any stronger claim than the negative finding advanced here.

Second, the NAS 2021 round's exclusion of several Tamil Nadu districts owing to a natural calamity introduces a sampling irregularity specific to that state and year, as noted in Section 3.2; conclusions resting on Tamil Nadu's NAS 2021 standing should be treated with corresponding caution pending a methodologically unimpaired round.

Third, two objections to the diglossia argument deserve explicit reply. A critic might object that Tamil Nadu's low ASER scores reflect socioeconomic factors — household poverty, first-

generation learners, pandemic-era learning loss — rather than diglossia. This is partly correct and is not denied here: socioeconomic factors certainly contribute, as they do everywhere. But they cannot be the whole account, because on the standard socioeconomic indicators Tamil Nadu compares favourably with the national average, while its foundational-literacy figure falls below it; a purely socioeconomic explanation predicts the opposite ordering. The diglossic account is offered as a language-specific contributor consistent with that anomaly, not as a monocausal explanation, and only the error-classification study specified below can apportion the two. A second critic might object that the argument neglects students in English-medium and other non-Tamil-medium schools, whose numbers are substantial and growing. This is a genuine scope limitation: the diglossia argument applies directly to Tamil-medium instruction and to the Tamil-language subject taught in all streams, and its interaction with English-medium schooling — where the child faces a second-language medium *and* the Tamil H–L gap in the Tamil class — is a distinct and arguably harder problem, flagged here for separate study.

Fourth, the diglossia literature reviewed in Section 4, while well established in its qualitative dimensions since Ferguson, Fishman, Britto, and Schiffman, remains underdeveloped in the quantitative reading-acquisition tradition specifically for Tamil. The Singapore-based comparative research (Nag & Narayanan, 2019, and companion studies in the same volume) is the principal exception: it documents Tamil children's early orthographic knowledge and reading development within an explicitly diglossic frame, and it finds the published record for Tamil markedly thinner than the parallel record for Malay. The study that would close the gap can be specified concretely: a cluster-randomised comparison, within Tamil Nadu's government-school system, of schools receiving explicit H–L bridge-register instruction in Classes 3–4 against matched control schools, stratified by district and socioeconomic composition, with reading and spelling errors classified by whether they are attributable to the H–L gap specifically — following the error-taxonomy approach developed for Malay — and with H-register literacy and L-register oral competence assessed as separate outcomes. Until such a study exists, the pedagogical implications in Section 4.3 should be read as well-motivated hypotheses, not established findings ready for curricular adoption.

Finally, this article has confined itself to the pedagogical and sociolinguistic dimensions of a dispute that, as Section 6 notes, extends into recruitment examinations, public employment, and the constitutional distribution of authority over language policy. A fuller constitutional-law treatment of the Concurrent List question falls outside this article's scope and is left for separate treatment, ideally once the Supreme Court's pending hearing clarifies whether the 2026 litigation will engage that question directly.

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Negation in Malto

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Abstract

This study illustrates differences in the process of negation marking process between the variations of Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya. It also illustrates the commonalities they exhibit in marking negation. This paper shows that Malto has dedicated a negative imperative. This study examines two distinct forms of copula negation that signify various types of copula predicates. This study explains how negative constructions with an indefinite pronoun and WH words provide a negative reading, and how double negatives provide a negative reading.

Keywords: Malto, negation, double negative, copula negation, suffixation, infixation.

1. Introduction

Malto is one of the North-Dravidian languages spoken by tribal groups like Mal Pahariya and Sauriya Pahariya in Pakur, Godda, and Sahibganj districts of Jharkhand. According to Eberhard and Fennig (2022), Malto is also an endangered language on the verge of extinction. Furthermore, in terms of linguistic works on Malto, apart from a handful of descriptive grammars, including Droese (1884), Mahapatra (1979), Kobayashi (2000, 2012) and Puttaswamy (2009), Malto remains largely understudied. There are two types of varieties in Malto: Mal Paharia and Sauriya Paharia.

Zanuttini (2001) mentions three different types of negation. They are the following:

Morphological Negation: The dependent negation morpheme that can be attached to the

verb (Iatridou & Zeijlstra 2013). In (1), *-me-* is a dependent morpheme and it has been attached to the verb by infixation.

(1) john elmalari sermedi (Turkish)

John apples like.NEG.PST.3SG
'John doesn't like apples.'

Morphosyntactic Negation: Negative auxiliary expresses tense, aspect, mood, person, number, and gender. In (2), *nəv* is an auxiliary negation verb, and it hosts tense, person and gender marking.

(2) mi ghar dza-t nəv-to (Marathi)

I.NOM home go-IPFV not-PST.1SGM
'I was not going home.'

Lexical Negation: Independent and overt lexeme mark negation in a sentence. In (3), *nahi* is auxiliary verb. It does not inflect for person, number, gender, and tense.

(3) akash pad^heta nahi hai (Hindi)

Akash study NEG be.PRS
'Akash doesn't study.'

(4), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), (14) and (15) are examples of Sauriya Pahariya variation. All the following examples show that Malto has dependent morphemes that mark negation, thus Malto has morphological negation.

Sauriya Pahariya Variation

Present tense

In (5), *-ol-* is dependent morpheme. It marks the negation. The process of forming negation is infixation. So, it gets infixed between the root verb and the person, number marking. Infixation is possible in the present tense for marking negation in the Sauriya Pahariya variation.

(4) mo:q-i-n

eat-PRES-1SG
'I eat' (Kobayashi 2012: 46)

(5) mo:q-ol-(a)-ke-n

eat-NEG.SFX-(E)-PST.SFX.1SG
'I do not eat' (Kobayashi 2012: 46)

Future Tense

In (7), *-ala* is a dependent morpheme. It marks negation in the future tense. The process of attaching the dependent morpheme to the verb is suffixation. In the Sauriya Pahariya variation, negation in the future tense is marked through the suffixation.

- (6) mo:q-e-n
- eat-FUT-1SG
'I will eat' (Kobayashi 2012: 47)
- (7) mo:q-e-n-ala
- eat-FUT-1SG-NEG.SUF
'I will not eat' (Kobayashi 2012: 47)

Past Tense

In (9), *-la-* is dependent marking. It marks negation in the past tense. It gets infix in the root verb and person, number marking. The process of attaching the dependent morpheme to the verb is infixation. In the Sauriya Pahariya variation, negation in the past tense is marked through infixation.

- (8) moq-qe-n
- eat-PST-1SG
'I ate ' (Kobayashi 2012: 47)
- (9) mo:q-la-ke-n
- eat-NEG.SFX-PST-1SG
'I did't eat ' (Kobayashi 2012: 47)

Subjunctive

In (11), negation in subjunctive is marked by *-la-* dependent morpheme through infixation in Sauriya Pahariya variation.

- (10) mo:q-l-eh
- eat-SBJV-3SG.M
'He would eat' (Kobayashi 2012: 48)
- (11) mo:q-la-le-h
- eat-NEG.SFX-SBJV-3SG.M
'He would not eat' (Kobayashi 2012: 48)

Optative

In (13), negation in optative is marked by *-om-* dependent morpheme through infixation in Sauriya Pahariya variation.

- (12) mo:q-a.nd-ed
- eat-OPT-3SG.NM

‘She may eat’

(Kobayashi 2012: 48)

eat-NEG.SFX-OPT-3SG.NM

‘She may not eat’

(13) mo:q-om-and-ed

(Kobayashi 2012: 48)

Imperative

In (15), negation in the imperative is marked by *-om-* dependent morpheme through infixation in Sauriya Pahariya variation.

eat-IMP

‘eat’

(14) mo:q-a

(Kobayashi 2012: 49)

eat-NG.IMP

‘Don’t eat’

(15) mo:q-om-a

(Kobayashi 2012: 49)

In the Sauriya Pahariya variation, Negation in the future tense is marked by suffixation. Negation in the past tense, present tense, subjunctive, optative, and imperative is marked by the process of infixation.

2. Comparing Negation in Sauriya Pahariya variation with Mal Pahariya variation

Mal Pahariya variation

Present Tense

There are two ways to mark negation in the Mal Pahariya variation. In (17), ‘*məla*’ is used for marking the negation. ‘*məla*’ is a negation auxiliary verb in Malto. In (18), ‘*məla*’ is infixed between verb and tense, person, and number marking. So, in Mal Pahariya, the negation in the present tense is marked by ‘*məla*’ as an auxiliary verb or as infixation, whereas, in Sauriya Pahariya variation has ‘*-ol-*’ morpheme that marks negation by infixing it.

- (16) ajay-ek seve ləbani
ajay-DAT apple like
‘Ajay likes an apple.’

- (17) ajay-ek seve ləbani məla
ajay-DAT apple like NEG
‘Ajay does not like an apple.’

- (18) e:n tat^hje moho-məla-tan
I mnago eat-NEG-PST.1SG
'I don't eat a mango.'

Future Tense

In Sauriya Pahariya variation, negation in the future is marked by the suffix '-ala'. But, in Mal Pahariya variation, negation is marked through the process of infixation by affix '-la' as in examples (20) and (21).

- (19) e:n eskul-ek ek-kan
I school-DAT go-FUT
'I will go to school.'
- (20) e:n eskul-ek ek-la-n
I school-DAT go-NEG-FUT.1SG
'I will not go to school.'
- (21) en jagu-n ləp-la-n
I food-ACC eat-NEG-FUT.1SG
'I will not eat.'

Past Tense

The process of marking negation in Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya is the same. They both mark negation in past through the infixation as in examples (22), (23) and (24).

- (22) ajay-ek oq^hik ek-ina
ajay-DAT home.DAT go-PST.3SGM
'Ajay went to school.'
- (23) ajay-ek oq^hik ek-la-ina
ajay-DAT home.DAT go-NEG-PST.3SGM
'Ajay did not go to school.'
- (24) en jagu-n ləp-la-in
I food-ACC eat-NEG-PST.1SG
'I did not eat food.'

Optative

Optative sentence in Mal Pahariya is negated with 'məla' as in example (26). Whereas, in Sauriya Paharia '-om-' morpheme is used for marking negation through infixation.

- (25) a:yu tat^hye mohot loɽi
she mango eat-INF may

‘She may eat a mango.’

- (26) a:yu ʈaʈʰye mohot loɽo məla
she mango eat.INF may NEG
‘She may not eat a mango.’

Imperative

The process of marking negation in imperative in both variations is the same. It is marked through infixation by ‘-om-’ morpheme as in (13) and (28).

- (27) odʰik eɽk-a
home.DAT go-IMP
‘Go home.’

- (28) odʰik ek-om-a
home.DAT go-NEG-IMP
‘Don’t go home.’

3. Negation in Copula

Payne (1997) says non-verbal clauses can be divided into different types as follows:

Proper inclusion

There are two ways to negate proper inclusion. In (30), ‘məla’ marks negation. In (32), negation is marked with ‘məla’ by infixing it between the verb and the person and number marking. Examples (29) and (31) do not have verbs. The ‘-e’ marking is involved in forming the predication.

- (29) ajay-e doctor-e
ajay-e doctor-e
‘Ajay is doctor.’
- (30) ajay-e doctor-e məla
Ajay-e doctor-e NEG
‘Ajay is not doctor.’
- (31) enu doctor-en
I doctor-1SG
‘I am doctor.’

- (32) e:n doctor-e mələ-tan
I doctor-e NEG-PST
'I am not doctor.'

Attribution

An attributive predicate is negated by *məla* auxiliary verb as in example (34).

- (33) a:hu hus^hia:r-e
he intelligent-E
'He is intelligent.'
- (34) a:hu hus^hia:r-e məla
he intelligent-E NEG
'He is not intelligent.'

Locative Predication

A locative predicate is negated with the help of the negative morpheme '-o' as in example (36). '*bei*' is the present 'be' form of the verb. It is negated by suffixing -o morpheme.

- (35) koləme tabule-no bei
pen table-LOC be.PRS
'Pen table par hai.'
- (36) koləme tabule-no bəyo
pen table-LOC be.PRS.NEG
'Pen is not table.'

Existential Predication

The existential predicate is formed by '*bei*'. In example (38), a sentence is negated by '-o' morpheme suffixation.

- (37) berəhe dade-no bei
cat jungle-LOC be.PRS
'There exists the wild cat.'
- (38) berəhe dade-no bəyo
cat jungle-LOC be.PRS.NEG
'There doesn't exist the wild cat.'

Possessive predicate

A possessive predicate is negated by '-o' morpheme by suffixation. The suffix is attached to be a verb, as in example (40).

- (39) ajay-e pede-no car-e bei
ajay-E have-LOC car-E be.PRS
'Ajay has a car.'

- (40) *ajay-e pede-no car-e bəyo*
ajay-E have-LOC car-E be.PRS.NEG
 ‘Ajay does not have a car.’

Equation

Equation predicate is negated by ‘*məla*’ auxiliary verb as in (42).

- (41) *a:yu eŋ dudu*
that my mother
 ‘That’s my mother.’
- (42) *a:yu eŋ dudu məla*
that my mother NEG
 ‘That’s not my mother.’

A copula is negated in three ways. The first way is to use the negative auxiliary. The second way is to infix ‘*-məla-*’ between the root verb and the person, number marking. The third way is to add the suffix ‘*-o*’ to be a verb.

4. The position of negation in Malto

There are two positions of negative marking. One is Pre-verbal, and the other is Post-verbal. Negation marked preverbally is called preverbal negation. Negation marked postverbally is called Post-verbal negation. Examples (43), (44), (45), (46), and (47) show that Malto has Post-Verbal negation.

- (43) *mo:q-e-n-ala*
eat-FUT-1SG-NEG.SUF
 ‘I will not eat’ (Kobayashi 2012: 47)
- (44) *a:yu doctor-ni məla*
that.girl doctor-F NEG
 ‘That woman is not a doctor.’
- (45) *e:n jagu ləpo-toko mələ-tan*
I food eat-TOKO NEG-PST
 ‘I don’t want to eat food.’
- (46) *berəhe dəde-no bəyo*
cat jungle-LOC be.PRS.NEG
 ‘There doesn’t exist the wild cat.’
- (47) *en jagu ləp-la-in*
I food eat-NEG-PST.1SG

‘I did not eat food.’

Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya variations, they both have Post-verbal negation.

5. Marking negation with the help of WH and in-definite pronouns

In Malto, most of the indefinite pronouns are formed by WH words. *ikne* and *indir* are WH words in Malto. The following are examples:

- nowhere → *ikne a: no məla*
- never → *ikne kaḍa məla*
- nothing → *indir-ne məla*
- whoever → *indir-ho pədiə*

In (48), ‘*indrane*’ together with ‘*məla*’ gives the reading of ‘nothing’. Malto does not have a separate word for ‘nothing’. The reading is possible when ‘*indrane*’ is licensed by the negative auxiliary verb ‘*məla*’.

- (48) e:n indrane a:hu məla-tan
I WH that NEG-PST
‘I know nothing.’

In (49), ‘*nekene*’ is indefinite pronoun. There are two negatives, one in the form of an indefinite pronoun and the other in the form of a verb. ‘*nekene*’ is licensed by negative -*la-* morpheme. Thus, a double negative in Malto gives a negative reading.

- (49) e:n nekene tud-la-in
I nobody see-NEG-PRS.1SG
‘maine kisi ko bhi nahi dekha.’

In (50), ‘*indrə-ne*’ is a WH word that gets licensed by the negative auxiliary verb ‘*məla*’ and gives the reading of ‘no-use’.

- (50) a: indrə-ne kadze məla
that indrə-NE work NEG
‘He is of no use.’

6. Conclusion

Malto has morphological negation. Malto has two variations that are Sauriya Pahariya and Mal Pahariya. The marking of negation in both variations differs. Marking negation by suffixation in the future tense is possible in the Sauriya Pahariya variation, but it is not

possible in the Mal Pahariya. Mal Pahariya strictly sticks to infixation for marking negation. In Sauriya Pahariya, the marking of negation is marked through ‘-ol’ morpheme through infixation, but in Mal Pahariya it is marked by the negative auxiliary ‘māla’. This negative auxiliary verb ‘māla’ also inflects for the person, number, gender, and tense marking. Malto has a dedicated imperative negation. Imperative negation is marked by -om through infixation.

In Malto, negation in copula is marked by ‘māla’ and ‘bāyo’ auxiliary negative verbs. ‘māla’ negates the proper inclusion predicate, the attribution predicate, and the equation predicate. Whereas ‘bāyo’ negates locative predicate, existential predicate, and possessive predicate. The position of Malto is always post-verbal. The reading of nothing is generated by WH word ‘indra’ and negation auxiliary verb ‘māla’. The double negative provides the negative reading in Malto.

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Variation in Person, Number & Gender (PNG) Agreement in Azamgarhi and Ballia Dialects of Bhojpuri

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Abstract

This paper discusses Person, Number, and Gender (PNG) agreement in the dialects of Azamgarhi and Ballia Bhojpuri. Two distinct Bhojpuri dialects belong to Eastern UP. Bhojpuri language is the living language in Uttar Pradesh, West Bihar, Northern Chhattisgarh, and in the lower belt of south Nepal. The language is genetically related to an Indo- Aryan language family. The dialectal variants of Bhojpuri language spoken in these areas can be easily found. The variations in different dialects can be identified at phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic levels. The intra-district variation is the testimony to the fact that Bhojpuri is not homogeneous even in a single district (Dubey, 1996). The objective of the present study is to explore the variations in agreement (particularly related to Person, Number, and Gender as seen) in Bhojpuri dialects of Azamgarhi and Ballia Bhojpuri. The qualitative and descriptive research methodologies have been used for

the present study. Data have been collected from its native speakers. The findings of the research reveal that there are two distinct varieties of the Bhojpuri dialect that differ from each other in terms of agreement patterns, particularly person, number, and gender agreement. The limitation of the study can be seen in terms of analyzing agreement of number, person, and gender only.

Keywords: Agreement, Syntactic Agreement, Bhojpuri Dialects, Indo Aryan Language.

Introduction

The Bhojpuri language is an Indo-Aryan language that is mostly spoken in Bihar, the eastern section of Uttar Pradesh, a portion of northern Chhattisgarh, and the lower belt of south Nepal. Bhojpuri is typically written in the devanagari script, which is also used for other Indian language like Hindi and Sanskrit. However, in some region, the Kaithi script was historically used for writing of Bhojpuri dialects.

This language is mostly spoken the western part of the Magadhan group of the IA language family of India (Tiwari,1960: xxi). Bhojpuri language has been also known as the Bihari language. Bihari implies a single language under which Magadhan, Maithli and Bhojpuri are kept as dialects (Grierson,1898. vol.V,pp.V). In British India, the Bhojpuri dialects were spoken in many cities or district including Champaran, Saran, Gazipur, Azamgarh, and Ballia (John Beames:1868, pp 483-508). Historically, Bhojpuri language has derived from the name “Bhojpur” which belongs to Shahabad district. This district is situated at few miles south of Ganga River and about 60 miles west of Patna district of Bihar. At present, this language is widely spoken as the speakers of this language have migrated to many states of India. While migrating, the mother tongue language is also carried by the migrant population. Thus, there are now many Bhojpuri speakers in the states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Delhi, Assam, West Bengal, and so forth. Bhojpuri language speakers are also found in a Jammu Kashmir of the North India where approximately 8,824 speakers are residing (census:2011). Bhojpuri speakers are also found in the southern Indian in state such as the Kerala. In Kerala, Bhojpuri language speakers are found approximately 1,688 (Census: 2011). In Western India's states and Eastern India's states such as Gujarat and Assam the Bhojpuri speakers are approximately 1,37,956 in Gujarat and 2,78,052 in Assam (Census: 2011). The Census data 2011 indicate that Bhojpuri has the second highest

number of speakers in India. It ranks just below Hindi and its speakers' strength is higher than any other languages such as Magahi, Chhattisgarhi and Rajasthani. Further, Bhojpuri speakers constitute the largest ethno-linguistic group in Mauritius. This language belongs to Eastern Indo-Aryan language group and speakers are approximately 5,05,79,447 (Census of India Report,2011).

Bhojpuri Dialect and its Classification

Chatterji (1926) has classified the Magadha speeches in three groups namely Western Magadhan group (Bhojpuri), central Magadhan group (Maithili and Magahi) and Eastern Magadhan group (Bengali Assamese and Oryia).

Bhojpuri dialectal varieties and creoles are also spoken in various part of world. This language had been highly influenced by other languages in many parts of the world. Mauritius Bhojpuri includes many creoles and English words. Outside India, it has a sizable diaspora in places like Mauritius, Nepal, Guyana, Suriname, and Fiji. As a language it has spread over an area of almost 45000 square miles. As per Verma (2003), the Bhojpuri dialect in India is pragmatically divided into four distinct regional varieties: Standard Bhojpuri (the southern standard, spoken in Bihar's Saran, Rohtas, in some parts of Champaran, and in Ballia and eastern Ghazipur of Uttar Pradesh); Northern Bhojpuri (found in Deoria, Gorakhpur, Basti and in some parts of Azamgarh, Mirzapur, and Varanasi of Uttar Pradesh); and Nagpuria (spoken in the south of the Son River of Jharkhand's Palamu and Ranchi districts).

Further, Verma (2003) has also identified the 5th variety of this language i.e. 'Tharu', a variety of Bhojpuri that is spoken in Tarai region of Nepal and also in the adjoining area such as the upper strips of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar i.e. from Bahraich to Champaran.

There are two distinct geographical dialects of Bhojpuri, namely Azamgarhi Bhojpuri and Ballia Bhojpuri. Ballia Bhojpuri is generally classified as a variety of Western Bhojpuri and demonstrates notable divergences from more stereotypically "Bihar-centric" Bhojpuri, particularly with respect to its phonological system and certain lexical and morpho-syntactic features (Chatterji, 1926; & Grierson, 1903). As a vernacular variety, it is linguistically distinct from Azamgarhi Bhojpuri. More specifically, Ballia Bhojpuri is characterized by a relatively higher degree of nasalization, a frequent occurrence of retroflex consonants, and a discernible influence of Bihari phonetic patterns (Chatterji, 1926; Grierson, 1903). In contrast, Azamgarhi Bhojpuri

exhibits comparatively reduced nasalization and displays its own distinct phonological configurations. These differences highlight the internal diversity within Bhojpuri and underscore the role of regional variation in shaping its linguistic structure (Pandharipande, 1997).

The comparison between Azamgarhi Bhojpuri and Ballia Bhojpuri reveals significant variation in the domain of Person–Number–Gender (PNG) agreement, particularly in verbal morphology and auxiliary systems of the language. In line with earlier observations by Grierson (1903) and Chatterji (1926), Bhojpuri as an Indo-Aryan language that exhibits relatively weak gender agreement, with grammatical relations being primarily governed by person and number distinctions, often further nuanced by honorificity. Within this framework, Ballia Bhojpuri, typically classified under standard Bhojpuri, demonstrates a comparatively conservative and morphologically richer agreement system (Tiwari: 1960). In contrast, Azamgarhi Bhojpuri shows a tendency toward morphological leveling, with reduced paradigmatic variation and a preference for the *h-* auxiliary series (e.g., *haī*, *hau*), which marks person and number distinctions in a less differentiated manner (Tiwari: 1960).

From a gender perspective, both dialects exhibit a high degree of neutralization, with minimal or inconsistent marking in verbal agreement, thereby diverging from the more robust gender agreement system found in Standard Hindi (Comrie, 1989). This suggests that gender plays a subordinate role in the agreement hierarchy of Bhojpuri dialects, while person and number remain the primary grammatical categories. Furthermore, these structural differences may also be interpreted in light of sociolinguistic factors. Azamgarhi Bhojpuri, situated in a linguistically transitional and socially heterogeneous region, reflects greater leveling and simplification, possibly due to dialect contact and community interaction across caste and religious groups (Dubey, 1996). In contrast, Ballia Bhojpuri retains more distinct agreement morphology, which may index stronger regional identity and relatively conservative linguistic norms. Thus, the variation in PNG agreement between these two dialects not only highlights internal linguistic diversity but also underscores the role of social and geographical factors in shaping agreement patterns.

Agreement is a phenomenon in natural language in which the form of one word or morpheme carries with the form of another word or phrase in sentence. Agreement phenomena are some of grammar and this is essential for creating grammatical and well-formed sentences (Baker,

2008). The generative grammar has explored the principal, Mechanism and Parameters that govern syntactic agreements (Chomsky, 2000).

Selection of Geographical Area

The reason for choosing the Bhojpuri dialects of these two regions is that Azamgarh and Ballia are two prominent districts of Uttar Pradesh. Azamgarh is a bilingual area where Awadhi language is mostly spoken as the first language and Bhojpuri is spoken as the second language. Bhojpuri is usually spoken in the Eastern part of Azamgarh and in the western part of Azamgarh people use mostly Awadhi language. The people of Azamgarh use 37.46% Bhojpuri language (Census: 2011). Ballia is also a very important district in context to Bhojpuri language. Bhojpuri is the mother tongue of that area and people speak Hindi and Urdu, too. According to Grierson, Ballia has standard Bhojpuri and its strength is up to 81.96% of the total speakers.

Previous Works

The research on Bhojpuri has been done extensively, from the perspectives of sociolinguistics, morphology, syntax, phonetics, and phonology. Grierson (1903, Vol. 5, p. 5), stated Bhojpuri as a Bihari language which emerged from Ardha Magadhi, Magadhi, and Maithili. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Tiwari (1960) provided the most influential description of Bhojpuri's origins and development. Other scholars, including Dubey (1996), Mishra (1971), Chatterjee (1926), kumar (2020), Khan & Singh (2020) have also contributed significantly to the studies of Bhojpuri language.

Numerous works have also been done on the topic of agreement. Baker (2008) defines agreement as a fascinating topic because it involves multiple factors, including syntax, morphology, semantics, pragmatics, and real-time processing. Key scholars who have contributed in syntax and agreement include Launey (1991), Benmamoun (2000), Fassi Fehri (1993), Chomsky (2000, 2001), Haspelmath (2004), and Nevins (2007).

The study on variation in speech in Sociolinguistics and dialectology attracted significant attention in the second half of the 20th century. The most prominent study on variation in speech was done by William Labov (1966), who elaborated the social stratification of New York City speech; his seminal work also includes the Martha's Vineyard study (1963). Other speech

variationists include Chambers (1995), Trudgill (1998), Herzog (1968), Gumperz (1958), Chaturvedi, Bright, and Ramanujan (1972), and Hasnain & Mohan (2013).

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The study on dialectal variations in Bhojpuri is a few, therefore this paper tries to explore the variations in PNG agreement between Bhojpuri dialects based on geographical location, especially between Ballia & Azamgarhi Bhojpuri dialects.

Research Methods used in the Study

This paper uses qualitative as well as descriptive methods of research in Linguistics. The data have been collected through questionnaire, observations, and personal interview of the native speakers of the language. The fieldwork for collecting data has been done in the area of Azamgarh and Ballia districts. The past study and old record have been also cross checked and reviewed for gathering data from the secondary sources. Initially, the pilot survey was done with the help of 50 sentences to identify whether the dialectal variations exist or not.

Data Analysis

This section analyzes the data in terms of person, number, & gender agreement. The comparative analysis of two different dialects of Bhojpuri namely Azamgarhi and Balia Bhojpuri has been done to identify the PNG variations by analyzing the present tense affirmative sentences.

Person Agreement

In linguistics, person agreement denotes to the grammatical agreement between a verb and its subject. Grammar classifies person into first person, second person, and third person categories of the pronoun. Person agreement is commonly expressed through verbal inflections, pronouns, or auxiliary markers. As per Comrie (1989) & Dixon (1994), person agreement refers to the grammatical correspondence between subject and verb according to person categories. Here are some instances of how person agreement varies in two distinct geographical Bhojpuri dialects. Consider the following examples taken from present tense:

Examples:

1)	həm	əsko:l	džāli	(Azamgarhi dialect)
[1st.P.]	[OBJ.]	[V. - PRS]		

I go to school.

2) *həm* *əsko:l* *ɖʒātəni* (Ballia dialect)
[1st.P.] [OBJ.] [V. - PRS]

I go to School.

3) *tʊ* *əsko:l* *ɖʒāle/ ɖʒālə* (Azamgarhi dialect)
[2nd.P.] [OBJ.] [V. - PRS. NON-HON./HON.]

You go to school.

4) *tʊ* *əsko:l* *ɖʒātəɽə* (Ballia dialect)
[2nd.P.] [OBJ.] [V.-PRS.]

You go to school.

5) *rovāke* *əsko:l* *ɖʒātəni-ɖʒə* (Ballia dialect)
[2nd. P. HON.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS. HON]

You go to school.

6) *ʊ* *əsko:l* *ɖʒālə* (Azamgarhi dialect)
[3rd.P.] [OBJ.] [V.-PRS]

He goes to school.

7) *ʊ* *əsko:l* *ɖʒātā* (Ballia dialect)
[3rd.P.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]

He goes to school.

The above examples, from sentences (1) to (7), represent affirmative constructions in the present tense. In the examples (1) and (2), the first-person pronoun */həm/* in both Azamgarhi as well as in Ballia dialects, remains the same as whereas the verbal agreement differs from each other. In Azamgarhi dialect, the first person pronoun agrees with the verb */ɖʒāli/* but in Ballia dialect, it agrees with the verb */ɖʒātəni/* which is different from each other. Similarly, the second-person pronoun */tʊ/* in examples (3) and (4) is also similar in both the dialects, but the verbs differ in each variety such as */ɖʒāle/* or */ɖʒālə/* is used in Azamgarhi dialect but */ɖʒātəɽə/* in Ballia dialect. It is important to note here that in Ballia Bhojpuri, */rovāke/* is frequently as the second-person pronoun for honorific purposes. Moreover, the third-person pronoun */ʊ/*, meaning “he,” is similar in the both dialects but verbs used with them are different as in examples (6) and (7). Thus, the

variation in person agreement patterns is clearly observable in both the two different dialects of the same Bhojpuri language.

Number Agreement

The linguistic agreement between sentence elements based on number categories, such as singular and plural, is referred to as number agreement. It frequently occurs between the subject and the verb, although agreement may also appear between nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and determiners in many languages (Comrie: 1989 & Corbett: 2006). Bhojpuri has two categories of number agreement such as singular and plural but variation in the number agreement of Azamgarhi and Ballia Bhojpuri is quietly observable. Some examples of the same are given and discussed below:

Examples:

- 8) həm bādžār dźāilə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [1st P.SG.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]
 I go to market.
- 9) həm bādžār dźātəni (Ballia dialect)
 [1st P.SG.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]
 I go to market.
- 10) həm-log bādžār dźāilə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [1st P.PL.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]
 I go to market.
- 11) həmnike bādžār dźātbənidžə (Ballia dialect)
 [1st P.PL.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]
 I go to market.
- 12) tū bādžār dźāilə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [2nd P.SG.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS]
 I go to market.
- 13) tū bādžār dźātəṛə (Ballia dialect)
 [2nd. P.SG.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS.]
 You go to market.

- 14) tɔ-log bādʒār dʒāilə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [2nd P.PL.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS]
 I go to market.
- 15) tɔhən-log bādʒār dʒātbrədʒə (Ballia dialect)
 [2nd. P.PL.] [OBJ.] [V.-PRS.]
 You go to market.
- 16) ʊ bādʒār dʒālə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [3rd. P.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]
 He goes to market.
- 17) ʊ bādʒār dʒātā (Ballia dialect)
 [3rd. P.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS]
 He goes to market.
- 18) ʊ-log bādʒār dʒāne (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [3rd. P.PL] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]
 They go to market.
- 19) ʊ-log bādʒār dʒātbrəɳ (Ballia dialect)
 [3rd. P.PL.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS]
 They go to market.

All the above examples from (8) to (19) are in affirmative and in the present tense. Here, the first-person singular pronoun /həm/ is used in both the dialects but the plural of the first-person pronoun differs across these two dialects of the Bhopuri language such as the plural of the first person pronoun /həm-log/ is used in the Azamgarhi dialect, whereas /həmnike/ occurs in the Ballia dialect and the verbal agreement patterns also vary between the dialects. In Azamgarhi dialect, the verb /dʒāilə/, meaning “go,” agrees with the first-person singular pronoun, as well as with the plural pronoun whereas in the Ballia dialect the verb /dʒātəni/ agrees only with the singular pronoun and the verb /dʒātbrəɳ/ is used with the plural pronoun in Ballia variety of Bhojpuri. Thus, the variation is observed not only in the pronominal forms but also with the verbal agreement patterns across these two dialects.

In the above examples from (12) to (15), it is observed that the second-person singular pronoun /*tʊ*/ is used in both the Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects but they differ in their verbal agreement patterns. In Azamgarhi dialect, the second person singular pronoun /*tʊ*/ agrees with the verb /*ḍḡāilə*/ whereas in the Ballia dialect, the second-person singular pronoun /*tʊ*/ agrees with the verb /*ḍḡātəṛə*/. Furthermore, the second-person plural pronouns also differ across the two dialects and their verbal agreement also differs from each other. The Azamgarhi dialect employs plural form of the second person pronoun as /*tʊ-log*/ while in the Ballia dialect it is /*tʊhən-log*/. These plural pronouns agree with the verbs /*ḍḡāilə*/ and /*ḍḡātḡəḍḡə*/, respectively in these two different dialects. Thus, variation is completely evident in both the dialects at their use in pronominal forms and their verbal agreement patterns of the second-person plural pronouns.

Similarly, the examples from (16) to (19) illustrate third-person number agreement. The third-person singular pronoun /*ʊ*/, meaning “he,” is identical in both dialects; however, the corresponding verbal forms differ. In the Azamgarhi dialect, the third person singular pronoun /*ʊ*/ agrees with the verb /*ḍḡālə*/, whereas in the Ballia dialect it agrees with /*ḍḡātā*/. The third-person plural pronoun /*ʊ-log*/ is used in both dialects, but its verbal agreement varies. In the Azamgarhi dialect, /*ʊ-log*/ agrees with the verb /*ḍḡāne*/, while in the Ballia dialect it agrees with the verb /*ḍḡātḡəṛn*/. Although the third-person singular and plural pronouns remain largely similar across these two dialects yet significant variation is found in their verbal agreement patterns.

Gender Agreement

According to Corbett (1991), gender is a grammatical category that divides nouns into different classes based on agreement patterns on related linguistic elements including verbs, pronouns, and adjectives. Gender connects verbally with person and number in several Indo-Aryan languages, including Hindi. However, as compared to standard Hindi, gender agreement is typically less prevalent in Bhojpuri, and several dialects place greater emphasis on person, number, and honorific distinctions. Some instances of variation in gender agreement identified in Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects are discussed below:

Examples:

20)	<i>həm</i>	<i>bāḍḡār</i>	<i>ḍḡāilə</i>	(Azamgarhi dialect)
	[1st P.M.]	[OBJ.]	[V.- PRS.M.marker]	
	I go to market.			

- 21) həm bādžār dʒātbəni (Ballia dialect)
 [1st P.M.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS.M.marker]
 I go to market.
- 22) həm bādžār dʒāilə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [1st P.F.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS.F.marker]
 I go to market.
- 23) həm bādžār dʒātbəni (Ballia dialect)
 [1st P.F.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS.F.marker]
 I go to market.
- 24) tʊ bādžār dʒāilə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [2nd P.M.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS.M.marker]
 I go to market.
- 25) tʊ bādžār dʒātəɾə (Ballia dialect)
 [2nd. P.M.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS.M.marker]
 You go to market.
- 26) tʊ bādžār dʒāilə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [2nd P.F.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS.F.marker]
 I go to market.
- 27) tʊ bādžār dʒātbāɾʊ (Ballia dialect)
 [2nd. P.F.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS.F.marker]
 You go to market.
- 28) ʊ bādžār dʒālə (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [3rd.P. M.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS.M.marker]
 He goes to market.
- 29) ʊ bādžār dʒātā (Ballia dialect)
 [3rd. P.M.] [OBJ.] [V. -PRS.M.marker]
 He goes to market.
- 30) ʊ bādžār dʒāilin (Azamgarhi dialect)
 [3rd. P.F.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS.F.marker]

She goes to market.

- 31) *ʊ* *bādžār* *ḍāṭbāṛin* (Ballia dialect)
 [3rd. P.F.] [OBJ.] [V.- PRS.F.marker]
 She goes to market.

In the above examples, from (20) to (31) variation in gender agreement in the both the dialects has been analysed. The examples (20) and (21) show that despite being the first-person singular masculine pronoun */həm/* same in both the Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects, there appears a variation in the verbal agreement patterns. In the Azamgarhi dialect, the first-person masculine pronoun */həm/* agrees with the verb */ḍāilə/*, whereas in the Ballia dialect it agrees with the verb */ḍāṭbāni/*. Further, the examples (22) and (23) illustrate that the first-person feminine gender */həm/* in both Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects also agrees with the verb differently. Moreover, the verb form */ḍāilə/* in Azamgarhi and the verb form */ḍāṭbāni/* in Ballia dialects remain the same despite changing the gender of the first person pronoun. Thus, examples from both the dialects show variation in gender agreement despite being the same first-person pronoun */həm/* used in both dialects in both genders.

In the above given above examples from (24) to (27) represent gender agreement in the use of 2nd person pronominal with respect to masculine and feminine gender. The pronominal */tʊ/* is used in the same form in both masculine and feminine genders in both the dialects. The second person pronoun */tʊ/* in masculine gender in Azamgarhi dialect takes the verb form */ḍāilə/* whereas in feminine gender it takes the form */ḍāilʊ/*. Similarly, in Ballia dialect, the second person masculine pronoun */tʊ/* takes the verb form */ḍāṭāṛə/* while in feminine gender the verb form changes and it becomes */ḍāṭbāṛʊ/*. Thus, is quite clear that in the use of the second person pronoun in Azamgarhi as well as in Ballia dialect the pronoun remains the same in both the genders but the verb form changes if change in the gender occurs. In both the dialects, gender agreement at pronominal level is evident.

The examples from (28) to (31) demonstrate third-person gender agreement. The third-person pronoun */ʊ/* is identical in both dialects for both masculine and feminine referents, but variation is observed in the verbal agreement patterns. In the masculine category, */ʊ/* agrees with the verb */ḍālə/* in the Azamgarhi dialect and */ḍātā/* in the Ballia dialect. In the feminine category, the same pronoun agrees with */ḍāilin/* in the Azamgarhi dialect and */ḍāṭbāṛin/* in the Ballia

dialect. These examples indicate that while the pronoun forms remain largely unchanged across gender categories in both dialects, gender distinctions are primarily expressed through verbal agreement markers. Furthermore, the verbal forms employed to mark masculine and feminine gender differ systematically between the Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects, demonstrating dialectal variation in gender agreement patterns.

The interrogative sentences in the examples given below from Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects of Bhojpuri language have been analyzed in terms of agreement in interrogative sentences (in past tense) having honorific markers.

Examples:

- 32) *ba:bu: dʒi: kʰa:nəva: kʰa:ini:?* (Ballia dialect)
 [1st.M, Sg.] [OBJ] [V. -PRS. F.] Father, have
 you eaten food?
- 33) *əmma:dʒi: kʰənəva: kʰa:ini: ?* (Ballia)
 [1st .F.Sg] [OBJ] [V.-PRS. F.]
 Mother, you have eaten food?
- 34) *ba:bu:dʒi: kʰənəva: kʰəila:?* (Azamgarhi)
 [1st .M.Sg] [OBJ] [V. -PRS.M] Father,
 you have eaten food?
- 35) *əmma:dʒi: kʰənəva: kʰa:ilu:?* (Azamgarhi)
 [1st .F.Sg] [OBJ] [V. -PRS . F.]
 Mother, you have eaten food?

From the above-mentioned examples, it can be argued that Ballia dialect doesn't show change in agreement with verbs even when the two distinct nouns such */ba:bu: dʒi/* and */əmma:dʒi:/* are used with honorific marker such as */ji/* which denote 'father' and 'mother' in this dialect. In contrast to this, in Azamgarhi dialect of Bhojpuri, there seems to be variation in agreement markers when these two nouns are used. The word */ba:bu: dʒi/* agrees with the verb */kʰəila:/* whereas the word */əmma:dʒi:/* agrees with the verb */kʰa:ilu:/*. Thus, it appears that these two dialects are distinct in agreement patterns while using interrogative sentences with honorific markers.

Findings and Discussion

The study highlights significant variation in agreement pattern across the selected Bhojpuri dialects, particularly in terms of person, number, gender agreement variations in Ballia (standard Bhojpuri) and Azamgarhi Bhojpuri (Western Bhojpuri) dialects.

- a) The first-person pronoun /həm/, the second-person pronoun /tʊ/, and the third-person pronoun /ʊ/ are similar in both the Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects. However, their corresponding verbal agreement patterns differ across the two dialects. In the Ballia dialect, the pronoun /rovāke/ is frequently used as an honorific second-person form. The analysis reveals that, although the pronoun systems of the two dialects are largely similar, significant variation exists in their verbal agreement patterns. These differences may be attributed to geographical and dialectal influences, with the Azamgarhi dialect showing features of Western Bhojpuri and the Ballia dialect exhibiting characteristics closer to Standard Bhojpuri.
- b) The findings also show that the Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects differ in both first-person plural pronoun forms and verbal agreement patterns. While the singular pronoun /həm/ is common to both the dialects, the variation is evident in plural pronouns and corresponding verb forms, reflecting dialectal differences in number agreement. This dialectal reflection has influenced by geographical differences and language contact.
- c) The findings, further, indicate that gender distinction is observed in the Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects. The same pronouns are used across both the dialects in Ist, IInd & IIIrd Persons, in both the masculine and feminine genders but the gender differences are marked with verbal inflection. The verbal forms used for masculine and feminine referents differ systematically between the two dialects, indicating dialectal variation in gender agreement patterns.
- d) Further, while using interrogative sentences with honorific markers in Ballia, it evident that despite change in gender there is no change in the verb forms whereas in Azamgarhi Bhojpuri, with the change in gender, the verb changes and reflect the masculine/ feminine gender as per nouns used with honorific marker like /ji/.
- e) Ultimately, the variation is a found in the collected data from Ballia and Azamgarh Bhojpuri. This variation may be due to the geographical distinctions. The findings

suggest that the Ballia dialect exhibits features associated with Standard Bhojpuri, whereas the Azamgarhi dialect may show the influence of Awadhi and it appears to be Western Bhojpuri variety.

Conclusion

Bhojpuri language being an Indo-Aryan language is mostly spoken in Bihar and in the eastern section of Uttar Pradesh. However, it is also spoken in some other parts of the country as well as in the foreign country like Mauritius. Due to different geographical regions, the language has several dialectal varieties and the structural variations among different dialectal varieties of Bhojpuri language can be identified. The findings of the present research work reveal that the two different varieties of Bhojpuri namely Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects which are spoken in two different regions, one in UP and the other in Bihar region of the country, reflect dialectal variations. The study of person, number and gender agreement between these two dialects highlights that though same 1st person pronouns are used in both the dialects but they differ in terms of their agreement in both the dialects. It is also identified that second person pronouns in singular number remain same but when they are in plural number they differ in these two dialects and they also differ in agreement markers. Further, I, II, and IIIrd person pronouns in both masculine and feminine gender are same in use in both the dialects but they differ in agreement markers. Thus, from the close observation of the analysis, it may be concluded that although there are similarity in the use of the pronominal across these two dialects yet they exhibit different patterns of agreement at the level of person, number and gender.

The study highlights significant patterns of variation between the two distinct dialects of the Bhojpuri which may be very useful in understanding how the same language varies across geographical regions. The study limits to the study of only Azamgarhi and Ballia dialects of Bhojpuri and some more dialectal variations at different levels of linguistic analysis can be attained

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