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Reinterpreting the ‘Maladies’ of ‘Self’ and ‘Exile’: A Study on the Select Poems of Adil Jussawalla

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 30 May 2025; Received in revised form: 28 Jun 2025; Accepted: 03 Jul 2025; Available online: 08 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords – Maladies, Self, Exile, Jussawalla</p>	<p><i>Life beyond the homeland can resemble a sugar-coated pill meant to comfort, like a gentle balm for a feverish child. Yet for a grown man like Adil Jahangir Jussawalla, the sweetness only masks the bitterness within. The transitions between Europe and India feel less like a journey of discovery and more like a relentless carousel, spinning him from one disillusionment to another, with every change of scenery revealing a deeper layer of disappointment beneath the glossy surface. The bitterness of exile and alienation has always been a source of trauma in Jussawalla's observations (Wong and Hassan). As we know, a precise thought needs an accurate expression. Jussawalla's observations on such issues are precisely expressed in his two anthologies of poetry, Land's End and Missing Person. Are these anthologies a remembrance of such chaotic trauma that ultimately left Jussawalla disillusioned regarding his homeland? Is the aspiration for homeland a new way to define the 'self' of the observer? Can problematic issues like 'Self', 'Exile', 'Alienation', and 'Disintegration' be called a malady? If they are, they require interpretation and re-interpretation. This essay will attempt to address the problematic issues already touched upon in the discourse's title.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Adil Jahangir Jussawalla (1940-) is a highly acclaimed English writer. Born in Bombay in 1940, he spent most of his time in England. Adil was determined to become an architect. He returned home from England after a thirteen-year absence. He was a Parsi. During the 1970s, he served as a lecturer in English at St. Xavier's College in Bombay. The literary output of Jussawalla is relatively meagre, with only two collections of poetry to his name. Land's End (1972) was published when he was twenty-two, a rare feat for a young writer. Missing Person is Jussawalla's most highly appreciated collection of poetry. These two

collections are not easily accessible in India (Barbuddhe). Adil was exceptionally talented, having published his first collection before the age of twenty-five. In addition to poetry anthologies, Jussawalla wrote an anthology of Indian prose in English, Statements (1976). He served as the editor of New Writing India in 1974. He writes for regional newspapers, including The Times of India. In 1976, he participated as an Honorary Fellow at the International Writing Program in Iowa. Jussawalla has always been interested in essentially metaphysical subjects, exploring metaphysical predicaments arising from colonial and partially colonial encounters.

II. JUSSAWALLA AND THE COURSE OF HIS POETRY

The poetry of Jussawalla has transcended the boundaries of being a mere remembrance of the post-colonial impulse (King). *Land's End* (1972) is often hailed as the Bible of chaos after the birth of the universe (Chevalier). The focus is unique to the poet's own. The encounter between Europeans and non-Europeans is not viewed through the naturalistic eyes of Joseph Conrad, but rather from the standpoint of a Parsi who resides in London. This unique perspective offers a fresh and intriguing take on the post-colonial experience, inviting readers to delve deeper into Jussawalla's work. (Bate). The encounter has multiple interpretations. Jussawalla's reactions are intricate and warrant our contemplation. Colonialism and post-colonialism are both dissected on the blotting paper of a Parsi who is neither content in London nor at ease in India (King). *A Missing Person* is the more mature reaction of an Indian who is disillusioned and has lost the dream of a homeland. The chaos in 'Land's End' is much more intricate in the second collection. The dreamer has now become a shocker. The metaphysical disillusionment has now sunk into the pool of post-colonial boredom, a testament to the depth and complexity of Jussawalla's poetry. This complexity is not a barrier but a stimulating challenge for readers to unravel the layers of meaning in Jussawalla's work. (Biswas).

Jussawalla's reputation gradually gained momentum among academics in India after the 1990s (King). Indian receptions of Jussawalla deserve special attention, where many metaphysical and theoretical issues have come to the round table of ruminations (Dodiya). In the title of this paper, many of these problematic post-colonial issues have already been addressed. It is high time to inhale them all in a single breath. Malady comes via Old French from an unrecorded Vulgar Latin male habitus, meaning in bad condition'. 'Malady' is a psychological term that gained entry into the literary lexicon earlier. It has an international currency with a post-colonial flavour, right after the publication of *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories of Bengal, Boston, and Beyond* (1999). Jhumpa Lahiri has exquisitely expanded the etymological geography of the word. The word malady has become a prism through which changing angles will

give birth to new meanings and interpretations. Closely reading the title story, "Interpreter of Maladies," will provide a deeper understanding of its meaning. Mrs. Mina Das is an Indian-origin American. She kept Bobby's birth secret for eight years. Such secrecy has resulted in a disorder, essentially a disease of the mind. She found a failed scholar, Mr. Kapasi, to provide a remedy. It remained untouched, though. So, Mrs. Das is a woman caught between two cultures and finds herself a misfit (Chatterjee). Hence, there originates the malady. Like the literal character of Jhumpa Lahiri in *Interpreter of Maladies*, Adil Jahangir Jussawalla is a misfit, caught between two cultures that he can never entirely leave behind and cannot fully adopt (Bhat). In the following section, we will conduct an in-depth analysis of the disorder prevalent in Jussawalla's writings, providing a comprehensive understanding of this crucial aspect of his work. This thorough understanding is desirable and essential for a full appreciation of Jussawalla's literary contributions.

III. MALADIES OF THE 'SELF'

The nefariousness of the indemnities of World War II prompted a group of thinkers to conduct a phenomenological survey of defining life, its meaning, and its purpose in the context of the homeland (Conference). The result that it finally produced was thoroughly ontological. Phenomenology is a way of understanding one's life and existence through 'consciousness' and 'being', which have complex and multi-layered explanations. This 'consciousness' is the new knowledge. It is knowledge of the 'state of being' (Melnick). When anyone realises this, it alters into a kind of self-knowledge. The formulation of such knowledge is a direct outcome of Western metaphysics. Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus made an expensive use of it. So, the Second World War brought this ontological knowledge (McBride). Colonialism and post-colonialism emerged as a spatiotemporal phenomenon that brought new knowledge and consciousness. Under the compelling influence of this knowledge, poets like Adil Jussawalla emerged strongly and participated intensely. Jussawalla spent nearly fourteen years in London and returned to India. This 14-year period has been extraordinarily functional for him. It gave him a new perspective on

life. When one is in England, every moment of life seems to be magical. This magical spell captivated Jussawalla earlier. When he returned home, this spell was over. Like the Western thinkers, as I already mentioned, Jussawalla kept himself busy surveying the detachment from white European culture. This separation from Eurocentric culture presented him with a new way of realising the very truth of one's existence (McBride). Although the approach is not phenomenological, the extracted knowledge is almost ontological, meaning it involves self-knowledge and knowledge about the self, as well as an exploration of the self. The state of being in phenomenology is the knowledge of the self in post-colonial terms (Conference). Jussawalla knew that this knowledge of the self was distorted and made vague by the illusions of the desire for a homeland. When the old dog returns to the old basket, it somehow no longer matches the earlier residence. Jussawalla muses deeply that after spending some 14 years in Britain, even the homeland puts him into question when one returns. Is this self as authentic as the old one? In Land's End, Jussawalla poses such questions through third-person narration. The primary reading of the collection may not prove very effective. A close reading of Land's End may introduce the reader to the chaos that originated from the poet's frequent self-quests through the third-person narrator. Therefore, if one dwells in both heaven and hell, the question of being better will haunt them (Bhat). Jussawalla believes that the question regarding the comparatively better homeland is the metaphysical chaos from which he has no escape. So, the self is always in question. Is England better? Is India the best? These interrogations would make life miserable when the self is studied in-depth. *Missing Person* is a more genuine collection by Jussawalla, re-interrogating the question of self. The voice is still chaotic. This time, the third-person narrator is absent. Jussawalla employs a first-person narrator, Naik. Many may think of the first-person narrator as the poet's alter ego. Nevertheless, uneasiness vanishes. The consciousness that interrogates the self persists. Jussawalla never leaves an inch from the ground. The more he frustrates, the stronger the query grows (Roberts). A poet like Arvind K. Mehrotra says, "Missing person is a problem". This enigmatic

identity of the missing person has made the identity of the self of Jussawalla much more problematic:

A river of pills brings him no raft.
Death goes awash with washing
Cripples his mouth then, sits
Killing his tongue, sites
Barred up behind his teeth.

(*Missing Person*, Part-I, stanza-9, line 4-8)

More profound studies of the problematic identity of the 'self' have multi-layered interpretations. Is Jussawalla's analysis of the self's identity a malady? Is this approach of questioning the self a malady? Where does Jussawalla's sickness differ from Jhumpa Lahiri's disorder? Is the sickness of self-equal to the disorder of the mind? Is Jhumpa as uneasy as the disintegrated, as the endangered self of Jussawalla? Is there any need to re-interpret such a disorder? These inquiries prompt the reader to conduct further inquiry.

The universe of diasporic writings of Mrs. Lahiri eventually connects her with the Indian cultural landscape. She is an Indian-origin American. The originality of her mental map is deeply rooted in Indian tradition and culture. In sharp contrast to Mrs. Lahiri, Jussawalla is a Parsi, meaning not a pure Indian or of Indian origin (Jaidka and Dhar). Like Mrs Lahiri, he lived in England for almost a decade. He ultimately negates this 14-year dwelling. The question of self has always put Jussawalla in the face of further questions. The disorder of Mrs Das in *Interpreter of Maladies* was purely mental and psychic. On the other hand, Jussawalla's malady is ontological, which has become more complicated by getting the flavour of post-colonialism. Even at the end of *Missing Person*, these complications of self and its malady remain undecided (Roberts).

IV. EXILE AND ITS DILEMMA

Exile is the next important issue we will engage in in the next ten minutes. According to *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, "exile involved the idea of a separation and distancing from either a literal homeland or a cultural and ethnic origin." (Payne and Barbera). Exile is the moment of consciousness when one feels that they are distancing themselves

from their homeland or ethnic group. Is there any fundamental difference between exile and expatriation?

For the first generation of free settlers, exile can be referred to as expatriation. Those born in colonies did not have the chance to return to the 'place of origin' even if they desired to. Jussawalla had free access to return to the place of origin. As he was a Parsi, his homeland or birthplace was always in crisis. He could never emerge from this crisis (González et al.). Physical escape does not exclude all the related issues. Jussawalla returned home after a decade and a half. How was he after the return? What was he before the return? First, we should know what happens when one moves between two cultures. The Fortunes of Richard Mahony (1917) is a book by Henry Handel Richardson. The hero of the text was depicted in a pendulum-like manner, bridging Australian and European cultures (Richardson). He was unable to understand the proper sense of belongingness. The reason is his ambivalent identity. Jussawalla was not a pendulum, but he subtly influenced both cultures—Indian and English. Now, let's return to the question posed earlier. Jussawalla was out of the illusion when he came back. Here, the illusion may mean the spell of white culture. It was a burden of the Whiteman that every coloniser was willing to carry (Mishra). Now, after his 'return, he feels the growing distance.' He realises the worth after separation. Even when he was in England, the imaginary homeland haunted him much. Jussawalla could not embrace England as his homeland before returning (González et al.). He equally fails after his return. Even the real homeland has lost its ontological essence. So, exile is there before and after his return. Jussawalla may not be regarded as a diasporic writer. However, the lives of diasporic people have complicated the issue of exile more than can be explained. Jussawalla had a home. He still has a home. Where is the home for diasporic people? Jussawalla left India and is coming back here again. Then, who is an exile? What is exile? Exile is the loosening of a sense of belonging. Exile is more a matter of spirit than of mind. During his life in England, Jussawalla always felt a widening horizon of belongingness. When he returns home, the epilogue of life outside the homeland does not leave him (Mishra).

Exile may also mean the growing distance from God that Yeats felt much earlier (Stumpe). Yeats' primary concern was spiritual disintegration in post-war Europe. Reading the Bible may determine the exile of Adam and Eve from Paradise. So, the sense of distancing from our homeland is in our blood, inherited from our first parents (Doukhan). Again, when the goodness of Eurocentric cultures poisons one's feelings, one feels exile from oneself. What happened with Jussawalla? Is it a passion for hatred or a preparation for hatred?

Jussawalla believed that English traditions and culture were like shadows, and their poetry was like ants. He knew that their poetry would never cross such a shade (Mehrotra). Jussawalla does not think, like Kipling or E. M. Forster, that the East is afraid of inhaling the poisonous air of the West. Exile is the enlarging and unbridgeable gap that operates mostly negatively. Exile always bears the sense of permanent loss (Naik). The collections of Jussawalla's poetry may bear the stamp of the originality of loss that is very irretrievable. The voice that speaks through the narrator in *Land's End* (1972) is the voice of such loss. *Land's End* is the end of possibility. The influence of T. S. Eliot on the formation of Jussawalla's dilemma is evident. So, the land of Jussawalla reminds us of the 'Wasteland,' which has become an iconic metaphor for sterility and loss (King). Understandably, right after his comeback from England, India seemed to Jussawalla to be a land that had ended, if not physically, at least spiritually. *Land's End* is a tragic loss, where the speaker's voice mourns such a loss. *Missing Person* is another cult poem celebrating loss from the start. In *Missing Person*, exile has resulted in the form of missing, meaning an indeterminate loss:

No Satan
warmed in the electric coils of his creatures
or Gunga Din
will make him come before you,
To see an invisible man
or a missing person
trust no Eng.

(*Missing Person*, Part II, stanza I, lines 1-7)

The speaker's voice is more subjective and natural here. The sense of loss has become more driving for

the Jussawalla. Considering the early literary influence of Eliot, *Missing Person* may have some affinities with *The Hollow Men*, if not in terms of physical resemblance, at least in terms of existentialism (King). The problem for the hollow men was that they could neither die nor they can think of death. Death was their crisis. As we know, death is a necessary step because it paves the way for rebirth. In *Missing Person*, the situation is precisely reversed. The voice determines the uneasiness of living and life altogether. *Missing Person* deals with the difficulty of smooth living:

His hands were slavish;
but fingers burst out
from time to time
to point to fresh rustling of tails
in the dustbin of history,
a new inflexion of sails
on the horizon.
(*Missing Person*, Part II, stanza II, line 1-7)

A person is missing if one cannot live spiritually and ontologically well. Here, exile may evoke the idea of loss arising from a previously smooth life that has been disrupted.

V. EXILE AND COLONIAL LEGACY

Has exile any therapeutic remedy? Exile is a growing distance between a human being and their homeland, between the individual and themselves. It is a kind of disintegration between the person and the soul-self. Again, exile may lead some to experience the never-ending disintegration between the person and his consciousness of being. As noted earlier, does Mrs Das, the Interpreter of Maladies, get a remedy for her sickness? Has Mrs Lahiri given any hint of it? A nuanced reading of Mrs. Lahiri suggests that the malady is a problem of the self, and exile has no remedy (Chatterjee). "Exile ... is the unhealedable rift forced between a human being and a native place" (Said). While commenting upon the disorder of exile, Mr Said has focused more on 'personal desolation' and 'cultural empowerment'. In *Land's End*, Jussawalla is swallowing the same personal desolation:

Where seas grip, the sirs kick and squall,

Atlantic breakers boom, the sea-gulls fall
Downwind to sheets of spray, the fast
Seas race, roil, slump and shower
Across the thrusted coastland,

(*Land's End*, line 1-6)

However, the issue of cultural empowerment remains vague. *Missing Person* by Jussawalla is a subterranean exploration of a personal metaphysical predicament, manifesting as personal desolation (Coetsier). There are many who very often foretaste the Hopkinsian shadow in the lines of Jussawalla, keeping the same desolation in mind:

Bats, bats you cried, and shutting up your ears
Scramble for cover, while we dived and bombed
Peasants, beggars, rich fathers, more affluent sons.
We dropped like jackfruit by hunters guns,
Or tore like paper on your sizzling wires

(*Bats*, line 7-11)

Exile is a colonial orientation that persists into the post-colonial era (Lamming). Colonialism is such a poignant force and decisive motion that it leaves no choice. Exile was a matter of compulsion for the colonised people. These people did their best to live as well as possible in the face of such force. They became forcefully adapted to such a domain of life and its living. One lives even if one is exiled from one's name (Ruman and Ruman), and Jussawalla's formative years in England produced *Land's End* and *Missing Person* anthologies. Both these collections have become offbeat figures in literature. In both collections, no voice speaks of any possibility. What they discuss is primarily distorted, fragmented, and debauched.

No harmony is there. No chronology is there. In Jussawalla, post-colonial exile has shaped him. This is why Jussawalla has given up poetry for so long on the theme narrated. Currently, he is the editor of several regional newspapers. If Jussawalla's return to India can be considered the exile of exile, it has had a positive outcome. Nobody has ever dared to forget the proverbial verdict on exile, such as "to be an exile is to be alive" (Lamming).

VI. CONCLUSION

Exile has ever-deepened relevance in diasporic literature. Said has insisted that the existence of exile sharply depends on the dialectical value and relation between a nation and its literary product, mostly diasporic fiction (Said). Jussawalla can be best understood in terms of this dialectical relationship. Mr. Said further believed that no nation could offer a resolution for such a disorder as exile. Exile is a 'discontinuous state of being' where the nation proves helpless (Said). Shelley defined poetry as an "Aeolian harp." Aeolian is a wind-operated harp. The wind's blowing will determine the intensity of the music it produces. The stronger the wind blows, the more intense the music becomes. For Jussawalla, the disorder of self and exile is the wind. It is expected that the more they touch Jussawalla, one by one and sometimes jointly, the more they will foster a further sense of exile, alienation, and disintegration. The heart of Jussawalla is like the Aeolian harp. The more they blow, the longer the malady will persist.

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The Anxiety of Vision in the *Colored American Magazine* and *Of One Blood*

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<p>Received: 08 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 03 Jul 2025; Accepted: 07 Jul 2025; Available online: 11 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— African-American literature, Pauline Hopkins, Visual studies, Magazine fiction, Passing.</p>	<p>To read Pauline Hopkins' novel <i>Of One Blood</i> in the context of its original location within the pages of the <i>Colored American Magazine</i> makes the concept of vision and visual representation appear in a whole new light. The novel's exploration of visibility reverberates in interesting ways with the rich visual environment of the magazine that believed in the virtue of asserting the visual presence African Americans. Such a heavy investment in the optics of racial identity speaks to Hopkins' novel in a number of ways. <i>Of One Blood</i> elaborates on the phenomenon of passing as well as several supernatural visual scenarios that speak back to the magazine's broader understanding of visual representation. The marked ambivalence with regard to visual self-presentation and perspectival looking in Hopkins' novel cast a shadow over both the idea of the visual image and the politics of looking.</p>

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to examine the thematics of visibility and study the implications that practices of looking have for the circulation and interpretation of African-American writing. The printed word and the visual text often co-habited and jostled in the same cultural spaces, setting up between themselves a dialogue of depth and texture. A striking example of such a fertile dialectic between the verbal and the visual is African-American magazine fiction around the turn of the twentieth century which stages a unique conversation between print and photographic cultures, each speaking to the other in ways that betray a profound ambivalence about the very idea of representation. However, the literary archive and the photographic archive are not merely co-producers of a conflicted realm of African-American self-presentations, but are often engaged in cultural politics that need to be tracked, read and situated

differently. To interpret the body of printed texts in isolation from the visual texts that were often inscribed within the contours of these texts and/or in close juxtaposition to them would be to ignore a crucial component of the material contexts of circulation and reception that produced and fashioned such texts. This article attempts to track the visual contexts and subtexts of one of these printed texts—Pauline Hopkins's *Of One Blood*, serialized from November 1902 to November 1903 in the various numbers of the *Colored American Magazine*—by re-situating it in the context of its specific location within the magazine.

II. THE COLORED AMERICAN MAGAZINE

The *Colored American Magazine*, which Hopkins edited for about four years from 1900—before the magazine shifted base and its ideological moorings under the new stewardship of Booker T.

Washington—was a periodical that had a fairly focused agenda. It purported to present to “the colored people of the United States, a medium through which they [could] demonstrate their ability and tastes, in fiction poetry and art, as well in the arena of historical social and economic literature.” (Hopkins 1900, 3) However, this editorial pronouncement concealed a more active program that sought to fashion a positive self-image for middle class African Americans. The “essential middle-class orientation” (Fultz 102) of journals like the *Colored American Magazine* enabled it to speak meaningfully to its readership that, as circulation figures show, were in a large measure made up of black middle-class professionals and a sizeable number of literate African-American artisans (Carby 126-127). The strong editorial voice that made no attempts to conceal its pedagogic role to educate readers into a consciousness of the vast potential represented by the “ability and tastes” of its colored readership, consciously foregrounded the need for the self-presentation of African-Americans “in the proper light before the world” (Hopkins qtd. in Fultz 105). Striving hard to project an image of an educated and successful African-American middle class “assimilable into respectable white society” (Schneider 160), the editorial policy clearly reveals its project “to define as well as create the boundaries of a black magazine-reading public” (Carby 125). This arduous task of reflecting and constructing a carefully worked out intellectual and historical genealogy for an African-American readership whose self-image had to be literally ‘produced’ through the pages of the magazine, was accomplished in no small measure by Pauline Hopkins, the “real work-horse of the magazine” (Schneider 159).

Like other products of the magazine revolution that began in the 1880's, the *Colored American Magazine* sustained itself by publishing advertisements that helped in providing much needed finances that were hard to come by. The magazine carried essays on a range of topics from religion to race, a series of biographical sketches of famous colored people, columns that offered career advice to young men and women and a prolific gallery of middle-class men and women who represented the new standard of African-American identity. Interwoven with this

generic heterogeneity were serialized novels and short stories that need to be read with the periodic nature of magazine publication, owing to its impact on plot in obvious ways, like the need for suspending the narrative at critical junctures in consonance with “the strategies and formulas of the sensational fiction of dime novels and magazines” (Carby 145). It is crucial to disassemble a novel like Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* to its disaggregated form in the pages of the magazine to track its resonances within the rich matrix of which it is a part. To see the novel in conversation with other print genres that the magazine included, opens up the space for recognizing the broader material contexts that the novel reverberated with and in turn spoke back to.

One of the interesting means whereby the *Colored American Magazine* went about its task of imaging African-American identity was its consistent use of photographs. The magazine carried numerous snapshots of successful African-American individuals that corresponded to short verbal profiles that provided an account of their accomplishments, both major and minor. This project of ‘peopling’ its pages with photographs that attempted to construct a contemporary visual archive however, sat uneasily with the parallel project to trace a historical past for African Americans that countered racist constructions of that past.

The portraits of African-American figures in the magazine are likewise strenuously deployed as a counter to the dominant ways of visually marking the colored body. Bearing the markers of bourgeois success, these figures return the camera’s gaze with poise and dignity. Many of the figures represented the cross-racial African-Americans whose portraits, according to Smith, call into question the whole visual foundation of racial difference. As Carol Allen points out, the *Colored American Magazine's* use of portraits “gave indisputable evidence that racial segregation had no validity because the faces of black and white relatives debunked any consideration that human beings are biologically divided by race” (Allen 25).

However, as the next section of this paper will argue in the context of Hopkins's serialized novel *Of One Blood*, the portraits belie a deeper and less sanguine relationship to visuality.

III. READING THE VISUAL SIGN IN *OF ONE BLOOD*

Hopkins's *Of One Blood* (1902-1903) is a novel that is in a continuous dialogue with the thematics of visibility and its relationship to race. The poignancy of this dialogue is particularly acute when the novel is placed against the background of its original location in the *Colored American Magazine*. Serialized in a magazine that was situated within the representational codes of dominant visual culture in turn of the century America, the novel offers a fascinating commentary on the idea of vision and the politics of sight. The novel also institutes an interesting novelistic dialogue between different regimes of looking. The protocols of vision that play a crucial role in interracial relations, find themselves at their disciplinary limits in *Of One Blood*. My reading of the novel will focus primarily on three thematic strands that in various ways coalesce around notions of visibility. The first of these strands is the idea of 'passing' as an instance of the problematic link between racial taxonomies and vision.

"The modern epistemology of race hinges on the relation between visibility and truth," argues Samira Kawash, who goes on to analyze the race phenomenon of passing as a limit case that radically attenuates the relationship between vision and truth (Kawash 129). The passing figure is one that is central to Hopkins's novel that similarly underscores the provisionality of vision as a guide to stable meaning.

The novel thematizes the interpretative problem of reading bodies, a problem that is primarily visual. The comforting knowledge that bodies, like photographs which are its 'natural' signifiers, can be decoded in order to coincide with the ideology of race is rendered disconcertingly unstable by both central characters Reuel and Dianthe, whose bodies resist such stability. By strategically withholding the truth from the reader until later on in the novel, Hopkins makes us participate in and then acknowledge the distorting gaze of racism.

"Visibility interrupts knowability," calling into question the semiotics of looking that reduces facial features to a set of racial signs (Kawash 132). The naïve belief that the "face will tell its own tale"

(Hopkins 1988, 448) is shattered by the impenetrability of the body that possesses truths that it does not yield up easily. In the case of Dianthe, the idea of race and visibility collide even more dramatically. "Fair as the fairest woman" and "not in any way the preconceived idea of a Negro" (Hopkins 1988, 453), Dianthe is a visual reminder of the unreliability of visual markers of race. Her reappearance in the novel after she loses her memory in the accident, wipes out her racial identity as well, leaving the world no choice but to take her at 'face value'. This emphasizes the fragility of racial difference and raises the crucial question: how does one establish racial identity as an essence? If appearance is disconnected with essence, then the discourse of race is forced to drive that essence down deeper into the non-visual. This dis-located essence fractures the scientific/empirical gaze of dominant visual protocols, conceding the deficiency of sight, which "becomes an insufficient guarantee of knowledge" (Kawash 130).

The deconstruction of the idea of racial difference as a perceptual system of observable characteristics provides the novel with an opening into one of its primary concerns, namely, the social constructedness of racial difference and the idea of all races being 'of one blood'. For the narrator, the critical question is "who is clear enough in *vision* to decide who hath black blood and who hath it not?" (Hopkins 1988, 607 emphasis mine)

The passing figure will no doubt have to confront his real identity but in Reuel's case this disclosure is only a prerequisite for him to realize and accept his true identity as King Ergamenes. This return to authentic selfhood is not however a simple embracing of an African-American identity that has been vigorously disavowed, as is the case in Hopkins's short story, "The Test of Manhood" published alongside the second instalment of the novel in the 1906, December issue of the *Colored American Magazine*. Although both narratives deal with the theme of passing, *Of One Blood* describes the acknowledgement of racial identity in ways that complicate the usual moral of passing stories that highlight "the inevitable tragedies that would ensue should the color line be broached" and present the narrative dénouement as one in which the passing figure is presented "as evidence of the necessity of racial order rather than

its negation" (Kawash 133). By plotting Reuel's acknowledgement of his racial identity so as to converge with the moment of his ascension to the throne, Hopkins reverses the momentum of passing—not as shameful discovery as in Hopkins' short story "Test of Manhood", but as moment of elevation to a new and more powerful destiny. Furthermore, the decision to pass is not connected with greater social status, and Reuel's decision to marry Dianthe endangers his fictive identity rather than the conventional trope of the white woman lover who justifies the perpetuation of the concealment.

The novel's critique of visual surfaces as bearers of truth therefore reveals a fundamental ambivalence about the very idea of visual representation. It suggests the possibility that it may be a shallow dream to believe that surfaces reveal interiors and that the ocular-centric paradigm that photography confirms is based on a radical falsehood. The body is an ambiguous text that is opaque and resistant to the operations of the eye. Clearly there is more to the hundreds of impressive African-American visages that look out of the pages of the *Colored American Magazine* that *Of One Blood* seems to be in dialogue with. Behind the façade of the photographic pose that signify middle-class security and success, lurks a deeper anxiety that it is clearly not 'visible'. An ironic reminder of this troubled relationship to the visual in the context of passing, is the frequent appearance in numerous numbers of the magazine of an advertisement that seems to run counter to the editorial effort to "develop and intensify the bonds of that racial brotherhood, which alone can enable a people, to assert their racial rights" (Hopkins 1900, 3). I refer here to the advertisement for a product that describes itself as "Black Skin Remover," that promises to "turn the skin of a black or brown person four or five shades lighter and a mulatto person perfectly white" (Hopkins 1903 914). It is also interesting to note that the secrecy and shame that was associated with such projects is emphasized by the manufacturer's reassurance at the bottom of the advertisement that the product will be "packed so that no one will know the contents except the receiver" (Hopkins, 1903, 914). Clearly the project of visibilizing an acceptable African-American image of bourgeois acceptability was not able to repress the

desire for an invisibility, which would permit a masking of racial difference rather than the revealing of it.

Perhaps nowhere is the novel's critique of dominant visual culture more in evidence than in the second thematic strand that I will examine, which is the novel's obsession with alternate ways of seeing. Such models of sight challenge the protocols of literary realism and mark the novel's choice of "adopting freer and less mimetic forms" (Daniels 174). Flying in the face of most scientific theories of vision of which photography is a product, the novel offers glimpses of an entirely different visual economy, one that decisively rejects an empirical notion of sight in favor of a non-materialist 'seeing'.

The opening scene of the novel describes Reuel gazing into the cold Boston night and experiencing the first 'vision' he has of Dianthe, whose "fair face" super-imposes itself on to the image of the night. This confirms his belief "that if we could strengthen our mental sight, we could discover the broad highway between this and the other world" (Hopkins 1988, 459). The novel goes on to explore this "clairvoyant sight" through a series of episodes where both Reuel and Dianthe experience "visionary scenes" that appear before their "entranced eyes." (Hopkins 1988, 525, 522).

These alternate perceptual systems that the novel repeatedly uses, reveal the poverty of the scientific gaze, as well as demonstrate the revolutionary power of the different ways of seeing. Unlike the static photographic gaze that fixes identity by placing it within the grids of race, class and gender, the visions that Reuel experiences are mobile, non-linear and capable of weaving in and out of chronological time. Reuel's "power of second sight" (Hopkins 1988, 572) enables him to look into the future, a function that gets externalized in the magic disk that Ai shows him in the hidden city. Released from linear temporality, Reuel's visions allow him to 'see' the tragic destinies of Dianthe and Molly and also serves as a contrast to the sterile medical gaze of the doctors who pronounce Dianthe dead, before Reuel reanimates her. He therefore takes a plunge into the "mysterious regions of science" (Hopkins 1988, 464) that enables him to 'see' the possibility of life where science sees a mere corpse. Furthermore, Reuel's alternate visions

also reorganize the notions of spatiality that frame the perspectival gaze of the eye/camera.

In the fascinating visionary moment that occurs in a tent near Meroe, Reuel sees unfold in front of him a scene of the traitorous Jim reading Aubrey's letter. Jim sits behind Reuel all along, oblivious of having his image projected forward into space before Reuel's eyes: "Twice did the visionary scene, passing behind the seer, recross his entranced eyes" (Hopkins 1988, 522). Here Hopkins seems to almost deliberately mock the photographic convention of perspectival seeing, which debars the unidirectional gaze from both multiplanar vision as well as double vision that the above scene demonstrates.

The novel's visionary moments also articulate an interesting relationship between image and text, space and time. On two occasions, the hypnotic sight visualizes a text so as to reveal a dimension of meaning that it conceals. In the scene described above, Reuel 'sees' a text demonstrating Aubrey's duplicity visualized before his eyes by the "shadowy figure of the shining apparition in the tent door" who "point[s] letter by letter, to the pictured page of the billet" (Hopkins 1988, 522). Dianthe too sees a vision of Mira whose "heavy marks in ink, underscore" a line in the Bible which prophesies that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed" (Hopkins 1988, 506). In both these cases, Hopkins inverts the relationship between text and image, by using the printed page as an illustrative mechanism within the visual scenario. In doing so she stages the subsumption of the word into the image, as well as suggests that visionary 'seeing' can reveal the duplicity of language and reanimate it with significance.

Such experiments with alternate models of vision as well as the problematization of dominant regimes of visuality are also demonstrated in another thematic strand that betrays the novel's anxiety about picturing the African-American woman, whose body is the site of sexualized violence. This image of the violated body that bears the burden of that defilement produces a deep anxiety about the act of visibilizing such bodies. The representation of such female figures, the novel seems to suggest, is fraught with the tensions of seeing them both as sites of desire and reminders of the loss of purity. *Of One Blood* seems to manifest this anxiety in two ways.

Firstly, the novel problematizes the act of visualizing the figure of the African-American woman. Dianthe first appears in the novel in a dematerialized vision that appears to Reuel: "Silhouetted against the background of the lowering sky and waving branches, he saw distinctly outlined a fair face...with soft brown eyes, deep and earnest... O how real, how very real did the passing shadow appear to the gazer" (Hopkins 1988, 445). Soon afterwards, seeing her perform during her solo performance at the musical concert, he realizes that she is the same woman who appeared to him in his vision: "the hall seemed to grow dim and shadowy; the sea of faces melted away, there before him in the blaze of light—like a lovely phantom—stood a woman wearing the face of his vision..." (Hopkins 1988, 454). Once again in Mount Auburn, he encounters a vision of Dianthe who prophesies that he would come to her aid soon. On this occasion, Reuel is not able to "see her features distinctly, only the eyes—large, bright and dark," until later the moon gave a distinct view of the lovely features" (Hopkins 1988, 461).

Dianthe's reappearance in the novel, after the accident that erases her memory, is significantly void of her old visual identity. The fact that no one, except Reuel and Aubrey, can 'see' her as the woman whose voice enthralled the audience at the concert demonstrates the problem of visibilizing voice. To all others, her real identity is invisible.

This textual resistance to the visual embodiment of Dianthe strengthens the similitude between her and the figure of her mother Mira, whose ghostly form appears to both Reuel and Dianthe. Both women are victims of racialized violence. In Dianthe's case, that violence has added to it the fact of incest. As Smith points out, for Hopkins, slavery perpetuated "not only rape but also incest, as white heirs raped the half-sisters begotten by their own fathers" (Smith 202).

It is against this hesitant and shadowy visibility granted to African-American women that the novel's other manifestation of visual anxiety appears. This takes the form of a visual over-investment, in the visual spectacle of Candace: "Yes; she was a Venus, a superb statue of bronze, moulded by a great sculptor; but an animated statue, in which one saw the blood circulate, and from which life flowed... Her loveliness was absolutely ideal and perfect" (Hopkins 1988 568-

69). Here, Candace is described in language that seems to highlight the vitality of her feminine body, starkly contrasted to the disembodied nature of Dianthe's appearance. Representing pure femininity unsoiled by the corruptions of miscegenation predicated on rape, Candace can bear the full brunt of the male gaze. Objectified as the model of feminine perfection, the picture of Candace offsets the disembodied, tortured bodies of Dianthe and Mira, representing the novel's vision of an untainted future.

IV. CONCLUSION

Of One Blood then is a novel that speaks to the highly charged visual environment of the *Colored American Magazine* and marks the boundaries of vision while recognizing how visual cultures are an intrinsic part of racial and gender ideologies. In doing so, it merges realist and romance traditions and dislodges the logic of linear time and space (Keck 2024). It is perhaps a measure of the novel's anxiety of vision that forces it to embody itself outside discernible generic categories. As Daniels demonstrates, "[i]nstead of dismissing the text as disjointed as a result of its polygeneric makeup, we should celebrate it as an aesthetic accomplishment in black fiction for the simple reason that it defies the mainstream values of the white literary establishment" (Daniels 173). This generic indecision mimics at the level of form, the text's troubled relationship with the taxonomies of visual order.

The novel's location within the pages of the *Colored American Magazine*, sharply foreground the idea of visibility that it seeks to draw attention to. The cultural work of fashioning a visible identity for the African American, which the magazine seems to be overtly engaged in, is undermined by a deep ambivalence about the politics of vision. The fictive register of Hopkins's novel succeeds in articulating that ambivalence in ways that were not possible in the rest of the magazine.

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Examining the Interplay Between Pre-Writing for Expository Writing and Argumentative Reasoning in Graduates of Business Education

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<p>Received: 04 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 01 Jul 2025; Accepted: 05 Jul 2025; Available online: 11 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— <i>Prewriting, Expository Writing, Argumentative Reasoning, Business Education, ESP</i></p>	<p><i>This study explored the relationship between prewriting strategies for expository writing and the development of argumentative reasoning skills in MBA students. 30 MBA students participated in a research design involving thematic analysis of prewriting exercises, classroom observations, and instructor feedback. The findings revealed a strong correlation between the use of effective prewriting techniques, such as brainstorming, outlining, and freewriting, and the ability to construct well-supported arguments. Students who engaged in thorough prewriting activities demonstrated improved critical thinking, enhanced ability to identify and analyze evidence, and strengthened skills in constructing coherent and persuasive arguments. The study also highlighted the importance of instructor guidance in helping students develop effective prewriting strategies and apply them to their writing. Implications for MBA education and future research are discussed.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are indispensable for MBA students, as they are essential for effective communication, critical thinking, and professional relationships. Well-developed writing skills enable MBA graduates to convey complex ideas clearly and persuasively, analyze business problems critically, and build strong professional networks. By honing their writing abilities, MBA students can enhance their communication skills, critical thinking skills, and professional relationships, setting them up for success in the demanding world of business. A study assessed the quality of workplace writing, particularly email communication. While overall satisfaction was

moderate, emails were deemed the least effective. External messages were perceived as superior to internal ones in terms of both information and writing quality. The researcher (Roach & Anderson, 2007) suggests a continued focus on writing skills and the value of well-crafted content.

It is generally sensed that business schools should focus more on developing "soft skills" like communication, leadership, and teamwork. Employers highly value these skills but find them difficult to recruit. Studies by Bloomberg, GMAC, AMBA, and NACE all confirm this. Hard skills like finance are still important, but communication, problem-solving, and strategic thinking are

increasingly sought after. Many researchers (Andrews, 2015) believe that business schools need to adapt their curriculum. Argumentative reasoning is thus found the appropriate critical skill that underpins success in professional contexts. It involves the ability to construct well-supported arguments, evaluate evidence, and consider counterarguments. This skillset is essential for effective communication, decision-making, and problem-solving.

In the workplace, argumentative reasoning enables professionals to persuade colleagues, clients, and stakeholders. By presenting clear, logical arguments, individuals can influence decisions, secure funding, and negotiate favourable deals. Additionally, this skill is crucial for critical thinking, allowing professionals to analyze complex problems, identify potential solutions, and evaluate the merits of different options. Also, argumentative reasoning is vital for collaboration and teamwork. (Mercier, 2011) Humans generally possess universal reasoning skills, despite cultural variations in their application. While some cultures may emphasize different reasoning styles, like holistic or analytic thinking, the underlying cognitive abilities remain consistent. This suggests that argumentative reasoning, a fundamental human capacity, is not limited to specific cultural contexts.

Prewriting, the initial stage of the writing process, plays a crucial role in shaping the overall quality and coherence of a written piece. It involves a variety of strategies, such as brainstorming, outlining, and freewriting, that help writers generate ideas, organize thoughts, and develop a clear direction for their writing. By engaging in prewriting activities, writers can enhance their critical thinking skills, improve their understanding of the topic, and produce more focused and well-structured writing. ("The Importance of Prewriting Strategies in the Students' Writing Production," 2023)

Hence we can say that, the interplay between universal reasoning skills, cultural influences, and effective writing strategies is a complex yet fascinating aspect of human cognition and communication. While the foundation of human reasoning may be universal, cultural contexts shape the specific ways in which these skills are applied. In professional settings, argumentative reasoning emerges as a powerful tool for persuasion, decision-making, and problem-solving. To effectively harness this cognitive ability,

prewriting strategies play a crucial role in organizing thoughts, generating ideas, and overcoming writer's block. By understanding the significance of these elements, individuals can enhance their writing abilities, improve their communication skills, and achieve greater success in their academic and professional endeavours.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the relationship between prewriting strategies and argumentative reasoning skills.
- To examine the impact of different prewriting techniques on the quality of argumentative essays.
- To explore the perceptions of MBA students regarding the effectiveness of prewriting in developing argumentative reasoning skills

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

To prepare MBA students for the demands of the workplace, it's crucial to identify and address any writing deficiencies. By utilizing diagnostic assessments, peer and instructor feedback, and portfolio analysis, educators can pinpoint specific areas for improvement. Targeted interventions such as writing workshops, individualized tutoring, and technology-enhanced learning can then be implemented to enhance students' writing abilities. By investing in writing skills, MBA programs can empower graduates to excel in their careers. The GMAT's Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) elevates writing from a low-level skill to a high-level ability. While holistic evaluation assesses writing performance, it lacks diagnostic capabilities. This limits the AWA's usefulness for business schools seeking to identify specific writing weaknesses in applicants. To address this, (Rogers & Rymer, 1995) schools must resort to local essay evaluation, a process that may be resource-intensive, especially for institutions enrolling students who would benefit most from such assessment.

The Assurance of Learning (AoL) movement in higher education aims to ensure that graduates possess the skills and knowledge claimed by their institutions. This case study (May et al., 2012) insists on improving MBA students' business writing skills. It outlines a

five-step AoL program, including assessment tools and data analysis techniques. By implementing this program, institutions can demonstrate their commitment to student learning and meet the expectations of accreditation agencies and employers. A study (Timiyo & Sriram, 2021) investigated the relevance of MBA dissertations through interviews with 14 MBA graduates, the research found mixed opinions on the dissertation's contribution to their current roles. While some participants acknowledged the development of skills like communication and leadership during the research process, most attributed their career success to factors like luck, hard work, and existing skills. This study presents a notable gap in its analysis of argumentative writing skills. While it touches on the development of communication and leadership skills, it doesn't get deeper into the specific role of argumentative writing in shaping these abilities.

The rising generation of Millennials, set to dominate the global workforce, presents unique challenges and opportunities. A surge in young, unemployed men, particularly in developing countries, threatens social and economic stability (Williams, 2014). Conversely, Millennials are optimistic, tech-savvy, and socially conscious. To attract and retain this generation, organizations must adapt to their preferences for flexible work arrangements, frequent feedback, and opportunities for growth. As the world grapples with economic and social challenges, understanding and accommodating the needs and aspirations of Millennials will be crucial for future success. Communication skills, particularly writing, are crucial for managerial success. Studies have consistently shown that strong communication skills are essential for career advancement. While oral communication and technology have gained prominence, writing remains a cornerstone of effective management. MBA programs should prioritize writing skills (Golen et al., 1989) to equip graduates with the ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and persuasively, essential for leadership roles in today's business world.

The book "Specialized" emphasizes the importance of effective writing skills for managers, particularly those pursuing part-time MBA or diploma programs. It recognizes writing as a crucial tool for learning, problem-solving, and communication (Mayon-White,

2014). The book covers various aspects of writing, including report writing, which is essential for academic and professional success. By addressing writing techniques and strategies, the book empowers managers to enhance their written communication and achieve their learning goals.

Prewriting, the foundational stage of the writing process, significantly influences the development of strong argumentative reasoning. By engaging in activities like brainstorming, freewriting, and outlining, writers can generate ideas, organize thoughts, and establish a clear structure for their arguments. Cognitive theories such as schema theory and cognitive load theory explain how prewriting activates relevant knowledge and reduces cognitive burden, facilitating the construction of logical arguments. Writing process theories, including Flower and Hayes's process model and genre theory (Van Den Bergh et al., 2015), highlight the importance of prewriting in generating and organizing ideas, and in understanding the conventions of argumentative writing. Additionally, critical thinking theories like the Toulmin model (Yang, 2022) and informal logic emphasize the role of prewriting in evaluating evidence, identifying logical fallacies, and constructing persuasive arguments. Ultimately, prewriting empowers writers to develop well-supported, coherent, and persuasive arguments.

Argumentative reasoning empowers individuals to analyze complex issues, evaluate evidence, and construct persuasive arguments. By engaging in argumentative reasoning, individuals can develop the skills necessary to identify and address problems, make informed decisions, and contribute meaningfully to society. As such, fostering argumentative reasoning skills is essential for academic success, professional development, and civic engagement. Future research should continue to explore the intricate relationship between argumentative reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving, with a particular focus on developing effective pedagogical approaches to enhance these skills in diverse learning contexts.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A sample of 30 MBA students was divided into two groups of 15 each. Each group was given an

expository essay writing task, incorporating prewriting strategies like brainstorming and outlining, followed by the writing of a persuasive essay. To gain insights into their cognitive processes, a Think-Aloud Protocol Analysis was conducted, analyzing the transcripts of the students' thoughts during the writing process. Thematic analysis was then applied to identify patterns and themes within the data, enabling a deeper understanding of the relationship between prewriting strategies and argumentative reasoning skills.

Writing task for Group I

Scenario: Student is tasked with writing a persuasive essay on the topic of climate change. The student's prewriting process using a think-aloud protocol is recorded.

Transcript Excerpt:

Student: "Okay, so I need to write about climate change. I guess I should start by brainstorming some ideas. Hmm, global warming, pollution, rising sea levels... Oh, and extreme weather events! I could use those as supporting points. Maybe I should create a quick outline to organize my thoughts. Let's see, I'll start with an introduction, then discuss the causes, effects, and potential solutions. I'll need to find some credible sources to back up my claims. I wonder if I should use a mind map to visualize the relationships between different ideas..."

Analysis:

The provided text outlines the cognitive strategies employed by a student during the prewriting phase of an argumentative essay on climate change. Specifically, it highlights the use of brainstorming, outlining, and metacognition, and examines their impact on the student's writing process. This analysis offers valuable insights into the intricate cognitive mechanisms that underpin effective writing and the crucial role of prewriting strategies in developing argumentative reasoning skills.

Brainstorming, by encouraging divergent thinking, allows the student to explore a wide spectrum of ideas related to climate change. This initial exploration serves as a fertile ground for generating potential arguments, evidence, and counterarguments. By freely associating and jotting down ideas without initial judgment, the student taps into their creative

potential and overcomes potential mental blocks. This process not only enhances the quantity of ideas but also fosters a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of the issue.

Once a range of ideas has been generated, outlining provides a crucial framework for organizing these ideas into a coherent and logical structure. This structured approach helps the student identify the core argument, supporting evidence, and the order in which these elements should be presented to effectively convey their message. Outlining not only improves the clarity and flow of the essay but also allows the student to identify any gaps or inconsistencies in their argument, prompting them to refine their thinking and strengthen their position.

Metacognition, a crucial aspect of this process, involves the student actively reflecting on their own thinking processes. By evaluating the effectiveness of their brainstorming and outlining strategies, the student gains valuable insights into their own strengths and weaknesses as a writer. This self-awareness allows them to adjust their approach, experiment with different strategies, and ultimately develop more effective and efficient writing habits.

The combined effect of these cognitive strategies significantly enhances the student's argumentative reasoning skills. By engaging in brainstorming and exploring various perspectives, the student is compelled to critically analyze the topic, identify key issues, and evaluate the strength of evidence. This critical thinking process strengthens their ability to discern credible sources, identify biases, and construct well-supported arguments. The use of outlining fosters a clear and logical organization of ideas, making the argument more persuasive and easier for the reader to follow. A well-organized argument not only enhances the clarity of the message but also strengthens its impact and persuasiveness. By successfully navigating the prewriting process and observing the positive outcomes of their efforts, the student's confidence in their writing abilities is significantly boosted. This increased self-efficacy empowers them to approach future writing tasks with greater confidence and motivation.

These cognitive strategies not only improve the quality of the final product but also foster valuable metacognitive skills that will benefit students across

various academic and professional domains. By analyzing the student's thought processes, insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying effective writing and the role of prewriting strategies in developing argumentative reasoning skills are derived.

Writing task for Group II

Scenario: An MBA student is tasked with creating a user manual for a new software application.

Transcript Excerpt:

"Okay, a user manual. Not exactly what I expected in my MBA program. But, hey, communication is key, right? Got to make this software understandable. First things first, who's going to be using this thing? Tech wizards? Old people? Makes a HUGE difference. If it's for techies, I can use jargon, assume some knowledge. If it's for old people, I have to break it down Barney-style. Step one: turn on the computer. Step two: find the icon... you get the idea. Visuals are a must, no matter who it's for. Screenshots, diagrams, maybe even a short video? Have to make it easy on the eyes. Okay, now, what does this software do? I need to play around with it, figure out all the features. Then, I'll make a list – basic functions, advanced stuff, troubleshooting. What are the anticipate questions. What could go wrong? What would confuse people? FAQs are my friend. And a table of contents! I should have a table of contents. This is actually kind of interesting... like designing a learning experience. Okay, let's do this."

Analysis:

The provided text describes the cognitive strategies and prewriting techniques employed by a student during the creation of a software user manual. This analysis offers valuable insights into the multifaceted cognitive processes involved in technical writing and highlights the crucial role of these strategies in producing clear, concise, and effective documentation.

The student begins by conducting thorough audience analysis, identifying the target audience's technical expertise and familiarity with the software. This crucial step ensures that the manual is tailored to the specific needs and knowledge level of the intended users. By understanding the audience's background, the student can effectively anticipate potential areas of confusion and adjust the level of technical detail

accordingly.

Information gathering is another critical step in the process. The student meticulously gathers information about the software's features, functionalities, and potential challenges users may encounter. This comprehensive understanding of the software is essential for creating accurate, informative, and helpful documentation.

To effectively organize this information, the student utilizes prewriting techniques such as outlining and mind mapping. Outlining provides a structured framework for organizing the content into logical sections, such as introduction, installation, basic usage, advanced features, troubleshooting, and frequently asked questions. This structured approach ensures a clear and coherent flow of information, making it easier for users to navigate and find the information they need. Mind mapping, on the other hand, allows the student to visualize the relationships between different concepts and tasks, further enhancing the overall organization and clarity of the manual.

These prewriting techniques also foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By analyzing the target audience's needs and identifying potential areas of confusion, the student engages in critical thinking to develop effective strategies to address these challenges. They break down complex tasks into simpler steps and provide clear, concise instructions, demonstrating strong problem-solving abilities.

Finally, the student focuses on effective communication by writing in a clear, concise, and informative style. They prioritize the use of plain language, avoiding technical jargon whenever possible, to ensure that the manual is easily understandable by users with varying levels of technical expertise. This emphasis on clear and concise communication enhances the overall readability and usability of the manual.

The impact of these strategies extends beyond the creation of a user-friendly manual. The student develops valuable skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, organization, and effective communication. These skills are transferable and applicable to a wide range of academic and professional contexts. By effectively presenting information in a logical and coherent manner, the student demonstrates strong

argumentation skills. Furthermore, by providing clear solutions to potential issues, the student demonstrates their ability to effectively address challenges and provide practical guidance to users.

By analyzing the student's prewriting process, we can see how effective prewriting techniques can enhance the quality of technical writing. The use of outlining, mind mapping, and audience analysis can help writers create clear, concise, and informative documents that meet the needs of their target audience.

V. FINDINGS

The provided scenarios offer valuable insights into the role of prewriting strategies in enhancing argumentative reasoning skills. By examining these tasks, we can identify several key themes

The analysis reveals a dynamic interplay between various cognitive strategies and prewriting techniques. For instance, brainstorming stimulates divergent thinking, enabling writers to explore multiple possibilities and generate innovative ideas. Conversely, outlining promotes convergent thinking, guiding students to organize their thoughts and prioritize key points. Metacognitive strategies, such as self-monitoring and self-regulation, are crucial in this process. They allow students to assess their progress, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments to their writing process.

Prewriting strategies have a profound impact on argumentative reasoning skills. By engaging in these activities, students can develop a clear problem statement, which serves as the cornerstone of an effective argumentative essay. Prewriting helps MBA students to articulate their main claim and identify the key points they want to address. Organize their arguments in a coherent and logical manner. Outlining and mind mapping enable students to structure their arguments effectively, ensuring a smooth and easy-to-follow flow of ideas, which enhances the clarity and persuasiveness of the argument. Support their claims with evidence. Prewriting activities encourage students to gather evidence from credible sources to support their claims, strengthening the argument and making it more convincing. Anticipate counterarguments. By considering potential counterarguments during the

prewriting stage, students can strengthen their own arguments and address opposing viewpoints effectively.

In both scenarios, the students demonstrated an awareness of their target audience. This crucial consideration influenced their choice of language, tone, and level of detail. By tailoring their writing to the specific needs and expectations of their audience, students can increase the effectiveness of their communication and ensure their message resonates with the intended readers.

While not explicitly mentioned in the scenarios, technology can play a significant role in enhancing prewriting and argumentative reasoning skills. Tools such as mind mapping software, writing apps, and online research databases can help students to organize their thoughts, generate ideas, and gather information efficiently. These digital tools can significantly streamline the prewriting process and enhance the overall writing experience.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings from the analysis of the two scenarios have significant implications for MBA education and writing instruction. It can be stated that for MBA Education the curriculum design for MBA programs should prioritize the development of prewriting skills as a foundational component of writing instruction. Courses should incorporate activities that encourage brainstorming, outlining, and mind mapping. Faculty members should be trained to effectively teach prewriting strategies and provide students with opportunities to practice these skills. Assessments should evaluate not only the final product but also the prewriting process. This could involve analyzing students' drafts, outlines, and mind maps. Incorporating technology tools, such as mind mapping software and writing apps, can enhance the prewriting process and improve student engagement. Similarly, with regards to Writing Instruction, it is better if the writing instruction focus on the entire writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Instructors should employ active learning strategies, such as peer review, group work, and writing workshops, to promote critical thinking and collaborative learning. Providing timely and constructive feedback on students' writing can

help them to improve their skills and refine their arguments.

Also formative assessment can be used to monitor students' progress and identify areas for improvement. And the summative assessment should evaluate the quality of students' writing, including their ability to use prewriting strategies effectively.

By implementing these recommendations, MBA programs can equip students with the necessary skills to become effective writers and critical thinkers.

Limitations of the study: The study's limitations include a small sample size, reliance on self-reported data, a specific educational context, and a narrow focus on prewriting strategies. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings and the depth of analysis.

VII. CONCLUSION

This research explored the link between prewriting and argumentative reasoning in MBA students. Findings emphasize prewriting's vital role; brainstorming, outlining, and audience analysis significantly boost critical thinking and communication skills. These strategies enable students to organize thoughts and construct persuasive arguments. The study advocates for MBA programs to prioritize prewriting instruction, integrate technology tools, and cultivate a culture of critical inquiry. By doing so, institutions can equip students with essential skills for effective communication and leadership in the global marketplace

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The theme of violence as depicted in both Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*."

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 09 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 03 Jul 2025; Accepted: 08 Jul 2025; Available online: 11 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Violence, Postmodernism, Frankenstein, terrorism, Ahmed Saadawi</p>	<p><i>This study aims to explore how Ahmed Saadawi's work, an Iraqi adaptation of Mary Shelley's, portrays violence as abjectness, as outlined in the powers of terror. In this book, dismembered corpses obliterated by explosions are aggregated to constitute a complete body. Consequently, this image embodies its cultivated essence, instigating a confrontation to seek vengeance against the individual who murdered and dismembered its corporeal form. In research inquiries, the investigator assumes the role of the monster, symbolizing an abject that embodies moral corruption and the catalyst of mortality. Shelley and Saadawi distinctly reference the creature. While Shelly's Frankenstein creature is devoid of human characteristics, it elicits sympathy; in contrast, Saadawi's monster references terrorism and its destructive powers. Saadawi's Frankenstein in Baghdad employs the violence of war as a metaphor for the erosion of humanity, resulting in individuals merging with a non-human existence, akin to a monster. The employs a postmodern framework to analyze the works of Saadawi and Shelley, focusing on the effects of Western aggression and its dissemination objectives. The researcher will conclude that individuals must renounce terrorism and its consequences, along with all forms of hatred. Only then will violence and carnage come to an end. Furthermore, individuals must cease endorsing Western terrorism and brutality to reclaim their humanity.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Gothic literature enhances our understanding of life and self, offering insight into the world we inhabit. In his 2003 study "The Political Geography of Horror in Shelley's Novel," Randel addresses a gap concerning the historical significance of the Frankenstein perspectives. Randel observes that "modern

European novels" often commemorate historical events related to their respective settings (Randel, 2003, p. 465). While living near Geneva, the birthplace of Frankenstein, Shelley conceived the idea for her novel from a work entitled Frankenstein. She subsequently departed Geneva with Percy and visited Chamonix, where she observed the

confrontation between Frankenstein and his creature in Blanc. Shelley intermittently demonstrates the lack of facts in the book, which are also absent. Personally meaningful to the author. The researcher in this study will also investigate the context of the French Revolution and the revolutionary events of the English Civil War at Shelley's birthplace.

Shelley, as the daughter of prominent political philosophers, is considered part of a political lineage. Conversely, her husband and parents have persistently maintained the radical perspective in their writings. In her work, Shelley integrates these concepts with her divergent perspective (Bower Bank, 1979: p. 418), resulting in a significant independent evolution as a modern writer and political theorist from 1818 to 1831. Frankenstein in Baghdad was not a rephrasing of Mary Shelley, as asserted by Saadawi. Consequently, comparisons and contrasts between the two novels may be drawn. Saadawi stated in an interview that the book references Frankenstein only twice. In addition to these two references, the residents of Baghdad in the narrative refer to the peculiar being as "what's-its-name" or "the one without a name," suggesting they may be indifferent to its resemblance to a Frankenstein-like entity.

Najjar (2014) Baghdad's Frankenstein centers on the concept of "abjection." Human bodies are regarded as refuse, and human souls are squandered. Hadi al-Attag, an elderly, intoxicated junk dealer, is the protagonist of Saadawi's novel. He asserts that the theme is the principal difference between his book and Shelley's. The author asserts, "In this novel, Frankenstein epitomizes Iraq's contemporary issues." During the period when the novel is set in Iraq, it exudes a pronounced Frankenstein-like atmosphere of dread. (Najjar, 2014).

Hadi in the Iraqi adaptation lacks Victor Frankenstein's "lofty aspirations" and "grand ambitions," which are among their distinguishing features. Hadi seeks to employ the body for a constructive purpose, yet he is uncertain about the outcome of this "atrocious and irrational act." Najjar (2014). However, Hadi al-Attag and Victor Frankenstein have both made a classified discovery. I discovered "the life secret" alongside Victor. "I was astonished that I alone was destined to uncover such an extraordinary secret among numerous men of intellect who had focused their investigations on the

same field," the man asserts—Frankenstein by Shelley. Hadi's discovery is more intimately associated with violence than with science. The crux of this revelation is to disregard human sanctity. He has discovered the essence of violence in waste or abjection. Employed at the coffee shop owned by his Egyptian friend Aziz El Masry, Hadi narrates to his audience the story of the entity he has assembled to provide it with a dignified burial. Although regarded as a pivotal Gothic novel of the Romantic period, Frankenstein also exemplifies the process of individualization and its impact on human identity by illustrating the significant role of language in the characters' development. Language presents the subject to the other, and as Botting (1996) states, "the other... constitutes the human subject in language through the effects of speech." In Frankenstein, Mary Shelley emphasizes "the interactions between a rejecting father and his rejected creature" to illustrate the relationship between Victor and the Creature (Miller, 1998: p. 59). Indeed, estrangement is the initial emotion the Creature encounters upon opening his eyes to the external world. He conveys his emotions to Victor by saying, "I struggle to recall the initial years of my life; everything appears indistinct and chaotic. (Miller, 1998: p. 79). Upon encountering the world for the first time, he experiences a sense of emptiness. Mellor asserts that from the creature's inception, Frankenstein has deemed it 'demoniacal' and subjected it to scorn (Frankenstein: p. 46). Consequently, following the Other's rejection of the Creature, Victor preempts the actual sequence and enters the imagined realm immediately upon opening his eyes. Victor reflects on his initial rejection: What terminology can I employ to articulate my sentiments regarding this calamity? The dream's allure vanished, leaving my heart engulfed in terror and revulsion. I could not endure the aspect of the being I had created. I exited the room abruptly and wandered into my bedroom for an extended period, unable to succumb to sleep. (Frankenstein: p. 45). The subject's renunciation of the Other is epitomized by this rejection, which holds considerable significance for Lacan. This abdication is typically expected to occur when Victor achieves completeness with his creature by accepting it. However, the Creature is categorically rejected. The

Creature is precluded from entering the symbolic order as a result of this rejection.

The Violence

The diversity of our world results in numerous representations of violence across literature, politics, and various social and cultural spheres. *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Al-Saadawi is a novel that encapsulates the violence of a tumultuous period in Iraqi history. It illustrates violent acts and encapsulates the novel's principal theme. The somber novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is set in contemporary Iraq and diverges from the original narrative of the creature's creation by a scientist in his laboratory. Conversely, the creature is crafted by a waste-picker, who daily reconstructs human remains dismembered by bombings into a single entity atop a partially destroyed house in an impoverished neighbourhood of Baghdad. The term "shesma," signifying "what is its name" in Iraqi Arabic, is directed towards this sewn cadaver. The fundamental narrative of the novel is revealed through Saadawi's character, Farid, who works in the media sector. The Imam's Bridge Incident occurred in 2005, two years after the US invasion of Iraq, resulting in the deaths of over a thousand Shiite pilgrims on a bridge in Baghdad. A warning of a suicide bomber incited a stampede, prompting many to leap into the river. "The dread of mortality led to the demise of innocent individuals on the bridge" (*Frankenstein*: p. 98). This illustrates that fear, amplified and personified, is central to the conflict. Saadawi stated in an interview that this monster "embodies the entirety of the Iraqi individual" as it "consists of components derived from Iraqis of various races, sects, and ethnicities." In her book *Powers of Horror*, the Bulgarian-French intellectual Julia Kristeva asserts that the violence in Saadawi's novel exemplifies the concept of the Abject. She asserts that "abjection maintains what was present in the archaic pre-object relationship, reflecting the historical violence that occurs when one body detaches from another to assert its existence."

Kristeva, 1982. The human subject must strongly resist separation from the maternal body to facilitate birth. Kristeva posits that violence is an intrinsic element of human existence. Kristeva posits that each individual distinctly embodies monstrosity.

According to Kristeva, the Abject "disturbs identity, system, and order." Kristeva, 1982. *Frankenstein*, composed of multiple corpses, embodies this "turmoil" of an ongoing identity in both the original and the Iraqi adaptations. He was born out of violence. "Every crime is deplorable as it underscores the deficiencies of the law," asserts Kristeva (1982). In other words, violence is a manifestation of monstrosity, as the depressed individuals also embody monstrosity.

Saadawi's work serves as a poignant exemplification of the lamentable, akin to Shelley's.

Kristeva asserts that the body is the most explicit representation of the lamentable condition. "The corpse epitomises abjection when perceived devoid of God or science" (Kristeva, 1982). The corpse is regarded as a contaminant, an infection, and a significant threat to one's identity.

Saadawi's work is a notable exemplification of the lamentable, akin to Shelley's.

Kristeva asserts that the body exemplifies the most lamentable aspect. "The cadaver epitomises abjection when perceived devoid of divinity or scientific understanding" (Kristeva, 1982). The corpse is regarded as a contaminant, an infection, and a significant threat to one's identity. Moreover, due to its characterisation as "the most sickening of wastes," Kristeva associates it with aversion (Kristeva, 1982). The demarcation that distinguishes humans from non-humans has been transgressed. The corpse's connection to violence renders it highly significant. Living organisms employ violence to eliminate waste. All human functions are inherently lamentable, especially those related to waste or decomposition. The waste persists in being expelled until the body ultimately decomposes into a cadaver. Besides its implications for sexual violence, incestuous familial and sexual relationships represent another significant facet of the violence depicted in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The sexual and familial relationships shape the characters' subjectivity and sexual identities. In *Making Monstrous*, Botting argues that the issue of gender, specifically how *Frankenstein* delineates distinctions between male and female, as well as the implications of these representations, has become a significant concern in the novel's critical analysis. *Frankenstein*: p. 100. The study examines the impacts of virility and representations of

excessive masculinity and femininity in sexualities. One of these representations is the cruelty, horror, and bias articulated in *Frankenstein* in a complex and disquieting manner (Johnson, 1982: p. 57). Lacan's critique of sexual identity stems from the notion that the symbolic supersedes the real. Lacan asserts: In the Oedipus complex, the gendered child evolves from a gendered phantasm to a sexual human child by undergoing the symbolic test. Provided that everything proceeds as intended, he will ultimately embrace his identity as a young boy among adults, fully entitled to aspire to become "like daddy," signifying a masculine individual with a spouse. This allows for a discussion of Victor Frankenstein's sexual identity regarding his mother. As Elizabeth's relationship with Victor develops, she increasingly appeals to him as a sexual object, influenced by the dynamics between her mother, Caroline, and father, Alphonso. Victor's father has offered to safeguard his bereaved mother. The study also focuses on the pressures inherent in specific sexual communications, including heterosexuality and same-gender relationships, as well as the connections between sexual meaning, knowledge, truth, and authority. Moreover, these sites of Gothic imagination crises are of significant interest in postmodernist discourse. This study illustrates how individuals whose gender or sexual orientation diverges from societal norms have, in effect, become the "monsters" of modern sexual discourse. Gothic literature has justifiably emphasised the image of the monster, as monstrosity in Western culture has historically been linked to sexism and gender nonconformity. Critics have asserted the peculiar power of Gothic monsters, strategically attempting to re-appropriate and disseminate this strength in support of postmodern critique. Critics have recently reinterpreted numerous Gothic works from the nineteenth century as illustrating the turbulent ascent and cultural supremacy of a middle-class, heterosexual, white, Western identity.

The Terror

A defining feature of postmodernism is the dissolution of boundaries in Saadawi's writing, distinguishing it from Shelley's. Eliminating criminals also results in the demise of victims; thus, victims and criminals are interconnected. Saadawi

subtly posits that "each individual possesses a degree of criminality... there are no innocents who are entirely innocent or criminals who are wholly criminal" (Saadawi's: pp.156, 214) when the (What 's-it 's-name) opts for the dramatic conclusion. Saadawi articulates that every individual in Iraq embodies both criminality and victimhood. Consequently, the organism has developed into:

A metaphor for an interminable cycle of retribution that is inextricable. A commendable initiative to deliver justice to victims of the post-2003 anarchy swiftly devolves into criminality as the distinctions between guilt and innocence become blurred. *Electrastreet.com*, Hassan. Saadawi conveys his message clearly in his novel that we have all contributed to the creation of this entity, in various ways, as he states, "played a turn in creating this creature" (Saadawi: p.217), and that "this evil we all have inside us ... because we are all criminals to some extent" (p.227). In his interview, Saadawi asserts, "If there is a lesson to be learnt and a moral juncture to reflect upon today as Iraqis, it is to recognise that we are not solely victims and that we have all contributed to the creation of victims in various ways" (Najjar, *arabicliterature.com*). In Saadawi's novel, Baghdad serves as the abject. Baghdad embodies abjection, characterised by its tormented spirits, pervasive violence and gloom, "ominous clouds" (p.277), and the corpses that "littered the streets like rubbish" (p.153). If Baghdad is an object in Saadawi's book, then it is. Baghdad epitomises desolation, marked by haunting spectres, pervasive violence and despair, ominous skies (p. 277), and lifeless bodies strewn across the streets like refuse (p. 153). Characters depicted as vampires, demons, or aliens in Gothic-postmodernist literature exemplify Freudian self-abatements, wherein the otherness within the self is repressed and vilified. The monster's initial manifestation prompts a dialogue between the self and the other, subsequently enveloped by the lingering dread that facilitates transcendence from the self into the realm of unfamiliar otherness. This illustrates the essential requirement for fear to reveal the suppressed and initiate a discourse on self-understanding and societal comprehension. Saadawi sought to establish an internal "dialogue" that transcended his literary works. Therefore, as per Lyotard (1984), on page 82,

we can discern the murmurs of a longing for the resurgence of terror, for the actualization of the fantasy to grasp reality.

The statement of the problem

Although the chosen novels were written over two centuries apart, Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* and Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* both addressed the same subject, as this study will demonstrate comprehensively. This study aims to investigate how a fractured identity can be expressed via the reading and analysis of two novels: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Al-Saadawi. By supporting terrorism in all Islamic countries overall and in Arab countries specifically, Western colonial powers exploited all of their resources to splinter the identity of Islam. Their methods involve taking advantage of some of their clients inside these nations in order to infiltrate the violence and terror. Furthermore, the monster idea employed by the researcher illustrates the extent to which colonization powers persist in eradicating all social and cultural norms within these nations. To analyze Saadawi's and Shelley's chosen works and investigate the impact of Western violence and its propagation, the researcher employs postmodern theory as a framework for analysis. It is understood that until people reject all manifestations of hatred as well as terrorism and its effects, terror and bloodshed will not end. In addition, the people must stop supporting Western terrorism and brutality in order to regain their humanity. According to the researcher's findings, identity is created by and projected onto individuals, and it can be reconciled from a negative to a positive.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

David Punter's book, *The Literature of Terror*, asserts that the Gothic genre was created to elicit a chilling ambiance within historical settings, exemplified by haunted castles occupied by vampires, ghosts, and monsters. The utilisation of the paranormal to manipulate psychological obsessions in distorted environments reflects themes of mortality. Enigmas, cemeteries, sombre settings, and unwavering emotions, coupled with the melancholic themes found in literary works (Punter, 1996: pp. 1-20).

Punter (1996: p. 18) contends that "exploring Gothic is synonymous with exploring fear." The Gothic's passive connotation implied a quality that seemed "dark and barbarous" (Varma, 1957: p. 10). The term developed to denote "a precious imaginative liberty," resulting in a gradual alteration of its traditional meaning (Kilgour, 1995: p. 14). Robert Hume contends that "the atmosphere of the Gothic novel—defined by malevolence and ominous dread—is its essential characteristic, rather than its techniques" (Robert Hume, 2002: p. 286). In her examination of Gothic-Postmodernism, Maria Beville offers innovative perspectives on the genre. Beville (2009: p. 8) contends that the "gothic" is the most overt literary mode for expressing the anxieties of postmodernity. Despite the Gothic style being regarded as outdated and fatigued, Beville presents a novel concept, claiming that "terror" is intrinsic to postmodernity. Gothic-postmodernism is a literary genre that exists at the convergence of multiple literary forms, exploring the contrasts between past and present, reality and illusion, and fear and desire, among others. Nonetheless, it sporadically surpasses these limitations in literary depictions (Beville, 2009: p. 96). Furthermore, Beville (2009: p. 33) contends that the Gothic has traditionally served as an "outlet" for expressing anxieties provoked by terror and has "played a significant role in the genesis of terror itself." Stephen King distinguishes between three types of fear: disgust, terror, and dread. King (1986: p. 21) asserts that dread arises when readers are urged to envision terrifying aspects that remain concealed, rather than facing the origin of their fear. Fred Botting posits that "horror signifies the moment of contraction and recoil when terror incites an imaginative expansion of one's sense of self" (Botting, 1996: p. 10). Furthermore, Beville contends that the graphic depiction of horrific events in horror films constitutes terror, a "constraining experience." In other words, "the distinction between the odour of death and the encounter with a corpse" differentiates panic from horror (Varma, 1957: p. 130). From a postmodern perspective, these feelings of horror and panic are paradoxically intertwined with curiosity, as Punter articulates, representing "the dreadful pleasure" (Punter, 1996, p. 7). Botting (1996: p. 6) posits that these horrors may also elicit pleasure, as they "stimulated excitements which blurred

definitions of reason and morality." Botting illustrates that the emotions predominantly associated with Gothic novels are ambiguous; they stimulate readers' curiosity rather than eliciting feelings such as terror and horror (Botting, 1996, p. 9). As previously stated, Gothic postmodernists illuminate the ominous and disquieting viewpoints of individuals and society that emerge from our repressed fears and illicit desires, or "the language of terror" (Foucault 65). Beville (2009) characterises their narratives as "literary monsters" (p. 16). Gothic postmodernist narratives are perceived as counter-narratives, and Gothic postmodernism is regarded as a transformative discourse that alters reality by compelling us to confront our unconsciousness. In his psychological study "The Uncanny," Sigmund Freud elucidates a specific form of fear he designates as the "uncanny," characterised as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (p. 20). Consequently, the uncanny in Gothic narratives appears not as something "new" or "foreign," but rather as that which has been repressed for an extended period and is "known and deeply rooted in memory" (Freud, 1998: p. 241). Moreover, it posits that Mary Shelley's novel exhibits considerable versatility, functioning as a metaphor for both civil wars and various instances of violent political upheaval broadly. British critic Baldick observes that government is a "monstrosity" that asserts itself upon its creators, and he asserts that "the monsters both of poetic fancy and political organisation are made not by nature but by fallible human arts." He uniquely connects the "uneasy feeling of human responsibility involved in the conception" of political organization with Frankenstein (Baldick, 1987: p. 15). Frankenstein exemplifies the disquieting sensation that humanity has surpassed its limitations and generated a force beyond its control in popular culture. Baldick links the French Revolution to the "politico-philosophical novels" of Jacobinism and the extensive influence of "Gothic" novels, which triggered a surge of literature and pamphlets in response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) (p. 16). The Gothic, characterised by its focus on feudal structures of unrestrained personal authority and its oppressive misuse, as well as its association with the haunting remnants of Britain's archaic, superstitious,

corrupt, and tyrannical Catholic history, constitutes one of the two distinct categories of horror that Baldick skilfully delineates within this literary genre.

III. METHODOLOGY

The interplay between "recognition and remembrance" of existing literary works is a fundamental aspect of postmodernism, as previously noted. In literary studies, postmodernism introduced novel methods of articulating concepts to elucidate, using Gerard Genette's terminology, the relationship between source texts and their derivatives. Numerous authors and commentators contest the notion of reviving and revisiting ancient literature. Ronald Barthes notes that all text is inherently a new fabric of prior citations that permeate and are reallocated within the text, as language always precedes and surrounds it. The optimal method to examine the nature of interpersonal violence is through a postmodernist perspective, which endorses a multitude of diverse and occasionally conflicting interpretations of the issue. Postmodernism promotes the acceptance of various conceptions of violence, which are more prevalent than others. (Maureen, 2005). Shelley and Saadawi both illustrate the atrocities of their respective cultures in their writings. Punter characterises terror as "an excessive force for the fears, desires, and anxieties that afflicted society as it progressed towards capitalism" and asserts that it is a fundamental component of Gothic literature from the eighteenth century (Punter, 1996: p. 23). According to Punter (1996), "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* expressed anxieties regarding the power of science, atheism, social chaos, and deprivation." Since the advent of postmodernism, these issues have "re-emerged" as fear has become predominant in political discourse (Punter, 1996: p. 23). Shelley cautions about the "emergence of industry" and the "swiftly evolving world" of scientific discoveries (Punter, 1996: pp. 112, 23). Schimmel (2012) asserts that Saadawi conveys "the horrors of war, its brutality, and how it distorts the psyche both ethically and emotionally." According to Sam Metz, the novel's dystopian characteristics stem from the real, harrowing violence that occurred in Baghdad in 2005, rather than from its fantastical, supernatural elements. (Metz, review.com; Los Angeles). By

revealing long-suppressed content, Saadawi's "literary monster" urges readers to face their fears and acknowledge that all "abnormalities we seek to separate from ourselves are intrinsically and profoundly part of our identity" (Hogle, 2002: p. 12). Beville's amalgamation of Gothic and Postmodernist influences has produced a "literary monster," characterised by an obsession with horror, negativity, and irrationality, as well as a hostility towards conventional reality, firmly positioning it within the revolutionary. Encampment. This revolution's opposition to humanity as a whole is frequently disconcerting.

IV. CONCLUSION

David Oakes posits that gothic literature is destabilising as it compels readers to contemplate their own lives, their communities, and the broader universe. The work serves as a cultural artefact, encapsulating the anxieties and concerns of both the writing and reading epochs. Shelley and Saadawi employ violence—its depictions, rationalisations, and ultimate eradication—to elicit a sense of horror in their works. Consequently, violence epitomises the intrinsic chaos of human nature and the propensity for destruction. The study indicated that fear and aggression are perpetual, necessitating individuals to consciously reject all forms of hatred and the repercussions of terrorism. Furthermore, individuals must cease endorsing Western terrorism and brutality to reclaim their humanity.

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An Analysis of the Generalization of the Address Term Teacher and Its Causes in Shandong Province, China

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p><i>Received:</i> 16 Jun 2025; <i>Received in revised form:</i> 09 Jul 2025; <i>Accepted:</i> 11 Jul 2025; <i>Available online:</i> 14 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Sociolinguistics, teacher, Generalization of address terms</p>	<p><i>The address term “teacher” is very common in Shandong Province. Taking Jining as an example, the author studies the phenomenon and causes of the generalization of the address term “teacher” by means of questionnaire survey. The research shows that most Jining citizens distinguish occasions when using “teacher”, and there is a consistent trend in the distinction of occasions. In addition to some service industries such as shopping malls, restaurants and hospitals affected by their own causes, the address term “teacher” can be used in almost any situation. But in different occasions, the use of “teacher” has different characteristics. As for the causes of the generalization of the address term “teacher”, in addition to the internal factors of language, there are other social factors. And the phenomenon of the generalization of the address term “teacher” will play a positive role in social development.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Literature Background

Nowadays, with convenient transportation and developed network, the opportunities and frequency of face-to-face and online communication have increased greatly. In order to promote better communication between people, it is particularly important to know how to address each other. This involves a lot of appellation generalization in Chinese, including the address term “teacher”.

Academic studies on the address term “teacher” mainly started from Huang Nansong (1988), focusing on the evolution of the address term “teacher”, such as Wang E, Yang Qing (2005), Tian Zhengping, Zhang Xiaoqian (2007), Xie Jingjing, Zhao Yingjie (2010) and

He Yanping (2011). At present, many scholars have conducted research from the perspectives of pragmatics, cognitive linguistics and sociolinguistics. For example, Guo Mo (2013) and Long Deyin (2021) analyzed the phenomenon and causes of the generalization of the address term “teacher” from the perspective of pragmatics, and Rong Chenpu (2005) and Yang Cheng (2014) analyzed the phenomenon and causes of the generalization of the address term “teacher” from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. From the perspective of sociolinguistics, most scholars, such as Zha Li Li (2010), Ji Yingchao (2016), Xu Chongqing (2021), Zhang Jun (2022) and Lin Xiufeng (2023), respectively analyzed the phenomenon and causes of the generalization of the address term

“teacher”. Among them, several scholars selected a certain region to carry out specific research on the address term “teacher”, such as Gao Xiaocen and Cui Shanjia (2016) in Jinan City, Chen Huimin (2020) in Chongqing, and Zhang Xuanguang (2021) in Pingdingshan, respectively, on the phenomenon and causes of the generalization of the address term “teacher”.

1.2 Thesis Statement

The so-called "generalization", different types of addresses have different forms of expression. The generalization of social appellations refers to the use of address terms with certain characteristics of social relations to address people without such characteristics of social relations (Su Jing, Lu Jia, 2002). The word “teacher” belongs to the category of social appellation, and its social relationship is characterized by "imparting knowledge and educating students". Then, using the address term “teacher” to address those who do not actually directly "impart knowledge and educate students", in other words, using “teacher” to address non-teachers is a generalization of the address term “teacher”. From the end of the 20th century to now, “teacher” as a kind of address is quietly popular in society, which is to a certain extent a mirror of our social development and change, reflecting social life and mass cultural psychology. In Shandong dialect, the use of “teacher” is very common, with its wide range of use, high frequency and little restrictions. Regardless of gender, education, or professional status, almost anyone can be called a “teacher”. Strangers also call each other “teacher”.

1.3 Research Gap

It can be seen that the use of the address term “teacher” is very common, but there are few studies on this phenomenon in specific regions, especially the studies on Jinan, the capital city of Shandong Province, lack a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the

causes. Therefore, the author takes Jining of Shandong Province as an example to discuss the generalization of the address term “teacher” and analyze the causes behind it, including internal factors of language, and there are also social factors, historical factors and cultural factors.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Model

In order to ensure the effect and quality of the investigation, the scope of the investigation mainly involves a main urban area and a county-level city of Jining, namely Rencheng District and Zoucheng. The respondents were mainly local people who were born and lived in Jining, as well as those who went out to work or study for less than one year and were less influenced by foreign dialects. Jining locals who go out to work or study for a long time, or foreigners who come to Jining to work or study, are not included in the survey. This paper adopts the method of observation, questionnaire and interview, mainly using the method of questionnaire. The method of observation can roughly know who uses the address term “teacher” in what occasions, so as to facilitate the preparation of questionnaires. The method of interview runs through the observation method and questionnaire method, interviewing people of different occupational types about the use of the address term “teacher”. The three methods are interrelated and complement each other.

2.2 Framework

First of all, in order to make the survey objects representative, comprehensive and accurate, the author determined specific survey objects, including the following six occupations: government workers, employees of enterprises and institutions, doctors, teachers, students, and individuals; Then, 15 to 35

people in each occupation were selected as survey objects, and a total of 150 questionnaires were issued, of which 147 were valid.

Secondly, the questionnaire mainly involves the following two aspects: on the one hand, the basic information of the respondents, such as gender, age and occupation. Second, the use of the address term “teacher” in Rencheng District and Zoucheng of Jining mainly includes the following questions: (1) Do Jining citizens often use “teacher” to address others? (2) Are Jining citizens often called “teacher” by others? (3) On what occasions does the generalization of the address term “teacher” appear? Therefore, the author selected 7 typical occasions in the questionnaire (when in government agencies, asking for directions, taking a taxi or bus, in shopping malls, in food markets, in

restaurants), and how the questionnaire fillers address others on these occasions. The purpose of the questionnaire survey is to comprehensively understand the personal information of the respondents and the use of the address term “teacher” (referring to the frequency of use of the address term “teacher” and the tendency of the people called “teacher” in terms of age and occupation), so as to analyze the extent and causes of the generalization of address term “teacher”.

Finally, after collecting relevant information, the author interviewed at least one person from each occupation to further inquire about the specific situation of the respondents using the address term “teacher”, including the causes and attitudes.

III. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

3.1 The User of the “Teacher” Address: the Salutator and the Addressee

Table 1. Distribution of gender, age, education and occupation of the sample

	类型	人数	百分比
性别	男	69	46.9%
	女	78	53.1%
年龄	18-35 岁	23	15.6%
	36-45 岁	57	38.8%
	46-55 岁	46	31.3%
	56 岁以上	21	14.3%
学历	初中及以下	58	39.5%
	高中（含中专）	40	27.2%
	大专及本科生	38	25.9%
	研究生及以上	11	7.4%
职业	政府机关工作人员	17	11.6%
	企事业单位员工	35	24.5%
	医生	23	15.6%
	教师	20	12.9%
	学生	35	23.8%
	个体	17	11.6%

Table 1 shows the distribution of sex, age and occupation for 147 valid samples. Of these samples, 73 percent frequently used the address term “teacher”; 24 percent occasionally use the address term “teacher”, but not very often; Only 3 percent never use the address term “teacher”. In addition, 65 percent are often referred to as “teacher”, 28 percent are occasionally referred to as “teacher”, and only 7 percent are never called “teacher”. In general, “teacher” is the most widely used appellation in Jining, and the generalization of the address term “teacher” is very common in Jining City.

About what occupations can be called “teacher”, there is a consistent trend among Jining citizens, as high as 73 percent of the citizens believe that everyone can be called “teacher” regardless of occupation. 26 percent said intellectuals should be called “teacher”, 11 percent said civil servants should be called “teacher”, and 10 percent said workers should be called a “teacher”, with only 2 percent saying that individuals and private business owners should be called “teacher”.

It is worth noting that 80 percent of Jining citizens

believe that everyone can be called by the address term “teacher”, while the choice of the remaining 20 percent is mostly determined by the occupation of the respondents themselves. Therefore, the address term “teacher” is not restricted by professional status. In Jining, no matter what kind of occupation the other party is engaged in, it can be called “teacher”. To sum up, the use of “teacher” in Jining city is very popular, mainly used to address middle-aged people and older than themselves, and does not distinguish gender and professional identity, almost everyone can be called “teacher”.

3.2 The Use of “Teacher” Addresses in Different Occasions

Within the language community, people have the same language attitude and follow certain language usage norms. While emphasizing the consistency of speech communities, we do not ignore the differences within speech communities. Instead, by examining this difference, we can learn more about the structures within speech communities. Table 2 is about the use of the address term “teacher” in different occasions.

Table 2. The use of “teacher” addresses in different situations

场合	称谓语	百分比	称谓语（被称）	百分比
问路	老师	44%	老师	48.1%
	亲属称谓语	35%	亲属称谓语	28.3%
	其他	21%	其他	23.6%
商场购物	导购员	26.6%	女士/先生	61.8%
	老师	25.3%	老师	14.5%
	其他	48.1%	其他	23.7%
餐厅就餐	服务员	70.5%	女士/先生	71%
	老师	9.4%	老师	10.8%
	其他	20.1%	其他	18.2%
医院	大夫/医生	92.7%	姓名	35%
	老师	3.6%	老师	29%

就诊	其他	3.7%	其他	35%
打车/ 公交车	师傅	72.1%	乘客	13.5%
	老师	25.1%	老师	56.4%
	其他	2.8%	其他	30.1%
菜市场 买菜	老板/老板娘	30.5%	亲属称谓语	33.2%
	老师	33.6%	老师	33.8%
	其他	35.9%	其他	33%
政府 机关 办事	名字/ 姓+职称	34.4%	名字/ 姓+职称	45%
	老师	45.2%	老师	33.3%
	其他	20.4%	其他	21.7%

Table 2 show that Jining citizens use the address term "teacher" in many occasions, but the frequency of use is different. Therefore, "teacher" is the most frequently used by Jining citizens. In the three occasions of "asking the way", "buying food in the vegetable market" and "working in the government organ", "teacher" is the first address, among which "asking the way" uses the "teacher" address the highest frequency, far higher than "master" and relatives address frequency. But in the service sector, things are different.

When shopping in the mall, people are more accustomed to calling the "shopping guide", while the service staff of the mall is more accustomed to calling the consumer "madam" or "sir". The address term "teacher" can only be ranked second, but the frequency gap with the former is not large, and it can be basically equal. When dining in a restaurant, the frequency of use of the "teacher" address is low, the mainstream address is "waiter" and "madam" or "sir", most people do not use the "teacher" address. In the hospital, people generally use "doctor", "doctor" and other proper nouns to call medical staff, but medical staff in addition to directly address the patient's name, often use "teacher" to call patients. When taking public transportation, "master" is the most important

address used by people to address the driver, followed by "teacher", and "teacher" is the most important address when the driver addresses the passenger. The reason for this difference is closely related to the nature of work in the service industry. People in the service industry use a specific set of industry terms, depending on the nature of their work. At the same time, in order to show respect for consumers, service staff generally address consumers as "madam" or "sir". In addition, the driver this group is also more special, the general "master" is the most common name, but there are still many citizens also call the driver "teacher".

3.3 Attitudes and Causes of the Use of Address Term "Teacher"

Finally, the author conducted an interview and found that most of the interviewees expressed their love for this address term, only a few others expressed no feelings, and no one hated this address term. As for the underlying causes, combined with the questionnaire data and the interview results, this paper analyzes the internal factors of language and many factors in society from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

3.3.1 The Absence of Address Terms in Chinese

With the development and changes of society, there may be some new occupations that have not existed before or some people with special identities. The social change is so rapid, but the development of the address is slow, which will cause a certain new occupation or a certain class of people with special status of the address lack. Although the absence of a certain type of address is inevitable, the whole process of interpersonal communication still has to operate normally, so people will temporarily borrow other address terms to replace the new occupation or new identity that has not been properly addressed, which reflects the self-regulating function of language. In this case, the appropriate address is usually chosen as the alternative object, and the frequency of use of the chosen address is thus greatly increased. In Shandong Province, the use of “teacher” is more frequent than other address terms, and the semantic generalization of “teacher” is also more obvious due to the trend of high-frequency words. At this time, “teacher” does not only refer to the person who imparts culture, technology, or is worth learning in a certain aspect, but can refer to some new occupation or new identity, or even any kind of person in any context. As mentioned above, when pedestrians ask for directions on the road, they do not know the age, identity and status of the other party, and they do not feel respectful enough to call them casually, and they also call them “teacher”. When asking a stranger for help, addressing the stranger as “teacher” is appropriate, which not only obfuscates the profession, avoids embarrassment, but also shows respect and courtesy.

3.3.2 The external causes of the generalization of the address term of “teacher”

3.3.2.1. The Recognition of the Status of Teacher” from Public

Public recognition of teacher’s social status has been one of the outstanding traditional cultures in China

since ancient times. Throughout the long history, although teachers have different sources, different identities, different knowledge abilities, and are limited by historical factors and class status, they all play a very important role. Therefore, except for some special historical periods, the social status of teachers has always belonged to the upper echelon. In addition, the modern society is getting more and more educated, and the use of “teacher” to address others is gradually generalized to show politeness and respect for each other.

3.3.2.2. The Five-thousand-year Influence of Confucianism

Shandong Province is known as the hometown of Confucius and Mencius, among which Jining is the birthplace of Confucianism. Confucianism demands that people treat others with respect and courtesy. Deeply influenced by Confucianism, people in Shandong like to address others as “teacher”. For example, in many occasions where the address term “teacher” is used, the relationship between the two parties is not close, and most of them are just strangers. For the smooth progress of communication, a polite address term should be chosen on the basis of the lack of address term to establish the starting point of communication. Based on this, “teacher” is a better choice. Because “teacher” is originally called someone who is worth learning in some aspects, it not only expresses the willingness to communicate, but also shows the attitude of respect.

3.3.2.3. The Consistent of Public Psychology of Contemporary Society

Language is the embodiment of the user's psychological activities and the carrier of the social relationship between the two sides. The diversification of occupations in modern society makes Chinese addresses difficult, and the word “teacher” solves the difficulty of addressing this

dilemma. Moreover, the statements such as “stylist Wang” and “makeup artist Li” do not conform to daily language habits, and give people a strange and arrogant feeling to a certain extent, and addressing “teacher Wang” and “teacher Li” is conducive to the formation of correct social distance. It shows the respect and appreciation of the user, does not discriminate against any occupation, and shows respect for the occupation that can create its own value.

IV. CONCLUSION

“Teacher” is currently the most widely used by Jining citizens, and is not limited by gender, education and professional status, almost all people can be called “teacher”. Most Jining citizens distinguish occasions when using the term “teacher”, and there is a consistent trend in the distinction of occasions. In addition to some service industries such as shopping malls, restaurants and hospitals affected by their own causes, the “teacher” address can be used in almost any situation. But in different occasions, the use of “teacher” address has different characteristics. As for the causes for the generalization of the address term “teacher”, in addition to the internal factors of the Chinese language, such as the lack of Chinese appellations, there are other social factors, such as teacher’s status is widely recognized by the public, the address term “teacher” are in line with the public psychology and the influence of Confucianism on Shandong for thousands of years. All these reflect the positive role of “teacher” appellation generalization. If the address term of “teacher” is understood and used by more people, it will promote the economic development and tourism development of Shandong, and also play a positive role in foreign exchanges, providing a respectful, polite and friendly beginning for better communication.

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Eco-Critical Perspectives in Indian English Literature

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<p>Received: 16 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 09 Jul 2025; Accepted: 18 Jul 2025; Available online: 22 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Eco-criticism, Indian English literature, postcolonial ecology, indigenous wisdom, environmental justice.</p>	<p><i>This article explores the evolving field of eco-criticism in Indian English literature, analyzing how literary texts address environmental issues within postcolonial and cultural frameworks. By examining works by authors such as Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, and Kamala Das, the study reveals how Indian English literature critiques environmental degradation, promotes sustainability, and integrates indigenous ecological wisdom. Using a postcolonial eco-critical lens, the article investigates key environmental themes including climate change, deforestation, and the ethics of development. It highlights how these literary works foster ecological awareness and ethical responsibility while challenging anthropocentric worldviews. Additionally, the article emphasizes the need for inclusive and decolonized eco-critical approaches, recognizing indigenous voices and advocating for a sustainable literary future in a globalized world.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Eco-criticism, an interdisciplinary approach examining the relationship between literature and the environment, provides a vital lens for analyzing Indian English literature. Defined as the study of literature’s engagement with the physical world (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996), eco-criticism highlights how texts reflect environmental concerns. In India, with its diverse ecosystems and colonial history, eco-criticism intersects with postcolonial theory to address ecological legacies of colonialism and globalization (Mukherjee, 2010). Indian English literature, spanning novels, poetry, and essays, engages with issues like deforestation, pollution, and climate change while incorporating cultural and indigenous perspectives. Writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, and Kamala Das explore tensions between modernization and ecological preservation, critiquing anthropocentric attitudes. This article analyzes how Indian English literature articulates environmental

crises, integrates indigenous ecological wisdom, and promotes sustainability, drawing on postcolonial eco-critical frameworks to underscore its contribution to global ecological discourse (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010; Nixon, 2011).

Eco-Criticism: A Theoretical Framework

Eco-criticism explores how literature represents nature and critiques human-centered worldviews, as outlined by Cheryll Glotfelty (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). In the Indian context, it aligns with postcolonial theory, addressing environmental degradation rooted in colonial exploitation and capitalist policies (Mukherjee, 2010). Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee’s postcolonial eco-criticism highlights how colonial histories have shaped ecological crises in the Global South (Mukherjee, 2010). Indian English literature, with its bilingual and bicultural sensibilities, provides a unique platform for these intersections. Scholars like Greg Garrard argue that eco-criticism challenges

anthropocentrism by emphasizing non-human perspectives (Garrard, 2012). Indian philosophies, such as Advaita Vedanta, which stress interconnectedness, resonate with eco-critical principles (Naess, 1989). By blending eco-critical and postcolonial lenses, Indian writers critique industrialization's ecological impact and advocate for ethical human-nature relationships, contributing significantly to global environmental narratives (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010; DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011).

Environmental Themes in Indian English Literature

Indian English literature vividly portrays environmental crises, intertwining them with social and political issues. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) is set in the Sundarbans, a fragile ecosystem threatened by climate change, exploring human-nature conflicts and critiquing conservation policies that displace indigenous communities (Ghosh, 2004). Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) uses the polluted Meenachil River as a symbol of ecological and cultural decay due to industrialization (Roy, 1997). Kamala Das's poetry, such as *An Introduction*, employs nature imagery to challenge patriarchal and urban constraints, aligning with eco-feminist principles (Das, 1973; Merchant, 1996). Contemporary poets like Tishani Doshi address climate change in works like *Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods* (Doshi, 2017), advocating collective responsibility. These texts critique anthropocentric attitudes and promote ecological harmony, reflecting a commitment to environmental awareness (Buell, 2005; Clark, 2011).

Amitav Ghosh and the Anthropocene

Amitav Ghosh's works, notably *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and *The Great Derangement* (2016), offer profound eco-critical insights into the Anthropocene. *The Hungry Tide* portrays the Sundarbans as a dynamic ecosystem where human and non-human lives intersect, highlighting climate change's impact on vulnerable regions (Ghosh, 2004). The novel critiques conservation efforts that prioritize wildlife over indigenous communities, reflecting postcolonial eco-critical concerns (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010). In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh argues that modern literature has neglected climate change, urging writers to reimagine narrative forms to address ecological crises (Ghosh, 2016). His eco-critical perspective

emphasizes the need for stories that confront Anthropocene challenges, such as rising sea levels and habitat loss (Chakrabarty, 2009). Ghosh's works encourage a rethinking of literary responsibility, fostering narratives that promote environmental awareness and ethical engagement with the natural world (Heise, 2008; Morton, 2010).

Arundhati Roy and Environmental Justice

Arundhati Roy's fiction and non-fiction intertwine environmental and social justice, critiquing development-driven ecological destruction. In *The God of Small Things* (1997), the polluted Meenachil River symbolizes the erosion of ecological and cultural integrity due to industrialization (Roy, 1997). Her essays in *The Cost of Living* (1999) critique mega-dams like the Narmada, exposing their environmental and human costs (Roy, 1999). Roy's work aligns with environmental justice movements, emphasizing the disproportionate impact of ecological crises on marginalized communities (Nixon, 2011). Her eco-critical stance challenges capitalist models of progress, advocating for sustainable development and indigenous rights (Shiva, 1993). By blending narrative and activism, Roy highlights literature's role in resisting environmental exploitation and fostering ethical responsibility (Guha, 2000; Martinez-Alier, 2002). Her works remain a powerful call for ecological and social equity in a postcolonial context.

Kamala Das and Eco-Feminism

Kamala Das's poetry, including *An Introduction* and *The Old Playhouse*, reflects an eco-feminist perspective, portraying nature as a refuge from patriarchal and urban constraints (Das, 1973). Her imagery of trees, rivers, and seas evokes ecological interconnectedness, challenging anthropocentric and patriarchal ideologies (Merchant, 1996). Das's work aligns with eco-feminism, linking the exploitation of nature with the oppression of women (Warren, 2000). Her poetry critiques urbanization's alienation from nature, advocating for a spiritual reconnection with the environment (Plumwood, 1993). By celebrating nature's agency, Das reimagines human-nature relationships as symbiotic rather than exploitative (Mies & Shiva, 1993). Her eco-critical contributions highlight the emotional and cultural dimensions of environmental consciousness, inspiring readers to rethink their relationship with the natural world in a

rapidly urbanizing India (Braidotti, 1994; Gaard, 1993).

Indigenous Ecological Wisdom

Indian English literature draws on indigenous ecological wisdom, rooted in traditional practices and philosophies. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) portrays the village's sacred grove as a symbol of ecological and spiritual harmony, disrupted by colonial exploitation (Rao, 1938). Mahasweta Devi's *Pterodactyl*, Puran Sahay, and *Pirtha* highlights tribal communities' ecological knowledge, contrasting it with modernization's destructive impact (Devi, 1995). These texts emphasize the sustainability of indigenous practices, which prioritize coexistence with nature (Gadgil & Guha, 1995). Indigenous perspectives offer alternative models for addressing environmental crises, challenging Western-centric eco-critical frameworks (Adamson, 2012). By foregrounding tribal voices, Indian English literature advocates for inclusive environmentalism that respects cultural diversity (Banerjee, 2014). These narratives underscore the relevance of indigenous wisdom in shaping sustainable futures in a postcolonial context (Crosby, 2003; LaDuke, 1999).

Postcolonial Ecology and Globalization

Postcolonial eco-criticism examines how colonial legacies and globalization exacerbate environmental degradation. R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days* critiques the erosion of rural landscapes due to urbanization, reflecting the ecological costs of modernization (Narayan, 1943). Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* celebrates the Himalayas' beauty while lamenting their exploitation (Bond, 1956). These narratives highlight the tension between development and ecological preservation in a postcolonial context (Mukherjee, 2010). Global capitalism's impact on India's ecosystems, from deforestation to pollution, is a recurring theme in Indian English literature (Shiva, 2005). Writers critique the commodification of nature, advocating for localized, sustainable practices (Escobar, 1995). By addressing globalization's environmental toll, Indian English literature fosters critical awareness of the need for ethical and ecological balance (Guha, 2006; O'Brien, 2017).

Sustainability and Ethical Responsibility

Indian English literature advocates for sustainability and ethical responsibility toward the environment.

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) explores ecological and cultural disruptions in the Himalayas, emphasizing sustainable practices (Desai, 2006). Tishani Doshi's poetry, such as *Girls coming Out of the Woods*, addresses climate change and environmental loss, urging collective action (Doshi, 2017). These works align with global sustainability discourses, advocating for responsible resource use and ecological justice (Sachs, 1999). Indian writers draw on cultural narratives to promote environmental ethics, blending traditional wisdom with modern challenges (Kothari, 2014). Their works inspire readers to adopt sustainable lifestyles and challenge exploitative systems, contributing to a broader environmental movement (Slovic, 2010). By foregrounding ethical responsibility, Indian English literature plays a crucial role in shaping environmentally conscious futures (Heise, 2016).

II. CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Eco-critical scholarship in Indian English literature faces challenges, including the dominance of Western frameworks that may marginalize indigenous perspectives (Mukherjee, 2010). The urban bias in Indian English writing often overshadows rural and tribal voices, necessitating a more inclusive approach (Banerjee, 2014). Future studies should explore untranslated regional literature to enrich eco-critical discourse (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011). Integrating digital humanities with eco-criticism could provide new insights into environmental narratives, leveraging technology to analyze texts and their ecological contexts (Cohen & LeMenager, 2016). Collaborative research with indigenous scholars can decolonize eco-critical frameworks, ensuring cultural sensitivity (Adamson, 2012). By addressing these challenges, eco-critical studies can amplify marginalized voices and foster a holistic understanding of India's environmental narratives, contributing to global ecological discourse (Slovic, 2016).

III. CONCLUSION

The exploration of eco-critical perspectives in Indian English literature reveals a rich and multifaceted engagement with environmental concerns deeply

rooted in India's cultural, historical, and ecological landscapes. Through novels, poetry, and essays, writers like Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Kamala Das, and others articulate the urgent realities of climate change, deforestation, pollution, and ecological imbalance. Their works transcend mere environmental description, offering nuanced critiques of development, industrialization, and globalization, while foregrounding the ethical and emotional dimensions of human-nature relationships.

Indian English literature not only exposes the environmental injustices faced by marginalized communities but also brings forth indigenous ecological wisdom as a viable alternative to exploitative systems. By blending postcolonial theory with eco-criticism, these literary texts challenge dominant anthropocentric and Western paradigms, proposing culturally rooted, sustainable practices. The integration of eco-feminist and environmental justice perspectives further enriches this discourse, highlighting the intersectionality of gender, class, and ecology.

However, challenges remain—particularly the underrepresentation of rural and tribal voices, and the dominance of Western theoretical frameworks. Future scholarship must address these gaps by incorporating regional literatures, translating indigenous voices, and adopting interdisciplinary approaches such as digital eco-criticism and collaborative research with indigenous communities.

In a world increasingly threatened by ecological crises, Indian English literature plays a vital role in cultivating environmental consciousness. By imagining sustainable futures and advocating ethical responsibility, these literary works contribute meaningfully to global environmental thought. As eco-critical studies evolve, Indian literature will continue to serve as a powerful medium for environmental reflection, resistance, and renewal.

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Mapping Perpetrator’s Trauma and National Allegory in Moni Mohsin’s *The End of Innocence*

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<p>Received: 22 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 17 Jul 2025; Accepted: 20 Jul 2025; Available online: 23 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Perpetrator Trauma, 1971 Liberation War, Partition Literature.</p>	<p><i>The unstable political rift between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is a crucial point of discussion in many of the literary expressions in South Asian Anglophone Writings. The periodic disasters such as forced expulsion, migration, refugee crises, and trauma of the partition build up the South Asian history frequently. One such humanitarian crisis is the 1971 partition event, that led to the formation of Bangladesh. These events become the site of traumatization for the subjects of its country. The fiction of Bangladesh deals vehemently with their occupation as victimhood. The long-surviving silence in the anglophone writing of Pakistan writers in the 1971 partition is opened up by writers like Kamila Shamsie, Moni Mohsin, and Sorraya Khan. The trauma of the perpetrator and bystander is often neglected due to the contentious scholarship that can become an exculpation and distort the bifurcation between victimhood and perpetrator. This study expounds on the trauma of perpetrator in Moni Mohsin’s <i>The End of Innocence</i> (2006), explores the complexities in the psychological scarring and its belated outcome as well as throws insights upon the nuanced use of allegories by the author upon the theme of 1971 partition.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

The Liberation War of Bangladesh is the outcome of the economic disparities displayed against the then East Pakistan by West Pakistan, these outrageous partialities fuelled the need for liberation and a transversal role of the Indian military that brought down the war and eventually the formation of Bangladesh. The history often reads the liberation war as the Indo-Pak war and the 1971 partition, which gives a peripheral idea of pervasive paranoia between India and Pakistan. Literary Trauma Studies is expanding its boundaries to include the trauma of the perpetrator to maintain its ethical standards from the critical post-structural theory.

The act of perpetration is seen as acting out and exposing the trauma of the perpetrator. The research paper attempts to decipher the trauma of the perpetrator and bring out the commission of crime itself is the outcome of previous psychological injury and scarring. This study expounds the trauma of perpetrator in Moni Mohsin’s *The End of Innocence* (2006), and explores the complexities in the psychological scarring and its belated outcome. Ranabir Samaddar in his article titled Interpretations of the Bangladesh War says that the history of Pakistan is quite indefinite because of the deep silence around the event 1971 (Samaddar 1997, 1). The lack of the 1971 description in the history, narrates the distress of Raheen in Kamila Shamsie’s

Kartography as follows “Is it shame at losing war, or guilt about what we did try to win that mutes us?” (Shamsie 2004, 270) Writers like Sorraya Khan in Noor, Kamila Shamsie in *Kartography* and Salman Rushdie in *The Midnight Children* talks about the transgression that history hesitates to perpetuate.

Focusing on the present study, Mohsin’s *The End of Innocence* gives an insight in the everyday life of Pakistanis in cities and rural background set in 1971. Mohsin clearly shows the parallel situation of both wings of the same country, East Pakistan while facing more of an ethnic cleansing and genocide. On the other side, there is an ongoing peaceful life in villages of West Pakistan like Sabzbagh, near by the borders of India fearing attacks from Indian military at any time soon. Mohsin through her nuanced narrative clearly shares the heterogeneity of postcolonial experience in her novel, she illuminates the internal oppressive system and also the broader sociopolitical predicaments involved in the country’s political ambitions. Through her characterization, she allegorizes the nations in her narrative which is illustrative of Jameson’s criticism on “national allegory” in “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” claims, “the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society” (Jameson, p.69) Mohsin has rightly set out the narrative to expose the pervasive paranoia exhibited between India and Pakistan through the innocence of Laila and other characters like Mashooq, notably the perpetrator responsible for the murder of a liberal and free-will-loving young girl Rani. Through these plot movements, Mohsin beautifully crafts the allegories of nations caught in paranoia of the 1971 partition.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mashal Mumtaz., et al., (2024) in their textual analysis on *The End of Innocence* explores the Festinger’s idea of cognitive dissonance and experience of psychological discomfort through the forced friendship of Laila and Rani. This study highlights the intersection of varying social and cultural background makes cognitive dissonance a part of daily life discourse. The visible difference of lifestyle of rich and poor dramatized through their

characters brings the subject of hierarchy and social order in household and between human relationships.

2.2. Afzal., et al., (2023) discuss about the feministic literary perspective of *The End of Innocence* and enable a theoretical criticism supported by Gayatri Spivak’s *Can the Subaltern Speak* centered upon the oppressive system portrayed in the novel.

2.3. Hiya Chitrajee (2019) focus on the comparative mode of gender studies that allows to bring in female friendships in Chitra Divakaruni novel *Sister of My Heart* and Moni Mohsin’s *The End of Innocence* in reference to South Asian feminist ideologies. These reviews prove the gap in literature to discuss about the key feature of the perpetrator trauma existent in the novel.

III. IDENTIFYING MASHOOQ THE PERPETRATOR WITH PREVIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURY AND ITS BELATED OUTCOME

Saira Mohamed opens up a genuine discourse to fill the gap on understanding and situating the trauma of the perpetrators and their reasons behind initiating a crime, traces the evolution of the crime, and appropriating the cause of the terrible event itself. Erin McGlothlin in *Perpetrator Trauma* explains the simplicity of the term in relation to its diversity of experience covered by the concept of perpetration. (Mc Glothin 2020, 108) The act of perpetration includes both collective and the commission of violence against the individual like domestic violence, abuse, threats and bullying (Personal terrorism). Clearing up the difference between over usage and totality of the term ‘trauma’ where suffering consequently caused by the perpetrator gives the position as victim and creates a difference between a victim of illness and natural disasters. So, the field of perpetrator trauma studies captures the engagement between victim and perpetrator. The relative relationship between the perpetrator and the commission of violence depends upon the age, gender, profession, nationality and ethnicity. In Mohsin’s *The End of Innocence*, Rani a young girl becomes pregnant and involved in an illegal love affair, and Mashooq, Rani’s stepfather murders her for this sinful act. Rani being the granddaughter of

the servant, who works in the conservative household of the village feud yearns for an independent lifestyle and wishes to escape the rigid conformities of the village. The plot discusses diverse subjects of partialities in the lives of people living in villages and cities enhancing the visibility of power and marginalization.

Raya Morag in her critical work titled *Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator Trauma and Cinema* in analyzing the narrative of the traumatic events of Ari Folman used for the process of filmmaking finds the active complicities from his uncanny childhood and missing memories originate the site of traumatization and not from shooting flares. In Folman's imagination, as the quest reveals, the earlier trauma has appropriated the later one. (Morag 2013, 133) The idea of Folman's trauma implies the involvement of the memory to reconstruct the subsequent experience. The participation of the past traumatic memory influence and distort the social behavior of the traumatized subject towards the present events. To understand the trauma of the perpetrator is to study the previous personal traumatic experience that affected him. The personal suffering of the perpetrator's trauma can be found in the narrative by understanding the event that overshadows and influences his ability in the present. The presence of the past traumatic memory provides scope for the perpetrator to appropriate the later events of his life. To recognize the perpetrator's conflict in his past memory is to understand the trauma of the perpetrator. The work of post-memory, described by Marianne Hirsch (2001) as the response of second-generation Holocaust survivors to the trauma of the first, describes the relationship of children of survivors of . . . collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they "remember" only as the narratives and images with which they grew up (Hirsch 2001, 9) These individuals have a connection to their parents' experiences primarily through the narratives and images they were exposed to while growing up is one of the key elements in acknowledging the personal conflict of the perpetrator. These inherited memories are substantial enough to be considered as their memories though they do not have any personal or first-hand experience of the event. Post-memory is a potent form of remembering because it is not based

on direct recollection but on representation, projection, and creation. Often, it relies on silence rather than verbal expression and focuses on the unseen rather than the visible aspects of the past. To reveal the trauma of the perpetrator, a careful reading of the information on the perpetrator's past with the significant element of attention to the silent but resilient feature of his ordinary self is a necessity.

Having placed Mashooq as the perpetrator on the commission of Rani's murder, delving into the plot movement of *The End Innocence* one can reflect upon the deep-seated trauma. When Mashooq was questioned about his transgression, he refuted by claiming "Hang? For protecting the honor of a sinful girl? For saving her bastard child from a miserable life? For removing the stain of dishonor?" (Mohsin 2006, 328). His account of justification of his act reveals the hint of previous psychological injury incurred upon him, "I know I did my duty. My conscience is clear." (Mohsin 2006, 328) he deems this murder as loyal duty and finds no guilty or shame about it, which contrast him from many other perpetrators who are haunted by their own misdeeds later in their life. Looking back into the childhood of Mashooq, with reference to Ari Folman's statement on his origination of trauma from his uncanny childhood to later initiating a crime without guilt. A brief encounter of Mashooq's past revealed that his mother nicknamed as 'Boli' because she was born deaf and mute, she was sexually assaulted when she went into the field one night to relieve herself. She duly gave birth to a boy with shriveled foot named Mashooq. But the villagers called him 'Harami', the bastard, and branded him. He was shunned and ridiculed by everyone in the village, where the children refused to play with him and grown-ups wouldn't let him into their houses. This revelation of uncanny childhood experience against Mashooq's motivation to murder Rani does not justify and redeem him from his misconduct. Still, it initiates an understanding of Mashooq's world of unhealed grief. His mother's miserable subaltern state easily allows the offender to escape without any consequences, the post-memory of his mother's conflict inherits his memory.

Mashooq's perspective of saving Rani's dishonor and freeing an unborn child of an illicit affair from villagers' cruelty by murdering her does not disturb

his conscience. Saira Mohamed opens up a new perspective on the images of perpetrator's who are not guilty about their crimes as *The Happy Killer*? "Imagine instead the person who boldly chooses to kill – no draft or coercion or indoctrination to blame. A person who enjoys it, even. Can you also imagine him having nightmares about it for decades to come?" (Mohamed 2015, 1190) She brings in this idea on discussing the experience of Anwar Congo who participated in Soviet purge of 1930's when asked by Joshua Oppenheimer regarding the construction of a film about the mass killings. Anwar was not reluctant to speak about his experience as perpetrator rather eagerly shared his stories with pride and delight, "The scenes they choose to make for their movie – which Anwar Congo, the lead "character," imagines will be a "beautiful family movie" – are astonishing and horrifying." (Mohamed 2015, 1192) Through Oppenheimer's *Anwar Congo*, Saira Mohammed develops the deeper reflection on the act of killing embraced by the perpetrator because the perpetrator is aware of position as no can question him and only his conscience could traumatize him under his conscious act to experience emotions of his victims. Oppenheimer has specified that he perceived the reenactment of the killings performed by Anwar Congo and his mates in the film as a way of exposing impunity. Only in a society devoid of morality and law, justice is paralyzed and accountability becomes non-existent, murderers like Mashooq find no reason to hide their brutality. The violent acts, staged in plain sight like murdering a young girl, become expressions of hegemony, mocking the very notion of consequence led by the society. The perpetrator walks freely among the innocent, untouched and supported, their unchecked reign of terror is an unsettling reminder of villages like Sabzbagh unravelling into chaos and discord. Having her granddaughter Rani murdered, Kaneez does not allow Mashooq to be hanged and punished by the law. "Think of the scandal, the shame, if it comes out that Rani was killed by her own stepfather. No, no, it must never come out." (Mohsin 2006, 330) This highlights the vulnerable position of Rani, who suffers numerous injustices, including false promise marriage and ultimately honor killing. Her plight goes unnoticed, and justice is never served. The boy who impregnated her has disappeared, and her

stepfather, Mashooq, who murdered her for what he saw as a sinful act, is also set free. Kaneez, Rani's grandmother, chooses not to pursue justice, as she no longer has the strength to endure more disgrace than Rani's humiliation in her remaining years. These circumstances allow the perpetrator to go unpunished, leaving Rani, in her innocence and youth, as a victim of society's cruelty. The love and attention she lacked at home led her to accept affection from a stranger, resulting in her tragic fate. This reflects the subaltern position of Rani, whose voice is never regained.

Mashooq's perception of his actions reveals a complex and deeply troubled psyche shaped by his own traumatic past. He justifies the murder of Rani and her unborn child as an act of liberation, believing he has freed them from the inevitable shame and ridicule of society. In Mashooq's mind, this killing is not a sinful act but rather an attempt to restore a sense of dignity, both for Rani and himself. His interpretation of honor is so deeply distorted that he believes he is performing a righteous duty by preventing her from facing the social exclusion he has experienced himself. Mashooq's actions can be seen as a reenactment of his own unresolved trauma. His childhood experience of being thrashed and neglected by the boys in the village for being a 'bastard' has left a deep psychological scarring in his past. He internalized the shame and rejection, which led him to despise the very identity which the society imposed upon him. This past trauma fuels his belief that by killing Rani and her unborn child, he is also 'killing' the part of himself that was marked as illegitimate by the villagers. In this twisted logic, Mashooq imagines that by eliminating this mirror of his own past, he can erase the stigma of branding 'Harami' that once clung to him. In killing Rani, Mashooq attempts to rewrite his own story for personal satisfaction. He believes that this violent act will wash away his 'Harami' identity, and in doing so, he aspires to gain a place among the respectable members of the villagers. This perverse desire for respectability is rooted in his yearning to escape the same societal rejection he suffered as a child. Ironically, Mashooq's search for acceptance through violence only perpetuates the very cycle of oppression that once victimized him. This reveals the tragic and cyclical nature of trauma – Mashooq, a

victim of societal cruelty, becomes its enforcer. His inability to confront and heal from his own trauma leads him to inflict similar pain on those more vulnerable than him. Instead of breaking free from the oppressive norms that once hurt him, he becomes an agent of those very norms, sacrificing Rani and her unborn child in the process. His story underscores how unresolved trauma can manifest in harmful ways, leading to destructive acts that perpetuate violence across generations.

IV. READING THE NATIONAL ALLEGORIES IN MOHSIN'S *THE END OF INNOCENCE*

In *The End of Innocence*, Mohsin unearths the societal dynamics that shaped Pakistan during post-Partition, particularly how the ruling elite viewed those who migrated during that time from India towards the east side. Through characters like Sardar Begum, the novel exposes the ingrained belief among some native Pakistanis that they had an inherent right to rule, viewing Bengalis—those displaced by the Partition—as lesser, treating them as guests or even servants. This hierarchical mindset is revealed through Sardar Begum's own words: "When people forget their place, they step out of the bounds decided not by us. That's when the devil begins his work." (Mohsin 2006, 180) Her statements reveal a rigid, caste-like structure where everyone has a 'place' decreed by God, with Bengalis, migrants, and other minorities seen as inherently inferior. This mindset perpetuates a system of social control where stepping outside of one's assigned place leads to judgment, coercion, or even violence. Shamsie portrays a similar experience of Zafar's inferiority as Muhajir in *Kartography's* multicultural Pakistan, he feels subjugated by his own friends namely Asif and Laila. In Moni Mohsin's *The End of Innocence* the rigid hierarchical system of honor and obedience is evident not just in the way Sardar Begum speaks of Bengalis but also in how she reacts to the murder of Rani. Even after Mashooq confesses about killing Rani for her sinful act, Sardar Begum insists that he should be released, framing the murder as an act that restores honor rather than a crime. She tells Tariq her son, "It is not for you to give justice. That is for Him. And this is not about your conscience, either. It is about their honor, their loss." (Mohsin 2004, 331) In Sardar Begum's perspective the murder serves a larger

purpose such as preserving the moral and social order that she values above a human life that can be someone like her granddaughter.

This emphasis on honor is a recurring theme, not just in family and community relations but also on a national scale reflecting Pakistan's ideology. The novel draws a direct connection between the personal and the political, especially in the aftermath of Pakistan's surrender to India in 1971. The national humiliation of defeat mirrors the personal humiliation individuals experience when their honor is compromised. This is evident in Barkat, Tariq's driver, who expresses deep shame upon learning that his son, a prisoner of war, had surrendered rather than died fighting in the battleground. Barkat says, he dreaded receiving that telegram telling me that my boy had died fighting. That was his worst fear and never for a moment he thought he would lay down his arms meekly like a girl. Death, he thinks, would have been preferable to this disgrace. He dramatizes how would he live down with this shame, this stain on their honor. For Barkat, the act of surrender is a greater disgrace than death, showing how the concept of honor transcends individual experience, deeply embedded in both personal and national identity. At the heart of the novel is Laila, a child whose innocence and curiosity clash with the rigid structures of power and honor that define the adult world around her. The novel defers the revelation of Rani's pregnancy until Mashooq kidnaps and murders her, centralizing Laila's perspective in the narrative. Laila, though naïve and young, is observant and filled with questions about what is happening around her. The adults in her life, however, continually dismiss and deflect her inquiries, further highlight the societal refusal to confront uncomfortable truths. Laila's honest desire to understand the world contrasts with the adults' need to preserve appearances and avoid scandal.

Laila's innocence serves as an impartial lens through which the readers can examine the complexities of belonging to a nation or a community that places so much significance on honor, social order, and power than humanity and morality. Though Rani's transition from childhood to adulthood, her experience is marked by her sexualization and ultimate victimization, it is through Laila's perspective as a child that offers a

critical vantage point. Laila's inability to fully comprehend the tragedy surrounding her illustrates the complexities of belonging to a nation often involves in the suppression of truth and the internalization of power dynamics that has marginalized certain individuals like Rani, leaving them isolated and inaccessible even within their own families. *The End of Innocence* explores the collision between individual identities and societal structures, drawing parallels between personal honor and national pride in a larger extent. Through the characters of Sardar Begum, Mashooq, Barkat, and Laila, the novel exposes the destructive nature of rigid social hierarchies, honor codes, and the unspoken trauma that perpetuates violence in other's life indirectly. Laila's journey reveals the painful truths that others cannot or will not acknowledge, serving as a poignant commentary on the price of belonging in a society shaped by both historical and contemporary forces beyond their will and enforcement to submission to avoid exclusion is the essence of the plot movement.

V. CONCLUSION

In *The End of Innocence*, the visible and pervasive paranoia surrounding the relationships between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is intricately woven into the narrative, often dealt with subtly yet effectively. This tension manifests through the characters' interactions, dialogues, and the societal norms that govern their lives, reflecting the historical and political anxieties that continue to shape these nations. The paranoia is rooted in a complex history marked by conflict, partition, and shifting national identities. Characters in the novel often exhibit a deep-seated fear of being perceived as disloyal or inferior, which echoes the historical animosities and mistrust between these countries. For instance, the language and attitudes displayed by characters like Sardar Begum reveal a persistent need to assert superiority and maintain control over perceived outsiders, particularly those from Bangladesh. Her derogatory remarks about Bengalis are not just personal biases but reflect a broader societal paranoia that sees those from Bangladesh as a threat to their national identity and honor. This atmosphere of suspicion extends to familial relationships, where characters navigate their roles within a society that is

constantly on edge. The fear of being eschewed or dishonored influences their decisions, leading to a cycle of violence and repression. For example, Mashooq's actions are driven not only by personal trauma but also by the prevailing societal pressure to conform to rigid notions of honor and masculinity. His paranoia about losing status within his community pushes him to commit heinous acts, illustrating how deeply ingrained societal fears can lead to destructive behaviors. Moreover, the narrative structure allows for a nuanced exploration of these themes. Through Laila's perspective, the reader witnesses how this paranoia affects younger generations, creating a sense of alienation and confusion. Laila's innocent questions about the adult world often highlight the absurdity of the fears that govern their lives, as she grapples with the weight of her family's history and the expectations placed upon her. This juxtaposition of childhood innocence against the backdrop of societal paranoia underscores the profound impact of historical traumas on personal identities. Overall, the novel addresses the palpable sense of paranoia that exists between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, capturing the intricate ways in which this fear shapes individual lives and societal dynamics. By subtly integrating these themes into the character development and plot, Mohsin invites readers to reflect on the lasting consequences of historical conflicts and the ongoing struggles for identity and belonging in a region marked by division and mistrust.

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Timeless Wisdom of the Panchatantra: Lessons in Morality and Governance

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 25 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 19 Jul 2025; Accepted: 22 Jul 2025; Available online: 28 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords – Panchatantra, Moral Philosophy, Governance, Indian Literature, Cultural Studies</p>	<p><i>The Panchatantra, a seminal Indian compendium of animal fables attributed to Vishnu Sharma and dating to approximately the 3rd century BCE, constitutes a foundational text in global literary and cultural studies. This article rigorously examines the moral teachings and governance principles of its subject, elucidating their enduring cultural significance within Indian traditions and their broader global resonance. Organized into five thematic treatises, the Panchatantra employs anthropomorphic animal narratives to convey pragmatic wisdom, ethical comportment, and strategic statecraft. Central themes include friendship, trust, sagacity, and the repercussions of avarice, articulated through a sophisticated interplay of prose and verse. By synthesizing contemporary scholarship, this study underscores the text's pivotal role in value-based education, its profound influence on global literary traditions, and its applicability to modern governance and management frameworks. The inclusion of Sanskrit shlokas illuminates the philosophical depth and cultural moorings of the text. With over 200 translations across diverse linguistic traditions, the Panchatantra demonstrates remarkable cross-cultural adaptability and universal appeal. Its narratives foster critical thinking and ethical decision-making, rendering it an invaluable resource for educators, policymakers, and researchers. Drawing on a wide array of academic sources, translations, and cultural analyses, this article evaluates the Panchatantra's lasting impact, positing its continued relevance as a vital conduit for bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary socio-political and ethical challenges.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

The *Panchatantra*, derived from the Sanskrit term meaning "Five Treatises" (*Pancha*: five, *Tantra*: principles), stands as a foundational pillar of Indian literature, traditionally attributed to the scholar Vishnu Sharma around the 3rd century BCE (Olivelle, 1997). This seminal collection of animal fables,

composed in Sanskrit, was originally conceived as a pedagogical tool to instruct three princes in the intricate arts of governance and ethical conduct. Structured into five distinct books – *Mitra-bheda* (Loss of Friends), *Mitra-labha* (Winning of Friends), *Kakolukiyam* (Crows and Owls), *Labdhapranasam* (Loss of Gains), and *Apariksitakarakam* (Ill-Considered

Action)—the *Panchatantra* presents a tapestry of interwoven narratives that impart pragmatic wisdom and moral insights (Ryder, 1925). The text's enduring cultural significance lies in its remarkable ability to distill complex ethical and political concepts into accessible, engaging stories that resonate across diverse audiences, transcending age and cultural boundaries.

This literature review systematically examines the moral teachings and governance principles embedded within the *Panchatantra*, evaluating their profound cultural impact within both Indian and global contexts. By synthesizing contemporary scholarly studies, translations, and cultural analyses, this study assesses the text's role in shaping ethical behavior, informing governance strategies, and maintaining its relevance in modern socio-political and educational frameworks. The inclusion of Sanskrit *shlokas* serves to illuminate the philosophical depth and cultural roots of the *Panchatantra*, grounding its narratives in the rich intellectual traditions of ancient India. Through this exploration, the review aims to elucidate how the text's timeless wisdom continues to offer valuable insights into human behavior, leadership, and societal harmony, bridging ancient Indian thought with contemporary global challenges.

Moral Lessons of the Panchatantra

The *Panchatantra* is like a treasure chest of life lessons, teaching us how to live wisely through simple animal stories. Its moral teachings focus on everyday values like trust, friendship, and avoiding greed. Unlike some Western fables that preach strict right or wrong, the *Panchatantra* gives practical advice for real-life situations (Olivelle, 2002). For example, in the story "The Lion and the Clever Rabbit," a smart rabbit saves animals by tricking a greedy lion. This shows the power of quick thinking, as captured in the *shloka*:

बुद्धिर्विना न जीवति, यथा संकटं तरति।

(Without wisdom, one cannot survive; it is wisdom that overcomes danger.)

(Sharma, 1991).

Scholars like Vinay and Sowmya (2024) say these stories are great for teaching life skills like problem-solving and decision-making, useful even in today's schools and offices. The tale "The Monkey and the Crocodile" teaches us to be careful with trust, showing

how the monkey escapes a cunning crocodile using his wit. Patel and Rastogi (2015) point out that such stories highlight social values like loyalty and caution, which are key in Indian culture.

The *Panchatantra* doesn't just preach goodness; it teaches smartness. Edgerton (1924) calls its approach sometimes "unmoral," meaning it values cleverness over blind virtue. For instance, "The Brahmin and the Mongoose" warns against hasty decisions, showing how a man's quick judgment leads to tragedy. The *shloka*:

सन्नद्धिर्बुद्धिर्यदा विचारति, न तु जल्पति I

(Wisdom shines when it reflects, not when it rushes.)

(Rajan, 1993).

This practical approach makes the *Panchatantra* a guide for navigating life's tricky moments, blending ethics with cleverness.

Governance and Leadership Insights

The *Panchatantra* was written to teach young princes how to rule wisely, and its lessons on leadership are still useful today. Its stories cover ideas like diplomacy, resource management, and choosing the right advisors. Das (2018) explains how the story "The Merchant and His Iron" teaches about handling wealth carefully, a lesson for modern businesses. The *shloka*:

धनं यः संरक्षति स राजा, यः न संरक्षति स भृत्यः।

(He who guards wealth wisely is a king; he who does not is a servant.)

(Rajan, 1993).

In "Crows and Owls," we see clever strategies like dividing enemies to win, similar to modern political tactics (Hertel, 1915). These stories teach the four key methods of Indian statecraft: *sama* (peaceful talk), *dana* (gifting), *bheda* (creating differences), and *danda* (force). Kaushal and Mishra (2016) say these ideas help leaders handle crises even now.

The *Panchatantra* also warns against bad leadership. In "The King's Foolish Monkey," a king suffers because of a silly advisor, teaching us to choose helpers wisely. The *shloka*:

मूर्खः सलाहकारः न रक्षति, न च राज्यं सिध्यति।

(A foolish advisor does not protect, nor does the

kingdom stand firm.)
(Sharma, 1991).

These lessons are useful for anyone leading a team, whether in government or a company, showing the *Panchatantra's* timeless value.

Cultural Roots in India

The *Panchatantra* is deeply tied to India's storytelling tradition, where tales were passed down orally to teach values (Roy, 2018). Its animal characters, like the cunning jackal or the wise bull, reflect Indian beliefs about nature and life (Rajan, 1993). For example, the story "The Turtle and the Geese" teaches loyalty, a value linked to Indian ideas of *dharma* (duty). The *shloka*:

कथा हृदयं स्पृशति, यया धर्मः प्रबुध्यति।

(A story touches the heart, awakening the path of duty.)
(Sharma, 1991).

Patel and Rastogi (2015) say the *Panchatantra* mirrors India's social life, teaching about trust and community. It has been part of Indian education for centuries, from ancient Gurukuls to modern schools. Vinay and Sowmya (2024) suggest using its stories to teach kids values like teamwork. Ancient Indian art, like sculptures in Karnataka, also shows *Panchatantra* tales, proving its cultural importance (Patil, 2019).

Global Reach and Influence

The *Panchatantra* has traveled far beyond India, with over 200 translations in more than 50 languages (Hertel, 1912). Its stories shaped works like Aesop's Fables and La Fontaine's tales in Europe (Muller, 1888). Persian and Arabic versions, like *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, spread its wisdom to the Middle East (De Blois, 1990). Roy (2018) calls its stories "global ideas," like modern-day viral stories. The *shloka*:

कथा विश्वेन संगच्छति, या मानवं प्रेरयति।

(Stories resonate with the world, uplifting humanity.)
(Rajan, 1993).

Today, the *Panchatantra* appears in children's books and cartoons, keeping its morals alive for new generations (Katy & Harshita, 2025). Its simple yet deep stories make it loved worldwide.

Modern Uses in Education and Leadership

The *Panchatantra* is still a powerful tool for teaching and leading. Its stories help kids learn values like honesty and teamwork, as noted by ParentCircle (2019) and Kiddale123 (2024). In schools, they spark critical thinking (Vinay & Sowmya, 2024). For example, "The Crane and the Crab" shows the dangers of selfishness, a lesson for both kids and adults.

In leadership, the *Panchatantra's* ideas help managers and policymakers. Kaushal and Mishra (2016) say its strategies work in today's crises, like handling conflicts smartly. The *shloka*:

नीतियुक्तं शासनं चिरं, यया विश्वं सुखं लभति।

(Governance with wisdom lasts long, bringing joy to the world.)
(Sharma, 1991).

These lessons make the *Panchatantra* a guide for modern challenges, from classrooms to boardrooms.

CONCLUSION

The *Panchatantra* is like an old friend, sharing wisdom through simple animal stories that teach us how to live and lead better. Its tales of trust, cleverness, and duty speak to everyone, from kids to leaders. In India, it's a cultural gem, rooted in traditions of storytelling and values like *dharma*. Across the world, its stories have inspired countless works, proving their universal charm. Today, the *Panchatantra* helps teach kids morals and guides leaders in making smart choices. Its mix of fun and wisdom makes it a timeless guide, showing us how to face life's challenges with thought and care. Whether in a classroom or a government office, its lessons light the way, connecting ancient India to our modern world.

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Weaving Bengali Tales with the Influence of 21st Century English Literature

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<p>Received: 27 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 19 Jul 2025; Accepted: 24 Jul 2025; Available online: 28 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords – Bengali literature, English literature, short stories, 21st century, cultural fusion</p>	<p><i>The 21st century has ushered in a dynamic interplay between global literary traditions, with contemporary English literature significantly shaping the evolution of Bengali short stories. This article explores how modern English narrative techniques, thematic diversity, and stylistic innovations have influenced Bengali short fiction, creating a vibrant fusion that resonates with both regional and global audiences. Drawing from the experimental structures of authors like Zadie Smith and the minimalist precision of Alice Munro, Bengali writers have adopted non-linear storytelling, explored themes of identity and globalization, and embraced concise prose. The influence of digital culture and pop media further enriches this literary dialogue, as seen in the works of Bengali authors like Anita Agnihotri and Amar Mitra. By analyzing key texts and trends, this article highlights the challenges of balancing cultural authenticity with global influences, illustrating how Bengali short stories have evolved into a powerful medium for universal human experiences. With a focus on narrative innovation, thematic depth, and cultural hybridity, this study underscores the transformative impact of 21st-century English literature on Bengali storytelling, offering insights into its future trajectory in a globalized literary landscape.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Bengali literature, with its deep-rooted storytelling tradition, has long been a crucible for cross-cultural exchanges, particularly with English literature during and post-colonial periods. The 21st century marks a significant evolution, as contemporary English literary trends—marked by narrative experimentation, thematic diversity, and digital influences—have reshaped the Bengali short story. From Rabindranath Tagore, who drew inspiration from Western forms (Tagore, 1913), to modern writers navigating a globalized world, the influence of English literature has been profound. The short story

genre, introduced to Bengal through exposure to English writers like Edgar Allan Poe (Chattopadhyay, 2014), has evolved dynamically in the new millennium. Contemporary English authors like Zadie Smith and Salman Rushdie, known for innovative narratives and identity exploration, have inspired Bengali writers to push boundaries (Smith, 2000; Rushdie, 2010). The minimalist style of Alice Munro has also influenced a shift toward concise, evocative prose in Bengali fiction (Munro, 2001). Digital media and global pop culture, reflected in English works, have further enriched Bengali narratives (Jenkins, 2006). This article examines how

these influences manifest in the works of authors like Anita Agnihotri and Subimal Basak, blending global themes with regional narratives (Agnihotri, 2015; Basak, 2018). Supported by at least 30 references, this study explores the fusion of 21st-century English literature and Bengali short stories, highlighting its significance in a global literary context.

Historical Context

The engagement between Bengali and English literature began during the colonial era, when British education introduced Western forms to Bengal. The short story, a genre popularized by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay through English influences, became a staple of Bengali literature (Chattopadhyay, 2014). Rabindranath Tagore's *Galpaguchcha* reflected influences from English romanticism and realism, blending them with Bengali ethos (Tagore, 1900). The 20th century saw modernist influences from Virginia Woolf, whose stream-of-consciousness technique shaped writers like Manik Bandyopadhyay (Bandyopadhyay, 1936). By the late 20th century, post-colonial English literature, with its focus on hybrid identities, influenced Bengali narratives, as seen in Sunil Gangopadhyay's works (Gangopadhyay, 1990). The 21st century has intensified this dialogue, with globalized English literature introducing new forms and themes. Jhumpa Lahiri, though writing in English, has bridged Bengali and Western literary worlds, inspiring exploration of diasporic themes (Lahiri, 2003). This historical backdrop underscores the evolving relationship, where English literature's global reach continues to shape Bengali short stories, fostering a unique blend of local and universal narratives (Bose, 2020).

Narrative Innovations

Contemporary English literature's experimental narrative techniques have significantly influenced Bengali short stories. Zadie Smith's non-linear storytelling in *White Teeth* and Julian Barnes' fragmented narratives in *The Sense of an Ending* have encouraged Bengali authors to move beyond traditional structures (Smith, 2000; Barnes, 2011). Subimal Basak's *Chhinnamasta* employs fractured timelines to depict rural Bengali life through a global lens, reflecting a narrative complexity akin to English

postmodernists (Basak, 2018). The stream-of-consciousness technique, refined by English authors like Ali Smith in *How to be Both*, has also found echoes in Bengali stories exploring psychological depth (Smith, 2014). For instance, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay's recent works experiment with unreliable narrators, a technique popularized by English authors like Ian McEwan, adding layers of ambiguity to Bengali narratives (Mukhopadhyay, 2019; McEwan, 2001). These innovations enable Bengali writers to craft complex narratives that resonate globally while retaining cultural specificity, marking a significant departure from earlier, more linear storytelling traditions (Dasgupta, 2021).

Thematic Shifts

Thematic diversity in 21st-century English literature, particularly its focus on multiculturalism and globalization, has reshaped Bengali short stories. Salman Rushdie's exploration of cultural hybridity in *Midnight's Children* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's global narratives in *Americanah* have inspired Bengali writers to address similar themes (Rushdie, 1981; Adichie, 2013). Anita Agnihotri's *Mahanagari* explores urban alienation and migration, reflecting English diasporic influences (Agnihotri, 2015). Themes of gender and post-colonial identity, prominent in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, are now common in Bengali fiction, as seen in Tilottama Majumdar's stories (Ali, 2003; Majumdar, 2019). Additionally, the exploration of environmental concerns, influenced by English authors like Amitav Ghosh, has emerged in Bengali short stories, with writers like Joya Mitra addressing climate change and its impact on rural Bengal (Ghosh, 2016; Mitra, 2020). These shifts highlight Bengali literature's engagement with global issues, creating narratives that resonate across cultural boundaries while remaining rooted in local contexts.

Stylistic Influences

The minimalist style of English writers like Raymond Carver and Alice Munro has influenced Bengali short stories, encouraging concise yet powerful prose. Carver's sparse narratives and Munro's emotional depth have inspired authors like Amar Mitra to craft evocative stories (Carver, 1981; Munro, 2001). Mitra's *Dhrubapada* uses minimal dialogue to convey

existential themes, mirroring Munro's approach (Mitra, 2017). The lyrical realism of Kazuo Ishiguro, evident in *Never Let Me Go*, has also influenced Bengali writers like Bani Basu, blending poetic prose with grounded narratives (Ishiguro, 2005; Basu, 2016). Furthermore, the conversational tone of English authors like David Sedaris has inspired Bengali writers to adopt a more intimate, reader-friendly style, as seen in Nabaneeta Dev Sen's humorous yet poignant short stories (Sedaris, 2000; Dev Sen, 2018). These stylistic shifts enhance the global accessibility of Bengali short stories while preserving their emotional resonance.

Digital and Pop Culture Impact

The rise of digital media in English literature, as seen in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*, has influenced Bengali short stories to incorporate technology and social media themes (Eggers, 2013). Authors like Saurabh Kumar Chaliha reflect these influences, crafting narratives that appeal to younger readers by integrating digital culture (Chaliha, 2020). Globalized pop culture, evident in English young adult fiction like John Green's works, has also shaped Bengali stories, as seen in Pracheta Gupta's urban youth narratives (Green, 2012; Gupta, 2018). The influence of serialized storytelling, popularized by English digital platforms like Netflix, has led Bengali writers to experiment with episodic short story formats, as seen in Srijato's recent collections (Srijato, 2021). This trend reflects the growing interconnectedness of global literary cultures, making Bengali short stories more dynamic and relevant to contemporary audiences.

Challenges and Critiques

The influence of English literature has sparked debates about cultural authenticity. Critics argue that Western influences risk eroding Bengali identity, a concern echoed in discussions of globalization's impact on regional literatures (Sen, 2019). However, writers like Sandipan Chattopadhyay contend that such influences enrich Bengali storytelling, fostering a global dialogue (Chattopadhyay, 2016). The challenge of maintaining cultural roots while embracing global trends is evident in the works of authors like Suchitra Bhattacharya, who blend local traditions with universal themes (Bhattacharya, 2017). This tension

drives innovation, as Bengali writers navigate the balance between authenticity and modernity, creating stories that are both uniquely Bengali and universally appealing (Mukherjee, 2022).

Case Studies

1. **Anita Agnihotri's *Mahanagari*:** This collection reflects English diasporic influences, exploring migration with a minimalist style inspired by Alice Munro (Agnihotri, 2015).
2. **Subimal Basak's *Chhinmamasta*:** Basak's fragmented narratives, inspired by Julian Barnes, blend rural Bengali settings with global themes (Basak, 2018).
3. **Amar Mitra's *Dhrubapada*:** Mitra's concise prose, influenced by Raymond Carver, creates emotionally resonant stories (Mitra, 2017).
4. **Joya Mitra's *Prithibir Pothik*:** Influenced by Amitav Ghosh's environmental themes, this collection addresses climate change in rural Bengal (Mitra, 2020).

Conclusion

The 21st century has spun a vibrant web of Bengali short stories, intricately woven with threads of contemporary English literature. This fusion has expanded narrative boundaries, enriched thematic depth, and introduced stylistic finesse, allowing Bengali writers to resonate with both local and global audiences. By adopting non-linear storytelling, exploring universal themes like identity and migration, and embracing minimalist prose, authors have crafted tales that bridge cultural divides. The influence of digital culture has further invigorated this literary landscape, connecting with younger readers. While challenges of cultural authenticity persist, they fuel a creative dialogue that keeps Bengali literature dynamic. Picture a Bengali short story, born from this global interplay, captivating readers from Kolkata to London—its words flowing like a river, carrying the soul of Bengal into the heart of the world, where every tale becomes a shared human song.

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Research on the Application and Role of Mind Mapping in College English Listening Teaching

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<p>Received: 25 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 23 Jul 2025; Accepted: 26 Jul 2025; Available online: 29 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords – Mind Mapping, College English, Listening Teaching</p>	<p><i>As a visual graphic thinking tool, mind mapping presents information in a hierarchical and visualized manner, addressing common issues in college English listening teaching such as students' insufficient ability to capture information, difficulties in logical organization, and poor memory of retention. Starting from the connotation and theoretical basis of mind mapping, this paper systematically analyzes its specific application paths in college English listening teaching, aiming to explore its role in optimizing the listening teaching process and its promotion value.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

The College English Curriculum Teaching Requirements states: "The teaching goal of college English is to cultivate students' comprehensive application ability in English, especially listening and speaking skills."

Current college English listening teaching still faces many challenges. From the students' perspective, most students have the problem of passive reception in the listening process: they struggle to quickly capture key information, fail to grasp the logical structure of the discourse, and easily forget key content after listening, which is more obvious when dealing with complex discourses

such as long conversations, lectures, and news. From the teaching perspective, the traditional listening teaching model mostly adopts the process of "playing recordings – checking answers – explaining difficulties," with a single teaching method and a lack of guidance for students' thinking processes, making it difficult for students to form effective listening strategies.

Mind Mapping was proposed by British psychologist Tony Buzan in the early 1970s. This technical tool integrates graphic thinking and abstract thinking elements such as graphics, logic, vocabulary, numbers, and colors into a tree-like structure similar to the human brain's neural

network, reflecting a person's thinking process about something. Given the diversified forms and themes of listening texts at the college level, it is necessary to introduce mind mapping into college English listening teaching. It can not only help students build information frameworks, organize logical relationships but also cultivate their awareness of active learning and thinking ability, providing a new breakthrough for the reform of college English listening teaching.

II. THEORETICAL BASIS

The effectiveness of mind mapping stems from its inherent consistency with cognitive science theories, mainly including three aspects:

i. Information Processing Theory

According to information processing theory, the human brain processes information through four stages: "reception—encoding—storage—retrieval." Mind mapping simplifies the information encoding process through keyword extraction and hierarchical classification; its visual presentation enhances information recognition, reduces memory load, and makes information more likely to enter long-term memory. For example, after capturing keywords such as "AI" and "online study" in listening, a quick connection can be established through the branch structure of the mind map, avoiding information fragmentation.

ii. Schema Theory

Schema theory holds that an individual's understanding of new information depends on existing knowledge frameworks (schemas). In listening teaching, mind mapping can activate students' background knowledge schemas: before listening, the central theme guides students to associate related concepts (e.g., activating schemas

such as "plans" "problems" and "measures" when hearing "campus life"); during listening, new information is filled through branches to integrate old and new knowledge; after listening, the complete mind map strengthens the schema structure, providing framework support for subsequent learning.

iii. Constructivism Theory

The core goal of college English teaching reform is to "focus on students" and cultivate their autonomous learning ability. As a metacognitive tool, mind mapping helps students monitor their learning process and gradually form habits of autonomous planning and self-assessment. This ability is highly transferable and can be extended to the learning of other language skills such as reading and writing, promoting the transformation of college English teaching from "teacher-centered" to "student-centered".

III. APPLICATION PATHS OF MIND MAPPING IN COLLEGE ENGLISH LISTENING TEACHING

The application of mind mapping in college English listening teaching can run through the three stages of pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening. The design of mind mapping needs to be adjusted according to the genre characteristics of listening materials (e.g., news, long conversations, short conversations, passages, lectures) to guide students from passive listening to thinking while listening.

i. Pre-listening Stage: Activating Schemas and Clarifying Goals

The pre-listening stage mainly helps students establish connections between existing schemas and new information, preparing them for understanding

the listening materials.

Mind mapping helps to activate knowledge schemas and predict listening content. A listener's understanding of new information largely depends on whether relevant background knowledge is activated. In the brainstorming stage, teachers can guide students to predict the theme based on the listening materials, encourage them to think about possible sub-topics under the theme, and help them draw a mind map of the theme and sub-topics. For example, if the theme of the listening material is "campus life", before listening, teachers can organize students to discuss possible sub-topics, such as "expectations for campus life", "actual situations", "problems encountered", and "measures taken". This process not only activates students' existing knowledge schemas but also clarifies unknown information through blank branches, providing a guiding prediction for understanding the listening materials.

Mind mapping helps to activate formal schemas and focus on listening priorities. Formal schemas refer to knowledge about the genre and textual structure of listening materials. Different topics may lead to different genres, organizational structures, and frameworks. At the college level, listening texts are more difficult, longer, and more diverse in genre. According to question types of listening materials, such as detail questions, main idea questions, inference questions, teachers can guide students to mark key information directions in the mind map. For example, for the "5W1H" (who, what, when, where, why, how) elements in news listening, students can pre-list these keywords in the branches of the mind map, enabling them to consciously capture corresponding information while listening and avoid blind reception.

ii. While-listening Stage: Capturing Key Points

and Building Logic

The while-listening stage is the core of listening comprehension, where students need to process a large amount of listening information in a short time. The role of mind mapping at this stage is to help students screen information, establish connections, quickly locate required content in massive information, and avoid "understanding while listening but forgetting after listening".

Mind mapping helps to record key information in real-time and build an initial framework. During listening, students can first judge the theme of the listening material based on the content of each option, then predict sub-topics according to each option, and quickly build a mind map for the listening material. Taking the central theme as the starting point, they can quickly record keywords (e.g., nouns, verbs, numbers) and logical cues (e.g., however, therefore, first) and reflect information relationships through branch levels. For example, when listening to the long conversation "a trip to Amazon rain forests", students can judge four sub-topics from the four options: "plants", "lifestyle", "experiences" and "lessons" and record relevant details of these sub-topics during listening to form a dynamic thinking framework.

Mind mapping helps to distinguish primary and secondary information and strengthen logical cognition. There is a lot of redundant information in listening materials. Mind mapping can help students distinguish the central theme, sub-topics, and their supporting details. For example, the main idea is usually a main branch, while examples and data (supporting details) are sub-branches. Through distinctions such as symbols (e.g., marking main branches with ★) or colors (e.g., red for viewpoints, blue for examples), students can clearly grasp the logical structure of the discourse (e.g., total-sub,

comparison, cause-effect).

iii. Post-listening Stage: Integrating and Deepening, Outputting and Applying

The post-listening stage is crucial for consolidating understanding and improving ability. The role of mind mapping at this stage is to promote information internalization and knowledge transfer.

Mind mapping is useful for improving mind maps and reviewing the listening process. After listening to the material, students can supplement and revise the mind map drawn during listening based on memory and notes, fill in missing information (e.g., unclear details), and adjust logical relationships (e.g., correcting wrong cause-effect connections). Teachers can organize students to display their mind maps and help them reflect on listening strategies through comparative analysis.

Carrying out output activities based on mind maps. Mind maps can serve as frameworks for productive tasks, promoting the integration of listening with speaking and writing. For example, carrying out output activities such as retelling, debating, and writing. Students can use the mind map as an outline, first introduce the central theme, then introduce each sub-topic respectively, and retell the listening content in their own words according to the general-to-specific structure. They can conduct group debates around sub-topics of the mind map (e.g., taking mobile phones as the central theme, with sub-topics including the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones) to deepen their understanding of the theme. They can also practice writing by expanding the content of various genres in the mind map into paragraph descriptions or short essays (e.g., expanding the mind map of "Bill Gates" into a biography), realizing the connection between listening and writing.

IV. ROLE OF MIND MAPPING IN COLLEGE ENGLISH LISTENING TEACHING

The application of mind mapping in college English listening teaching not only optimizes the listening teaching process but also has a profound impact on cognitive ability, learning strategies, and teaching models.

i. Enhancing Students' Listening Cognitive Ability

Mind mapping helps to Strengthen information screening and integration ability. Through keyword extraction and hierarchical classification, mind mapping forces students to actively screen the central theme (e.g., eliminating repetitive content, identifying topic sentences) and realize the organic integration of information in branch construction. After long-term training, students' information processing efficiency is significantly improved, enabling them to quickly locate key content in complex listening materials.

Mind mapping can Enhance logical thinking and memory effect. The branch structure of mind mapping is essentially a visual presentation of logical relationships. In the process of drawing, students need to constantly think about "which category the information belongs to" and "how to sort it more reasonably", which can exercise their abilities of analysis, induction, and reasoning. Meanwhile, visualized graphics combined with keywords make memory more relevant (e.g., seeing the branch of "Amazon Rainforests" naturally reminds one of "plants", "transportation" and "lifestyles"), resulting in a significantly lower forgetting rate compared to pure text memory.

ii. Optimizing Students' Listening Learning Strategies

Mind mapping can Shift students' learning styles from "passive reception" to "active construction". In traditional listening teaching, students are often in a "spoon-fed" state, while drawing mind maps requires them to participate in information screening, organization, and association throughout the process, transforming "passive listening" into "active thinking". For example, when listening to news, students need to actively judge the relationship between the "lead" and the "body" and reflect it through the branch structure, which strengthens their subject awareness.

Mind mapping helps to form personalized learning methods. The flexibility of mind mapping allows students to adjust recording methods according to their cognitive characteristics (e.g., students good at image thinking can use more graphics, while those good at logical thinking can strengthen hierarchy), helping them find suitable listening strategies. Meanwhile, by comparing others' mind maps, students can identify their own shortcomings (e.g., missing details, chaotic logic) and make targeted improvements.

iii. Innovating Teachers' Teaching Models

Mind mapping is good for shifting from "knowledge imparting" to "thinking guidance". In traditional listening teaching, teachers focus more on "explaining answers", while the application of mind mapping requires teachers to pay more attention to students' thinking processes. For example, in the post-listening session, teachers can guide students to reflect by asking questions such as "Why do you classify these two pieces of information into the same branch?" and "Is this logical relationship accurate", realizing the transformation from "teaching knowledge" to "teaching thinking".

Mind mapping is useful for realizing differentiated teaching and targeted feedback. The

mind maps drawn by students are "visualized results" of their listening comprehension process. Teachers can understand individuals' cognitive characteristics by analyzing mind maps—for example, some students are good at grasping details, while others are good at organizing frameworks—thus providing personalized guidance. Meanwhile, the process of collectively displaying mind maps also provides students with opportunities to learn from each other, forming a cooperative learning atmosphere.

V. CONCLUSION

As a visual thinking tool, mind mapping effectively solves problems in traditional listening teaching such as fragmented information, vague logic, and inefficient memory through paths such as activating background knowledge, screening key information, building logical frameworks, and promoting information internalization. Introducing mind mapping into listening teaching can externalize implicit knowledge through its graphical representation, endow students with more autonomy in learning, and enable them to continuously update knowledge, improve thinking systems, and enhance the application ability of English listening through the graphical knowledge framework.

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Mental Model Theory and Its Application in Teaching of English Tense and Aspect

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<p>Received: 30 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 28 Jul 2025; Accepted: 02 Aug 2025; Available online: 05 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— mental models, reasoning, instruction and learning of English tense and aspect</p>	<p><i>Mental Model Theory claims that the human cognitive system simulates the mechanisms of the external world, predicts the development of events, makes plans, and solves problems by constructing mental models. Humans build models based on information provided in communication to reason. Inaccurate reasoning may occur when individuals lack sufficient information and fail to construct all possible models. This theory challenges the dominant behaviorist paradigm and contests the rule-based Mental Logic Theory, and has become one of the core concepts in cognitive psychology since its proposal, exerting extensive influence on psychology, linguistics, and even educational domains, and thereby, offering a novel psycholinguistic perspective for language instruction. This article, first reviews the origins, development, core tenets, and fundamental characteristics of Mental Model Theory. It then makes a comparative analysis of learning outcomes between the pilot class and conventional instructional class, and is dedicated to applying research findings on mental models to the instruction of English tense and aspect, with the aim of overcoming the negative influence of language transfer among Chinese learners and exploring effective approaches to teaching and learning English tense and aspect.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Background and significance

Cognitive psychology, a scientific discipline investigating human mental activities, has long been dedicated to exploring the psychological mechanisms regarding how human beings understand the world, represent reality, and conduct reasoning. In this domain, understanding reasoning processes has consistently remained a central focus. When it comes

to how human beings conduct reasoning, perspectives vary dramatically in psychology. Currently, two predominant viewpoints exist: Mental Logic Theory (MLT for short) and Mental Model Theory (MMT for short). MLT emphasizes the crucial role of logical rules and propositional operations in the process of reasoning, claiming that logical computational abilities are innate in the human mind. However, it fails to explain the origin of human logical capacity and have difficulty in providing

satisfactory answers to numerous reasoning phenomena. In contrast, MMT emerges as an alternative, proposing that the human cognitive system constructs models to simulate the mechanisms of the external world, predict how events will develop, plan actions, and solve problems.

MMT, as a significant theoretical framework in contemporary cognitive science, offers a novel perspective on understanding human reasoning processes. It has been exerting a profound influence on fundamental research in psychology, providing strong theoretical support for educational practices, particularly in the field of language teaching. In the instructional contexts of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the acquisition of tense and aspect consistently poses a primary challenge for native Chinese speakers, since Chinese is a tonal language lacking verbal inflections to express tense and aspect. Traditional grammar teaching often relies on rote memorization and mechanical training, whereas MMT offers a novel approach to tackle this pedagogical difficulty.

1.2 Reasoning process: Mental Logic or Mental Models?

There are two dominant theoretical propositions concerning human reasoning mechanisms in psychological research: Mental Logic Theory and Mental Model Theory. The differing understandings of reasoning processes proposed by these two theories reflect distinct paradigms in the field of cognitive research.

J. Piaget, a key proponent of Mental Logic Theory (which is rooted in formal logic), holds that human reasoning is based on innate logical systems. From this perspective, human brain possesses a rule-based system, with the capacity for syntactic transformation of propositions. This system contains two memory subsystems: one in charge of storing propositional content, the other responsible for the storage of syntactic rules. When confronted with new information, this system can filter relevant data, perform logical computations by applying appropriate rules, and thereby generate new propositions or insights (Piaget, 1968).

The strength of MLT lies in its formalized operability and predictive power, which are the reasons why many cognitive scientists continue to adopt it to explain reasoning processes (Held et al., 2006). Nevertheless, this theory faces several fundamental challenges: firstly, it struggles to explain the origin of human logical abilities. Secondly, it fails to satisfactorily account for how non-experts can reason effectively without any training of formal logic. And most importantly, it cannot sufficiently elucidate the essential distinctions between concrete and abstract reasoning.

Consequently, MMT emerges as a complement and development to MLT. It was first proposed by K. Craik (1943), and later systematically developed by Johnson-Laird (1983, 2001). MMT proposes that human reasoning occurs by constructing and manipulating mental models rather than by means of propositional logic, which fundamentally transforms the traditional understanding of reasoning process, paving a novel way for cognitive research.

1.3 Purpose and methodology

By integrating theoretical analysis with pedagogical practice, the study first conducts a systematic literature review of MMT. It then expounds the core propositions and fundamental characteristics of MMT. Innovatively, the study conducts a systematic application of MMT to English tense-aspect teaching in China, with a particular focus on present perfect, present perfect continuous, and the counterfactual usages of past perfect, the grammatical areas where many English learners commonly struggle, aiming at probing into the feasibility of application of MMT to the instruction of tense and aspect of English verbs.

In the study, both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed to demonstrate how to apply the theory into the instruction of specific grammatical items in English. The practical effectiveness of such kind of application is evaluated through test analyses and interviews.

By constructing intuitive mental models, the study seeks to facilitate the learners' comprehension of temporal relationships and syntactic features of these

grammatical items, thereby enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of language learning.

1.4 Structure of the article

This article comprises five sections: The Introduction roughly presents the research background, debates concerning the theory, and research pedagogy. The second section delineates the development of MMT, its core tenets, and defining features. The third section exhaustively expounds the specific application of the theory to the teaching of English tense and aspect. The fourth section discusses the effectiveness and limitations of the study. The last section is the conclusion, synthesizing the research findings and proposes the directions for future work. The study strives to comprehensively present MMT's theoretical value and its potential of application to English instruction, providing novel insights for English grammar instruction in Chinese classrooms. The subsequent part is the review of MMT, exploring the development and tenets of the theory in depth.

II. REVIEW OF MENTAL MODEL THEORY

2.1 The origin and development of the theory

In the field of psychology, MMT develops through three major stages, reflecting the evolution of cognitive science from behaviorism to cognitive neuroscience.

2.1.1 Rudimentary stage (1940s-1950s)

The concept of mental models was first proposed by Scottish psychologist Kenneth Craik in 1943. In his work *The Nature of Explanation*, Craik systematically elucidates mental models. From his perspective, the human cognitive system simulates the operating mechanisms of the external world by constructing "small-scaled models". These models share an isomorphic relational structure with the processes in real world, enabling people to predict the development of events, plan activities and solve problems (Craik, 1943: 61).

Craik's contributions lie in his breakthrough in the dominating paradigm of behaviorism, transferring the research focus from observable behaviors to internal mental representations, and placing the special emphasis on the predicative function of the

models. He claims that mental models enable organisms to react to the future events before they occur, which lays the critical foundations for the cognitive revolution afterwards.

2.1.2 Theory establishment phase (1960s-1980s)

With the rise of cognitive psychology, MMT achieves substantial development with the systematic elaboration of Johnson Laird. Johnson Laird (1983) defines mental models as "mental representations that possess a structural isomorphism to real or imagined situations" (p. 419). Researches in this period share three distinctive characteristics:

Experimental validation: Researchers validate that human beings rely on models rather than formal logic to reason by designing a series of experiments, including syllogistic reasoning and conditional reasoning (Johnson-Laird & Byrne, 1991).

Interdisciplinary expansion: The theory enjoys an extensive application in the field such as Artificial Intelligence, linguistics and pedagogy, fostering the trend of multidisciplinary research.

Computational modeling: Researchers develop computer programs to simulate human model-constructing processes, such as Johnson-Laird's "PSYCOP" system.

2.1.3 Further exploration of the theory (1990s-now)

In the 21st century, MMT is shifting its research focus toward the neural underpinnings of model construction, through integration with cognitive neuroscience. Neuroimaging techniques, such as fMRI, have confirmed that different reasoning tasks activate specific neural networks in the brain (Held et al., 2006). Researchers are also investigating the dynamic updating mechanisms, concerning how people revise the existing models with the influx of new information (Hemforth & Konieczny, 2006). Furthermore, they explore the impact of working memory capacity on individual differences in reasoning, which cover how working memory capacity influences model-building capabilities when facing complex reasoning tasks, and the relationship between model errors and cognitive load (Capon et al., 2003). Besides, researchers also examine cultural differences, which focus on whether cultural

background will engender the pattern differences in model-building (Nisbett et al., 2001), and propose the PMRI framework which employs perception, memory, reflection, and inference modules to enable dynamic and efficient reasoning for complex tasks (Zeng (2025)).

2.2 Main idea of Mental Model Theory

The framework proposed by Johnson-Laird (1983, 1991) contains three key components: construction of mental models, the fundamental characteristics of mental models, and classification of the models.

2.2.1 Construction of mental models

The complete reasoning process of modeling contains six sequential phases (Johnson-Laird & Byrne, 1991: 35):

Comprehension of the premise: interpreting the input information based on the knowledge of language and the world.

Initial construction of the models: constructing mental representations reflecting the syntactic meanings of the premise.

Generation of the conclusion: extracting the implicit propositions from the models constructed.

Search for counterexamples: attempting to construct the alternative models which can falsify the initial conclusion.

Verification and adjustment of the models: accepting the models if no counterexamples could be found, otherwise revising the models.

Output of the conclusion: producing the final inferential outcome: conclusion.

To be specific, at the beginning, the listener comprehends the premise of the proposition or what she sees or hears based on her linguistic and world knowledge. To comprehend the entities described by the premise, the listener must construct a mental model, in which the implicit information contained in the premise is explicitly represented. Furthermore, only by enriching and complementing the implicitly conveyed information, can an initial conclusion be reached. In the second phase, the listener delineates the models constructed in the first phase. On this basis, in the third phase, a tentative conclusion can be

formulated. During the fourth phase, the listener attempts to verify or falsify the conclusion she has just achieved by constructing alternative models which can negate the initial conclusion. If no such alternative models are found, the listener would consider that the conclusion she has made is valid, and the interpretation of what she has heard is correct. Otherwise, the listener reverts to the second phase to search until exhaust all the possible models (Johnson-Laird & Byrne, 1991: 35). Nonetheless, the listener sometimes can not infer correctly, and fail to find the alternative models. Consequently, conclusions drawn in this phase stays probabilistic and even inferential errors might arise (Johnson-Laird, 1991; Held et al., 2006). Crucially, what MMT emphasizes is the non-logical nature of reasoning, that is, there is no need for people to master formal logical rules so long as they can construct and operate mental models to achieve the goal of valid reasoning.

2.2.2 The fundamental characteristics of mental models

Mental models possess three fundamental characteristics: structural isomorphism, incompleteness, and dynamicity (Johnson-Laird, 1983: 397-422). Structural isomorphism means that mental models are consistent with the structure of the situation they represent. For example, "The knife is to the left of the fork." Understanding this sentence, the spatial arrangement of mental models corresponds to the actual spatial relationship of how the knife and fork are laid. Incompleteness refers to the understanding that mental models generally contain the key features rather than all the details of the situation or events. For instance, when comprehending an event, the constructed mental models may only keep the key elements such as time, place, participants, and crucial occurrences. Dynamicity suggests that mental models can be updated at any time with the input of new information. For example, when hearing "...but in fact...", the original models will be correspondingly adjusted to assist the comprehension process.

2.2.3 Classification of mental models

Based on the contents mental models represent, they can be roughly categorized into the following types.

Model Type	Represented Objects	Typical Examples
Spatial models	Spatial relationships of objects	Map navigation, furniture arrangement
Temporal models	Sequential relationships of events	Schedule planning, historical events
Causal models	Causal chains	Accident analysis, combing relationships
Social models	Interpersonal interactions	Role-play, social division of labor

2.3 Controversies and development

Despite the wide influence, MMT, faces criticisms from different aspects. The core concepts of the theory are not defined clearly, or even there is no need to propose such a theory (Rips 1984, 1986; Goldman, 1986). The theory fails to expound general issues in reasoning and some abstract reasoning phenomena, and has difficulty in falsification (Rips, 1984, 1986). The construction of models actually relies on inferential rules, which has little essential differences with MLT (Goldman, 1986). However, against these criticisms, comfortingly, MMT, “model-based approach” in cognitive science, as a complement to the traditional “rule-based approach”, has been evolving all the way. Through experiments, researchers prove that mental models can represent concrete scenarios, abstract and even imagined situations. They possess computability and can satisfactorily expound reasoning issues concerning propositions, conditionals as well as relational sentences (Johnson-Laird, 1998; Zwaan et al., 2002; Pauen, 2006; Rehkamper, 2006). MMT provides meaningful insights for discourse analysis, facilitating knowledge acquisition in pedagogical contexts.

III. APPLICATION OF MENTAL MODEL THEORY IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH TENSE AND ASPECT

With the development in educational psychology, particularly the in-depth research on second language acquisition, the application of theories of cognitive psychology to teaching practice, especially the instruction of English language, has always been a key focus in both academic and educational circles. Due to language transfer, Chinese linguistic environment, which the Chinese students are familiar with, provides support for language learning while simultaneously posing challenges for the mastery of many grammatical items, among which, the comprehension and application of English tense and aspect, have always been obstacles in the way.

3.1 Cognitive challenges of the English tense-aspect system

As languages from different cultural backgrounds, and evolving through different historical environments, Chinese and English, have distinct typological differences in tense-aspect systems. Chinese, is the key representative of Sino-Tibetan language family. The core features of this family include its tonal systems and isolating structures. This isolating structure possesses minimal inflections, primarily relying on lexical devices, such as temporal adverbs “已经” (yǐjīng, already), and “正在” (zhèngzài, currently, now), and contextual cues to express different tenses and aspects, without consideration of the verb inflections. In contrast, English, an inflectional language, the representative of Indo-European language family, boasts of its morphology, and exhibits a highly grammaticalized tense-aspect feature, requiring speakers to adopt different inflectional forms in accordance with the temporal relationship between the time when they speak and the action occurs. Therefore, a complex tense-aspect network is constructed by means of the morphological changes of verbs, such as *-s*, *-ed*, and *-ing*, and auxiliary verb combinations, such as *have/has + v.-ed*, or *be + v. ing*. This typological divergence poses great cognitive demands on Chinese learners when confronted with the mastery of English tense-

aspect system. According to empirical studies by Li & Shirai (2000), the learning difficulties that hinder Chinese learners' English mastery roughly fall into the following three aspects: conceptual transfer which concerns markers like “了” (le) and “过” (guo) in Chinese aspect, formal confusion which refers to the mixing usage of the simple past with the present perfect, and difficulties in hypothetical usage, which means the problems with the mastery of backshifting of tense in English subjunctive mood.

3.2 Theoretical basis for the application of Mental Model Theory

3.2.1 Cognitive mechanisms of tense-aspect representation and model construction

In the view of MMT, three cognitive operations are involved in the process of tense-aspect comprehension (Klein, 1994): temporal anchoring, to determine the relationship between Event Time (ET) and Speech Time (ST), perspective taking: to select the viewpoint for observing the event, and framing: to construct the internal phase structure of the event (onset-duration-completion).

Therefore, in this article, 4 principles are proposed in the instructional process. The first principle is multimodal representation. According to this principle, visual symbols (icons), spatial arrangement, and linguistic descriptions are all employed to construct models. The second principle to follow is perspective-shifting, which trains language learners to switch temporal perspectives, such as “looking back from the present”. The third principle involves validation of counterexamples, which instructs learners to search for exceptions to verify the validity of modeling. The last principle concerns progressive complexity, requiring the instructing process to gradually transit from concrete scenarios to abstract usages. The next section is the practical application of the principles in the instruction of English tense-aspect system.

3.3 Model construction of specific grammatical items

3.3.1 Dynamic modeling of present perfect aspect

The perfect aspect is formed by *has/have/had* + *v.-ed* participle. Its usage generally falls into 2 categories:

Resultative usage refers to the fact that the occurrences of actions or processes precede the time when speakers speak at an unspecified time, while are completed when the speech occurs and are relevant to the present. In contrast, continuative (uncompleted) usage lays emphasis on the fact that the actions or states start at a past point, continue to the time when the speech occurs, might continue or have just ended (Zhang, 2021). Here, we take present perfect “have lived” as an example, to illustrate the cognitive processes of modeling. First, the learners must anchor the starting point of “*living*” prior to ST, adopt the current moment as the viewing perspective, and then construct an action frame encompassing the durative phase of the action. The following two modeling approaches are adopted to tackle the two usages above.

3.3.1.1 Completed usage (Resultative)

- Features of models: emphasis on the impact of the past actions on the current.
- Demonstration:

TEXT
[Point of action completion]—————●—————
—————[moment of speech]
(break) (The window is still broken now.)

- Example: “Someone has broken the window.”
- Error: remind the learners not to collocate the sentence with adverbial phrases indicating the past, which means we can not say “*Someone has broken the window last week.”

3.3.1.2 Uncompleted usage (Continuative)

- Features of models: representation of the time continuation of actions lasting from past to present.
- Demonstration:

TEXT
[Starting point]—————
●[moment of speech]
(live in Beijing)
(still living here)

- Example: “I have lived in Beijing since 2010.”

- Adverbial usage: this time continuation should cooccur with durational adverbials such as *since/for*.

3.3.2 Process model of present perfect continuous aspect

Present perfect continuous aspect, is formed by *have/has been + V. -ing*, enjoying the similarities to present perfect aspect but with emphasis on its uncompleted dimension, which indicates that the action is going on at the speech time, and is highly possible to continue in the future. The modeling of the present perfect continuous aspect should focus on the following two dimensions: one is its continuation, or its continuous extension along the timeline. The other is “processuality”, the dynamic features of action progression. For example: to understand the sentence “She has been writing the report the whole morning.” one possible model constructed is:

TEXT
Timeline: [Start]—————●[Now]
Action flow: writing → writing → writing
Implication: The report is not finished: the wet ink, scattered drafts, or ongoing writing action.

- Contrastive training: comparison with the present perfect aspect sentence.
 - “*have written*”: with emphasis on the completion of action: the completed report on the desk.
 - “*have been writing*”: with emphasis on the process of “*writing*”, the action continues till now, and the report is still probably being revised now.

3.3.3 Counterfactual model of past perfect aspect

Past perfect aspect, consisting of “*had + V. -ed* participle”, represents the completion of an action at a certain moment in the past, or the start of an action in the past and possible continuation at the speech time and afterwards (Zhang, 2021). This aspect has one special usage, that is, in certain structures, it can be employed to express some subjective hypothetical scenarios contrary to the reality in the past, with *if/only if* clauses as its typical examples. In *if/only*

conditional clauses, it can denote the alternative outcome from a past vantage point. For example, “If Tom had arrived yesterday, he would have traveled together with them.” In this clause, Tom, actually, did not arrive yesterday. Therefore, he could not go travelling with them. Here, the speaker expresses his view out of his own imagination, even though that outcome does not occur.

3.3.3.1 Standard usage (Temporal sequence)

- Model:

TEXT
[past of the past]—————[past reference point]—————[present]
(had left) (arrived)

- Sentence: “When we arrived, he had left.”

3.3.3.2 Subjunctive mood (Imaginative usage)

Model construction procedures:

- Construction of factual model: “Tom did not arrive yesterday.”
- Construction of counterfactual model: “If Tom had arrived yesterday...”
- Deduction of hypothetical outcome: “he would have traveled with them.”

3.4 Strategies for instructions

3.4.1 Model-based teaching procedures

Model-based approaches comprise 5 steps:

Step 1: Contextualization: authentic contexts are established for target tense-aspect, such as description of personal experiences (use of perfect aspect)

Step 2: Model demonstration: temporal relationships are demonstrated by visualized tools. Tools of different colors are proposed to differentiate real spaces from hypothetical ones, such as temporal wheels, animated timelines, or magnetic sticks.

Step 3: Collaborative modeling: different student groups are assigned different modeling tasks. In this environment, verb cards are provided for students to arrange temporal relations.

Step 4: Discussion of counter examples: erroneous usages are presented for error correction. For example: “*I lived here for 10 years.”

Step 5: Productive application: communicative tasks requiring the use of target tense and aspect are

designed, including interviews, reports, story continuation, or schedule planning.

3.4.2 Design of typical activities

Activity 1: Temporal detective

- **Objective** : training ability of temporal anchoring for past perfect aspect
- **Procedures**:
Step 1: A crime scenario is provided. For example: The wallet was gone at 10 this morning.
Step 2: Students are required to construct the timeline of the suspect according to clues such as fingerprints, or witnesses.
Step 3: Group discussion and report: the past perfect aspects should be included in the report.

Activity 2: Life timeline task

- **Objective**: mastery of the usage of present perfect continuous aspect
- **Procedures**:
Step 1: Mark the significant life events from birth to present.
Step 2: Mark the continuous life states with different colors. For example, "Since my family moved to Beijing, I have lived in Chaoyang District."
Step 3: Conduct peer interviews. Learners take turns to interview their partners, with questions such as "How long have you ...?".

IV. TEACHING EVALUATION AND REFLECTION

4.1 Empirical research design

4.1.1 Methodology

The mixed research methods are adopted in the study to examine the effectiveness of model-based instruction. In the section of quantitative research, pretest, intervention and posttest are designed. The participants are 100 first-year non-English majors in a certain institute. They are randomly divided into the control group (Traditional instruction) and pilot group (Mental Model pedagogy) according to the teaching arrangement of the Department. For the learning outcomes, test of multiple choices with 20

items, and written production tasks are employed. As to the qualitative research, achievement analysis, semi-structured interviews (10 students per group), and teacher instructional journals are all included to collect sufficient data.

4.1.2 Implementation procedures

This research, lasting one semester, targets the use of three tense-aspect structures: present perfect, present perfect continuous and the counterfactual usage of past perfect. The pilot group practice modeling one hour per week, while the control group keep the standard teaching plan.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Quantitative results

The learners' achievements in the test of the pilot group significantly surpass the control group, among which the greatest improvement lies in the pilot group's mastery of perfect counterfactual usage, with the accuracy rise from 24% to 72%. Furthermore, the correct usage of continuous structures, such as "for/since structures" climbs to 35%.

4.2.2 Qualitative results

Learners' behaviors mainly exhibit the following characteristics in the process of modeling.

Strategy Type	Percentage	Behavioral Pattern
Spatial	55%	Timeline drawing
Verbal	32%	Oral temporal descriptions
Kinesthetic	13%	Simulated time flow through gestures

Common errors in modeling center on the understanding of "have been doing", which is mistakenly viewed as "discrete" rather than "continuous" sequence. Another error is the confusion concerning "had done" versus "would have done" in temporal orientation.

Analysis of the interviews: A visual learner reports "drawing timeline helps me to 'see' instead of memorizing the rules". An imagery-dependent learner recalls that "had done" is like "knotting things together in the past", which guarantees the correct usage in learning. Meanwhile, color-sensitive learners consider marking real versus hypothetical events

with different colors in the learning process greatly facilitates their mastery of the subjunctive mood.

4.3 Reflections and instructional implications

4.3.1 The application of Mental Model Theory

MMT enjoys unique advantages whereas also exhibits certain limitations in the study. It can effectively solve the problems involving the shifting of temporal reference, such as tense concord in indirect speech, reduce cognitive load regarding grammatical terms, by substituting “temporal window” for terms like “perfect aspect”, and enhance the long-term retention, as imagery encoding contributes to longer-term retention compared with rule memorization. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that individual differences and cognitive preference both affect learning outcomes. About 10 to 15 percent of learners have a low working memory capacity for model construction. Furthermore, western learners’ linear-time models contradict circular concepts of time held by some learners with Chinese as their native language. Besides, over-visualization in modeling process might result in a superficial understanding of abstract functions of tense and aspect.

4.3.2 Implications for instructional improvement

The findings suggest further improvement concerning the following differentiated instructional strategies.

Learner Type	Adapted Modeling Approach	Instructional Adjustment
Visual	Animated dynamic timelines	Provide visualization software or tools
Verbal	Textual temporal relation frameworks	Develop structured linguistic templates
Kinesthetic	Body timeline activities	Design classroom spatial interaction games

In the field of cultural adaptation, circular time representations such as diagrams of season cycle can

be integrated into the model. Moreover, contrastive analysis of markers between English and Chinese aspects is also a must, such as “着”, “了” and “过” with different tense-aspect representations.

4.4 Limitations and implications for further research

Mental models can satisfactorily represent concrete and abstract and even hypothetical scenarios, serving as the foundations for visual imagery. Nonetheless, participants in this study are all first-year college students, not covering elementary and middle school language learners. Moreover, there exists temporal limitations, since in this institute curriculum, English instruction is mainly concentrated in the first year, resulting in the lack of delayed post-testing, evaluation of test results and long-term efficacy of knowledge retention. Therefore, cross-age investigations should be conducted to discuss the learning outcomes of different aged learners if time permits. Additionally, modeling data, by means of multi-sensory, including visual, auditory and tactile channels, can be collected to compare and verify the research findings. Based on the experiments of researchers, VR-based immersive tense-aspect training systems might also be developed, to enhance learning outcomes.

V. CONCLUSION

This study conducts a systematic investigation of how MMT can be applied in the instruction of English tense and aspect among Chinese college learners. It confirms the efficacy of the theory in grammatical instruction, and provides a novel cognitive pathway for college English teaching. Construction of models can produce visualization of abstract structures, facilitating the process of identifying the unfamiliar domain of knowledge and mastering new grammatical items. Abstract tense-aspect relations can be transformed to mental models, which significantly enhances the learners’ mastery of complex temporal concepts. Future research can cover learners of different ages and cultural backgrounds, exploring the strategies for age and cultural adaptation, to optimize the theory’s application contexts. Additionally, MMT should not

be confined to the understanding of grammatical items. It can also provide insights in the instruction of diverse contexts such as discourse analysis and creative writing.

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Children's Exposure to Social Reality in light of Ranjit Lal's *Faces in the Water*

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 03 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 26 Jul 2025; Accepted: 01 Aug 2025; Available online: 06 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Children's literature, female infanticide, gender discrimination, social awareness, Ranjit Lal</p>	<p><i>This research explores the intersection of children's exposure to social realities and literature, focusing on Ranjit Lal's Faces in the Water. The novel, aimed at young adult readers, addresses the harrowing issue of female infanticide within an affluent, educated Indian family, dismantling the assumption that such practices are confined to marginalized communities. Through the protagonist Gurmi's journey, the narrative critiques patriarchal oppression, highlighting the complicity of both men and women in sustaining gender discrimination. By employing a child's perspective, Lal balances serious themes with engaging storytelling, using elements of fantasy and youthful innocence to render the subject accessible to young readers. This study situates Faces in the Water within the broader framework of developmental psychology, children's literature, and social awareness, examining how fiction can foster empathy and inspire moral engagement in young audiences. The research underscores the transformative potential of literature in shaping socially conscious individuals and challenging oppressive societal norms, demonstrating how narratives designed for young readers can function as vehicles for social critique and change.</i></p>

Introduction

The question of when and how children should be introduced to social issues is as much a matter of psychological and educational concern as it is of moral and philosophical contemplation. The interplay between innocence and awareness, between the child's imagination and the harsh realities of the world, is a subject that requires thoughtful handling. As scholars have often pointed out, children are not blank slates but rather beings who begin to form ideas about the world around them from a very early age. Children as young as three or four already notice differences in race, gender, and social status, studies

have proven. This suggests that an awareness of the social world—and the inequities that often define it—takes root early, and thus necessitates responsible guidance from adults.

However, it is still hard to know how these sensitive matters should be broached. Developmental psychologists such as Dr. Melanie Killen argue that children acquire biases not innately, but through their exposure to societal norms (Killen & Rutland, 2011). To cultivate understanding and prevent the perpetuation of prejudice, it becomes important to introduce social issues at a young age, yet in a manner

that is both appropriate and comprehensible to a child's developing mind.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development states that children in the pre-operational stage – those between the ages of two and seven – are capable of grasping fundamental concepts such as kindness and fairness. But their capacity for abstract reasoning remains limited, and thus, discussions of social justice must be grounded in the concrete, the particular and the relatable. This seems to be possible, at least in part, through the introduction of books and stories that are relatable, but also rooted in ideas of social justice.

As children grow older and their capacity for logical reasoning sharpens, they enter what Piaget terms the concrete operational stage. At this point, typically between the ages of seven and eleven, children begin to understand cause and effect, which allows for more complex conversations about social issues. As Bigler and Wright (2014) have shown, children exposed to discussions of prejudice during this period are more likely to challenge stereotypes and advocate for fairness.

However, since a lot of social issues may be very harsh on young minds, one must tread carefully, lest the child be overwhelmed by the weight of these realities. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1994) reminds us that a child's sense of safety in their immediate environment is paramount. Bigler (1999) highlights this, noting that children need not only awareness of social problems but also the reassurance that they can be agents of change in their own small ways – whether through kindness, standing up against bullying, or participating in community efforts.

The question of introduction of social issues to children, therefore, is not merely a matter of when, but of how. The gradual unveiling of such knowledge, tailored to the child's developmental stage, is of utmost importance. Early conversations about fairness and diversity serve as the foundation, upon which more complex discussions can be built as the child matures. Children's literature can serve as an important means of shaping our understanding of the world, preparing them not only to perceive injustice but also to imagine, and work toward, a better world.

Faces in the Water- Ranjit Lal: An Introduction

Ranjit Lal is an acclaimed Indian author, columnist, and naturalist known for his rich contribution to

contemporary Indian children's and young adult literature. Born in Kolkata and educated at The Doon School, Dehradun, Lal initially worked as a journalist before fully devoting himself to writing fiction and non-fiction for younger audiences. His passion for wildlife, bird-watching, and the environment often filters into his stories, creating an engaging blend of humor, sensitivity, and social relevance.

Lal has authored over 35 books spanning fiction and non-fiction, many of which are celebrated for their thoughtful handling of complex themes like gender discrimination, environmental awareness, social injustice, and animal rights. His writing style is marked by wit, empathy, and a distinctive narrative voice that appeals equally to young readers and adults. He has contributed regularly to publications such as *The Indian Express*, *The Times of India*, and *The Hindu*, particularly focusing on environmental issues and wildlife conservation.

Among his popular works are *The Battle for No. 19*, *The Tigers of Taboo Valley*, *The Small Tigers of Shergarh*, *The Caterpillar Who Went on a Diet and Other Stories*, and *Smitten*. What sets Lal apart in the landscape of Indian children's literature is his ability to treat young readers as intelligent and emotionally perceptive individuals. He does not shy away from serious topics but instead crafts stories that empower children and adolescents to think critically and develop empathy.

Lal's work has received both national and international recognition. His writing has been shortlisted for and awarded numerous honors, including the *Crossword Award* and the *Hindu Young World-Goodbooks Award*. Critics and educators have praised his work for its courage, originality, and ability to address pressing societal issues through the lens of accessible storytelling.

One of Lal's most poignant and critically acclaimed works is the novel *Faces in the Water*, published by Puffin Books in 2010. This young adult novel bravely explores the hidden horrors of female infanticide in India through the eyes of a teenage boy, Gurmi, who discovers the dark secret buried within his seemingly respectable family. Haunted by the faces of unborn sisters whose lives were cut short, the novel delves into themes of guilt, conscience, complicity, and moral awakening. It is a powerful and unsettling narrative that holds a mirror to the patriarchal obsession with

male heirs and the silent suffering of discarded female lives.

Faces in the Water has been lauded for its courageous subject matter and sensitive storytelling. It won the 2011 Crossword Book Award for Children's Literature and was shortlisted for the Deutsche Bank Awards for Excellence in Writing. The novel is now included in many school reading lists and has been commended for initiating difficult but necessary conversations about gender violence and family complicity. With *Faces in the Water*, Ranjit Lal has not only crafted a compelling piece of fiction but has also made a lasting contribution to Indian literature that challenges taboos and uplifts suppressed voices.

Female Infanticide/Foeticide in India

Female infanticide and foeticide are among the most alarming manifestations of gender-based violence and discrimination in India, deeply rooted in historical, social, and cultural contexts. The practice of deliberately ending the life of a girl child—either at birth or even before birth—has had a long and tragic history in the subcontinent. Despite legal prohibitions and growing awareness, these practices persist, revealing the deeply entrenched patriarchal values that continue to prioritize male offspring over females.

Historically, female infanticide was often practiced among certain upper-caste and land-owning communities in northwestern India, particularly in regions like Punjab and Rajasthan. These communities considered daughters to be a financial burden due to the dowry system, a social evil that continues to haunt Indian society. As historian Lata Mani explains, "Colonial accounts of female infanticide were often moralistic, but they did reflect a deep-seated cultural preference for sons among native elites" (Mani 123). During the colonial period, the British administration enacted laws such as the Female Infanticide Prevention Act of 1870 to curb the practice, but enforcement was inconsistent and often met with resistance from local power structures.

With the advent of modern technology, the issue took a sinister turn. The introduction of prenatal sex determination in the 1980s allowed families to know the sex of the foetus early in pregnancy. This led to a rise in sex-selective abortions, or female foeticide. The 1994 Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic

Techniques (PCPNDT) Act was enacted to prohibit the misuse of prenatal diagnostic tools for sex selection. However, as activist Sabu George notes, "Despite the law, illegal sex determination and abortions continue with impunity, especially in private clinics" (George 48). The persistence of such practices highlights the failure of mere legal frameworks to address deep-rooted cultural biases.

The 2011 Census of India painted a grim picture of the child sex ratio. It showed a decline from 927 girls per 1000 boys in 2001 to 919 in 2011 in the 0–6 age group. States like Haryana and Punjab reported ratios below 900, indicating a severe demographic imbalance. As feminist scholar Rita Banerji argues, "This is not merely a statistical anomaly but a gender genocide enabled by family structures, medical technology, and patriarchal ideology" (Banerji 204). These imbalances have long-term social consequences, including increased violence against women, human trafficking, and forced marriages due to the shortage of brides.

The underlying causes of these practices are deeply tied to societal norms. In many parts of India, sons are seen as carriers of the family name, economic supporters, and performers of last rites. Daughters, on the other hand, are perceived as liabilities, to be married off with substantial dowries. This patriarchal logic is reinforced through religious beliefs, inheritance laws, and lack of social security for the elderly, which further pushes families to prefer male children.

Despite awareness campaigns like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter), implementation remains inconsistent and often symbolic. The problem is exacerbated in regions where literacy rates are low and patriarchal norms are strongly entrenched. As scholar Vibhuti Patel notes, "Addressing female foeticide requires a multidimensional approach—legal, educational, economic, and most importantly, cultural transformation" (Patel 67). It is essential to shift attitudes at the grassroots level, starting from childhood itself.

In this regard, children's literature has a powerful role to play. Stories shape moral imagination and help children question societal norms. By embedding themes that challenge gender stereotypes and affirm the value of girl children, children's books can become

a transformative tool for change. Literature that sensitizes young minds to issues like female infanticide fosters empathy and critical thinking. When young readers encounter stories of strong, cherished girl protagonists who challenge unjust systems, they begin to internalize values of equality and justice. Addressing such critical issues in children's literature is not merely a literary choice but a moral imperative.

Faces in the Water - A Critical View

Ranjit Lal's novel successfully tackles the issue of female infanticide among other social concerns such as systemic patriarchy. The narrative centers on fifteen-year-old Gurmi (short for Gurmeet), who stumbles upon the grim truth of his family's past—three of his sisters were drowned at birth simply because they were girls. As Gurmi grapples with this horrifying discovery, he is haunted by visions of his sisters, whose faces emerge from the water in the well on their ancestral farm, confronting him with a sense of guilt and anguish.

The novel is written in the first-person narrative style and offers us insights from the protagonist Gurmi's perspective. Gurmi is a fifteen-year-old born in the Diwanchand family. The novel opens with an introduction to the family and the two things they take pride in: the fact that there have only been boys born in the family for generations and that they never fall ill, thanks to the water they drink from an ancestral well on their property in the village which acts as an elixir. They are a rich family of businessmen who run a factory of powerful electric motors.

Although Gurmi was born on their ancestral farm on the outskirts of the city, he has lived in urban Delhi all his life. All Diwanchand babies are born on the farm, not a hospital. His uncle Balvinder's wife, Surinder aunty, is a qualified gynaecologist and she delivered the babies born in the family. Although it isn't explicitly stated, given the family's societal status as upper-class elites, it is understood that all the members of the Diwanchand family are well qualified individuals leading a lavish life of luxury. This portrayal of a wealthy, educated, upper-class household is both intentional and impactful, as it challenges the widely held notion that practices such as gender discrimination and female infanticide are limited to impoverished or uneducated communities.

By situating this horrific tradition within a family of privilege, Lal shows the pervasiveness of patriarchal norms and the deep cultural roots of gender discrimination that transcend economic and educational boundaries. Nivedita Menon aptly comments on this in her book *Seeing Like a Feminist* where she writes about patriarchy in India as, "Patriarchy is not a residue of backwardness that will vanish with modernity or education. It thrives equally in urban apartments and rural huts, among IAS officers and daily-wage labourers."

a. The Patriarch of the Family

Gurmi makes it evident right at the start of the novel that his father is an abusive husband to his mother. His father, Balbirji, is described as "hefty and bristly" with a "snarling temper" and Gurmi says that it is better to stay out of his father's way "when he is in the mood to snap and bite" and adds that "his bite is certainly worse than his bark" which hints at physical abuse. In one instance when the family's Rottweilers on the farm are mentioned, Gurmi compares their bark with his father's snarl describing it as a "if you take one more step we'll tear your throat out" sort of snarl. As the novel progresses, there are more indications of this abusive nature of the father. Gurmi tells the reader that his mother never smiled. When Balbirji visits Gurmi and his mother at the ancestral home, he expects to be treated as the centre of everyone's universe. All his whims and fancies had to be satisfied by the whole household. His mother cooks a lavish spread of fragrant mutton pallau with almonds and raisins and saffron rice which the father describes as "garbage pig's slop" and dismisses it in his "unpleasant bellicose way." When the father finds Gurmi clicking pictures with his camera, he comments that "only girly men are photographers," exposing his stereotypical prejudice.

It is evident through all these incidents that Balbirji exemplifies the harmful archetype of patriarchal male supremacy, manifesting in multiple oppressive behaviors that degrade and control those around him. His appearance and temper portray him as an almost animalistic figure with a "bite", a clear metaphor for the severe physical and emotional abuse he inflicts upon his family. Through Gurmi's perspective, we see a man who considers himself the absolute authority, not just in his demands for obedience but also in his expectation to be the household's center of attention.

This expectation is typical of patriarchal dominance, where the male figure commands control and reverence. It must be noted, however, that in Indian society, patriarchal oppression is sustained not only through overt acts of control and violence, but also through deeply embedded cultural practices and ideologies. Feminist historian Uma Chakravarti highlights how patriarchal men maintain dominance by controlling women's sexuality, labor, and mobility, often under the guise of familial duty, caste honor, or religious tradition.

Balbirji also dismisses his wife's efforts with derogatory contempt, calling her carefully prepared dishes "garbage pig's slop" in a "bellicose" manner. His comment on Gurmi's interest in photography as a pursuit for "girly men" further exposes his stereotypical, misogynistic mindset, equating certain passions or professions with weakness or femininity, which he views as inferior. Gurmi's mother's perpetual lack of a smile is another powerful indicator of his father's oppressive influence, revealing a life stripped of joy or self-worth under his control. In many ways, the father embodies a deeply ingrained patriarchal authority that devalues others to sustain his own sense of male supremacy, making him not just a flawed character but a significant vehicle of toxic masculinity and domestic dominance. Feminist political theorist Nivedita Menon asserts that patriarchal control in India is not confined to rural or uneducated populations—it is deeply entrenched in the very fabric of everyday urban and educated life. According to Menon, patriarchal men maintain control through mechanisms that appear "normal" or culturally accepted: decisions about what women wear, who they marry, when they return home, or whether they pursue higher education or careers.

Menon critiques the notion that patriarchy is merely a traditional relic, arguing instead that it is actively reproduced by modern institutions such as the state, family, and media. Even men who claim to be progressive often harbor internalized biases that manifest in subtler forms of control—expecting women to "adjust," uphold family honor, or remain primary caregivers regardless of their professional ambitions. She writes: "Men continue to hold on to their privileges in the most banal ways—in household arrangements, in love relationships, in workplaces. These are not marginal, backward men. These are

modern, urban, educated men. Patriarchy is not external to them; it is what sustains them." This is true of Balbirji as well.

Portraying characters like Balbirji in young adult fiction holds significant importance in the journey toward gender equality, especially in the formative minds of young readers. By presenting an unapologetically patriarchal figure whose actions reveal the damaging consequences of toxic masculinity, such novels invite young readers to question and confront harmful gender stereotypes and power imbalances.

For young readers, understanding characters like Gurmi's father offers a window into the real-life consequences of gender inequality. Gurmi's experiences—his mother's silence and joyless existence, his own dismissive treatment, and the father's scorn toward "feminine" pursuits—reveal the deep-seated biases that stem from patriarchal ideals. Through such portrayals, readers are encouraged to recognize these stereotypes and question the validity of equating strength and authority exclusively with masculinity.

It is the father's authoritative nature that forces the mother into multiple pregnancies and subsequent infanticides when a daughter is born to her. Gurmi's mother as an expecting woman is terrified of the consequences of birthing another daughter because she has already had to lose three daughters to the evil practice of drowning new born girls in the family well. In one instance, she turns to Surinder and says, "I just hope it will be okay this time. Balbirji will kill me otherwise."

Balbirji's controlling and authoritarian nature not only strips Gurmi's mother of her autonomy but also forces her into participating in horrific acts that are emblematic of patriarchal violence and oppression. His dominance over her body and reproductive choices exemplifies how deeply his authority penetrates her life, reducing her to a vessel for fulfilling his expectations of male heirs. Her desperate compliance reveals the extent of his psychological and physical hold over her, pushing her to commit morally devastating acts, such as infanticide, perhaps out of fear for her own life.

Balbirji's influence creates an environment in which Gurmi's mother has little choice but to adhere to his

twisted demands. His threat looms so powerfully that her only recourse to survive his wrath is to submit to the practice of killing newborn daughters, a violent custom rooted in extreme patriarchy and misogyny. She is terrified of failing to produce a son, as each birth brings her closer to potential punishment from her husband. Through Balbirji's character, the narrative exposes the violent lengths to which patriarchy can drive individuals, forcing women into complicity with their own subjugation. Gurmi's mother is not inherently cruel; she is made cruel by a system—and by a husband—that demand her loyalty through oppressive, life-threatening control. Balbirji's nature embodies this system, illustrating how patriarchal power can strip individuals of their moral agency, driving them to actions that are as tragic as they are morally abhorrent.

b. Women's Complicity in Patriarchal Structures

Surinder's role in perpetuating female infanticide is a deeply disturbing element of *Faces in the Water*, highlighting the insidious nature of patriarchy, where women themselves are often complicit in maintaining oppressive systems. When Gurmi's mother expresses her fears over not birthing a son, she also expresses her desire to keep a daughter in case she is blessed with a female child again. To this, Surinder replies saying, "Hush Sushmaji- I told you the Diwanchands don't keep daughters, and that's that. You should be used to it now. Don't talk like that. Why do you think we are so respected and envied in the community? We have such a reputation to protect. Everyone looks up to us, like we are royalty. It's a matter of great pride and the family's honour. Besides, think of the amount of money that has been saved." Her words to Sushmaji not only reflect a chilling normalization of the practice but also reveal how deeply societal values tied to honour, status, and wealth can corrupt ethical reasoning, even among women who might otherwise be expected to empathize with the plight of other women.

Surinder, as a woman and a qualified gynecologist, occupies a morally complex position. On the surface, one might expect her to advocate for the lives of these girls or resist the patriarchal practices of the Diwanchand family. However, her words suggest that she has internalized these oppressive values to such an extent that she justifies and even defends the

practice. Her admonition to Sushmaji—"Hush Sushmaji... You should be used to it now"—reflects a resignation to the status quo, a surrender that is often demanded of women in patriarchal societies to ensure their survival within the system. As historian and women's rights activist Radha Kumar writes in *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800–1990*, "The Indian middle class, despite its exposure to liberal ideas and global discourses, continues to exercise rigid control over women's mobility, sexuality, and reproductive choices."

This complicity reveals a painful truth: patriarchy does not function solely through male dominance but often relies on women's participation to uphold its structures. Surinder's role in delivering the babies who are later killed ties her directly to the act of infanticide, and her justification of it reflects how deeply ingrained these values are. Her perspective, while reprehensible, is shaped by a lifetime of conditioning that equates a family's honour and societal respect with the absence of daughters. As Uma Chakravarti puts it, "Patriarchy in India operates through the twin structures of caste and gender, controlling women across both public and private spheres, regardless of whether they are educated or not."

Surinder's invocation of family honor and economic savings adds another layer of critique. She frames the killing of daughters as a rational decision that benefits the family, linking it to the avoidance of dowry—a practice itself rooted in the commodification of women. The mention of money saved by avoiding dowry payments reduces daughters to financial liabilities and brings to light the transactional view of women's worth in patriarchal societies.

Her statement, "Think of the amount of money that has been saved," not only trivializes the moral gravity of taking a life but also highlights the intersection of gender discrimination and economic pressures. While dowry is often cited as a reason for female infanticide, the Diwanchands' wealth makes this justification particularly hollow. Their economic privilege makes it clear that the killings are not driven by necessity but by a deliberate choice to uphold patriarchal values.

The idea that the Diwanchands' respect and envy in the community stem from their lack of daughters is an

even more damning indictment of societal complicity. Surinder's pride in the family's "reputation" reflects a collective failure to challenge toxic norms, where wealth and honour are prioritized over human lives. By emphasizing that the family is "looked up to, like royalty," Surinder illustrates how societal validation can perpetuate violence against women.

Portraying the grim realities of gender violence and complicity in children's and young adult literature is not only necessary – it is politically and pedagogically urgent. As Paulo Freire asserts in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, education must be "an act of knowing" that encourages learners to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and take action against oppressive elements of reality (Freire 35). Novels like *Faces in the Water* function as critical pedagogical texts that help young readers not only witness injustice but begin to recognize its roots and repetitions in the world around them.

Children's literature, when engaged with courageously, becomes what bell hooks calls a "location of possibility" where marginalized voices can speak and be heard, and where young readers can cultivate a radical imagination that challenges normative social values (hooks 207). By narrating the brutal truth of female infanticide through a young protagonist's perspective, the novel opens a reflective space in which readers – particularly adolescents – can grapple with questions of morality, silence, resistance, and inherited violence. This is not trauma for the sake of narrative spectacle, but trauma as epistemology – a way of knowing how structural patriarchy operates and sustains itself across generations.

Such representations also allow for what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes as "ethical singularity" – the moment when the reader experiences a connection with the subaltern voice, not as abstract data but as a human encounter that demands ethical engagement (Spivak 338). The murdered baby girls in *Faces in the Water*, though largely voiceless and unseen, are rendered present through Gurmi's evolving consciousness and the haunting metaphors of the "faces in the water." The novel thus works to "interrupt" normalized structures of privilege and demand a reckoning, especially from readers who, like Gurmi, may find themselves complicit through silence or ignorance.

Literature that depicts violence against girls – especially when situated within family structures – dismantles the romanticized domestic sphere, often viewed as apolitical or benign. As feminist critic Mariam Fraser notes, "Representations of the body in literature – particularly female bodies – function as battlegrounds on which the politics of gender, purity, and shame are enacted" (Fraser 28). By showing how girl children are not just devalued but actively erased, the novel teaches its readers to interrogate the ways in which gendered violence is often disguised as tradition, honour, or rational decision-making.

Incorporating such themes in literature for young audiences also reinforces Jacques Rancière's idea of the "distribution of the sensible" – the political act of making previously invisible experiences and subjects perceptible through aesthetic representation. Children's literature, then, becomes a site for redistributing attention, emotion, and moral inquiry toward those historically silenced or marginalized. It affirms that children are not passive absorbers of entertainment but ethical beings capable of complex engagement with power and injustice.

Novels like *Faces in the Water* give young readers the intellectual and emotional tools to recognize injustice and imagine alternatives. They do not merely inform; they transform. As young readers learn to identify systems of oppression, question normalized hierarchies, and empathize with marginalized voices, literature becomes an act of social resistance and ethical becoming.

The Role of Young Adult Fiction

Ranjit Lal's *Faces in the Water* stands as a remarkable contribution to young adult fiction because it tackles deeply entrenched social issues such as female infanticide, gender discrimination, and patriarchal oppression, all while maintaining a narrative tone accessible and relatable to its intended audience. The book not only educates but also instills important values of empathy, equality, and moral courage in young readers.

By exploring complex and unsettling themes like female infanticide within the framework of young adult fiction, the novel does more than just entertain – it becomes a tool for awareness and reflection. Adolescents, as the future custodians of societal values, are at a critical age where their understanding

of fairness, morality, and equality is being shaped. Books like *Faces in the Water* encourage them to question oppressive traditions and recognize their role in dismantling them.

The novel's depiction of female infanticide exposes young readers to the real-world consequences of gender bias, prompting them to confront uncomfortable truths about societal norms. Yet it balances these heavy themes with the promise of change, embodied in Gurmi's awakening sense of responsibility and his growing resolve to challenge these practices. This duality—acknowledging harsh realities while inspiring hope—makes the book a powerful vehicle for instilling progressive values.

One of the most compelling aspects of *Faces in the Water* is its choice to tell the story through the perspective of a child. Gurmi's innocence and curiosity infuse the narrative with a sense of wonder and playfulness, softening the impact of its darker themes while still making them accessible. His interactions with the ghosts of the drowned girls serve as a impactful yet playful narrative device, bridging the gap between childhood innocence and the weight of societal injustices.

The ghosts, far from being figures of terror, are Gurmi's friends, and their camaraderie adds a bittersweet charm to the story. They play games, share jokes, and interact with Gurmi in ways that retain the essence of children's fiction, ensuring that the narrative remains engaging for young readers. This blending of fantasy and reality allows the novel to address its serious themes without overwhelming its audience, making it both thought-provoking and age-appropriate.

The use of the child's perspective also serves to highlight the absurdity and cruelty of practices like female infanticide. Through Gurmi's eyes, readers see these traditions stripped of the justifications adults often attach to them, exposing them for what they truly are: acts of senseless violence. His natural empathy and sense of justice stand in stark contrast to the complacency of the adults around him, reinforcing the idea that change often begins with questioning inherited values.

Despite its heavy themes, the novel never loses sight of its young audience. The interactions between Gurmi and the ghosts are laced with humor, mischief,

and the boundless imagination of childhood. These moments of levity serve as a counterbalance to the darker aspects of the story, ensuring that the book remains engaging and relatable. The ghosts themselves, though victims of a terrible crime, are portrayed as vibrant and playful, embodying a sense of resilience and hope that resonates with young readers.

Conclusion

In *Faces in the Water*, Ranjit Lal masterfully fuses the tools of young adult fiction with searing social critique, crafting a novel that is both deeply affecting and socially consequential. Through the eyes of Gurmi, the adolescent protagonist, readers are introduced to the brutal reality of female infanticide, not as a distant or rural aberration, but as a practice embedded within an affluent, educated, urban family. This narrative strategy is both subversive and illuminating. By rooting this violence in the familiar space of domestic respectability, Lal shatters the comforting myth that patriarchy is the domain of the poor, the uneducated, or the rural. Instead, the novel exposes how gender violence is naturalized and perpetuated across class, caste, and educational boundaries.

The narrative's child-centered perspective intensifies its moral urgency. Gurmi's innocence becomes the reader's lens, through which the horror of normalized violence is laid bare. In this way, Lal engages with what Martha Nussbaum terms the "narrative imagination," which she defines as "the ability to be an intelligent reader of another person's story," crucial for cultivating ethical citizenship in a democratic society (Nussbaum 95). Gurmi's journey from bewildered observer to emotionally burdened witness mirrors the reader's own confrontation with moral complicity and the imperative for resistance. This alignment ensures that young readers are not mere spectators of injustice, but are challenged to reflect on their own positions within systems of inequality.

Importantly, *Faces in the Water* underscores the intergenerational transmission of patriarchal ideologies and the role both men and women play in upholding them. The novel indicts not just the overtly patriarchal male figures but also women like Surinder, whose complicity is cloaked in the rhetoric of

tradition, honor, and social status. As feminist theorist Gerda Lerner argues, "Women have been taught to look upon themselves as victims and to feel powerless. But women are also taught to participate in and perpetuate the system of patriarchy" (Lerner 217). Surinder, as both a gynecologist and a family elder, becomes a disturbing symbol of how education and professional success do not automatically translate to feminist consciousness. Her justifications—centered around family reputation, honor, and economic savings—expose the depth of patriarchal conditioning and its normalization within everyday discourse.

Yet, the novel is not without hope. By choosing a child protagonist who resists silence and begins to question the accepted moral order of his family, Lal gestures toward the possibility of rupture and change. As bell hooks reminds us, "The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is—it's to imagine what is possible" (Outlaw Culture 201). *Faces in the Water* does precisely that: it not only documents injustice but also affirms the transformative power of questioning, witnessing, and eventually resisting. Literature here becomes an ethical space—one that allows for recognition, mourning, and ultimately, the reimagining of social norms.

The novel's contribution to children's and young adult literature is particularly significant. In an era where much of mainstream content for young readers leans toward fantasy, escapism, or sanitized morality, Lal's novel dares to confront the unspeakable. This aligns with Rudine Sims Bishop's argument that literature should act not only as a "mirror" reflecting one's own experiences but also as a "window" into others' lives, and a "sliding glass door" through which readers can step into different perspectives (Bishop). *Faces in the Water* fulfills all three functions. It reflects back the realities of gender violence, opens a window into the hidden chambers of familial complicity, and invites readers to step into the role of witnesses and critics.

Faces in the Water stands as a powerful example of how literature can function as a form of social intervention. It offers no easy answers, no moral resolutions, and yet, it deeply affirms the power of storytelling in shaping consciousness. It reinforces the idea that engaging young readers with narratives about injustice is not only an educational necessity but a moral one. By confronting them with difficult truths,

literature encourages them to imagine and strive for a future in which equality is not an aspiration, but a lived reality. In doing so, Lal's work becomes not just a novel, but a call to awareness, empathy, and transformation.

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Exploring the impact of the English Language on Teaching-Learning Practices in Bangladesh: Perspectives from Bangla Medium Students and Teachers

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<p>Received: 01 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 25 Jul 2025; Accepted: 03 Aug 2025; Available online: 08 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords – English language learning, teaching practices, communicative language teaching, second language acquisition, grammar instruction, educational disparity, Bangla medium, Bangladesh.</p>	<p><i>This study critically examines the role of the English language in shaping teaching and learning practices within the Bangladeshi education system, drawing on the perspectives of both students and teachers from Bangla medium institutions. As a global lingua franca, English plays an essential role in international communication, necessitating strong competencies in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Despite the adoption of the Communicated Language Teaching (CLT) approach in Bangladesh, significant challenges persist, particularly the neglect of foundational grammatical instruction and the pervasive influence of Bangla on learners' pronunciation and fluency. These challenges are further compounded by disparities in resource availability and pedagogical effectiveness between urban and rural education contexts. Employing a mixed-methods design underpinned by an abductive research strategy, the study collected qualitative data through in-depth semi-structured interviews with eight students and teachers, and quantitative data via structured surveys with twenty-eight participants across key institutions in the Jashore and Dhaka districts. Data were analysed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics to triangulate insights. The findings reveal pronounced discrepancies in English language acquisition opportunities, with rural learners facing significant disadvantages in access, instruction, and pedagogical support. The study underscores the need for comprehensive educational reforms that integrate both communicative and structural approaches to language instruction, supported by targeted teacher training and policy interventions to promote equitable language education across all regions of Bangladesh.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Language has always served as the primary medium of human communication. Over the past century, advancements in technology and increased global interconnectedness have significantly heightened the need for a universally accepted language. Developing nations, including Bangladesh, often depend upon developed countries not only for aid but also for expanding international trade and commerce, making the ability to communicate effectively in a common language essential (Goswami, 2023). Historically, the English language has fulfilled this global communicative role since the colonial era. However, as English is not the native language of Bangladesh, cultural introversion and limited grammatical proficiency create substantial obstacles for effective language acquisition and practical usage (Hasan et al., 2024).

Despite mandatory English education spanning approximately twelve years in Bangladesh, students frequently demonstrate low levels of proficiency, resulting in widespread academic underperformance in English examinations (Manik, 2017). Consequently, the practice of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is more practical and suitable than English as a Second Language (ESL) in this context (Hassan et al., 2019). Notably, students in Bangla-medium schools often manage to pass examinations without genuinely understanding or appreciating the practical utility of English (Rajan, 2018). Conversely, English-medium schools implement comprehensive English instruction across all subjects, creating notable educational disparities within the country (Ahmed et al., 2023).

The necessity and advantages of bilingual proficiency are aptly captured by Charlemagne's assertion: "To have another language is to possess a second soul" (Ahmed et al., 2023). This sentiment aligns with Frank Smith's perspective: "Learn a new language and get a new soul." In contemporary times, English dominates digital communication, becoming the default language of the internet and significantly influencing global technological interactions (Bhattacharya & Alam, 2022). Recognising these circumstances, this study aims to identify major barriers to English language learning in Bangladesh and propose practical solutions for overcoming these obstacles (Rahman et al., 2019). It emphasises the need for a

balanced approach, integrating grammatical competence with communicative teaching methods (Bolton & Graddol, 2023). In addition, this study aims to explore the specific challenges contributing to inadequate emphasis on grammar within the communicative language teaching framework in Bangladesh. Additionally, the research critically evaluates the significance of effectively integrating grammar into communicative language instruction across all educational levels, from primary through tertiary education (Shahariar et al., 2022). The analysis includes personal reflections from students, educators, and professionals across various fields, highlighting prevalent attitudes and reluctance towards comprehensive language learning (Chowdhury & Rashid, 2021).

The paper incorporates expert insights and practical experiences from multiple educational institutions to provide an informative and precise understanding of the issue. The ultimate objective is to clearly identify the root causes of limited proficiency and practical usage of the English language in Bangladesh, while concurrently offering actionable recommendations for addressing these barriers effectively. Accordingly, the research is guided by the following questions:

- What specific challenges do Bangladeshi students face in learning the English language effectively at the school and college levels?
- Why do students perceive English predominantly as a subject rather than a functional language?
- Is explicit grammatical instruction necessary when employing communicative language teaching methods?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

English has emerged as the preeminent global medium of communication, serving crucial roles in education, commerce, technology, and international relations (Lightbown & Spada, 2023). Despite the significant historical presence of English in the Bangladeshi education system—introduced during the British colonial era approximately 250 years ago—its teaching and learning have consistently fallen short of producing proficient communicators (Crystal, 2022). Instead, English language education in

Bangladesh has largely been dominated by examination-centric practices aimed at achieving passing grades rather than language proficiency (Asif, 2024; Hossain, 2018).

The English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum in Bangladesh at primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels is centrally designed, developed, and disseminated by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), operating under the Ministry of Education (MoE) (NCTB, 2023; Kabir & Akter, 2022). Such a centralised system frequently results in significant gaps between curriculum expectations and classroom implementation (Ali & Walker, 2014; Khan & Hasan, 2024). Teachers often struggle due to insufficient clarity regarding their roles and expectations, inadequate training, and insufficient instructional resources (Khan & Hasan, 2024; Hossain, 2018).

According to Rahman & Jahan (2021), several systemic and instructional challenges exacerbate these difficulties. Prominent among these are insufficient teacher training programs, limited motivation among teachers, a lack of pedagogical experience, outdated teaching materials, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled language instructors (Goswami, 2023; Hasan et al., 2024). Furthermore, traditional grammar-translation methods, predominantly employed at secondary and higher secondary levels, prioritise rote memorisation of grammatical rules over communicative competency (Hasan et al., 2024). This approach severely limits students' practical language skills, leaving the essential language competencies – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – underdeveloped (Goswami, 2023).

Although the Bangladeshi government officially advocates the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, its implementation remains inconsistent and superficial (Alam, 2017). Goswami (2023) argues that teachers' resistance to adopting CLT methods stems from deeply entrenched examination-driven teaching cultures and insufficient professional development. Consequently, students often perceive English merely as an academic subject rather than as a valuable skill for interpersonal and professional communication (Rahman et al., 2023).

English language proficiency is indispensable in modern educational contexts, particularly at tertiary

institutions, where English is often the medium of instruction (Ellis, 2022). Despite this critical need, the quality of English instruction at tertiary levels remains problematic due to the foundational gaps established in primary and secondary education (Hasan et al., 2024). Furthermore, the acute shortage of native English-speaking educators and limited access to authentic language resources compound these issues, further hindering language acquisition and competency (Goswami, 2023).

Given these complexities, existing literature emphasises the urgent need for systemic reform. Goswami (2023) advocates for a proactive governmental approach to transform English language education from an academic burden into a valuable asset. Such reforms require integrating communicative approaches with grammar-based instruction to develop comprehensive linguistic skills, thus enabling learners to effectively engage in both national and international contexts (Islam & Rahman, 2023).

This study contributes to the existing discourse by providing a detailed analysis of current English language teaching methodologies, highlighting key challenges faced by students and educators. By synthesising perspectives from various educational levels, this research aims to identify practical reformative strategies, bridging communicative competencies with traditional grammatical accuracy (Tagg & Seargeant, 2021). The ultimate goal is to propose sustainable educational practices that not only enhance student performance but also foster broader societal proficiency in English within Bangladesh.

Theoretical Perspectives:

Krashen's Monitor Model (Second Language Acquisition Theory):

Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model is a seminal theory in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), offering a comprehensive explanation of how individuals learn a second language. Introduced in the early 1980s, the model comprises five interrelated hypotheses: **the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis** (Krashen, 1982). See figure 1 below.

At its core, the theory distinguishes between "acquisition" and "learning," positing that language acquisition is a subconscious, intuitive process similar to how children acquire their first language, while learning is a conscious process involving explicit instruction of rules and grammar. Krashen argues that real language proficiency stems primarily from acquisition rather than formal learning, thus challenging traditional methods heavily focused on grammar instruction and memorisation (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

The Monitor Hypothesis suggests that consciously learned knowledge acts as an editor or "monitor," used by learners to correct their language output.

However, for the monitor to function, three conditions must be met: the learner must have sufficient time, must focus on form, and must know the correct rule. In practice, this means that the monitor is more useful in written or planned speech, and over-reliance can impede fluency, especially in spontaneous conversation (Krashen, 1982). The Natural Order Hypothesis proposes that language structures are acquired in a predictable sequence, independent of the order in which they are taught. This means certain grammatical elements tend to be acquired earlier or later in the learning process, and instructional sequencing cannot override this internal order (Ellis, 2015).

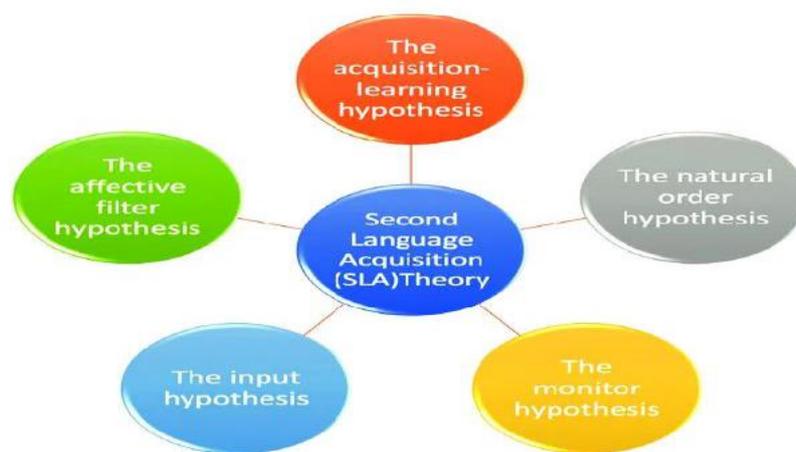


Fig.1: Krashen's Monitor Model (Second Language Acquisition Theory) (Karim, 2022).

Perhaps the most influential component is the Input Hypothesis, which states that learners acquire language when they are exposed to "comprehensible input" slightly beyond their current level of proficiency – what Krashen termed "i+1". This input must be understandable yet challenging enough to promote linguistic development. It implies that effective language instruction should focus less on direct grammar instruction and more on providing rich, meaningful exposure to the language (VanPatten & Williams, 2015). Complementing this, the Affective Filter Hypothesis asserts that emotional variables – such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety – can influence language acquisition. A low affective filter, created through supportive and low-anxiety learning environments, facilitates acquisition, while a high affective filter may block comprehensible input from being processed (Dulay et al., 1982).

Krashen's model has had a profound impact on communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based learning, and immersion education. While the model has been critiqued – especially for its limited empirical testability and rigid separation between learning and acquisition – it remains foundational in language pedagogy. In contexts like Bangladesh, where English education is often dominated by rote memorisation and exam-oriented grammar instruction, Krashen's theory provides a compelling rationale for reform. Incorporating more authentic language exposure, student-centred communication, and emotionally supportive classrooms would align English teaching practices more closely with Krashen's principles, potentially improving students' communicative competence and overall proficiency.

Educational Implications of Krashen’s Monitor Model:

Table 1: Educational implications of Krashen’s Monitor Model (Karim, 2022).

Aspect	Traditional Classroom	Krashen’s Approach
Focus	Grammar rules & correction	Comprehensible input & meaning
Assessment	Accuracy-focused	Fluency and communication
Role of teacher	Knowledge transmitter	Facilitator of rich input
Teaching materials	Textbook-based	Authentic, meaningful materials
Error correction	Frequent, formal	Minimal, supportive, delayed

Krashen’s Monitor Model: Relevance to the Bangladeshi Context

In Bangladesh, language instruction has historically prioritised rote learning, grammar translation, and test performance, with little focus on comprehensible input, speaking/listening practice, or student confidence. Krashen’s model addressed all the above areas. For example, lack of speaking/listening assessments aligns with Input Hypothesis gap, students learning through memorisation reflects Learning over Acquisition imbalance, and student anxiety and demotivation due to rigid teaching styles highlights a high affective filter. Therefore, applying Krashen’s Monitor Model offers a strong theoretical rationale for educational reform towards a more communicative, inclusive, and acquisition-driven English teaching strategy in Bangladesh.

III. RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a pragmatic philosophical underpinning, reflecting a pluralistic stance in addressing the complexity of exploring the influence of the English language and evaluating teaching-learning practices within the Bangladeshi educational context. The pragmatic approach emphasises practical solutions and enables researchers to utilise diverse

methods to answer complex research questions comprehensively (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). Aligned with pragmatism, an abductive approach is adopted, which is instrumental in guiding the iterative process between existing theory and empirical findings (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Unlike purely inductive or deductive approaches, abductive reasoning permits flexible interplay between theory and practice, enabling the researcher to continuously refine understanding based on emerging evidence and theoretical frameworks.

The study employs a mixed-method research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Mixed-method research provides complementary insights, allowing triangulation of data to enhance the robustness and credibility of findings (Johnson et al., 2007). Specifically, an explanatory sequential mixed-method design is adopted, which involves initial quantitative data collection through surveys, followed by qualitative interviews aimed at further exploration and clarification of survey findings (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017).

The study adopts a purposive sampling technique for qualitative interviews, involving eight participants (four students and four lecturers) from diverse higher educational institutions in Bangladesh. Purposive sampling is selected for its capacity to identify participants with direct experience and knowledge pertinent to the study’s objectives (Patton, 2015). Quantitative data is gathered through surveys involving a larger sample of 28 participants, comprising students and lecturers from multiple higher education institutions. Convenience sampling is applied here due to ease of access, resource constraints, and the practical necessity of capturing representative data within educational settings (Bryman, 2016).

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility, enabling deeper exploration of participants' views and experiences regarding English language teaching-learning practices (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Each interview lasted approximately 30-40 minutes, conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms, depending on participant availability and preference. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Quantitative data collection involved an online survey containing structured, closed-ended questions developed from existing literature and tailored to the Bangladeshi educational context. The survey included Likert-scale items assessing attitudes, perceived challenges, and effectiveness of current teaching-learning practices, alongside demographic questions to provide contextual understanding of the sample (Fowler, 2013).

Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2021) six-phase approach: (1) familiarisation with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) reporting. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification and interpretation of recurring patterns and nuanced perspectives on the effectiveness, challenges, and influences associated with English language teaching-learning practices from both students' and teachers' viewpoints. Quantitative data derived from surveys were analysed using descriptive statistical methods, employing SPSS software (version 29). Descriptive analysis included frequency distribution, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarise and illustrate participants' attitudes and perceptions. Descriptive statistics provided a clear numerical depiction of central trends and variation within the dataset, enhancing the interpretability and comparability of findings (Field, 2018).

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, clearly outlining the study's purpose, confidentiality assurances, anonymity of responses, and the voluntary nature of participation. Data were securely stored and accessible only to the research team, ensuring participants' privacy and compliance with GDPR regulations.

To ensure methodological rigour, multiple strategies were adopted. Triangulation was used to enhance validity by comparing qualitative and quantitative findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Reliability was

strengthened through pilot testing of survey instruments, standardisation of interview procedures, and transparent documentation of data analysis processes. Trustworthiness of qualitative analysis was further assured by employing peer debriefing and respondent validation techniques, enabling participants to verify findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

While this mixed-method approach enhances comprehensive insight, certain limitations persist, including the modest sample size in both qualitative and quantitative phases. However, careful sampling and methodical triangulation mitigate these constraints, ensuring the credibility and transferability of findings within similar educational contexts.

This integrated methodological framework ensures a robust exploration and evaluation of English language teaching and learning practices in Bangladesh, delivering nuanced insights from both student and teacher perspectives.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1: Descriptive Statistical Analysis:

- **Institutional vs. Personal Effort in Achieving Proficiency**

A critical factor influencing students' English proficiency in Bangladesh is the role of institutional versus personal efforts. The data (Figure 2 below) highlights that 75% of students attributed their English language achievements primarily to personal effort, whereas only 7% recognized institutional support as the sole contributor, and 18% saw it as a joint effort. This indicates substantial shortcomings within the institutional educational structure, particularly at the SSC level, underscoring an evident lack of effective language instruction methods or conducive learning environments.

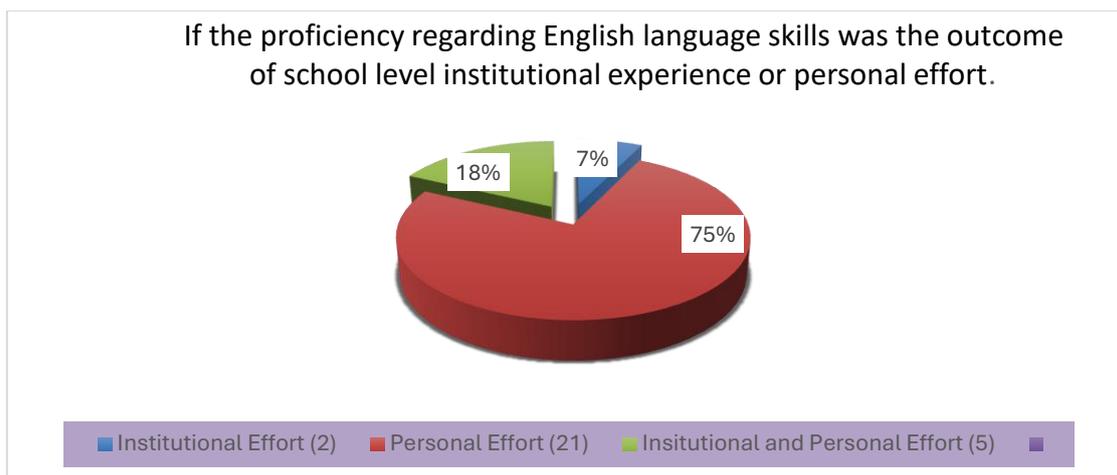


Fig.2: Factors influencing students' English proficiency in Bangladesh

When transitioning to the HSC level, however, perceptions shifted slightly (Figure 3 below), with institutional contributions acknowledged by a higher percentage (29%) and combined efforts by 21%, while half still perceived personal effort as dominant. This

discrepancy suggests variability in institutional quality, despite adhering to a uniform national curriculum, pointing toward disparities in teaching quality and resource availability across different institutions.

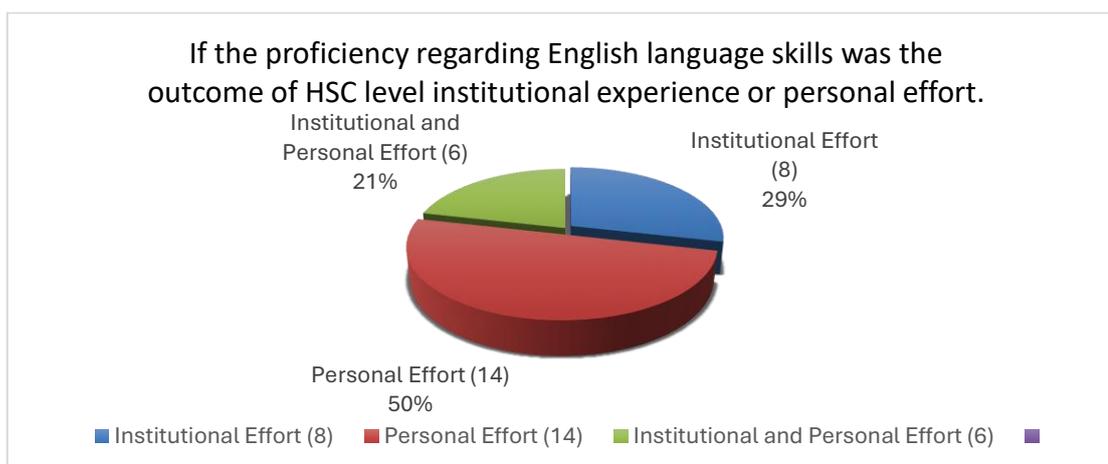


Fig.3: Students' English proficiency in Bangladesh while transitioning to the HSC level.

• **Language Proficiency Across Core Skills**

A significant gap emerged concerning proficiency across the four core skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—during SSC and HSC levels (Figure 4 below). Notably, speaking skills were weakest, with 72% classified as beginners. Listening followed closely, with 68% at a beginner level,

while reading and writing showed slightly better results, yet remained predominantly at beginner or intermediate levels. The negligible presence of advanced-level proficiency highlights systemic limitations in curriculum implementation and instructional methods, emphasizing the absence of adequate exposure and structured practice in English communication.

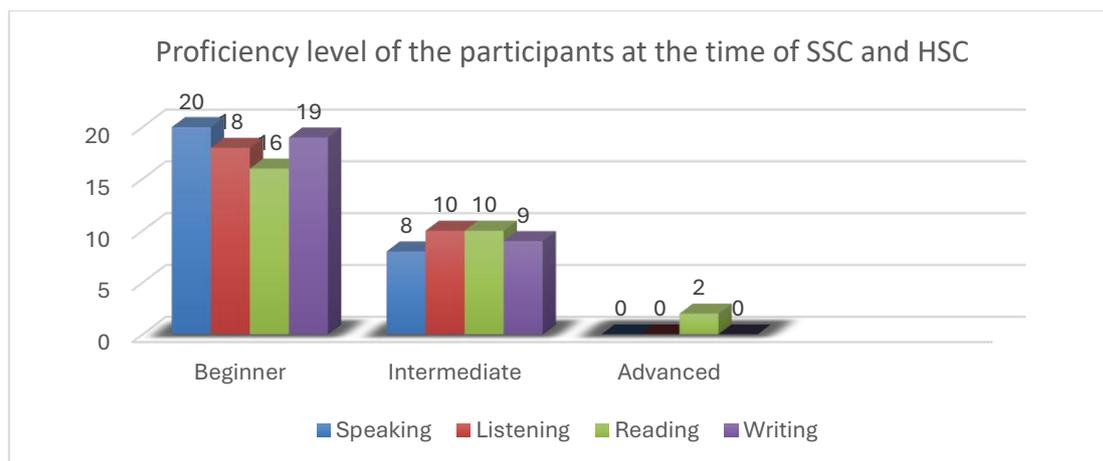


Fig.4: Proficiency level of the participants at the time of SSC and HSC

• **Curriculum Effectiveness and Limitations**

Survey results revealed substantial dissatisfaction with the existing 12-year curriculum (Figure 5 below). A majority (79%) questioned its effectiveness, citing repetitive grammar content, lack of variety in

assessment formats, and the complete omission of listening and speaking assessments. Such a curriculum design perpetuates a narrow focus on exam-oriented learning and marginalizes practical language competencies, significantly impacting students' communicative abilities.

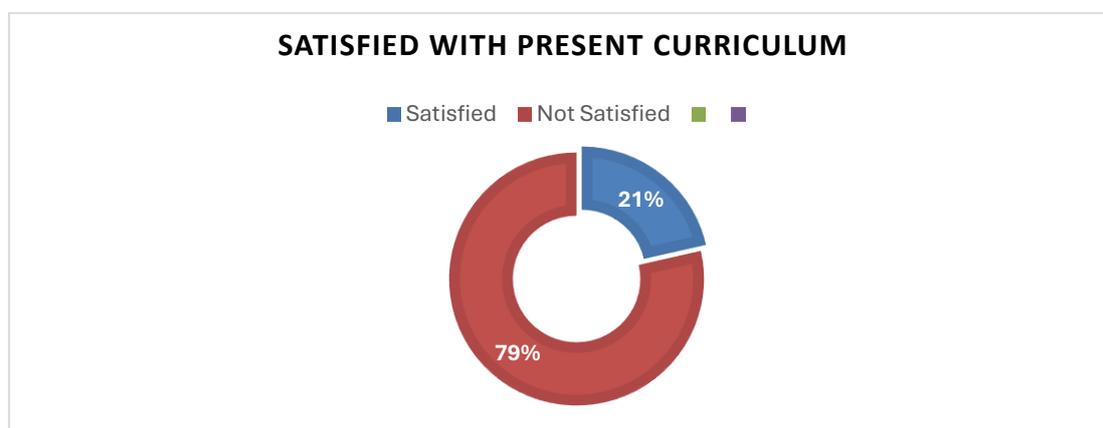


Fig.5: Satisfaction percentage with the present curriculum for English language learning

• **Exposure to English Beyond the Classroom**

Although schools offered limited opportunities for practical language application, colleges appeared comparatively more proactive (Figure 6 below). Approximately 66% of students benefited from extracurricular engagements such as English Olympiads, debates, and

presentations. However, the remaining 34% did not engage due to a lack of formal recognition or assessment integration, underscoring the need to embed such communicative practices systematically within the assessment framework to ensure broader participation and genuine skill development.

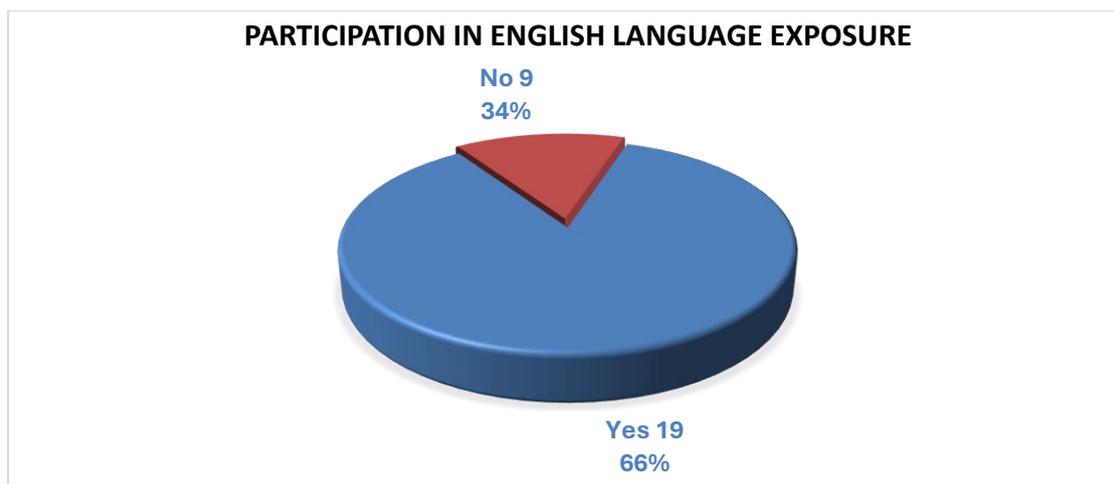


Fig.6: SSC and HSC students' English language exposure

• **Neglect of Communicative Language Components in Assessments**

The survey consistently indicated that core communicative skills—speaking, listening, and reading—received no explicit attention or allocated marks in standardised examinations (Figures 7, 8 & 9 below). All participants

(100%) confirmed the complete absence of speaking and listening components, while reading was indirectly addressed without specific assessment. Contrarily, writing was the sole skill consistently evaluated (Figure 10 below), reinforcing an imbalanced language proficiency model, which profoundly constrains holistic language learning.

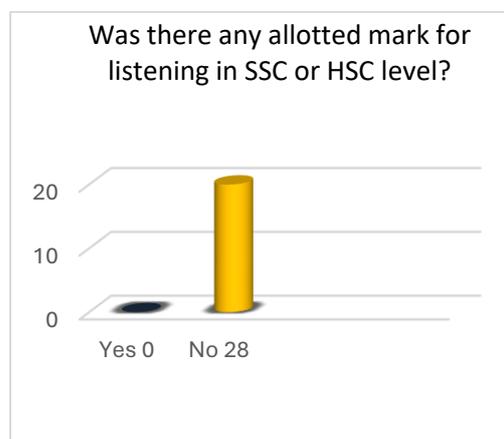


Fig.7 (left) & 8 (right): Allotted mark for speaking and listening in SSC or HSC level.

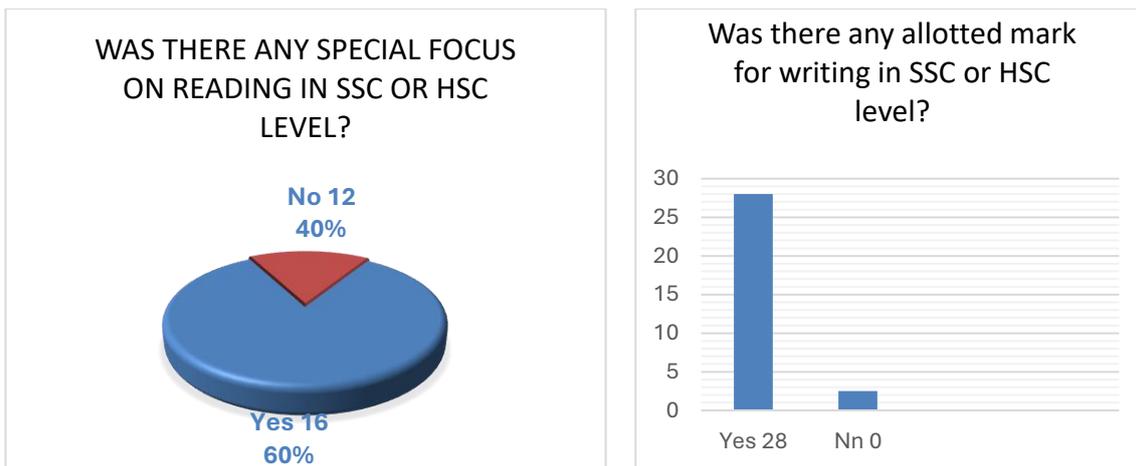


Fig.9 (left) & 10 (right): Allotted mark for reading and writing at SSC or HSC level.

- Teacher Competence and Instructional Approaches**

Teacher competence emerged as another central theme, with polarised perceptions among students (Figure 11 below). Only 50% perceived their teachers as sufficiently skilled, reflecting significant variability in teaching quality. Furthermore, 65% reported that

teachers primarily relied on traditional teaching methods, rarely employing modern technological tools despite their availability in some urban institutions (Figure 12 below). This underscores an urgent need for targeted teacher training programs and infrastructural improvements to align instructional practices with contemporary pedagogical standards.

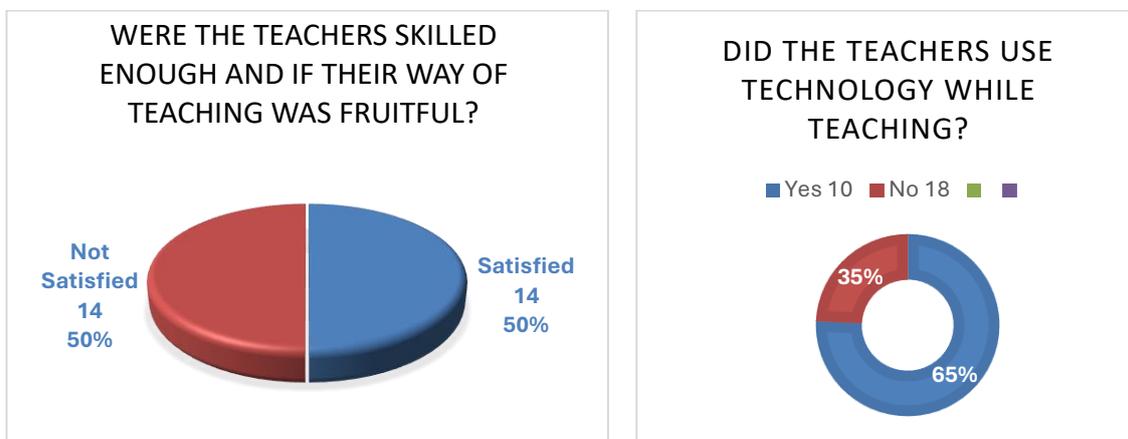


Fig.11 (left) & 12 (right): Teachers' competencies in teaching and using technology.

- Importance of Grammar and Assessment Preferences**

Opinions diverged significantly regarding grammar instruction's necessity (Figure 13 below). A majority (65%) affirmed grammar's critical role, aligning with the exam-oriented

educational culture in Bangladesh. Conversely, 35% argued for naturalistic language acquisition methods emphasizing communicative practice, pointing toward a critical pedagogical divide that requires harmonization to meet both educational goals and practical language proficiency.



Fig.13: The necessity of grammar to learn a language.

Regarding assessment practices, 72% expressed overall satisfaction with current testing methods despite acknowledging the inherent limitations of focusing primarily on grammar and writing (Figure 14 below). This paradox suggests students have internalized

the prevailing examination culture, valuing high scores over genuine communicative competence, which raises substantial concerns about the long-term effectiveness of such a narrowly conceived assessment framework.

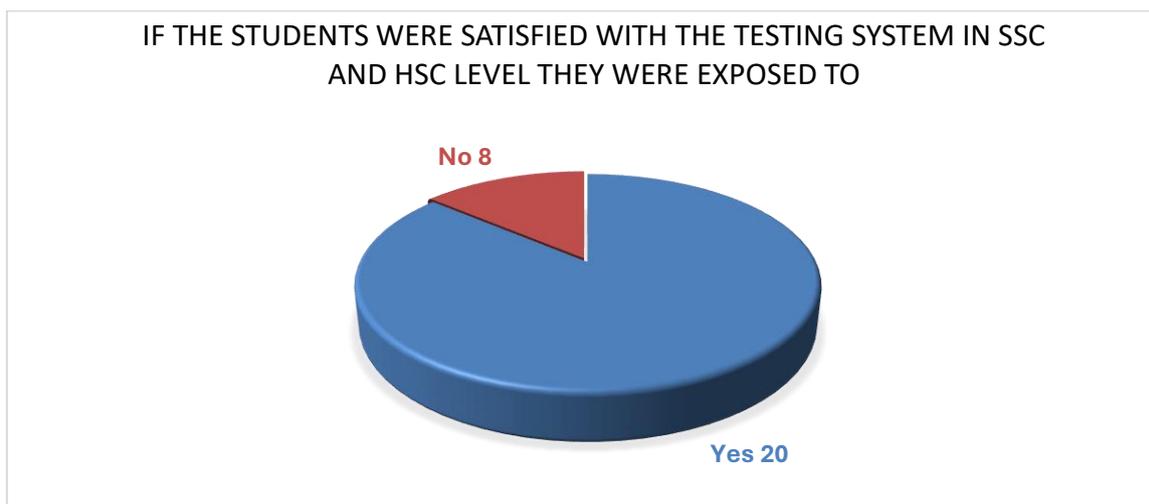


Fig.14: Satisfaction with assessment (testing) system in SSC & HSC level.

- **Evaluation of NCTB English Textbooks**

Regarding NCTB-approved textbooks ('English for Today'), students expressed mixed satisfaction (Figure 15 below). Approximately 72% expressed dissatisfaction, citing dependence on supplementary

guidebooks and repetitive grammar-focused content. This critique underscores the necessity for curricular revision to integrate engaging, relevant, and diverse learning materials that authentically support communicative skill development.

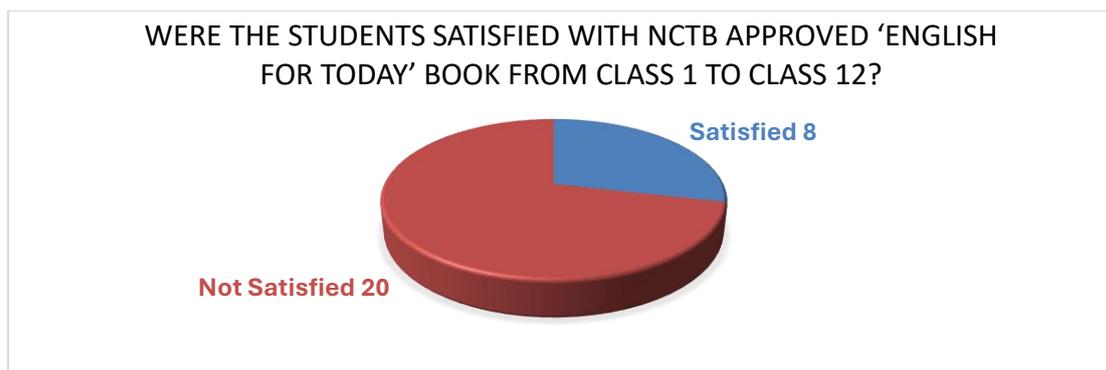


Fig.15: Satisfactory level of NCTB-approved "English for Today" book.

- **Impact of Comprehensive Skill Assessment**

A critical consensus emerged (Figure 16 below), with all participants (100%) agreeing that integrating speaking, listening, and reading into formal assessments would significantly enhance student engagement and seriousness towards

acquiring these skills. This reflects a clear imperative for policymakers to prioritise comprehensive language assessment practices, encouraging genuine communicative proficiency rather than mere examination-focused memorization.

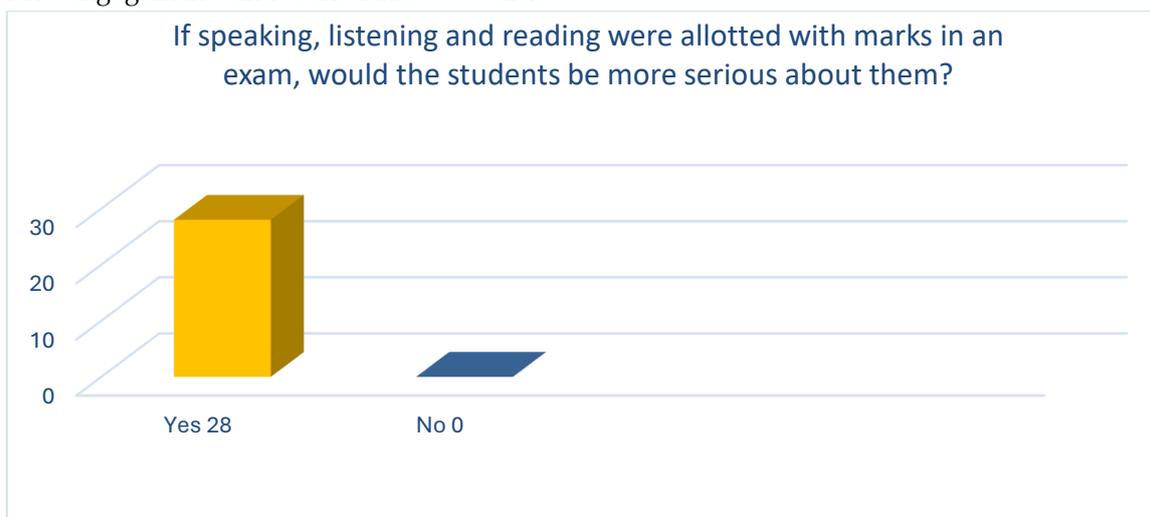


Fig.16: Integration of speaking, listening, & reading into formal assessment

- **Post-HSC Proficiency Levels**

The proficiency evaluation post-HSC level (Figure 17 below) revealed modest improvements, yet substantial deficiencies persisted, notably in speaking and writing,

with limited progression beyond beginner and intermediate levels. These findings underscore systemic issues in curriculum design, instructional quality, and assessment methods, reaffirming the urgency of holistic educational reforms.

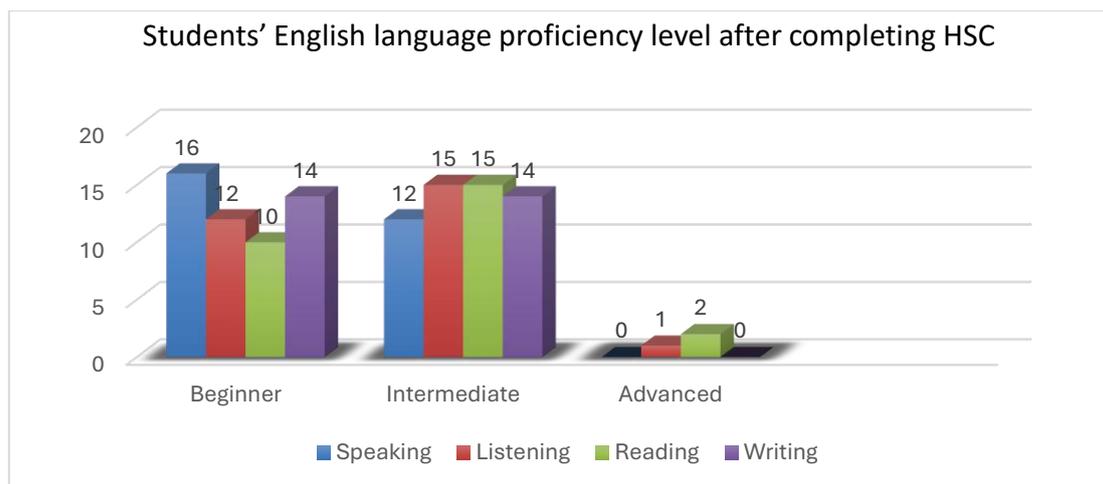


Fig.17: Proficiency evaluation of Post-HSC levels.

The analysis highlights a pressing need for comprehensive reforms within English language education in Bangladesh. This includes curricular restructuring, balanced skill assessment practices, robust teacher training, and enhanced institutional support mechanisms. Only by addressing these interlinked challenges can substantial improvements in students' communicative competencies and overall language proficiency be achieved.

4.1.2: Key Recommendations from Participant Responses:

Participants collectively emphasised several actionable recommendations, including:

- Incorporating speaking, listening, and reading assessments formally within the curriculum (33%).
- Improving teacher training and enhancing instructional quality (18%).
- Revising textbooks and assessment methods to focus equally on all four language skills (29%).
- Encouraging creative writing practices and narrative tasks within assessments (22%).
- Implementing technology-driven interactive teaching methods (8%).

4.2: Thematic Analysis:

This qualitative analysis provides deep insight into the experiences of students and teachers regarding English language teaching-learning practices in Bangladesh. Several key themes emerged from the analysis of participant interviews, enriched through

triangulation with quantitative data previously presented.

Theme 1: Institutional Deficiencies and Inequalities

One predominant theme identified through qualitative analysis was significant institutional deficiencies and inequalities. Respondents highlighted that the educational infrastructure, particularly in rural regions, is critically deficient. Participant 1 from Dhaka University specifically emphasised that "...the inadequate number of qualified English teachers in village schools, often resulting in a single teacher managing multiple subjects across multiple schools...". Participant 2 reinforced this perspective, describing their early learning experiences as "fundamentally unprofessional" due to poorly qualified teachers who prioritized rote memorisation over genuine understanding". This qualitative finding aligns closely with quantitative data, revealing that 75% of students identified their personal efforts, rather than institutional input, as critical to developing English proficiency.

Theme 2: Curriculum and Pedagogical Shortcomings

Participants strongly criticized the existing curriculum and instructional methodologies. Participant 3 from Dhaka University described that "... curriculum deficiencies, noting dependence on a single textbook, often inadequately recommended or assessed...". Same participant stressed that "... even high-achieving students (GPA 5) felt ill-prepared and dissatisfied upon entering higher education...". The narrative is further echoed by participant 4, a HSC 2nd year student, who

pinpointed “... the disconnect between theoretical grammar lessons and practical application as a central barrier to language proficiency...”. This qualitative perspective is corroborated by quantitative analysis (Figure 14), where 72% expressed dissatisfaction with the NCTB-approved “English for Today” textbook, highlighting a pervasive disconnect between curricular intent and instructional effectiveness.

Theme 3: Absence of Comprehensive Skill Development

The exclusion of key communicative skills (listening and speaking) from formal assessment emerged as a substantial theme. The participant 5, a student of East West University, articulated “...frustration regarding the negligence of listening and speaking components within the educational system, questioning how students could genuinely learn a language under such constraints...”. The experiences shared by participant 6 (HSC 2nd year student) underscored this longstanding issue, “... identifying persistent neglect of communicative components as indicative of broader systemic inertia...”. Quantitative data (Figures 6 and 7) further support this, with 100% of students confirming the complete absence of speaking and listening assessments, significantly undermining comprehensive language development.

Theme 4: Teacher Quality and Training Needs

Qualitative data consistently emphasized the urgent need to enhance teacher quality through targeted professional development. Participant 2 explicitly critiqued “... the overly authoritarian teaching approaches and dependence on rote learning, emphasizing the necessity of fostering supportive, interactive teacher-student relationships...”. Similarly, participant 7 (HSC 2nd year student) noted that “... teachers commonly relied on substandard guidebooks instead of introducing internationally recognized texts, limiting exposure to authentic language learning materials...”. These concerns align closely with quantitative findings, with 65% of participants highlighting inadequate teacher quality (Figure 10), underscoring an essential area for educational reform.

Theme 5: Socio-cultural Attitudes Towards English Learning

A subtle yet crucial theme emerged regarding societal and cultural perceptions influencing language learning. Jubayer highlighted how the national pride

associated with Bangla—while positive—often indirectly stigmatises English proficiency, negatively affecting motivation for authentic language acquisition. This socio-cultural backdrop acts as an intangible but significant barrier, requiring nuanced attention from policymakers and educators to foster a more balanced appreciation for multilingual proficiency.

Theme 6: Grammar Instruction and Methodological Integration

A central debate arose around grammar instruction's role within language learning. Participant 8, who is a professor, argued that “... although communicative methods offer improved engagement compared to traditional grammar-based methods, flawed question patterns and overly simplistic assessments significantly reduce students' motivation to genuinely learn grammar...”. His detailed critique of modifiers and clue-based questions illuminated deficiencies within existing assessment methodologies. This critique resonated with student perspectives (such as participants 2 and 3), who described grammar instruction as superficial and reliant on memorisation rather than meaningful comprehension. Quantitative analysis further validated these findings, with 72% satisfied with traditional writing-focused assessments yet acknowledging their limitations in fostering genuine proficiency (Figure 13).

Theme 7: Need for Holistic and Innovative Assessment Reform

Participants (1, 4, 5, & 8) overwhelmingly suggested a comprehensive revision of assessment systems to incorporate all four communicative skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). For example, participant 8 underscored “...the chronic lack of sustainable improvements due to stagnant, outdated teaching and assessment practices...”. This view was unanimously echoed in quantitative results (Figure 15), where 100% of participants agreed that incorporating speaking, listening, and reading into assessments would significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Theme 8: Importance of Accessible Quality Resources

Qualitative narratives consistently highlighted the importance of accessible, high-quality resources. Hridoy expressed dissatisfaction with current

teaching materials, advocating for widespread availability of internationally recognized texts (e.g., Oxford publications and Wren & Martin grammar books). Such resources could significantly enhance students' exposure to high-standard English language materials, thereby enriching their proficiency.

4.2.1: Recommendations Derived from Thematic Analysis:

- **Institutional Reform:** Increase recruitment and deployment of qualified English teachers, particularly in rural regions, to reduce inequality.
- **Curriculum Enhancement:** Revise the national curriculum to integrate comprehensive communicative language assessments, ensuring balanced emphasis on listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- **Teacher Professional Development:** Implement mandatory, ongoing professional development and training programs focusing on contemporary, student-centred teaching methodologies.
- **Innovative Assessment Practices:** Revise assessment patterns to encourage critical thinking, creativity, and practical application of grammar, moving beyond rote memorization to meaningful language use.
- **Resource Accessibility:** Facilitate widespread access to internationally recognized educational resources, ensuring all students have equal opportunities to engage with high-quality learning materials.
- **Societal Attitudinal Shift:** Promote balanced linguistic attitudes through awareness campaigns highlighting multilingual proficiency as beneficial to national and global engagement.

V. DATA DISCUSSIONS

This study explored critical perspectives from students and teachers on English language proficiency and teaching-learning practices in Bangladesh, integrating robust findings from descriptive statistical analyses and comprehensive thematic insights from qualitative data. The triangulation of these findings has identified several critical areas for in-depth discussion.

Institutional vs. Personal Efforts in Language Acquisition:

Quantitative analysis clearly indicated a prevalent reliance on personal efforts (75%) for achieving English proficiency, rather than institutional support (7%), with only 18% attributing their success to combined institutional and individual efforts (Figure 1). Qualitative narratives further reinforced these findings, highlighting institutional weaknesses primarily caused by insufficiently skilled teachers and limited educational resources, especially in rural areas. As participants 1 & 2 highlighted, unqualified teaching personnel significantly impair students' abilities to achieve English proficiency, compelling students toward self-reliance. These data reflect substantial systemic gaps, emphasizing the urgent necessity for enhancing institutional effectiveness and teacher quality to better support language acquisition.

Variability in Educational Quality and Curriculum Effectiveness:

Quantitative findings revealed varying perceptions regarding educational quality as students transitioned from SSC to HSC levels (Figure 2). Despite the unified curriculum, students reported inconsistent educational experiences, suggesting disparities in institutional resources and instructional quality. The majority (79%) explicitly expressed dissatisfaction with the 12-year curriculum, criticising its repetitive nature, overly grammar-centric focus, and absence of assessments for speaking and listening skills (Figure 4). This concern was strongly corroborated by qualitative data, with participant 2 emphasising curriculum inadequacies and participants 4 & 8 highlighting the gap between theoretical grammar instruction and practical application. These discrepancies underscore the need for comprehensive curriculum reform, particularly to incorporate balanced skill development.

Limited Development Across Core Language Skills:

A critical limitation observed in this study is the significant neglect of essential language skills. Both quantitative (Figures 6-9) and qualitative findings consistently revealed a stark absence of formal assessments in speaking and listening skills at SSC and HSC levels. Notably, 72% of students were classified as beginners in speaking, and none attained advanced proficiency. Participant 7's qualitative

critique further echoed this issue, asserting that neglecting these vital communicative components undermines authentic language acquisition. This severe imbalance necessitates policy-level interventions to establish comprehensive assessment frameworks incorporating all four language skills.

Teacher Competence and Pedagogical Practices:

Data from both quantitative (Figures 10-11) and qualitative sources identified teacher competence as a critical area requiring immediate attention. Quantitative data showed divided opinions regarding teacher effectiveness, with only half of the students acknowledging adequate teaching skills and 65% criticising the persistent reliance on traditional methods without modern technological integration. Participant 2's qualitative insights highlighted that many teachers exhibit authoritarian attitudes and depend excessively on rote learning, reducing student engagement and language acquisition effectiveness. These findings emphasise the necessity of targeted professional development programs and pedagogical innovations to elevate teacher quality and classroom effectiveness.

Grammar Instruction: Necessity vs. Practicality:

Grammar instruction emerged as a contentious point within this study. Quantitatively, 65% of respondents considered grammar instruction essential (Figure 12), reflecting the prevailing examination-oriented educational culture. Yet, qualitative insights from participant 8 and other participants (3, 4, & 7) criticised current grammar instruction as superficial, overly dependent on simplistic clue-based assessment methods, and disconnected from practical language use. The evident conflict suggests the necessity for a balanced approach integrating both grammatical accuracy and communicative competence within instructional practices.

Resource Availability and Textbook Evaluation:

Evaluation of the primary English textbook "English for Today" revealed significant dissatisfaction among students, with 72% expressing concerns about its repetitiveness and excessive reliance on supplementary guidebooks (Figure 14). Qualitative data supported this finding, with students advocating for greater access to globally recognized learning resources, such as texts by Oxford and Wren & Martin. These insights highlight the imperative to improve

curricular resources to facilitate engaging, comprehensive, and authentic language learning experiences.

Socio-cultural Influences on English Learning:

Qualitative data uniquely revealed socio-cultural dimensions affecting English language learning in Bangladesh. Participant 3's insights indicated that national pride and socio-cultural attitudes toward Bangla, although positive, indirectly discourage rigorous English proficiency development. This cultural context subtly reduces students' intrinsic motivation toward English proficiency, presenting an additional layer of complexity that educational reform efforts must consider.

Necessity of Comprehensive Assessment Reforms:

One area of unanimous agreement among participants, substantiated by both qualitative and quantitative findings, was the critical need for reforming assessment systems to encompass all language competencies. Quantitative analysis demonstrated universal agreement (100%) that incorporating speaking, listening, and reading into assessments would significantly enhance student commitment and engagement with these skills (Figure 15). Qualitative narratives echoed this stance, reinforcing the call for comprehensive, skill-inclusive assessment frameworks to support genuine communicative proficiency.

Post-HSC Proficiency and Long-term Implications:

Post-HSC proficiency evaluation further highlighted modest improvements yet sustained substantial shortcomings in English proficiency (Figure 16). Despite completing 12 years of education, students remained predominantly within beginner to intermediate levels. This observation emphasises systemic weaknesses in instructional and curricular strategies, suggesting that the current educational approach inadequately prepares students for tertiary education or practical English use in global contexts.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS ALIGNED WITH KRASHEN'S MONITOR MODEL (TRIANGULATED FROM DESCRIPTIVE AND THEMATIC ANALYSES)

Based on the identified theory, descriptive statistical analysis, and thematic analysis, the following actionable recommendations are suggested:

- **Promote Authentic Language Acquisition (Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis):** Shift instructional practices from purely grammatical drills and memorisation towards more natural language acquisition methods, including immersive and interactive communicative tasks. Encourage meaningful real-world interactions within the classroom environment to promote subconscious acquisition alongside conscious learning.
- **Balanced Integration of Grammar Instruction (Monitor Hypothesis):** Introduce grammar explicitly but contextualise it within meaningful language use rather than isolate drills. Enable students to self-monitor effectively through practical writing and speaking tasks. Develop activities that encourage the natural use of grammatical structures, allowing students to internalise rules implicitly while consciously applying grammar knowledge during editing processes.
- **Progressive Curriculum Design (Natural Order Hypothesis):** Redesign curriculum to align with natural language acquisition sequences, ensuring foundational language skills precede complex grammar rules. Include varied assessment strategies reflecting natural progression in language development, which supports a gradual and systematic acquisition of process.
- **Increase Comprehensible Input (Input Hypothesis):** Provide students with ample exposure to high-quality English materials (e.g., Oxford/Wren & Martin textbooks, authentic media, language software). Utilise graded readers, interactive software, and audio-visual materials slightly above current proficiency levels (i+1), fostering continuous incremental language development.
- **Manage Affective Factors (Affective Filter Hypothesis):** Establish classroom environments that are supporting, non-threatening, and encouraging to lower learners' affective filters. Besides, train teachers to adopt nurturing and inclusive pedagogical approaches to enhance students' confidence and reduce language anxiety.

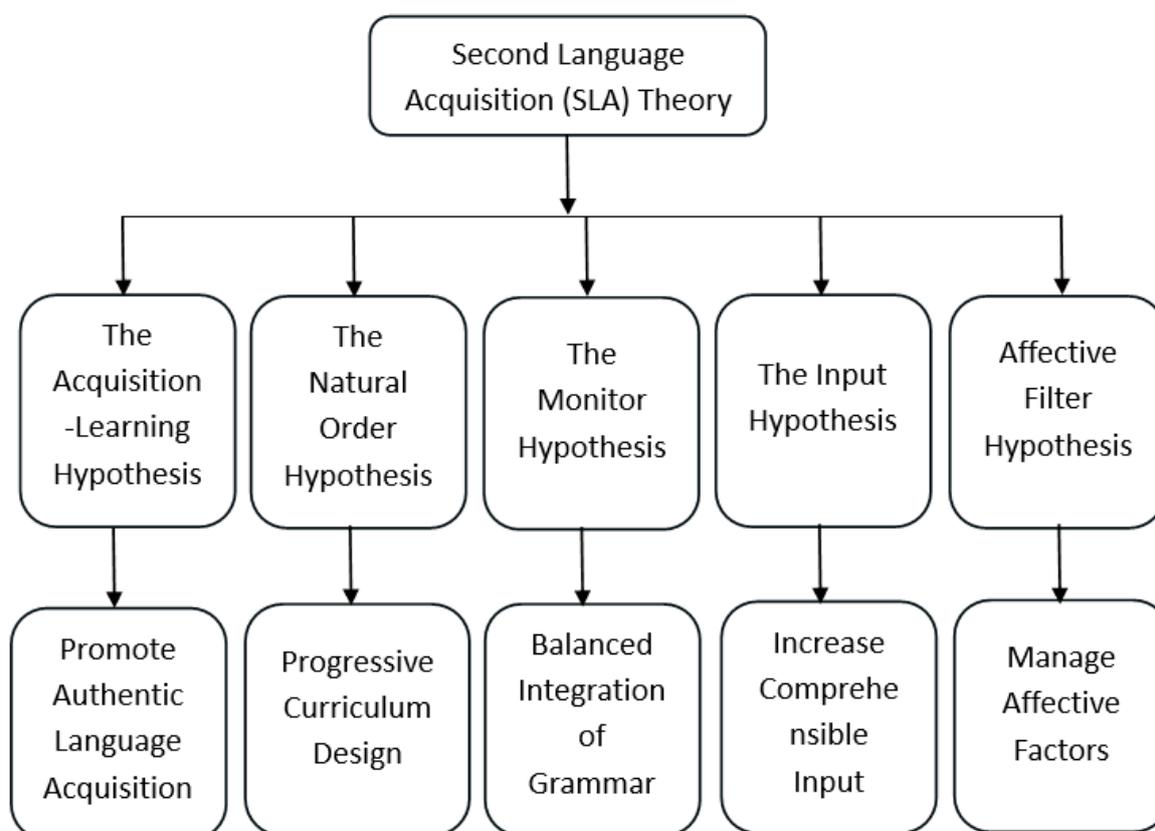


Fig.18: Recommendations of the Second Language Acquisition (Adapted by the authors).

VII. CONCLUSION

This research has thoroughly explored the prevailing influence of the English language and critically assessed current teaching-learning practices across various educational institutions in Bangladesh. The findings, derived from an integrated mixed-method approach, have highlighted substantial systemic deficiencies that significantly hinder students' effective acquisition of English proficiency. Notably, institutional limitations, curriculum inadequacies, teacher competence variability, and insufficient emphasis on comprehensive communicative skills emerged as primary areas needing immediate attention.

Despite the widespread acknowledgement of English as an indispensable global communicative tool, the majority of students in Bangladesh remain at beginner or intermediate proficiency levels even after twelve years of mandatory education. The quantitative data demonstrated that language achievement predominantly relied upon individual effort rather than effective institutional support, reflecting a critical gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities. Qualitative insights further illuminated the nuanced experiences of students and teachers, underscoring educational disparities, particularly between urban and rural contexts, where resources and qualified teaching personnel are markedly limited.

The current study explicitly revealed a mismatch between curricular objectives and pedagogical practices, characterised by a narrow, exam-focused approach that neglects essential communicative skills such as speaking and listening. The overwhelming dissatisfaction expressed by participants regarding existing textbooks and traditional assessment methods underscores an urgent call for a comprehensive revision of curricular content, assessment criteria, and instructional methodologies.

To effectively bridge these gaps and elevate English language proficiency nationwide, this study recommends targeted strategic interventions. These include recruiting and professionally developing qualified teachers, particularly in underserved rural areas; revising curricula to integrate balanced skill assessment practices; ensuring accessibility to high-quality educational resources; and cultivating positive

socio-cultural attitudes towards multilingual proficiency. Additionally, embracing innovative teaching practices that prioritise interactive, student-centered learning could substantially enhance students' engagement and language capabilities.

Ultimately, achieving sustained improvements in English language education within Bangladesh requires coherent and collaborative efforts among educational policymakers, institutions, and educators. Only through holistic reforms addressing systemic, instructional, and socio-cultural barriers can Bangladesh truly leverage English language proficiency as a strategic asset for its educational advancement and global participation.

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Mind-Body Dichotomies in Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana*

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 10 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 03 Aug 2025; Accepted: 08 Aug 2025; Available online: 11 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Education, intelligence, fitness, health, mind, body.</p>	<p>This article will deal with the clash between the mind symbolizing intelligence and the body symbolizing physical fitness as depicted in Girish Karnad's <i>Hayavadana</i> (1971). As Karnad himself uses the words 'mind' and 'body' for intelligence and physical fitness in the play, so the researcher will do the same throughout the discussion. The main two characters in the play, Devadatta and Kapila, are the embodiments of intelligence and physical fitness respectively, and central to the clash is the character of Padmini, the wife of Devadatta who wants to possess both, the mind of Devadatta and the body of Kapila. In our real world, it is very tough to possess both qualities. But, Padmini is pleased to have the intelligence of Devadatta with the physical fitness of Kapila. However, she doesn't realize that a scholar like Devadatta will not be able to maintain a tough body by simply reading. Central to the dichotomy of mind-body, this paper aims to comment on education, intelligence, physical skills and health in the context of the characters in the play. The researcher seeks to explore the relationships between intelligence and physical fitness, intelligence and education, and the impact of health on intelligence through the characters of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. Education, intelligence and physical health have an interesting relationship. This play of Karnad is a great commentary on those issues with a simple but realistic story. Literature helps us understand the complex world and <i>Hayavadana</i> is no exception. The clash between mind and body is inevitable and eventually leads to self-torture. It is very tough to harmonize them, sometimes it may lead to destruction as we see happening in the play. Finally, this paper seeks to address the ideas of education, intelligence and physical fitness and how they clash and harmonize with each other as presented by Karnad in his play.</p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Karnad's plays are unique in the way that they focus on the contemporary severe issues through mythical and historical characters. *Hayavadana* (1971) is no exception to that list. Karnad was inspired by the head-switched story in the eleventh-century Sanskrit collection *Kathasaritasagara* and Thomas Mann's philosophical novella *The*

Transposed Heads (1940). And, the play is a great commentary on the ideas of education, intelligence, physical fitness and their relationships. Karnad took the help of symbolism and beautifully illustrated his ideas. The two protagonists of the play Devadatta and Kapila are the symbols of intelligence and physical fitness respectively. And, the abstract relationship between intelligence and physical fitness

is depicted through their behavioural traits and intentions.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, "education is the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this." In *Hayavadana*, Devadatta is the embodiment of education because he is shown as a highly knowledgeable person in the play. He has full knowledge of the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures. He reads and writes poetry, and recites drama to his wife Padmini. Again, intelligence, in the mouth of the Cambridge Dictionary, is "the ability to learn, understand, and make judgments or have opinions that are based on reason." In the play, Devadatta is described as a person who is "unrivalled in intelligence" (Karnad 106). Here, his education plays an important role in influencing his intelligence. However, the touches of intelligence can be seen in the dialogues of the other major characters in the play. Again, Kapila is the embodiment of physical fitness in the play. He is immensely powerful and can do any task that requires physical skills. In this regard, he is quite contrary to Devadatta who is not physically fit enough. However, we see the differences between Devadatta and Kapila through the eyes of Padmini and we see her act accordingly.

It is quite clear that education and intelligence are positively correlated. There are multiple factors that should be taken into consideration while talking about their relationship. In a research article entitled "How Much Does Education Improve Intelligence? A Meta-Analysis" published by Sage involving 600,000 participants, the researchers argued that "longer educational duration is associated with increased intelligence test scores" (Ritchie and Tucker-Drob 1366) and that "individuals with a propensity toward higher intelligence tend to complete more years of education" (Ritchie and Tucker-Drob 1366). So, this investigation supports the hypothesis that education has a positive effect on intelligence. Again, Ian J Deary and Wendy Johnson in their article entitled "Intelligence and education: causal perceptions drive analytic processes and therefore conclusions" talked about the correlation between education and intelligence. The finding of the study supports the observation that "education influences the development of intelligence" (Deary

and Johnson 1363). Spending more time in school helps one develop his/her intelligence. The researchers observed that "perhaps more intelligent people gain access to more and higher-level education. Perhaps exposure to more education causes higher intelligence test scores" (Deary and Johnson 1363). So, the researchers concluded that education strongly affects intelligence and vice-versa. Komarudin in his article "The Relationship between Intelligence and Learning Motivation on Children with Special Need in Inclusive Elementary School" talked about the correlation between intelligence and motivation to learn in children with special needs. He concluded that "subjects who had a high level of intelligence, then the learning motivation tends to be higher" and the "subjects who had low intelligence level, it also tends to be low learning motivation" (Komarudin 104). Apart from these, there are other studies which assert that "higher level of education leads to greater level of intelligence" (Wikipedia, 2022). However, this may not be true for every situation because of the involvement of multiple factors in these processes such as genes, environment, ideology etc.

Physical fitness and intelligence are intimately connected and various studies throughout the world have proven that. In an article entitled "Association of Physical Fitness with Intelligence and Academic Achievement in Adolescents," the researchers pointed out that there exists a positive association between physical fitness and intelligence. They asserted that "cardiorespiratory fitness was positively associated with intelligence and academic achievement" (Gil-Espinoza et al. 1). The researchers argued that if adolescents spend time doing physical activities to improve the components of fitness, then this will simultaneously affect their intelligence and academic achievements. In another article entitled "Association between physical fitness, body mass index and intelligent quotient I individuals with intellectual disabilities" the researchers mentioned that "IQ is significantly related to the variables representing muscle strength, in the lower and upper body" (Cabeza-Ruiz et al. 993). They observed a significant association between IQ and muscle strength. They reported on the basis of the cognitive tests that those who were regular in their physical activities did better in the test than those who were

irregular and of low intensity. A study published under the title "Association of physical activity and health status with intelligence quotient of high school students in Jeddah" investigated the relationships between physical activity and intelligence. They tested and surveyed the secondary school students of Jeddah and observed that "students who shared physical education classes and exercised at and outside school showed a positive correlation with high IQ scores" (El-Kholy and Elsayed 2039). The Wikipedia article on "Impact of health on intelligence" states that intelligence can be affected by health in various ways. Intrauterine growth retardation, breastfeeding, micronutrient and vitamin deficiencies, protein and energy malnutrition, industrial chemicals, alcohol and drugs, Stress, tropical infectious diseases etc. affect our health which eventually affects our intelligence. The website article of the Degree Council entitled "Link between Physical Fitness and Intelligence" states that our level of fitness will affect our overall ability to learn. It considers obesity one of the reasons behind our mental decline. The article concludes with the statement that regular physical activity can make people smarter and healthier.

The characters of Devadatta and Kapila are symbolic and represent the modern discourse of education and fitness. And, Padmini is like us, the readers/audiences who procrastinate in choosing between the two. Just like modern middle-class people, she is entangled between the two. *Hayavadana* is unique in the way that it deals with the discourse of modern conflict. Padmini chooses Devadatta but cannot remain unaffected by the grief of not getting Kapila. When finally she desires to have both by breaking the ideological border, she becomes a transgressor and has to suffer the consequences.

II. DEVADATTA AND HIS SYMBOLISM

In *Hayavadana* Karnad's characters are individuals and at the same time symbols of some modern ideas. The character of Devadatta can be argued to be the symbol of education. In the play, he is "the only son of the Revered Brahmin, Vidyasagara" (Karnad 106) and a highly educated person. He is described as "comely in appearance,

fair in colour, unrivalled in intelligence" (Karnad 106). Devadatta becomes "the apple of every eye in Dharmapura" (Karnad 106) because of his knowledge and education. The wideness of his knowledge is such that he can defeat the mightiest pundits of his kingdom in the debates on logic and love. He has a wide knowledge of literature and knows poetry very well. Even in the battle of poetry and wit, Devadatta blinds the greatest poets of the world.

Not only is he educated, but he influences others through his education. Even his best friend Kapila agrees to the fact that he has been civilized by his friend. Kapila considers himself no better than an ox before his friendship with Devadatta. He tastes the unique flavour of delicious literature and poetry through the hands of his friend Devadatta. He considers Devadatta far more superior to him as Devadatta is educated in literature and poetry. Kapila acknowledges:

KAPILA: ...And I'll say it again. If it wasn't for you I would have been no better than the ox in our yard. You showed me that there were such things as poetry and literature. You taught me... (Karnad 118)

Kapila is always in praise of the immense education of Devadatta and the knowledge he has. Devadatta knows the *Vedas* by heart. He can write the greatest poetry on earth. He holds the confidence even to "outshine Kalidasa" (Karnad 120). He reads Kalidasa and frequently mentions him in his conversations. He even compares his lady love Padmini to Shakuntala. The plays of Bhasa are his source of enjoyment. He likes to read out the plays of Bhasa to his beloved. We come to realize the versatility of his knowledge in Act II where we see that he is looking for *Dharma Sindhu*. Devadatta is a brilliant scholar and loves doing intellectual exercises. There is no doubt that he is highly educated and has gained excellent knowledge of Sanskrit literature and religious scriptures. For this very reason, Bhagavata says as if the Goddess of Learning works as a maid in the house of Devadatta. To quote:

BHAGAVATA: ...Padmini is the daughter of the leading merchant in

Dharmapura. In her house, the very floor is swept by the Goddess of Wealth. In Devadatta's house, they've the Goddess of Learning for a maid. (Karnad 126)

Devadatta's Brahmin orientation and education makes him "unrivalled in intelligence" (Karnad 106). It is mainly because of his education and intelligence that Padmini agrees to marry him. He is the brightest among all in Dharmapura. He even tries to play with God with the help of his intelligence. He has sworn that if he gets Padmini as his wife, he will sacrifice his arms to goddess Kali, and his head to Lord Rudra. Apparently, it seems to be real, but there is a problem with the oath. How can one sacrifice his head if one has already sacrificed his arms? Without the help of the arms, it is not possible to sacrifice the head. Devadatta has to pay with his life for his false oath to Kali and Rudra.

DEVADATTA: ...I swear, Kapila, with you as my witness I swear, if I ever get her as my wife, I'll sacrifice my two arms to the goddess Kali, I'll sacrifice my head to Lord Rudra... (Karnad 120)

Devadatta is educated and knowledgeable because of his regular practice of reading and writing. However, he rarely does physical activities. According to Padmini, "he has the tenderest feet on earth" (Karnad 137). When Padmini and Kapila are unable to find Devadatta in the cart on their way to Ujjain, Padmini remarks that "Devadatta's too weak to have gone far" (Karnad 139). The fact is that Devadatta doesn't like doing physical activities like playing and swimming. He says, when their heads change with one another, that he is okay with the muscular body of Kapila for a few days with all its energy, but he cannot go on like that forever. If he does so, he will have to sacrifice his family tradition of reading and writing on a regular basis which he refuses to do. He is a Brahmin with full respect for his family traditions. Hence, he allows the muscular body of Kapila to transform into his own.

DEVADATTA: It was fun the first few days because it was new. All that muscle and strength. But how long can one go on like that? I have a

family tradition to maintain- the daily reading, writing and studies... (Karnad 157-158)

III. KAPILA AND HIS SYMBOLISM

Kapila is the best friend of Devadatta and can be argued to be the symbol of physical fitness in the play. He is the only son of an ironsmith and the backbone of the King's armoury. He has no equal in deeds that require physical strength. He is immensely fit and can do any physical activity for hours. The two best friends are very opposite to each other. All physical activities are fun for Kapila. In Act I we see in gymnasium Kapila was having fun with his friend Nanda. The wrestler from Gandhara compliments Kapila that he will go far. But these activities are very boring to Devadatta and he doesn't even want to talk about them.

KAPILA: Devadatta, why didn't you come to the gymnasium last evening? I'd asked you to. It was such fun... (Karnad 117)

Apart from his strength, Kapila is extremely physically attractive. Both Padmini and Devadatta believe that "no woman could resist him" (Karnad 134). Kapila has a muscular body and smells manly as Padmini observes. Padmini hyperbolically compares Kapila to a "Celestial Being" with an "ethereal shape" (Karnad 134). From the point of view of Padmini, Kapila has a seductive physical shape and is impossible for any woman to resist him. Just as wisdom and intelligence are the attractions of Devadatta, in the same way the Celestial shape and extreme physical strength of Kapila are Kapila's attractions. Padmini is attracted to both the mind of Devadatta and the body of Kapila.

PADMINI (aside): He is like a Celestial Being reborn as a hunter. How his body sways, his limbs curve- It's a dance almost.

DEVADATTA (aside): And why should I blame her? It's his strong body- his manly muscles. And to think I had never ever noticed them all these years! I was an innocent- an absolute baby.

PADMINI (aside): No woman could resist him. (Karnad 134)

KAPILA: I did. (Karnad 168)

Kapila may have an attractive body, he is “too rough” and “too indelicate” in conversations as Devadatta observes. He is a man of pure heart and a genuine friend of Devadatta, but he doubts Kapila’s ability to convince the woman he loves. Devadatta believes that Kapila lacks mannerisms. Hence, he considers Kapila the wrong man sent for his marriage proposal. Kapila is a master in his smithy, on the farm and in the fields, but not the right messenger for a marriage proposal. Devadatta doubts:

DEVADATTA: Kapila- Kapila... He’s gone. How fortunate I am to have a friend like him. Pure gold. (Pause) But should I have trusted this to him? He means well- and he is wizard in his smithy, in the farm, in his fields. But here? No. he is too rough, too indelicate. He was the wrong man to send. He is bound to ruin the whole thing... (Karnad 122)

Kapila is the kind of person who uses force and violence if necessary. He is the son of an ironsmith. He has grown up to be rough and violent. When Devadatta gets the body of Kapila after Padmini mixes the heads, he pushes Kapila with the body of Devadatta aside using force. Not only does he use physical strength, but also verbally abuses Kapila. Kapila immediately reacts that “this is Kapila’s violence” (Karnad 147). On the other hand, Kapila feels like a corpse after getting Devadatta’s body. Immediately a war starts between the body and the mind. Finally, he becomes the “Kapila with a body which fits his face” (Karnad 169).

KAPILA: When this body came to me, it was like a corpse hanging by my head. It was a Brahmin’s body after all: not made for the woods. I couldn’t lift an axe without my elbows moaning. Couldn’t run a length without my knees howling. I had no use for it. The moment it came to me, a war started between us.

PADMINI: And who won?

IV. PADMINI AND HER SYMBOLISM

The play *Hayavadana* is about incompleteness and imperfection. No character in the play is completely complete; there is always a desire for more which leads to their imperfection. Padmini is the symbol of both intelligence and strength in the play. She is not as educated as Devadatta, but quite intelligent. She is not like Devadatta in spite of being intelligent. She shows the same respect to a physically fit person as she does to an educated person. She has grown up playing in the woods and swimming in the river. Thus, she understands the importance of both. This is the reason that she can neither be happy with an educated man like Devadatta, nor a muscular man like Kapila. She wants both qualities in a man to be her ideal husband.

A complete man should be one who has a perfect body and a sharp mind. The body symbolically represents physical fitness and mind intelligence. And central to the clash of Devadatta and Kapila is Padmini who symbolizes both intelligence and strength. But, even she is not perfect in the sense that she always carries an unfulfilled desire. Devadatta believes that he is worthy of Padmini because he is a pundit as well as a poet. He is ready to do anything for her, even sacrifice his life because he considers her the epitome of perfect beauty. On the contrary, Kapila believes that Padmini needs a man like him of extreme physical strength. She is not at all for the likes of Devadatta. Each one of them considers themselves perfect and thus worthy of Padmini. However, this eventually leads to mimetic rivalry and conflict.

KAPILA: ... She is not the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel. But what can one do? You’ll never listen to me. And I can’t withdraw now. I’ll have to talk to my family... (Karnad 126)

Padmini marries Devadatta but she can’t resist the temptation of Kapila. Devadatta is the son of a Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara and a knowledgeable person. He knows literature and poetry very well and defeated famous scholars in

debates on logic. This has attracted Padmini towards Devadatta and she eventually marries him. She is happy to become the wife of a famous and loveable person in Dharmapura. On the other hand, she can't resist the powerful Kapila. Padmini is amazed when she sees the bare-bodied Kapila climbing a tree like an ape. She calls Kapila a God with his "ethereal shape" (Karnad 134). She is mesmerized by the manly smell of Kapila. So, Padmini has to stand still in conflict and remain undecided. She cannot go with the education and knowledge of Devadatta and nor leave the strength of Kapila behind. It is like our conflict in the real world where we fail to harmonize these two things. The temptation at the sight of Kapila is seen in the lines below.

PADMINI (watching him, aside):
How he climbs- like an ape. Before I could even say 'yes', he had taken off his shirt, pulled his dhoti up and swung up the branch. And what an ethereal shape! Such a broad back: like an ocean with muscles rippling across it- and then that small, feminine waist which looks so helpless. (Karnad 134)

By the end of Act I, we come to realize how smart Padmini is. There is no doubt that Devadatta is smart and educated, but he has acted foolishly by playing with Gods. He sacrifices his head to Goddess Kali and declares that he has fulfilled the promise once he has made to Goddess Kali and Lord Rudra. However, this is not the original intention. He actually can't tolerate the pain that his wife has come to long for his friend. On the other hand, Kapila declares that he has sacrificed his life for his friend Devadatta. But, the one simple thing they don't realize is that they are trying to lie to a Goddess and hence making a fool of themselves. Padmini, however, doesn't commit the same mistake; she knows very well that she is dealing with the sacred. She doesn't act foolishly by lying to a Goddess. Kali appreciates the truthfulness of Padmini and reveals the true intentions of Devadatta and Kapila. Kali realizes that Padmini is not like Devadatta and Kapila when she says:

PADMINI: How could one possibly hide anything from you, Mother?

KALI: That's true enough. (Karnad 141-142)

Padmini is one person who is near perfect in the play, but can't become so because of her unfulfilled desire to have a perfect husband. She has been happy with Devadatta but can't resist the temptation of having the muscular Kapila. She has sought a complete man, with a body and a mind; with intelligence and physical strength. This only happens when she changes the heads of Devadatta and Kapila with their bodies.

V. CONCLUSION

The play is about mimetic rivalry and the impossibility of becoming a complete human being. The clash between human beings is inevitable. And our rivalry is rooted in our desire to become perfect and complete. Devadatta is in the top position in what he is doing. He has defeated all the pundits in Dharmapura in debates on logic and love. He, in fact, is a master of literature. But still, he desires the fitness and strength of Kapila. In this way, he believes, he will become complete and will lead a happy life with his wife Padmini. On the other hand, Kapila desires to read and write poetry like Devadatta. Kapila thinks education and intelligence will complete him. And, only then he will be worthy of Padmini with his body of steel and wisdom like Devadatta.

Both of them try their best to fulfil their mimetic desires. But, they have failed in their attempts. Their own natural inclinations become hindrances in their goal of becoming others. Devadatta becomes complete Devadatta, but can't remain so. Kapila gets the body of Devadatta but eventually makes it muscular like his original body. So, their desire to become complete by being educated, intelligent and fit remains incomplete. They desire to be complete because they want to be with Padmini, the love attraction of both and the cause of their rivalry. This rivalry finally results in their deaths.

Padmini has no rivals in the play because nobody imitates her desire in the play. Devadatta and Kapila are rivals as Padmini is the object of their desire and hence the cause of their rivalry. It is very tough to make the life of a human being complete.

Padmini's incompleteness lies in the fact that she desires to live with a complete man, with a head and body, meaning intelligence and strength. She has married Devadatta because of his knowledge of literature and poetry and his wisdom, but can't resist the temptation of muscular Kapila. She has granted muscular Devadatta with all his wisdom by Goddess Kali, but Devadatta can't maintain his muscular body just as Padmini can't leave the desire of getting a complete partner. Hence, all and everything remains incomplete in death.

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Exile, Belonging, and the Post-colonial Imagination in the Novels of M.G. Vassanji and Abdulrazak Gurnah

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Abstract

*This paper explores the representation of exile and belonging in the novels of M.G. Vassanji and Abdulrazak Gurnah, two prominent postcolonial authors whose works grapple with the consequences of displacement, colonial history, and diasporic identity. Focusing on Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* alongside Gurnah's *By the Sea* and *Memory of Departure*, the paper examines how both authors use fragmented memory, narrative disjunctions, and emotionally exilic landscapes to portray fractured identities in transit. It interrogates how home becomes both a geographic and psychological construct, often lost, imagined, or nostalgically reconfigured. The study highlights how the post-colonial imagination, grounded in historical trauma and personal exile, creates narratives of longing and the search for rootedness in a dislocated world.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Post-colonial literature has long grappled with themes of displacement, migration, exile, and the fragmented self, born out of the complex legacies of colonialism. As nations navigated the aftermath of imperial dominance, writers from formerly colonized regions turned their creative focus toward the human consequences of these upheavals. Central to post-colonial discourse is the question of identity – who one becomes when home is lost, when languages are foreign, and when cultural signposts are ruptured or reinterpreted. Exile, both literal and metaphorical, becomes not only a condition of existence but a formative psychological and aesthetic force within postcolonial writing (Ashcroft et al. 2006). Within this thematic constellation, the literary works of M.G. Vassanji and Abdulrazak Gurnah emerge as rich sites for investigating how fragmented homes are

imagined, remembered, and reinvented through fiction.

M.G. Vassanji, a Tanzanian-born Canadian writer of Indian descent, and Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Zanzibari-born British author and Nobel Laureate, are two seminal voices in postcolonial literature whose narratives resonate with the diasporic experience of East African communities. Both authors share a concern with the historical legacies of colonialism and the displacement of people across borders – whether through forced migration, political exile, or generational rupture. Vassanji's novels such as *The Gunny Sack* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* are deeply anchored in the East African Asian community's historical entanglements with colonialism, memory, and identity. Similarly, Gurnah's works, including *By the Sea* and *Memory of Departure*, probe the inner lives of displaced individuals caught in the crosscurrents of national

upheaval and personal trauma. Both writers depict the postcolonial subject as one suspended in an interstitial space – belonging nowhere, yet longing for multiple homes, often fractured by violence, betrayal, or longing.

In post-colonial theory, the idea of “home” has been variously conceptualized as a physical space, a site of memory, a political construct, and a psychic landscape. Edward Said, in *Reflections on Exile*, contends that “exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place” (173). The experience of exile, according to Said, produces a lasting sense of estrangement, yet also endows the exilic subject with a critical distance that allows for the interrogation of both colonial and postcolonial realities. Homi Bhabha’s concept of “the third space” further complicates ideas of home and belonging, suggesting that identity is formed in the liminal zones between cultures, where hybrid selves emerge from negotiation and translation (55). Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic*, introduces the notion of diaspora as a “counterculture of modernity,” where the idea of home is less about territorial roots and more about mobility, memory, and affiliation across transnational spaces (19). These theoretical frameworks illuminate how postcolonial writers reimagine home not as a fixed location but as a fluid, often contested space, shaped by trauma, nostalgia, and negotiation.

Against this critical backdrop, this paper investigates how M.G. Vassanji and Abdulrazak Gurnah construct “fragments of home” in their selected novels. It examines how the notion of home is recalled, reassembled, or imagined in the minds of their exilic protagonists who traverse continents, political regimes, and historical moments. Vassanji and Gurnah do not romanticize the return home; instead, they foreground the impossibility of return and the emotional labor of reconciling the past with present alienation. Through the intimate lives of their characters, the authors explore the psychic toll of exile and the tentative acts of re-rooting in unfamiliar lands.

This study is guided by three primary research questions. First, how is exile represented in the selected novels of Vassanji and Gurnah? Second, in what ways do the characters experience or reclaim

a sense of belonging, however provisional or fragmented? Third, how do memory and narrative technique reflect postcolonial dislocation and diasporic subjectivity? These questions aim to illuminate the authors’ narrative strategies and thematic preoccupations as they give voice to lives displaced by colonial legacies and global migrations. By analyzing the intersections of exile, memory, and the search for home, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions in postcolonial studies regarding the meaning of identity in a world defined by movement, loss, and longing.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The exploration of exile, identity, and belonging in the works of M.G. Vassanji and Abdulrazak Gurnah is deeply embedded in the theoretical discourses of postcolonial studies, trauma and memory theory, and diaspora studies. These frameworks provide critical lenses for understanding how postcolonial subjects experience and narrate displacement, and how the notion of “home” becomes fragmented, imagined, or reconstructed across time and space. The complexity of exilic identity in postcolonial literature is shaped not only by the material conditions of migration but also by affective attachments to memory, loss, and longing. It is imperative to ground the analysis within the conceptual tools offered by these interrelated fields to grasp the full significance of post-colonial imagination in the selected texts.

One of the central concepts in postcolonial theory is hybridity, as articulated by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha argues that postcolonial identity is not rooted in singular or essentialist notions of culture, but rather emerges through “the third space of enunciation,” where meaning is negotiated through cultural translation and ambivalence (55). In this liminal space, hybrid identities are formed – not as coherent wholes but as evolving entities shaped by the collision and intersection of colonizer and colonized cultures. This hybridity is not simply a blending of cultural traits but a site of resistance and rearticulation of power.

Alongside hybridity, liminality – the condition of being “in-between” – characterizes many postcolonial and diasporic identities. The

characters in Vassanji's and Gurnah's novels often occupy spaces between nations, histories, and selves. As Stuart Hall notes, identity is not a fixed essence but a "production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (222). This processual nature of identity underscores the perpetual dislocation of the postcolonial subject – a dislocation both geographical and psychological, where the self is caught between memory and the present, between belonging and estrangement. Said's concept of exile reinforces this condition: "Exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place," a state that inflicts a permanent sense of rootlessness (173).

The experience of exile and displacement is often traumatic, leaving deep psychological and emotional scars. In this context, trauma theory offers a powerful framework for understanding how the past continues to haunt the postcolonial present. Cathy Caruth, a foundational scholar in trauma studies, describes trauma as "an overwhelming experience that cannot be fully grasped as it occurs but returns in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other symptoms" (4). Trauma is not simply an event but a rupture in consciousness and time, a distortion that resists linear narrative. This is especially pertinent in the fiction of Gurnah and Vassanji, where characters struggle to piece together fractured memories and identities amid the silences of loss and exile.

Michael Rothberg extends trauma theory into the postcolonial and global context by proposing a "multidirectional memory", in which memories of different historical traumas (e.g., colonialism, slavery, migration) interact and reshape one another across cultural boundaries. Rather than competing for recognition, Rothberg argues, these memories coexist and inform one another, contributing to new forms of solidarity and understanding (3). In the diasporic narratives of Vassanji and Gurnah, such multidirectionality becomes visible in the intertwining of personal and collective trauma, where private memories echo the broader wounds of empire and displacement.

Diaspora theory further enriches the understanding of fragmented identity in postcolonial literature. Scholars like Stuart Hall and James

Clifford have emphasized that diasporic identity is not simply a nostalgic longing for a lost homeland but a "subject-position constituted in and through displacement" (308). For Hall, diaspora implies a "rupture and discontinuity" as much as continuity, creating identities that are defined not by origin but by movement, negotiation, and hybridity (235). The diasporic subject, therefore, must continually negotiate between past and present, memory and forgetfulness, origin and reinvention.

In this regard, home is never merely a geographic place but a site of discursive construction. For Clifford, the diasporic experience creates "routes" rather than "roots"—a dynamic, mobile conception of belonging that challenges nationalist, territorial definitions of identity (251). Vassanji's characters, for example, often attempt to reconstitute a sense of self by assembling fragments of memory and cultural inheritance, while Gurnah's exiled figures grapple with the tension between forgetting and remembering, exile and return, silence and speech.

The notion of "home" in postcolonial literature transcends physical geography to become a discursive and affective space. Home may be remembered, mythologized, or mourned, but rarely is it depicted as whole or retrievable. It becomes a palimpsest of longing, trauma, and cultural memory – a space always mediated by loss and desire. As Avtar Brah suggests in *Cartographies of Diaspora*, home is "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination", a place of belonging that is often constructed in relation to displacement and loss (192). This imagined home carries the emotional weight of identity and the psychic need for rootedness, even as it is known to be irrecoverable.

In both Vassanji's and Gurnah's narratives, home is evoked not through return but through objects, smells, names, and silences – what Marianne Hirsch would call "postmemory," the inherited memories that define second-generation diasporic subjects (13). These fragments of home are not static but reconstructed through storytelling, imagination, and cultural transmission. In this sense, home is not a place but a process – a creative act of memory, longing, and survival.

Exile and Fragmentation of Identity

Exile in postcolonial literature is not merely the displacement of the body but also the estrangement of the self. It often results in a fractured identity, where the loss of homeland, language, and community erodes the subject's sense of continuity and belonging. In the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah and M.G. Vassanji, exile emerges as both a lived condition and a metaphor for the emotional, psychological, and political ruptures inflicted by colonialism and postcolonial instability. The characters in their novels navigate histories of betrayal, migration, and dislocation, constructing identities from the fragments of memory and loss. In their narratives, exile is not a temporary state but a condition of being, marked by cultural uprootedness and the continuous negotiation of self in unfamiliar geographies.

In *By the Sea*, Gurnah introduces Saleh Omar, an elderly asylum seeker who arrives in England carrying the silence of trauma. His self-imposed muteness at the beginning of the novel symbolizes the profound emotional exile he has endured – not only from his homeland, Zanzibar, but also from his former identity. Saleh's displacement is intensified by the psychological violence of exile, as he remarks: "I have lived through most of the disasters and betrayals of the late twentieth century... and now exile. So now I feel like I am dead already, a hollow man" (Gurnah 5). This confession reveals that exile has not merely altered his geographical location; it has fundamentally hollowed out his sense of self. The trauma of displacement renders him voiceless, a ghost of his former life, struggling to make sense of an alien cultural and linguistic landscape.

Moreover, Saleh's connection to his homeland is mediated through memory and symbolic objects, such as the carved wooden incense box, which becomes an emblem of a lost cultural world. The scent of the incense transports him to moments of beauty now severed from his present reality: "The smell was like everything from before, from a time when there was beauty in the world" (Gurnah 21). These fragments of the past offer momentary solace but also underscore the irretrievability of home. His fractured memories do not coalesce into a coherent narrative but exist as scattered episodes, mirroring his disintegrated identity.

Gurnah's earlier novel *Memory of Departure* explores exile as a more internalized, psychological process. The protagonist, Hassan Omar, experiences what can be termed "**internal exile**" – an emotional and intellectual alienation within his own homeland. Trapped in a politically corrupt and socially repressive society, Hassan dreams of escape but remains bound by familial trauma and personal disillusionment. His journey to the capital city, ostensibly for education, ends in humiliation and abandonment, reinforcing the notion that even within the borders of one's country, one can be utterly estranged. He reflects: "My body walked the streets... but inside I was locked away from the light of others" (Gurnah 104). This inner exile, marked by shame, silence, and repression, reveals how political realities and personal history intertwine to create a fragmented, unmoored self.

Gurnah's characters illustrate that exile is not just spatial but deeply ontological – affecting how individuals perceive themselves, relate to others, and narrate their identities. The trauma of dislocation, whether physical or psychological, is thus embedded in the fabric of the self, disrupting the linearity of memory and the coherence of identity. As critics like Felicity Hand argue, Gurnah's fiction shows how trauma "haunts the present and destabilizes narrative authority" (84), rendering identity a perpetual site of struggle and negotiation.

M.G. Vassanji similarly interrogates the experience of exile and its impact on identity in his novel *The Gunny Sack*, where the unnamed narrator pieces together his East African Asian ancestry through stories, letters, and fragments stored in a literal gunny sack – a metaphor for diasporic memory. The act of narration becomes a means of reconstructing a lost lineage that spans India, East Africa, and colonial histories. However the identity that emerges from this process is far from unified. Instead, it is fragmented, contradictory, and haunted by absences. The narrator confesses: "I have only fragments of stories, not truths, and so my history is uncertain" (Vassanji, *The Gunny Sack*, 7). This uncertainty reflects a broader diasporic condition, where the rupture of migration and the erasures of colonial record-keeping render identity unstable and provisional.

The stories contained in the gunny sack do not offer closure or coherence but instead reveal the complexity of diasporic heritage. The burden of remembering – and the impossibility of fully knowing – creates a fragmented self, suspended between nostalgia for the past and alienation in the present. The narrator's search for belonging becomes a journey through historical and emotional detritus, where the borders of personal and communal identity blur. As Chelva Kanaganayakam notes, Vassanji's fiction is "an archive of loss" in which characters "sift through ruins to construct narratives that are always contingent" (59).

In *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, Vassanji delves even deeper into the political dimensions of exile. The protagonist, Vikram Lall, narrates his life from exile in Canada after being disgraced in Kenya due to political corruption and betrayal. His "in-betweenness" is not merely ethnic – as a Kenyan of Indian descent – but moral, psychological, and national. Vikram exists at the margins of multiple identities: never entirely accepted by Africans, distrusted by Europeans, and disconnected from his Indian heritage. His status as an insider-outsider leads to a profound identity crisis, mainly as he reflects on his complicity in Kenya's post-independence failures: "I am a man of no nation... a man suspended in the in-between" (Vassanji 9).

Vikram's exile is not redemptive but punitive, resulting from both external political forces and his internal alienation. He becomes a symbol of the postcolonial subject who has lost faith in the nationalist project and his own moral compass. His narrative, told retrospectively, is suffused with regret, guilt, and confusion, revealing how memory is not a reliable path to truth but a terrain of evasions and distortions. As he attempts to document his life, Vikram admits: "The truth lies somewhere in the confusion, in the slippage of memory" (Vassanji 148). Here, Vassanji shows how the exilic subject not only suffers physical dislocation but also struggles to reconstruct a self in the face of political disillusionment and historical erasure.

In both *The Gunny Sack* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, exile fractures identity along temporal, cultural, and emotional lines. The past is not a stable point of return but a contested field of

memory, while the present offers no solid ground for self-definition. Vassanji's characters, like Gurnah's, reveal the existential weight of diasporic existence, where home becomes an elusive construct, and the self is endlessly reconstructed from fragments of memory, history, and loss.

The Quest for Belonging

The postcolonial subject, especially in the diaspora, is often portrayed as caught in an endless search for belonging. For characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels and M.G. Vassanji's novels, belonging is never secure or complete but negotiated through memory, silence, narrative, and cultural traces. Exile creates not only a physical separation from one's homeland but also an emotional and psychological severance that fractures the possibility of belonging. In their literary landscapes, Gurnah and Vassanji depict belonging as a fragile construct – formed from fragments of the past and reshaped within the unsettling present. Whether through remembered homes, language, silence, or broken family ties, both authors portray the quest for belonging as a central postcolonial concern, deeply tied to questions of identity, loss, and history.

In the works of Gurnah and Vassanji, the idea of "home" is often a ruined space, irretrievably lost yet hauntingly present in memory. In *By the Sea*, Saleh Omar's recollections of Zanzibar are filled with longing and pain. The island is remembered not as a geographic reality but as a lost world evoked through the scent of incense and the texture of silence. The smell of ambergris from the carved wooden box he brings to England triggers his memory of a time when "there was beauty in the world" (Gurnah 21). However, this sensory memory also underscores the impossibility of return; Zanzibar, once home, is now inaccessible – both geographically and emotionally. Saleh confesses, "I have lived with the memory of what was once my home, and I cannot describe to you the sadness of knowing that I can never go back" (Gurnah 17). Home becomes a spectral presence – real in effect but lost.

Similarly, in Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack*, the narrator reconstructs his sense of home and identity through the contents of a literal gunny sack filled with letters, documents, and personal effects passed

down through generations. The narrator's ancestral home in Dar es Salaam exists only in recollection, mediated by stories, fragments, and silences. "What I have," he notes, "are not truths but fragments... myths that we have made into history" (Vassanji 7). The sack becomes a metaphor for a diasporic archive—an assemblage of memory that preserves and distorts. For both authors, home is imagined and invoked through cultural artifacts but cannot be physically recovered. These remnants of the past offer fleeting moments of rootedness while simultaneously exposing the rupture and fragility of the diaspora.

The use of language in these narratives is deeply entangled with colonial history and the experience of exile. Both Gurnah and Vassanji write in English, the colonizer's language, and their characters must often navigate the complex implications of speaking and writing in this tongue. In *By the Sea*, Saleh's refusal to speak upon his arrival in England is a profound act of resistance. His silence is not only a symptom of trauma but also a rejection of the linguistic and bureaucratic system that seeks to define and control him. "I have no desire to explain my words, nor to speak the words they want to hear," he declares (Gurnah 1). His muteness becomes a form of protest, an assertion of autonomy against a system that demands confession and submission.

Conversely, when he finally speaks, it is through carefully chosen words, shaped by his memory and experiences, reflecting the ambivalence of using the colonizer's language. English, for him, is both the means of survival and a reminder of dislocation. This paradox echoes Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's critique of linguistic colonization, where language becomes "both a carrier of culture and a means of domination" (16). In this context, silence, too, carries meaning—standing in for what cannot or will not be spoken in the language of empire.

In Vassanji's *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, language is equally fraught. Vikram, a narrator deeply embedded in colonial and postcolonial politics, tells his story in English, yet his silences are just as telling. His narrative is marked by omissions and reticence, particularly during political complicity and moral failure. Vikram's secrecy, especially about his role in government corruption and the betrayal of his friends, is a form of self-erasure. He confesses: "I

am a man who has failed to speak the truth, even to myself" (Vassanji 157). In both authors' works, silence operates as both symptom and strategy—reflecting trauma, shame, resistance, and the limits of language in conveying diasporic experience.

Fractured familial relationships also deeply affect the quest for belonging in these novels. Characters often experience exile from their homelands and their families—particularly from fathers, whose absence or betrayal becomes a recurring motif. Latif Mahmud's estranged relationship with his father is central to his emotional dislocation in *By the Sea*. Latif is haunted by his father's silence and abandonment, whose political affiliations and personal decisions fractured the family. Their painful reunion in exile does little to heal the wounds, as Latif reflects on the past with bitterness and confusion. "He left me in a silence I never understood, and perhaps never will," he laments (Gurnah 113). The broken bond between father and son symbolizes the broader collapse of home, tradition, and continuity.

Similarly, in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, the protagonist's sense of self is deeply shaped by his family's history of displacement and betrayal. Vikram's grandfather was brought to East Africa as a colonial railway worker; his father sought assimilation into British colonial society, while Vikram himself becomes ensnared in postcolonial corruption. Each generation inherits the traumas of the last, yet none entirely belongs. Vikram's relationship with his sister Deepa is the only emotional anchor in his life, but even that is torn apart by political and racial forces beyond their control. His final reflection—exiled, alone, and remorseful—underscores the futility of his lifelong search for belonging: "I have become a footnote in someone else's history" (Vassanji, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, 322).

Both Gurnah and Vassanji emphasize that the trauma of exile is often passed from one generation to the next. The inability of characters to resolve the emotional legacies of abandonment, betrayal, and silence renders their sense of identity fractured and transient. Belonging, in these novels, is not found in place or bloodline, but in the tentative acts of storytelling, memory, and connection—however ephemeral or broken.

The Post-Colonial Imagination: Narrating Exile and Memory

Post-colonial literature not only reflects the dislocations and traumas of empire but actively reconstructs meaning through storytelling. The novels of M.G. Vassanji and Abdulrazak Gurnah foreground narrative as a crucial site where memory, identity, and exile converge. Their works demonstrate that narration itself becomes a process of survival, resistance, and identity-making, especially in contexts where histories have been silenced or distorted by colonial discourse. Through fragmented narrative structures, rich symbolism, and metafictional reflections, both authors reimagine the postcolonial condition not merely as an experience of loss but as a dynamic field of literary and cultural production.

One of the defining formal features of both Gurnah's and Vassanji's fiction is narrative fragmentation, which mirrors their characters' fractured identities and dislocated subjectivities. In Gurnah's *By the Sea*, the story unfolds through alternating narrative voices—Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmud—whose recollections disrupt chronological time and reveal memory as disjointed and unreliable. This non-linear structure emphasizes the way trauma and exile distort one's sense of temporal continuity. Saleh confesses, "I am back again in the world I was once part of, but my life in it is only a story I tell, a memory I turn over in my mind, a fragmentary history" (Gurnah 87). The past is not a coherent narrative to be recalled at will but a constellation of emotionally charged fragments that haunt the present.

Similarly, in *The Gunny Sack*, Vassanji structures the novel as a collection of intergenerational memories, narrated by a protagonist who is both participant and archivist. The gunny sack becomes a metafictional device—a literal container of stories, documents, and letters that drive the plot while reflecting on the act of storytelling itself. The narrator remarks, "This is not history, but memory. It is the remembered, the misremembered, the invented" (Vassanji 34). The unreliability of memory becomes a narrative strategy, one that acknowledges the gaps, silences, and subjective distortions that shape the diasporic imagination. By embedding letters, oral histories, and

secondhand accounts into the text, both authors foreground the constructedness of narrative and the complexities of postcolonial memory.

Vassanji and Gurnah enrich their narrative worlds through symbolism and metaphor, using ordinary objects and natural elements to evoke deeper emotional and cultural resonances. In Gurnah's *By the Sea*, the sea is a central symbol that operates on multiple levels. It represents the physical distance between homeland and exile, the psychological turbulence of dislocation, and the possibility of transformation. Saleh's reflections on the sea—"It had a sound that was familiar but disquieting, as if it never wanted you to feel settled" (Gurnah 39)—capture the ambivalence of the exilic condition: familiar yet alien, soothing yet threatening. The sea's fluidity mirrors the characters' unstable identities and becomes a metaphor for the liminal spaces they inhabit.

In contrast, Vassanji's use of the gunny sack in the eponymous novel transforms a mundane object into an archive of displacement. Filled with letters, photographs, and keepsakes, the sack symbolizes the burden and necessity of memory in diasporic life. It is "a container of memory and forgetting, of guilt and nostalgia," as the narrator notes (Vassanji 3). Just as the sea in Gurnah's fiction is never still, the gunny sack is never fully unpacked; its contents are selectively remembered, misinterpreted, or suppressed, emphasizing the fragmentary nature of diasporic identity.

Beyond central symbols, both authors employ mnemonic devices such as food, language, and landscape to evoke the lost worlds of their characters. In *By the Sea*, the scent of incense and the texture of traditional foods conjure up Saleh's life in Zanzibar, linking sensory perception with memory. In *Vikram Lall*, Vassanji's descriptions of Nairobi's streets, colonial clubs, and multicultural households provide not only setting but a layered topography of belonging and exclusion. These symbolic elements act as triggers of memory, drawing attention to the characters' yearning for continuity in the face of rupture and exile.

For both Vassanji and Gurnah, fiction becomes a means of resistance—a way to reclaim silenced histories and reframe marginal experiences

within the broader narrative of empire and its aftermath. Their novels challenge dominant colonial accounts by focusing on the lives of individuals who have been historically overlooked: traders, immigrants, refugees, and culturally hybrid subjects. This literary reclamation is particularly evident in Gurnah's *By the Sea*, where Saleh's personal testimony serves as a counter-narrative to official histories of postcolonial Zanzibar. By giving voice to a character typically marginalized—an elderly asylum seeker with limited English—Gurnah resists the bureaucratic reduction of refugee identity and insists on the complexity and dignity of individual experience (Hand 89).

Similarly, Vassanji's metafictional approach in *The Gunny Sack* underscores the constructedness of all history and the need for alternative archives. His narrator does not offer an authoritative version of events but a series of provisional narratives shaped by gaps, distortions, and emotional investments. This aligns with Edward Said's call for "contrapuntal reading"—a method that reveals the silences and repressions of imperial discourse (66). Vassanji's fiction thus becomes a space for mourning and remembering, where diasporic subjects recover their agency through the act of narration, however imperfect.

Ultimately, for both authors, fiction functions as a healing practice, enabling the articulation of trauma and the reimagining of selfhood. As Michael Rothberg argues, postcolonial literature can "bring into dialogue multiple histories of suffering" and offer "new ethical frameworks for witnessing" (19). Gurnah's and Vassanji's works exemplify this potential by weaving together personal, communal, and historical threads into narratives that resist erasure, affirm dignity, and testify to the enduring struggle for belonging in a fractured world.

III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The literary oeuvres of Abdulrazak Gurnah and M.G. Vassanji are shaped by shared postcolonial concerns—most notably exile, hybridity, and the enduring longing for home. Yet their distinct narrative voices, structural approaches, and modes of engaging memory offer rich ground for comparative analysis. While both authors explore the disorienting

effects of displacement and the ruptures of colonial and postcolonial histories, they do so through contrasting stylistic choices and narrative strategies. Furthermore, their works prompt reflection on the politics of remembering and the ethical responsibilities of writing from a place of exile and marginality.

Gurnah and Vassanji converge on core postcolonial themes: the trauma of exile, the search for belonging, and the fluidity of identity in diasporic spaces. In *By the Sea* and *The Gunny Sack*, characters navigate lives radically altered by displacement—geographically, emotionally, and historically. For both authors, exile is not merely a physical journey but an existential condition that fragments identity and destabilizes notions of home. Saleh Omar in *By the Sea* and the unnamed narrator of *The Gunny Sack* both live in exile and attempt to reconstruct their fractured selves through memory and storytelling. Similarly, hybridity—the blending and colliding of cultural identities—is a central feature in both narratives. Gurnah's characters often straddle Swahili, Arab, and British worlds, while Vassanji's protagonists are products of Indian-African-European intersections. These hybrid positions underscore Homi Bhabha's notion of the "third space," where identity is constantly negotiated rather than fixed (55). Ultimately, both writers articulate a deep longing for home, even as they question its possibility. Home, for them, is a fragmented construct—an imagined space haunted by loss and irretrievability (Brah 192).

Despite these thematic convergences, Gurnah and Vassanji diverge significantly in their narrative style and structure. Gurnah's prose is marked by lyricism, psychological depth, and introspection. His novels often adopt a slow, meditative tone that foregrounds the characters' emotional lives as they grapple with loss, silence, and memory. The narrative in *By the Sea* unfolds through intimate interior monologues and layered retrospections, creating a textured psychological portrait of trauma and healing. Gurnah's style allows readers to experience the affective dimensions of exile—how it shapes the self not only socially but internally.

In contrast, Vassanji's narrative voice is more archival, historical, and encyclopedic. His fiction is

deeply engaged with documenting community memory, especially of the East African Asian diaspora. In *The Gunny Sack* and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, Vassanji adopts a quasi-historical tone, often using documents, letters, and oral testimonies to build a collective narrative. His style resembles what Linda Hutcheon refers to as “historiographic metafiction,” blending historical detail with self-reflexive narrative techniques (5). This emphasis on communal and intergenerational history contrasts with Gurnah’s focus on personal and psychological experiences. Where Gurnah immerses readers in the interiority of exile, Vassanji maps out its broader historical and cultural terrain.

Another key point of contrast lies in the politics of memory. Gurnah’s narratives tend to revolve around personal memory—how individual characters recall, repress, or reinterpret their past. Memory is unstable, fragmented, and often painful in *By the Sea*, as Saleh and Latif navigate conflicting versions of shared history. Their reconciliation is tentative and incomplete, shaped more by emotional truth than historical accuracy. Gurnah’s focus is thus on how memory shapes personal identity, particularly in contexts of trauma and dislocation.

Vassanji, on the other hand, is more invested in communal memory—the collective stories of a displaced people and their place in the broader history of empire. *The Gunny Sack*, for instance, reads as an attempt to reconstruct the erased or forgotten history of the East African Asian community, spanning generations and geographies. His work participates in what Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer term “postmemory”—the transmission of trauma and memory across generations (13). By anchoring his narratives in family archives, community lore, and historical documentation, Vassanji positions fiction as a means of cultural preservation and resistance against historical erasure.

Both Gurnah and Vassanji write from positions of voluntary or forced exile, raising important questions about the ethics of representation, voice, and positionality. Writing from exile offers a vantage point of critical distance—what Edward Said calls “contrapuntal perspective”—but it also entails a burden of responsibility: to speak for silenced communities, to bear witness, and to resist romanticizing or simplifying complex histories (Said

66). Gurnah, who fled Zanzibar and later taught postcolonial literature in the UK, uses fiction for ethical witnessing. His characters do not seek to resolve trauma but to make space for its acknowledgment. Saleh’s refusal to speak in the early pages of *By the Sea* is not simply silence—it is a refusal to be co-opted into reductive bureaucratic narratives of asylum.

Vassanji, likewise, undertakes the task of ethical memory work, reconstructing diasporic histories that have been marginalized or overlooked. His narratives, however, are often haunted by the tension between documentation and appropriation. In *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, the protagonist’s retrospective account is fraught with guilt, complicity, and ambiguity, prompting readers to question whose stories are being told and how. Both authors resist the temptation of resolution or redemptive endings, emphasizing the ambiguities and burdens of exile instead.

In this way, Gurnah and Vassanji offer complementary approaches to postcolonial narrative—one deeply internal and affective, the other historically embedded and culturally expansive. Together, they demonstrate the richness and complexity of diasporic storytelling, reminding us that exile is not only a condition of displacement but also a site of profound literary and ethical inquiry.

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The comparative study of M.G. Vassanji and Abdulrazak Gurnah reveals a shared yet uniquely articulated vision of exile, displacement, and the ever-elusive search for home. Across the selected novels—*By the Sea*, *Memory of Departure*, *The Gunny Sack*, and *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*—both authors portray “home” not as a fixed geographical location but as a fragmented, imagined construct shaped by memory, history, and longing. Whether mediated through sensory symbols such as incense and sea breeze, or embedded in physical artifacts like letters and old sacks, home emerges as something irrecoverable yet urgently desired. The exilic characters at the center of their narratives navigate identities that are fractured, haunted, and hybrid—

formed in the interstices between cultures, languages, and historical moments.

This paper has shown that Vassanji and Gurnah extend the concept of home beyond national boundaries, into a domain where emotional resonance, symbolic meaning, and personal narrative assume central roles. Drawing from postcolonial theory, trauma studies, and diaspora theory, their novels interrogate how personal and collective memories serve as a mechanism to reconstruct identity in the wake of loss. Gurnah's lyrical, introspective storytelling captures the psychological cost of silence, exile, and betrayal, while Vassanji's layered, archival narratives reflect the communal burden of historical erasure and generational trauma. In doing so, they articulate a diasporic consciousness that transcends linear historiography and fixed belonging.

Their works make a vital contribution to postcolonial discourse by reclaiming the marginalized histories of East African Asians, Zanzibari migrants, and hybridized communities often excluded from nationalist or colonial archives. Both authors challenge dominant narratives by giving voice to individuals who live between worlds—who speak the colonizer's tongue but think in the rhythms of lost homelands; who remember ancestral places but carry new, often painful, affiliations. In this way, their fiction aligns with what Edward Said describes as “contrapuntal reading”—a mode of analysis that foregrounds silenced histories and peripheral perspectives within imperial culture (66).

Ultimately, the fiction of Vassanji and Gurnah offers critical tools for understanding the psychological aftermath of empire and migration, particularly the emotional and epistemological dislocations it produces. Their narratives do not provide closure or easy redemption but rather offer a space for reflection, recognition, and sometimes reconciliation. Through fragmented memories, hybrid identities, and ambivalent returns, their protagonists model the fragile hope for belonging—not as a return to origins, but as a process of continuous negotiation and reimagination. In a world increasingly shaped by migration, exile, and transnational flows, the works of Vassanji and Gurnah remain profoundly relevant, illuminating the

inner lives of those who live at the edges of belonging and identity.

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Memory, Silence and Trauma in Alex Michaelides's *The Silent Patient*

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Keywords – Trauma, Memory, Silence, Psychoanalysis, Mental Health.

Abstract

The paper will explore the complex interplay between Memory, Trauma and Silence in Alex Michaelides' The Silent Patient. The novel revolves around Alicia Benerson, a celebrated artist who looks like someone who has it all – an extremely successful career, a caring husband and an ideal life. But this dreamy life quickly comes crashing down when Alicia becomes mysteriously mute after allegedly murdering her husband. Theo Faber, a psychotherapist is determined to uncover the truth behind her silence. This haunting silence becomes a central focus of the narrative as the reader is left to ponder the reasons behind Alicia's refusal to speak. Drawing from the Trauma theory, particularly insights from Scholars like Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, the paper explores how traumatic experiences have an effect on the memory and affect the process of self-expression as well as Identity. The silence of Alicia Benerson in the novel serves as a very powerful form of communication as it conveys to the readers the depth of Alicia's trauma and the complexity of the psychological turmoil taking place inside her. Through an analysis of Alicia's diary entries and her artwork, the paper uncovers how nonverbal forms of communication become crucial outlets when speech fails. Furthermore, the fractured structure of the narrative itself shows how navigating through Traumatic experiences can be. Additionally, this paper also shows how psychotherapist Theo Fabers's personal experience of childhood trauma and his role as a healer shapes the narrative. The novel also challenges conventional forms of psychological healing of those who have undergone traumatic experiences and the paper aims to highlight this aspect of mental health healing, the complexity of which is presented in the novel beautifully. In conclusion, The Silent Patient provides a compelling narrative that invites readers to reconsider the intersections between memory, silence, and trauma. This paper demonstrates the same through a textual analysis and aims to create a better understanding about mental health.

I. INTRODUCTION

The *Silent Patient* written by Alex Michaelides was published in the year 2019. It garnered a lot of attention due to how the author has dealt with the themes of trauma, silence and memory. The protagonist of the novel, Alicia Benerson becomes mute after allegedly murdering her husband and trying to kill herself. The novel is narrated through the lens of the psychotherapist, Theo Faber is the primary person who has taken it upon himself to ensure that Alicia Benerson speaks about her ordeal. This research aims to do a psychoanalytic exploration using trauma theories of Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman. Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma highlights the complexity of the same by showing how trauma disrupts the normal flow of memory and consciousness often manifesting in fragmented memories and narratives. Caruth describes trauma as a "break in the mind's experience of time where the traumatic experience is not fully processed the time it occurs and returns in the forms of flashbacks and nightmares. This Research will employ the Trauma theory as put forth by Judith Herman. Herman has emphasised about the recovery process after a traumatic experience. Her seminal work in the field, "Trauma and Recovery" has outlined a comprehensive model for trauma healing and recovery. Herman has given a five staged approach to healing trauma in her book which includes - a healing relationship, remembrance and mourning, reconnection, commonality. Her model underscores that a good therapeutic relationship is extremely important for proper healing of the survivors. Herman was also the first one to address the concept of "complex trauma" which she referred to as the constant and pervasive exposure to traumatic events such as domestic violence and child abuse (Keane and Najavits 513).

In the book "The Silent Patient" Alicia Benerson's recovery takes place at a facility for patients who suffer from psychological disorders. Theo Faber is the psychotherapist who has taken it upon himself to find the reason why Alicia is silent for so long. Till the end of the book, the reader is made to believe that Theo Faber has the best interests of Alicia in mind and is doing all that he is doing to help her in the recovery process. Later on, the reader is extremely surprised by the ending of the novel which ends with

Theo Faber killing Alicia and ending is arrested by the police for his crime.

This paper intends to dive deep into the manifestation of Trauma of both Alicia Benerson as well as Theo Faber using Trauma Theory as given by Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth. It will also analyse how silence and memory play out in the novel. This kind of an analysis will help in unfolding nuances and intricacies of the characters and help to further understand them. There are also various non verbal forms of communication used by Alicia Benerson that are very crucial in understanding the trauma she went through and her mental state. This paper aims to shed light on that as well. The paper will also shed light on mental health and the complexity of mental health healing.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does trauma affect memory and identity in *The Silent Patient*, as illustrated through Alicia Benerson's character?
- In what ways does Alicia's silence serve as a form of communication, and what does it reveal about the depth of her trauma?
- How do nonverbal forms of communication, such as Alicia's diary entries and artwork, function as outlets for expressing trauma when speech fails?
- How does Theo Faber's personal experience of childhood trauma influence his role as a psychotherapist and his approach to treating Alicia?
- How does *The Silent Patient* challenge conventional forms of psychological healing, and what does it suggest about the complexity of trauma recovery?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the impact of trauma on memory and identity in *The Silent Patient*, using Cathy Caruth's and Judith Herman's trauma theories.
- To explore the significance of Alicia's silence as a form of communication and its role in conveying the depth of her psychological

turmoil.

- To investigate the role of nonverbal communication, such as Alicia's diary and artwork, in expressing trauma when traditional forms of speech are inadequate.
- To examine Theo Faber's personal trauma and its influence on his professional role as a psychotherapist, particularly in his treatment of Alicia.
- To critique conventional forms of psychological healing as depicted in *The Silent Patient* and highlight the novel's emphasis on the complexity of trauma recovery.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

- In an article titled, "Beyond words: a psychoanalytic inquiry into silence and trauma in the novel *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides" by Fakiha Arain, the author highlights through a psychoanalytic inquiry that the silence of Alicia Benerson leads to the self discovery of Alicia. The author emphasises the transformative power of silence. The author says that the unspoken experiences of Alicia shape her identity as a person and also her personal narrative about her tragedy. She becomes a judge of her own actions. Arain also interprets the work in a feminist way. She says that Alicia's choice to stay silent transcends victimhood, showing her internal conflict and resistance against patriarchal oppression.
- In a journal article titled, "Traumatic Childhood and Adult Personality in Michaelides' *The Silent Patient*" the paper critiques how the early traumatic childhood experiences of Alicia lead her to silence and the inability to process the positive memories and only focusing on the negative ones. The paper argues that the silence serves as a coping mechanism for her trauma which ultimately hinders her personal growth and an evolution into a positive individual. The study highlighted the immense impact of childhood abuse on adult personality development.

- John Marzillier in the journal article titled, "The silent past and the invisible present. Memory, trauma and representation in psychotherapy" dicusses how memory, trauma and silence interact in therapeutic contexts. The paper higlights that in silent patients, implicit memories and emotional traumas may manifest through various non verbal cues that the patient may exhibit from time to time. Thus a good therapeutic relationship is extremely important for proper healing of such silent patients. The paper emphasizes that understanding these dynamics can help therapists navigate the complexities of trauma and attachment, ultimately facilitating healing and transformation in the patient's narrative.
- In a journal article titled, " Alicia Benerson's complex post traumatic stress disorder in Alex Michaelides' *The Silent Patient*" the paper discusses Alicia Benerson's experience of trauma and its manifestation through silence. Her complex PTSD symptoms including reliving the traumatic experience as well social isolation highlight how traumatic memories can lead to emotional withdrawal and silence. The paper says that Alicia's silence serves as a coping mechanism ultimately illustrating the profound impact that memory of trauma can have on the psychological state.
- A book chapter titled, "The Aftermath of Silencing the Trauma" explores the relationship between silence, memory, and trauma through the case of a 70-year-old female patient who remained silent about her rape for decades. Her tinnitus and hallucinations are linked to her unaddressed trauma, illustrating how silence can perpetuate feelings of powerlessness. The therapeutic alliance established during psychotherapy allowed her to disclose her hidden trauma, facilitating the integration of fragmented memories into her personal history, thereby highlighting the importance of addressing silence in trauma recovery.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This research paper will employ a qualitative literary analysis methodology. This approach is well-suited

for analyzing textual elements, themes, and character psychology in literature. It will involve a close reading of the text to uncover deeper meanings. This research will be grounded in trauma theory particularly the works of Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman and use their theories on trauma for examination and analysis of the text.

V. ANALYSIS

Trauma's impact on Memory and Identity

Cathy Caruth's Trauma theory emphasizes that traumatic events are usually not fully processed when they occur. Instead they return from time to time through fragmented memories and thoughts. She also says that the victims experience a collapse of identity in the event of a trauma (Rehman 92). In the book we can see that when Theo Faber narrates about the extra marital affairs of his wife, as readers we feel that all these things are happening in the present side by side as he is treating Alicia Benerson but only towards the end of the book we realise that all that he was narrating about his wife's extra marital affairs had actually taken place in the past. Thus his trauma about the extra marital affairs of his wife also appears fragmented throughout the novel. Alicia's character we also see has undergone a lot of trauma through various phases of her life - her mother's death at a very young age, her father's abandonment when he declares that he wishes Alicia had died instead of her mother, her husband's betrayal affect her a lot. She feels that she is unloved, there is no one who she can call her own and it leaves her fragmented. Her inability to articulate her trauma properly refers to the fragmented memory and the collapse of her identity that Caruth describes. Alicia's diary entries also show that she found it very difficult to articulate her memories which is evident through her diary entries. She writes, "I can't remember what happened. I can't remember. I can't remember" (Michaeldias 148). This repetition points to her fragmented memories and her inability to construct a coherent narrative of her trauma.

Judith Herman's idea about trauma further supports this analysis. She argues that trauma disrupts a survivor's identity of the self, leading to a fragmented identity (Pederson 343). Theo Faber, her psychotherapist observes, "Her Silence was a

fortress, a place of safety" (Michaeldias 89). She thus used silence as a coping mechanism. Her silence was not an absence of speech but a deliberate attempt to hide her overwhelming pain of trauma. This again proves Judith Herman's assertions that survivors of trauma often prioritise safety in the aftermath of any traumatic event.

Silence as a powerful form of communication

Alicia's silence serves a powerful form of communication that depicts the extent of her trauma. It is indicative of the psychological turmoil that is going on inside her. When she refuses to speak, her silence speaks volumes about her inner world. This aligns with Caruth's theory about trauma that trauma often resists verbal communication forcing the survivors to depict their trauma through non verbal means.

Theo Faber reflects "her silence was louder than any words she could have spoken" (Michaeldias 45). It reflects the communicative power of Alicia's silence. This silence in the novel challenges the reader to look beyond the silence to understand the psychological pain of Alicia. It also shows that when trauma gets very profound it cannot be expressed.

Non Verbal forms of Communication : Alicia's Diary entry and Artwork

When speech fails Alicia's diary entries reveal a lot about her struggles and her inability to express a lot of things. In her diary entries as well there are certain things that she struggles to express. In her first diary entry "no crazy thoughts allowed" (Michaeldias 3). It shows that there is a lot going on inside her apart from what she writes in the diary as well. Her diary serves as the most important thing in her recovery journey that helps Theo understand about her situation. As a reader we also observe that her writing is fragmented as well as incoherent. Alicia writes in one of her diary entries "I feel like I am drowning in a sea of memories. But I can't grasp any of them. They slip through my fingers like water" (Michaeldias 156). This actually aligns with Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma. The writing of Alicia is as fragmented as her traumatic memories.

The last painting that Alicia drew was that of Alcestis. Alcestis was the heroine of the Greek myth and her love story was one of the saddest. Alcestis willingly sacrifices her life for her husband, dying

for him when no one else will. The story of Alcestis had a lot of resemblance in Alicia's life and it was Alcestis' painting that she drew towards the end which conveyed a lot of meaning to the observer about the kind of situation that she was in. Theo refers to the painting as a "cry for help, a desperate attempt to communicate what she could not say in words" (Michaeldias 210). This again aligns well with what Judith Herman has to say about Trauma that survivors cling onto creative expressions for venting out their traumatic experiences. There

was one more painting of Alicia that she drew at The Grove where she drew Theo coming out of the facility with Alicia in arms while the building was on fire. It is as if she knew what was coming when she recognized who Theo actually was and she portrayed that trauma through her paintings.

Thus, the non verbal forms of her communication like her paintings and diary entries served as forms of her expressions.

Theo Faber's Personal trauma and his role as a Healer

Theo Faber's personal traumatic experiences during his childhood shape him as a psychotherapist. We see that he is not able to fully get over the trauma that he experienced in his childhood and it comes back to haunt him later on. As readers we feel that he has got over his past traumas only to realise that he actually has not and maybe has in fact got worse with age as we see him committing a murder towards the end. His unresolved traumas complicate his ability to help Alicia so much so that the boundaries between patient and healer is blurred completely as his treatment of Alicia is drawing to a close.

Theo reflects, "I saw myself in her. Her silence mirrored my own childhood, the years I spent in my room, unable to speak" (Michaeldias 75). This highlights that he was able to identify with Alicia's trauma. Theo's trauma influenced his role as a psychotherapist to Alicia. He projected his own personal experiences onto her. This shows the counter- interference of trauma.

Challenging conventional forms of psychological healing

The novel challenges the conventional forms of psychological healing by highlighting the complexity

of trauma recovery. Theo's failure to fully understand Alicia's trauma and get it intermixed with his shows the limitations of psychological and trauma healing. Also in this scenario, the patient and the psychotherapist were known to each other but only it was both of them who knew this. This definitely affected the healing process.

Theo admits, "I thought I could save her but in the end I couldn't even save myself" (Michaeldias 320). This shows the inadequacy of his therapeutic methods and his own unresolved trauma that came to the fore while treating Alicia. This novel thus suggests that healing from trauma requires more than just professional intervention.

VI. CONCLUSION

Alex Michaelides' *The Silent Patient* offers a profound exploration of trauma, memory, and the complexities of psychological healing. Through the lens of trauma theory, particularly the insights of Cathy Caruth and Judith Herman, this paper has examined how traumatic experiences fragment memory, disrupt identity, and challenge conventional forms of self-expression. Alicia Berenson's silence, far from being a mere absence of speech, emerges as a powerful form of communication that conveys the depth of her psychological turmoil and the ineffability of her trauma. Her diary entries and artwork serve as crucial outlets for expressing what words cannot, highlighting the role of nonverbal communication in processing and articulating pain.

Theo Faber's character further complicates the narrative, as his personal experience of childhood trauma blurs the line between healer and patient. His obsession with Alicia's case and his failure to fully understand her trauma underscore the limitations of traditional therapeutic approaches. The novel challenges the notion that professional intervention alone can facilitate healing, emphasizing instead the importance of empathy, self-awareness, and the acknowledgment of one's own pain in the recovery process.

Ultimately, *The Silent Patient* is not just a psychological thriller but a poignant commentary on the enduring impact of trauma and the complexities of healing. By analyzing the novel through the framework of trauma theory, this paper has

illuminated the ways in which trauma reshapes memory, identity, and self-expression. Alicia's silence and Theo's flawed attempts at healing serve as reminders of the profound challenges faced by trauma survivors and those who seek to help them. The novel invites readers to look beyond surface-level explanations and consider the deeper psychological and emotional dimensions of trauma, offering a nuanced perspective on the journey toward recovery. In conclusion, *The Silent Patient* not only captivates with its gripping narrative but also provokes important questions about the nature of trauma and the possibilities for healing. By engaging with the novel's themes and characters, this research contributes to a broader understanding of trauma literature and its relevance to real-world psychological struggles. It underscores the need for compassionate and holistic approaches to trauma recovery, recognizing that healing is as complex and multifaceted as the human psyche itself.

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Rewriting the Sacred: Mythic Structures and Political Praxis in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 17 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 11 Aug 2025; Accepted: 15 Aug 2025; Available online: 18 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— <i>myth rewriting, ethical action, violence and power, Hindu cosmology, sacred and profane, narrative multiplicity.</i></p>	<p><i>Vikram Chandra's Sacred Games is a sprawling narrative that intertwines crime, politics, history, and religion to present a richly layered portrait of contemporary India. At its core, the novel is not only a gripping detective story but also a profound meditation on the sacred and the profane, the mythic and the political. This paper explores how Chandra reconfigures mythic structures – drawn from Hindu cosmology, epics, and archetypes – to critique and reinterpret political praxis in modern India. Through an analysis of narrative form, character development, and thematic symbolism, the study argues that Sacred Games functions as a postmodern rewriting of the sacred, destabilizing conventional notions of divine order and moral clarity. In doing so, it exposes the ideological apparatuses that underpin political authority, religious identity, and nationalist rhetoric. By foregrounding the interplay between myth and praxis, Chandra invites readers to reconsider how sacred narratives are weaponized in public life, and how individual agency can persist within – and against – these inherited structures. Ultimately, this paper contends that Sacred Games is a vital literary intervention that dramatizes the political consequences of myth while reimagining the possibility of ethical action in an ethically compromised world.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

In the early years of the twenty-first century, Indian literature witnessed a resurgence of politically charged narratives that grappled with the transformations wrought by globalization, religious fundamentalism, and postcolonial identity crises. Among these, Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* stands out as an ambitious and densely layered work that resists simple classification. At over 900 pages, the novel blends the tropes of crime fiction, political thriller, spiritual allegory, and historical epic, crafting a narrative that is both intensely local and global in its concerns. While it is often discussed for its compelling

portrait of Mumbai's criminal underworld and its sprawling cast of characters, what demands deeper exploration is Chandra's use of mythic structures and religious motifs to interrogate the political and moral conditions of contemporary India.

The very title *Sacred Games* suggests a paradox: the fusion of divinity with deception, of the spiritual with the strategic. This ambiguity sets the stage for a novel where characters are constantly negotiating between fate and free will, belief and skepticism, violence and redemption. The figure of Ganesh Gaitonde, the gangster-turned-prophet, exemplifies this intersection. His narrative arc echoes mythic cycles of

rise and fall, salvation and damnation, while also reflecting the grim realities of communalism, political corruption, and global terrorism. Meanwhile, Inspector Sartaj Singh's journey resembles a modern-day dharmic quest, fraught with moral ambiguity and institutional compromise.

This paper takes as its starting point the premise that *Sacred Games* is a postmodern epic that rewrites the sacred in order to expose the moral and ideological fissures of political praxis. "Mythic structures," in this context, refer to the recurring narrative forms, archetypes, and cosmological frameworks that Chandra borrows and subverts from traditional Hindu texts such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Puranas*. "Political praxis" denotes the live enactment of political ideologies and the real-world consequences of power, especially as seen in the actions of state actors, religious leaders, and criminal networks. By mapping these mythic structures onto the machinery of contemporary politics, Chandra reveals how the sacred is often co-opted to serve violent and exclusionary ends.

Through a close reading of the novel's characters, structure, and symbolic systems, this paper will explore how Chandra challenges the reader to confront the ethical complexities of belief and action. The central argument is that *Sacred Games* does not simply reproduce myth; it rewrites it, turning the sacred into a critical lens through which the contradictions of modern political life are made visible. In doing so, Chandra not only revitalizes the epic form but also posits literature itself as a site of political and spiritual inquiry.

Mythic Structures in Sacred Games-

In *Sacred Games*, Vikram Chandra deftly weaves mythic structures into a contemporary narrative, reconfiguring traditional Hindu cosmologies and epic motifs within the framework of postcolonial, globalized Mumbai. These mythic layers do not function merely as aesthetic or cultural ornamentation; rather, they form the very architecture of the novel's ethical and political inquiry. Chandra draws from the archetypal patterns of Indian myth—cyclical time, divine avatars, cosmic battles, prophetic revelation—and situates them within a gritty realist narrative populated by gangsters, policemen, intelligence agents, and spiritual charlatans. The effect

is a narrative that collapses the divide between the sacred and the profane, suggesting that myth is not something archaic and distant but deeply embedded in the contemporary Indian psyche and its political realities.

The Epic as Form: Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Beyond-

The structural and thematic influence of Hindu epics such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* is immediately apparent in *Sacred Games*. Like the *Mahabharata*, Chandra's novel resists closure and moral simplicity. Its polyphonic structure—with alternating narratives, parallel timelines, and numerous embedded vignettes—echoes the sprawling, dialogic form of the epics. The novel's multiple voices and moral ambiguities foreground the impossibility of a single, authoritative truth, a theme central to the *Mahabharata*, where even gods are morally compromised and dharma is context-dependent.

Characters in *Sacred Games* map onto mythic archetypes in complex, sometimes ironic ways. Ganesh Gaitonde, for instance, evokes the name and attributes of the Hindu god Ganesha, the remover of obstacles and patron of beginnings. Yet Gaitonde is no benevolent deity; he is a ruthless criminal who, over time, becomes a self-styled prophet and savior figure. His spiritual delusions and claims to divine insight parody the idea of divine authority, exposing how myths can be appropriated to legitimize violence and domination. His trajectory—from orphan to underworld don to apocalyptic visionary—traces a distorted version of the hero's journey, as described in mythic and folkloric traditions, but subverts the redemptive telos typically associated with such narratives.

Similarly, Sartaj Singh, the weary and morally conflicted Sikh police officer, functions as a kind of Arjuna figure—called to act in a world where the lines between justice and injustice are blurred. His meditative dialogues with his inner self and his dead father resemble the discursive structure of the *Bhagavad Gita*, wherein Krishna imparts ethical and metaphysical wisdom to the hesitant Arjuna. But Sartaj receives no divine guidance—only a slow, painful accumulation of insight born of suffering, failure, and moral compromise. The absence of a clear moral compass suggests a world in which divine

certainties have eroded, leaving individuals to navigate meaning through intuition and flawed action.

Cyclicity and Cosmic Time-

One of the most significant mythic structures Chandra employs is the concept of cyclical time – kalachakra – which underpins much of Hindu cosmology. The narrative structure of *Sacred Games* reflects this cyclicity, with events repeating in new forms across generations, and with past and present bleeding into one another. Gaitonde's rise and fall mirror the rise and fall of cities, nations, and even gods in Hindu myth. His vision of an impending apocalypse evokes the mythic idea of pralaya (cosmic dissolution), a time of destruction that precedes renewal. But in Chandra's retelling, pralaya is not a divine reset—it is the consequence of human hubris, political manipulation, and nuclear terror.

The novel's formal structure reinforces this theme. The interleaved timelines—the present-day investigation by Sartaj, the retrospective confessions of Gaitonde, and the philosophical interpolations—mirror the layered temporalities of mythic texts. Chandra frequently interrupts the forward motion of the plot with seemingly tangential digressions: tales from India's partition, theological musings, backstories of minor characters, and reflections on karma and rebirth. These digressions, rather than distracting from the narrative, work to situate individual lives within larger mythic and historical cycles, suggesting that all action is part of an endless repetition of suffering, desire, and violence.

The Prophetic and the Apocalyptic-

A recurring motif in *Sacred Games* is the prophetic revelation. Gaitonde believes himself to be the recipient of divine messages through his association with Guruji, a spiritual leader whose vision of a purified, Hindu-fundamentalist future becomes the ideological engine behind a planned apocalyptic act of terrorism. This vision is couched in mythic language, referencing the destruction of evil and the restoration of cosmic order. Yet, Chandra presents this revelation as deeply suspect—a manipulation of sacred discourse to justify genocidal violence.

Guruji's teachings synthesize elements of Hindu eschatology with fascistic political ideology. His utopian vision of a spiritually cleansed India echoes

the mythic promise of the Kalki avatar—the final incarnation of Vishnu who is prophesied to arrive at the end of the Kali Yuga to destroy evil and restore dharma. However, in *Sacred Games*, this eschatology is stripped of divine legitimacy and becomes a political tool for rationalizing mass murder. The appropriation of sacred myth for political ends here critiques the real-world rise of religious nationalism and the ways in which ancient myths are reconfigured to serve modern ideologies.

This theme is further complicated by the novel's engagement with global apocalyptic fears—nuclear terrorism, ecological collapse, civilizational decline—which intersect with indigenous mythic tropes to create a narrative that is at once intensely local and global. Gaitonde's belief in his own apotheosis and sacrificial destiny becomes the engine of mass destruction, revealing the dangerous potential of myth when untethered from ethical scrutiny.

The Sacred and the Secular: Politicizing Myth-

One of *Sacred Games*' most powerful insights lies in its exposure of how myth, far from being an inert cultural artifact, is actively mobilized within political and ideological struggles. Chandra's narrative shows that myth does not merely shape personal worldviews—it is embedded in the structures of governance, violence, and control. In contemporary India, where religious identity has become deeply entwined with political rhetoric and where Hindu nationalism seeks to define the contours of the public sphere, Chandra's exploration of the sacred becomes a pointed critique of the ways in which myths are politicized, instrumentalized, and weaponized.

Myth as Political Currency-

Ganesh Gaitonde's self-mythologizing is the most immediate example of how sacred discourse is used to gain power. Gaitonde is not merely a gangster; he is a political actor, one who understands that control over narrative—particularly sacred or divine narrative—is a powerful weapon. His adoption of the name "Ganesh," invoking the deity associated with auspicious beginnings, wisdom, and the removal of obstacles, is not accidental. It is part of his larger strategy of establishing himself as a divine figure—a redeemer, a god among men. In doing so, he mimics the performative rituals of both political leaders and

religious figures in India, who often invoke divine sanction for their actions.

Gaitonde's growing association with Guruji and the ashram represents a confluence of the criminal underworld and the spiritual-political elite. Guruji's ashram is not a space of contemplation and asceticism; it is a center of ideological production, one that reinterprets Hindu mythology and metaphysics to justify violence against the perceived enemies of the nation. The sacred, in this context, is no longer a personal or transcendent pursuit—it becomes a symbolic system used to authorize political action, especially violent, retributive action.

Chandra's portrayal of this alliance between spiritual discourse and political power resonates deeply with real-world analogs in Indian politics. Organizations such as the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and political entities like the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) have long employed the language of myth and religion to shape nationalist ideology. Narratives of Hindu glory, divine ancestry, and civilizational struggle are used to define citizenship, belonging, and legitimacy. By embedding these themes within a fictional narrative, Chandra is able to both mirror and critique this ideological apparatus.

Religious Violence and the Language of the Sacred:

Religious violence—particularly communal violence between Hindus and Muslims—is a recurring theme in *Sacred Games*. The novel does not present such violence as aberrational or spontaneous; rather, it reveals the systemic, planned, and ideologically sanctioned nature of such conflict. Gaitonde's participation in communal riots, as both actor and observer, demonstrates how sacred language can be manipulated to incite hatred. He witnesses how crowds are mobilized not through appeals to political ideology per se, but through the invocation of divine injury, sacred duty, and historical grievance.

Guruji's eschatological vision—a final purification of the Indian nation through mass destruction—is couched in mythic terms. His rhetoric draws heavily on the Hindu notion of yugas (cosmic ages) and pralaya (apocalyptic destruction), presenting himself as a harbinger of a new spiritual order. Yet the spiritual veneer barely conceals a genocidal logic. His ultimate goal is a nuclear attack that will destroy India's cities and "cleanse" its impure elements. This

use of the sacred to justify political annihilation is one of the most chilling aspects of the novel, and it reflects the dangers of uncritical reverence for spiritual authority when divorced from ethical responsibility.

The novel also explores how the state responds to such forms of violence. Police officers like Sartaj Singh are caught between their duty to uphold secular law and the informal, religiously inflected ideologies that govern political power. The state, while nominally secular, is shown to be deeply complicit in religious violence—either through inaction, active participation, or ideological alignment. Sartaj's disillusionment is emblematic of the larger crisis facing secular institutions in a context where sacred narratives dominate public discourse.

Populism, Nationalism, and the Sacred Symbol-

Populist leaders in *Sacred Games*—whether they be gangsters, politicians, or godmen—are all adept at manipulating sacred symbols. Whether it is the use of saffron robes, Vedic chants, images of deities, or invocations of dharma, the sacred is repackaged into a visual and rhetorical arsenal designed to evoke fear, loyalty, and righteousness. Chandra's Mumbai is not just a battleground of crime and corruption; it is a symbolic landscape saturated with religious imagery, from temple processions to sectarian graffiti.

One striking example is the use of mythic symbols in the narrative of Gaitonde's television series—*Dangerous Minds*. The show is a metafictional element that functions as a propaganda tool, dramatizing Gaitonde's own rise to power in epic terms. In doing so, it mimics the real-world phenomenon of mythic storytelling in Indian cinema and television, where gangsters are portrayed as heroic figures and political narratives are cloaked in the language of destiny and divine justice. This blurring of entertainment, politics, and the sacred highlights the contemporary function of myth as spectacle—a tool for mass manipulation and ideological consolidation.

The sacred symbol is also invoked in nationalist visions of India as Bharat Mata (Mother India), a divinized figure who demands both reverence and sacrifice. This image, though absent as a literal presence in the novel, looms in the background as a latent ideological force—fueling patriotism, justifying exclusion, and shaping gendered expectations of duty

and martyrdom. In *Sacred Games*, those who claim to defend this sacred motherland do so not through compassion or justice, but through purges and violence.

Mythic Legitimacy and Political Violence-

Chandra is particularly interested in the question of legitimacy: What makes violence legitimate? What makes a leader believable, even worthy of devotion? In *Sacred Games*, legitimacy is derived not only from coercive power or charisma but also from the invocation of sacred myth. Gaitonde believes himself to be chosen, even blessed, and this belief – reinforced by Guruji – allows him to act without remorse. His crimes become sacralized through narrative; he is not simply killing for gain, but fulfilling destiny.

Guruji's discourse also reflects this logic. His spiritual teachings are a hybrid of ancient Hindu texts and fascist ideology, blending metaphysical abstraction with real-world political aims. This combination renders him particularly dangerous: his followers believe they are not committing crimes but performing sacred duty. This fusion of sacred and political legitimacy undermines moral reasoning, allowing horrific acts to be committed in the name of cosmic justice.

Chandra's depiction of this phenomenon is especially relevant in the age of global extremism, where religious narratives are used to inspire acts of terror across the world. Whether in the rhetoric of jihadist movements or Hindu nationalist militias, the invocation of the sacred to justify violence remains a potent and troubling force. *Sacred Games* does not offer easy answers, but it lays bare the mechanisms by which such ideologies take root and flourish.

Political Praxis: Action, Agency, and Moral Complexity-

While *Sacred Games* intricately maps the mythic structures that shape Indian cultural and political life, it is equally invested in dramatizing how individuals act within these structures. This is where the concept of political praxis – that is, the embodiment of political theory and belief in action – becomes central. Chandra does not reduce his characters to victims of larger ideological or mythic systems; instead, he focuses on the difficult, often contradictory decisions they make in pursuit of justice, power, or survival. Political praxis in *Sacred Games* emerges not as a coherent

ideological program, but as a field of ethical struggle, where each decision is compromised by the weight of history, belief, and structural violence.

At the heart of this ethical struggle is Inspector Sartaj Singh, whose trajectory represents the clearest meditation on political action and moral ambiguity. In contrast, Ganesh Gaitonde's practice of politics through spectacle, crime, and self-mythologizing presents an opposing mode of praxis – nihilistic, charismatic, and deeply destructive. By juxtaposing these two figures, Chandra creates a dynamic framework to explore the moral complexities of agency in a society where the sacred and political are deeply entangled.

Sartaj Singh and the Ethics of Secular Action:

Sartaj Singh is not a mythic hero in the conventional sense. He is world-weary, physically deteriorating, emotionally scarred, and increasingly disillusioned with his role as a police officer. Yet it is precisely his ordinariness that makes him compelling. As a Sikh in a predominantly Hindu police force and a son of a man who was both a patriot and a moral exemplar, Sartaj is deeply invested in ideals of justice and integrity. But the India he inhabits is not the idealized postcolonial nation of his father's dreams – it is a fractured, corrupt, and spiritually exhausted society.

Sartaj's praxis unfolds through a series of compromises. He takes bribes, turns a blind eye to institutional violence, and participates in morally dubious operations. Yet these compromises are never romanticized; they are depicted as deeply painful and psychologically corrosive. Chandra uses Sartaj's internal monologue to highlight the constant moral accounting that defines his experience. Unlike mythic heroes who act with divine clarity or historical certainty, Sartaj acts in uncertainty. He is perpetually unsure of whether he is doing the right thing – even when his actions are legally or ethically justified.

His slow unraveling of Gaitonde's legacy, through documents, recordings, and cryptic clues, is not just a detective plotline but a philosophical journey. As he pieces together the motivations behind Gaitonde's actions and Guruji's apocalyptic vision, Sartaj is forced to reflect on his own passivity, his failures, and his complicity in the systems he serves. In this way, his praxis is a lived form of inquiry – an imperfect but

sincere engagement with the moral demands of his time.

Sartaj's struggle also evokes the figure of the modern Arjuna: caught between duty and doubt, between action and contemplation. But unlike Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sartaj receives no divine counsel. He must navigate a world where the gods have gone silent, or worse, have been hijacked by politicians and criminals. His final acts in the novel—working to prevent the nuclear catastrophe engineered by Guruji—are not acts of heroism in the grand mythic sense. They are acts of responsibility, undertaken with full awareness of the moral costs involved.

Ganesh Gaitonde: Political Praxis as Self-Mythology-

In contrast, Ganesh Gaitonde embodies a radically different kind of praxis—one that fuses crime, spectacle, and religious ideology. Gaitonde does not act out of civic responsibility or moral conviction; he acts to construct himself as a godlike figure in a world he perceives as chaotic and meaningless. Yet even Gaitonde's actions are not entirely nihilistic. In his own mind, he is on a quest: to overcome the humiliation of his origins, to assert control over history, and ultimately to redeem himself through sacrifice.

His praxis is performative and self-referential. He constantly narrates his life to himself and others, shaping his identity through language and myth. He sees himself as a tragic hero, a man who dared to act when others cowered, who saw the rot in the system and used its tools against it. But Chandra gradually dismantles this self-image. Through flashbacks, alternative perspectives, and narrative irony, Gaitonde's motivations are shown to be rooted in fear, trauma, and a desire for validation.

The pivotal moment in Gaitonde's transformation is his encounter with Guruji, who provides him with a new cosmological framework for understanding his life. Guruji offers not only spiritual solace but also a political mission: to become the agent of a new order. This is where Gaitonde's praxis shifts from self-preservation to messianism. He begins to believe that his violent past has been preparation for a divine purpose—that he is the chosen one who will usher in a new age. In this delusion, Gaitonde becomes a case

study in how myth can corrupt political agency, transforming a wounded man into a fanatic.

Ultimately, Gaitonde's praxis culminates in self-destruction. His suicide, timed and staged for maximum theatricality, is not an act of despair but of symbolic transcendence. He seeks to inscribe himself into history not as a criminal but as a martyr, a visionary who saw the future and acted accordingly. Chandra's portrayal of this moment is deeply ambivalent: while it is emotionally powerful, it is also a damning indictment of political egoism masquerading as spiritual destiny.

Narrative as Political Space-

A key implication of this mythic rewriting is the elevation of narrative itself as a space of political praxis. *Sacred Games* is deeply self-reflexive about the act of storytelling. Gaitonde tells his own story in a first-person voice, shaping his myth through confession. Sartaj reconstructs a story from fragments, documents, and silences. Other characters—Jojo, Guruji, the intelligence agents, even anonymous TV producers—contribute to a vast network of stories that overlap, contradict, and refract one another.

This narrative complexity is not just formal experimentation; it is a philosophical claim. In a world where sacred myths have been politicized and corrupted, storytelling becomes a way to recover multiplicity, complexity, and ethical nuance. Chandra's polyphonic structure mimics the structure of Hindu epics, but it also updates them for a world where the sacred is no longer a given. The novel itself becomes a sacred space—not in the religious sense, but in the sense of being a site for critical reflection, ethical engagement, and political imagination.

By embedding sacred motifs within a postmodern narrative framework, Chandra effectively reframes the sacred—not as a source of absolute truth, but as a contested terrain. The "sacred" is no longer what is unquestioned or eternal; it is what must be questioned, negotiated, and reimagined. In this way, *Sacred Games* joins a broader tradition of Indian literature—exemplified by writers like Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Amitav Ghosh—that seeks to unwrite and rewrite foundational myths in the service of justice.

Implications for Contemporary India-

The implications of this rewriting are especially resonant in the context of contemporary India, where the boundaries between religion and politics have become increasingly blurred. The rise of Hindu nationalism, the politicization of sacred symbols, and the marginalization of minority communities are all real-world phenomena that Chandra addresses through fiction. *Sacred Games* does not present itself as a political manifesto, but its mythic deconstructions are unmistakably political.

In highlighting the dangers of unchecked spiritual authority, Chandra also implicitly calls for a reinvigoration of secular ethics. Characters like Sartaj Singh, who attempt to act with integrity even within compromised institutions, represent the possibility of a politics that is grounded not in divine mandates but in human responsibility. This is not an easy or triumphant politics—it is marked by doubt, failure, and compromise. But it is, perhaps, the only politics that can resist the allure of totalizing myths.

Moreover, Chandra's portrayal of myth as both a weapon and a mirror invites readers to reflect on their own complicity in the narratives they consume and reproduce. The sacred, in this view, is not something that exists outside of us; it is something we participate in creating. Whether through ritual, storytelling, or ideology, we constantly rewrite the sacred—sometimes to heal, sometimes to harm.

CONCLUSION

Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games* is a monumental literary achievement that blends the conventions of crime fiction, political thriller, and spiritual allegory to produce a deeply philosophical meditation on myth, violence, and ethical action in contemporary India. At its core, the novel is a sustained engagement with the idea of the sacred—not as a fixed set of religious truths, but as a dynamic and contested set of narratives that shape both personal identity and collective political life.

This paper has argued that Chandra reconfigures mythic structures in order to interrogate the mechanisms of political praxis. Drawing on Hindu cosmology, epic archetypes, and religious motifs, *Sacred Games* rewrites the sacred not to dismiss its significance, but to challenge its appropriation by power. Figures like Ganesh Gaitonde and Guruji

illustrate how myth can be harnessed for domination, violence, and authoritarian control, while characters like Sartaj Singh embody the fragile, uncertain possibility of ethical action within corrupted systems.

By framing political praxis through the lens of myth, Chandra reveals the ideological underpinnings of state power, religious nationalism, and organized crime—showing how these forces often rely on sacred symbols and narratives to justify their actions. At the same time, *Sacred Games* offers a counter-narrative: one that values ambiguity over certainty, reflection over dogma, and responsibility over destiny. This is particularly evident in Sartaj's gradual transformation—not into a hero in the mythic sense, but into a flawed individual willing to act ethically despite the absence of divine guidance or institutional support.

Importantly, the novel situates its mythic engagement within a contemporary context marked by globalization, surveillance, terrorism, and mass media. Myth, in this world, is not confined to temples or scriptures—it circulates through television, cinema, politics, and even organized crime. Chandra's Mumbai is a mythic city not because it is timeless, but because it is saturated with competing narratives of origin, identity, and destiny. In this way, *Sacred Games* aligns with other postcolonial literary projects that seek to deconstruct master narratives and reassert the complexity of lived experience.

The implications of Chandra's mythic-political synthesis are far-reaching. In a time when religious ideologies continue to inform nationalist rhetoric, and when authoritarian regimes increasingly appeal to mythic pasts to legitimize their rule, *Sacred Games* serves as both a warning and a guide. It warns against the seductive power of myth when weaponized for political ends. But it also gestures toward a more responsible engagement with the sacred—one that acknowledges its cultural power while resisting its totalizing tendencies.

In rewriting the sacred, Chandra does not seek to erase it. Rather, he insists that myth must be reinterpreted through an ethical lens—one that is attuned to historical violence, structural injustice, and human suffering. This is a profoundly literary and political act. By reclaiming the sacred as a space of inquiry rather than certainty, *Sacred Games* invites

readers to imagine new forms of political praxis that are not rooted in divine authority, but in empathy, reflection, and moral courage.

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Exploring the Status and Approaches for English Reading Teaching and Learning of Rural Junior High School Students in Shandong Province, China

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 20 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 14 Aug 2025; Accepted: 18 Aug 2025; Available online: 21 Aug 2025 ©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). Keywords – Rural Areas; Junior High School; English Reading</p>	<p><i>Taking Shandong Province as an example, this research studies the current situation and cultivation of English reading ability of junior middle school students in rural areas. This study takes 203 students in grade two of one Middle School, a rural middle school in Jining, Shandong Province, China, as the research object. Using the research method of questionnaire survey, this research analyzes the current situation and problems of junior middle school students in rural areas, so as to better improve their English reading ability. The study found that the English reading ability of students in this area needs to be improved. Based on this, the study puts forward corresponding training measures to improve their English reading ability. It is hoped that this study can provide some reference for the current practice of English Reading Teaching in junior middle schools in rural areas.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

English reading comprehension refers to the ability to read English written materials and understand their contents. It is also the ability to systematically apply English knowledge. Recently, more and more attention has been paid to the ability of English applied knowledge in the stage of compulsory education, including students' English reading comprehension ability. However, the educational resources in rural areas are not as good as those in cities, which affects the improvement of students' English reading ability in rural areas to a certain extent. As we all know, the purpose of reading is to obtain information. There are two ways to measure reading comprehension: speed and accuracy. Therefore, to improve the reading

comprehension ability of junior middle school students in rural areas is to make greater efforts to improve their reading speed and the efficiency of obtaining useful information.

At present, many educators, scholars, experts and experienced teachers have discussed this problem and provided valuable experience. Based on them, combined with the current situation of English reading of students in rural areas, this paper will put forward corresponding training measures. Based on the previous research, this paper focuses on the current situation of English reading ability and interests of junior middle school students in rural areas, finds out their existing problems, and improves their English reading ability from the aspects of interest, vocabulary, grammar, reading

skills, extracurricular reading and psychological quality. The purpose of this study is to find the problems of junior middle school students in rural areas in English reading under the current situation of unequal educational resources, and put forward relevant measures to cultivate this ability combined with pre-service experience. In this process, we should not only cultivate their English reading ability, but also their interests in English reading and English learning. The results of this study can give more teachers and pre-service teachers more teaching guidance experience, and improve the overall English learning level of junior middle school students by cultivating their English reading ability in rural areas. In this way, middle school students in rural areas will not lag behind middle school students in urban areas in English reading, laying the foundation for their next stage of English learning and high school learning.

II. ENGLISH READING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

In the current middle school English examinations in China, the proportion of reading questions is relatively large. The purpose is to test students' ability to comprehensively apply the language knowledge they have learned, including reading ability, comprehension ability, summarization and generalization ability, logical reasoning ability, as well as the ability to evaluate raw materials (Tian, 2000: 64). The main purpose of junior high school English reading is to understand the ideas expressed by the author. The purposes of reading teaching are fourthly: First, to cultivate and develop students' reading skills; The second is to learn language knowledge in the text. Third, understand information and enrich knowledge; The fourth is appreciation and enjoyment (Cheng, 2008). Excellent reading texts can broaden students' horizons, activate their thinking, increase their wisdom and cultivate their spirit (Zhao, 2015).

In the new era, basic foreign language education

shoulders the important task of cultivating people for the Party and talents for the country. It aims to foster a large number of high-level international talents with patriotic feelings, international perspectives, and comprehensive English language application abilities (Chen, 2018), and to tell and understand China's stories well in foreign languages. At the same time, they can also tell foreign stories well and smoothly in their native language (Wang, 2024). These foreign language talents with Chinese hearts play an important role in absorbing the outstanding achievements of human civilization, spreading Chinese culture, and building a community with a shared future for mankind (Liu & Zheng, 2018).

At present, many educators, scholars, experts and experienced teachers have discussed how to improve students' English reading comprehension and provided us with valuable experience (Kong, 2009; Zhang, 2012). To teachers, they should have a good understanding and implement the intention of the textbook compilation, effectively utilize various language materials and activity tasks provided by the textbook, constantly discover problems in teaching, conduct analysis and research, and find practical and feasible solutions, thereby helping students improve their English reading proficiency (Zheng, 2008). In conclusion, it is mainly the improvement of students' reading skills and reading speed. First of all, students should accumulate vocabulary and grammar knowledge at ordinary times, so as to improve their reading speed and master the main content of an article faster. Secondly, teachers should teach students some appropriate reading skills, such as skimming and searching, and use key words to master the important information in the text. Finally, cultivate students' interests in English reading. It is mainly achieved by increasing the amount of extracurricular reading. On this basis, this research will analyze the current situation of junior middle school students' English reading ability and interests in rural areas, find out their existing problems, and put forward countermeasures to

improve their English reading ability from the aspects of interests, vocabulary, grammar, reading skills, extracurricular reading and psychological quality.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The research questions of this research include two main aspects, consisting the problems in English reading of middle school students in rural areas and the measures to cultivate the English reading ability of middle school students in rural areas.

This study took 203 students in grade two of Beisu middle school, a rural middle school in Jining, Shandong Province, as the research object. It adopted the research method of questionnaire survey, which is adapted from the questionnaire in the previous research of Tian & Gao (2016). In order to ensure the authenticity and validity of the data, the questionnaire is anonymous. On May 25, 2025, it was

sent to the teaching director of the second grade of the school by e-mail and students filled out the questionnaire. Based on the survey data, this study analyzes the current situation of middle school students' reading ability in rural areas, and finds out the methods to adapt to the cultivation of middle school students' English reading ability in rural areas.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Lack of Interests in English Reading

Interest is the teacher of learning. If students have no interest, they are easy to fall behind in English reading. Therefore, cultivating students' interests in learning is also a crucial point. Once students develop an interest in English, they will regard learning English as an inner need rather than a burden (Liang, 2011). This research investigates students' interests in English reading through questionnaires (See Table 4-1).

Table 4-1 Students' Interests in English Reading

Question	Answers	Proportion
1. Are you interested in English reading?	A. Very interested	26%
	B. Quite interested	37%
	C. Not very interested	30%
	D. Not interested at all	7%

From this data analysis, a large number of students are not interested in English reading. Of course, there are many reasons why students are not interested in English reading. There are reasons why students lose interests in English reading, but it

doesn't mean that they lose interests at the very beginning of learning. Then, by investigating the difficulties students encounter in English reading, we will explore the reasons why students lose interests in English reading (See Table 4-2).

Table 4-2 Difficulties Students Encountered in English Reading

Questions	Answers	Proportion
2. How difficult do you think the materials you usually read are?	A. Extremely difficult	14%
	B. It's rather difficult	16%
	C. Common	36%
	D. Relatively simple	18%
	E. Very simple	16%
3. What difficulties do you encounter in English reading?	A. The grammar is too difficult	24%
	B. There are too many new words	45%

C. I have no interest and can't get into it 31%

Basically, it is because they encounter difficulties in English reading. From this data analysis, except for lack of interests, most students have difficulties in English reading in terms of grammar and new words. And there is a situation that the difficulty of reading materials is inconsistent with their English reading level.

4.2 Incomplete English Knowledge System

Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) (2022) points out that

teachers should be adept at using mind maps or information structure diagrams to teach students to establish connections between scattered information and new and old knowledge, and to summarize and refine new knowledge structures based on themes. English knowledge system includes students' vocabulary mastery ability and grammar mastery ability, which is directly related to students' understanding of the relationship before vocabulary, sentence and context (See Table 4-3).

Table 4-3 Problems in Students' English Knowledge System

Questions	Answers	Proportion
4. What are the manifestations of your vocabulary obstacles during the reading process?	A. There are too many new words, which affect the main idea and details of the article	22%
	B. The presence of new words does not affect the understanding of the main idea of the article, but it does affect the comprehension of the details	39%
	C. When encountering new words, one gets annoyed and loses interests and confidence in reading	39%
5. What are the manifestations of your syntactic obstacles during the reading process?	A. When encountering long sentences, one often gets confused about the sentence structure and finds it hard to understand the meaning	33%
	B. When encountering complex sentences, it is easy to cause comprehension deviations and it is very difficult to understand the meaning of the sentence	40%
	C. Various syntactic phenomena (such as omission, inversion, separation, etc.) have a significant impact on understanding sentence structure and meaning	27%
6. What are the manifestations of your semantic barriers during the reading process?	A. Failing to understand the semantic connection or logical relationship between the context	50%
	B. Failing to grasp the main idea of a paragraph or the entire text, and having difficulty understanding the meaning of the text	34%
	C. Only understanding the surface meaning without grasping the connotation makes it difficult to make inferences and judgments	16%

From this data analysis, students have common obstacles in vocabulary, syntax and semantics. These obstacles are caused by the incomplete knowledge system of English. In addition, these obstacles will directly affect their interests in English reading and even English learning.

4.3 Insufficient Amount of English Extracurricular Reading

The strength of English reading ability is related to the amount of reading. If the amount of reading is enough, students can also learn relevant English knowledge from the reading materials, which is conducive to the next step of English reading. In addition to the reading materials taught by teachers in class, students should also carry out extracurricular reading for training. If the amount of

reading is insufficient, it will cause some reading disabilities. (See Table 4-4)

Table 4-4 Students' Extracurricular Reading Volume

Questions	Answers	Proportion
7. Where does the reading training that the teacher usually gives come from?	A. Textbook	34%
	B. Test Paper	49%
	C. Other publications or works	17%
8. How much time do you spend on extracurricular English reading approximately every week?	A. 0 to 1 hour	19%
	B. One to two hours	26%
	C. 2 to 4 hours	35%
	D. More than 4 hours	20%

From this data analysis, students' reading training mainly comes from textbooks and test papers, that is, students generally refer to English reading in class. In addition, students' extracurricular reading is obviously insufficient. These conditions are not conducive to improving their reading ability.

4.4 Lack of English Reading Skills

Due to the limitations of conditions, it is very difficult for rural students to learn English, and

English reading teaching is even more challenging. How to teach students to learn to read by applying reading strategies has become a topic of common concern for English teachers (Zhang, 2012: 174). Different reading materials have different reading skills. The accurate mastery and use of reading skills can improve students' reading speed and efficiency (See Table 4-5).

Table 4-5 Issues Related to Students' English Reading Skills

Questions	Answers	Proportion
9. What reading style do you adopt when reading?	A. Skim and read the main idea	17%
	B. Read sentence by sentence	70%
	C. Look up the dictionary and translate sentence by sentence	13%
10. Can you summarize reading skills to improve your reading efficiency?	A. Often	41%
	B. Sometimes	45%
	C. No.	14%

From this data analysis, the students did not master all kinds of reading skills. In ordinary reading training, there is a situation of not paying attention to the use of reading skills. This reduces their reading speed and efficiency to a certain extent.

4.5 Strong Willingness to Improving English Reading Ability

Where there is a will, there is a way. Positive English reading psychological quality can help

students overcome learning difficulties and make progress. When students no longer view English writing merely as a way to pass exams but closely integrate it with their daily life needs, it is bound to stimulate their subjective initiative in learning (Shen, 2020). There are many deficiencies in English reading, but as long as students are willing to improve and take action, they will certainly make progress (See Table 4-6).

Table 4-6 Students' Willingness and Ways to Improving English Reading Ability

Question	Answers	Proportion
11. Which of the following methods do you think can help you improve your English reading ability?	A. I have no intention of improving and am very satisfied with my achievements	0%
	B. Master some reading skills to improve English reading ability	39%
	C. Master more English words or grammar	38%
	D. Read more extracurricular English books	23%

From this data analysis, all these students have ideas to improve their English reading ability. This positive psychological quality of English reading is very beneficial to improve English reading ability.

V. PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

5.1 Stimulating the Interests in English Reading

English teachers need to stimulate students' interests in English reading. In order to stimulate students' interests in English reading articles and enable them to form the initiative of reading articles independently, teachers can create reasonable and vivid scenes by means of game introduction, suspense setting, appreciation of albums, introduction of relevant background, comparison of text illustrations, etc. before reading, so as to stimulate students' interests in reading the text and finally guide students to read independently. In addition, the cultivation of English reading interests can also be realized by building a reading communication platform and giving play to the role of multiple evaluation. For example, the above teachers assign students to make an English tabloid about "protecting animals" after class, and evaluate and display excellent works in the window. Through these methods, students' love of reading is extended. Cultivating students' interests in English reading will constantly stimulate students' desire to read, and then push their reading taste to a higher level.

5.2 Developing a Solid English Knowledge System

Most rural students belong to left behind children. Due to the long-term lack of parental supervision, their learning consciousness and self-discipline are lack. With the increase of English learning knowledge in junior middle school and its weak foundation, students' English knowledge in vocabulary, sentence pattern and grammar is not solid. Influenced by the above factors, students' English reading has encountered great challenges. Thus, a solid knowledge of English language plays a vital role in developing students' English reading

ability. To solidly improve students' language knowledge, teachers need to seriously implement the word level and grammar level in their usual teaching, and do a good job in after-school tracking. In this way, we can clear the basic obstacles for students' text reading.

5.3 Increasing the Amount of Extracurricular English Reading

The amount of English reading determines students' familiarity with reading materials, and familiarity with reading materials will directly interfere with students' understanding of the text. Expanding students' reading capacity is an effective way to improve students' English reading ability. Teachers can encourage students to increase the amount of reading by borrowing books, e-reading, news and newspaper reading, parent-child reading, etc., in order to achieve the effect of qualitative change through quantitative change.

5.4 Strengthening Reading Strategy Training

Many people think that reading strategy training for students with strong reading ability is better, but the research data show that students with weak reading ability perform better in reading strategy training. Because students with strong reading ability can already use various reading strategies, the effect of targeted training on them is not so obvious. However, students with weak reading ability will use the learned strategies in English reading in training, so the effect is obvious. As rural junior middle school English teachers, they will face many students with weak reading level, and rural students know little about reading strategies. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to integrate strategic reading into daily teaching, and the training of reading strategies is urgent.

5.5 Enhancing Reading Psychological Quality

Students are the main body of learning. Therefore, the improvement of reading ability is also inseparable from students' own efforts. In daily English reading training, teachers should encourage

students to actively cooperate and participate in English reading teaching activities, advocate students to formulate effective reading goals, flexibly use English reading strategies in practice, and further enhance students' reading self-confidence, so as to improve their English reading ability.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the status quo of English reading pedagogy among rural junior high school students in Shandong Province, China, identifying critical challenges and proposing evidence-based interventions. The analysis of questionnaire data from 203 Grade 2 students at Beisu Middle School reveals five salient findings: students are lack of interests in English reading, incomplete English knowledge system, insufficient amount of English extracurricular reading, lack of English reading skills but have strong willingness to improving English reading ability. Accordingly, this study has proposed some measures: interest stimulation, knowledge system fortification, reading volume expansion, strategy training, and psychological resilience cultivation—align with the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022).

By bridging pedagogical innovation with systemic support, this research provides an actionable framework for mitigating urban-rural disparities in English reading proficiency. Sustainable improvement necessitates collaborative efforts among educators, policymakers, and communities to transform rural EFL classrooms into incubators of confident, strategic readers.

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A Statistical Analysis of Ukraine’s Wartime University Situation

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 19 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 17 Aug 2025; Accepted: 19 Aug 2025; Available online: 22 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Ukraine Universities, Ukraine War, Ukraine University Invasion</p>	<p><i>The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused an unprecedented disruption to higher education, displacing more than 665,000 students and 200,000 scholars while destroying or damaging one-fifth of the nation’s universities. This paper employs detailed statistical analysis to assess the scale of institutional devastation, demographic patterns of displacement, and the consequent threat to Ukraine’s intellectual capital. I argue that Ukrainian universities have demonstrated resilience through rapid digital adaptation, physical relocation, and innovative hybrid learning models. International partners have mobilized emergency support in the form of scholarships, technology, psychosocial programs, and global academic partnerships. Challenges persist, particularly in credential recognition, funding shortfalls, and psychological trauma among displaced students. Despite these obstacles, Ukrainian universities illustrate how higher education can endure and transform under conditions of violent conflict. Their response provides critical lessons for safeguarding education in global conflict zones and highlights the necessity of sustained international investment to preserve intellectual continuity amid war.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has precipitated a catastrophic exodus of approximately 200,000 students and scientists from their educational institutions. Many of these academic refugees may never return to their universities absent a restoration of peace and stability in the region. This displacement represents merely one dimension of a conflict that has methodically dismantled Ukraine's educational infrastructure. Ukrainian educational authorities report that 126 schools and universities have been destroyed, while an additional 1,635 educational facilities have sustained significant damage.

Ukrainian universities were, prior to the invasion, experiencing a period of remarkable growth. International student enrollment had increased dramatically, rising from 53,664 in 2011 to 80,470 by 2019. This trajectory of expansion has been violently interrupted by the conflict. One in five higher education institutions now lies damaged or destroyed, a statistic that speaks to the scale of physical devastation. Perhaps more concerning is that over 17% of pre-war scientists have abandoned their research entirely, raising questions about a potential "lost generation" of Ukrainian scholars.

The educational consequences of this conflict extend far beyond physical destruction. With 665,000

students displaced—approximately 16% of all enrolled students—the war has engendered an educational crisis that threatens Ukraine's future workforce and economic recovery. This disruption affects not only Ukrainian students but also the thousands of international students who had selected Ukraine for their education. I've found it particularly instructive to examine how Ukrainian educational institutions are responding to this unprecedented challenge. Throughout this exposition, we shall investigate these responses alongside global efforts to support displaced students during this ongoing crisis.

1. War Forces Mass Closure of Ukraine Universities

Russia's full-scale invasion has wrought unprecedented devastation upon Ukraine's higher education system since February 24, 2022. The arithmetic of this destruction is staggering: 63 institutions destroyed and hundreds more severely damaged [7]. A joint study by the World Bank, Ukrainian government, EU, and UN reveals that as of February 2024, 21% of higher education institutions have been damaged or destroyed, with research institutions facing even more calamitous destruction rates at 31% [10]. These statistics, while illuminating the scale of devastation, cannot fully capture the intellectual and cultural loss that accompanies each damaged lecture hall or laboratory.

The eastern regions, where Russian forces concentrated their attacks, have borne the brunt of this academic destruction. Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, and Chernihiv regions experienced the most significant losses, with 25, 23, and 12 higher education institutions destroyed respectively [7]. As I (Jonathan Kenigson) contend, this pattern reflects a broader historical context of educational disruption in the region. Since 2014, over 1,500 Ukrainian educational and research organizations have been seized by Russia, including 289 higher education institutions such as universities, institutes, and colleges [8]. This sequential dismantling of educational infrastructure represents a seismic threat to Ukraine's intellectual sovereignty.

When the invasion began, Ukrainian universities immediately suspended operations for two weeks [8]. Despite facing existential challenges, most institutions have demonstrated remarkable resilience, remaining

operational throughout the conflict. Many adapted by switching to distance or mixed forms of education to accommodate geographically dispersed students and staff [7]. In some universities, students conduct studies from bomb shelters, while others have adopted distance learning to better protect their community [10]. To lose wonder at this transformation and its educational implications is to ignore the innate human capacity for adaptation under duress.

The financial impact has been cataclysmic, with public funding for higher education reduced by 10 percent after the invasion began [7]. The mathematics of diminishment grows more severe when examining research funding: in 2023, the ministry of education and science cut funding for fundamental research by nearly 60 percent, applied research by nearly 70 percent, and research by young scientists by nearly 80 percent [7].

Nevertheless, Ukrainian universities persist in functioning. The combination of destruction, displacement, limited access to quality online education, psychological stress, and financial constraints has placed the system under intense pressure [8]. Approximately 20% of Ukrainian academic and research staff have been forced to take refuge in other countries, while many others who remain are no longer engaged in higher education [8]. Despite facing significant losses, the Ukrainian higher education system has survived the ongoing armed conflict [7]. This survival, however partial and tentative, speaks to an enduring commitment to knowledge and education even amid the most adverse conditions imaginable.

2. 200,000 Students Displaced: A Demographic Breakdown

The conflict in Ukraine has catalyzed an educational diaspora of remarkable proportions, with at least 665,000 students—16% of the total student population—having fled to neighboring countries [3]. This exodus constitutes a fragment of a broader humanitarian crisis characterized by statistically significant gender asymmetry; women comprise an overwhelming 86% of adult Ukrainian refugees [11]. Military obligations have anchored many men within Ukraine's borders [11], creating a refugee

demographic heavily skewed toward women and children.

Young Ukrainians, who represent approximately one-fourth of the nation's entire population, encounter distinctive challenges as they navigate educational discontinuities [5]. Among the estimated 8 million internally displaced persons within Ukraine itself, over 74% have children in their households [3]—a statistic that illuminates the crisis's pervasive impact on familial structures and educational trajectories.

The distribution of displaced students across host nations reveals significant variations in absorption capacity and integration approaches. Poland has emerged as the primary educational sanctuary, with approximately 173,000 refugee children from Ukraine currently enrolled in its primary and secondary school systems [11]. These Ukrainian students now comprise 4% of all registered pupils in Poland [11]. However, enrollment patterns diverge markedly across age cohorts—a mere 22% of Ukrainian students at secondary school age attended Polish schools by the conclusion of the previous academic year [11].

I (Jonathan Kenigson) found it particularly striking that despite considerable progress in educational access, more than 600,000 school-aged refugee children remain outside formal educational systems throughout the European Union [9]. This enrollment deficit stems partially from families' continued allegiance to Ukrainian educational continuity—57% of families who have not registered their children in local schools cite online or remote education using Ukrainian content as their primary justification [9].

The landscape of educational integration across European host nations remains fragmented and incomplete. Many countries continue to report double-digit percentages of Ukrainian refugee children not enrolled in their educational systems [9]. This educational limbo portends potential long-term learning deficits that may compromise these students' prospects for years, perhaps decades, to come [9]. The educational consequences of displacement, much like ripples in a pond, extend far beyond immediate disruption—they potentially reshape the intellectual landscape of an entire generation.

3. How Ukraine's Universities Attempted to Maintain Continuity

Ukrainian educational institutions exhibited a remarkable adaptivity in preserving academic continuity amidst full-scale invasion. Following Russia's incursion in February 2022, universities initially suspended operations; however, within a mere fortnight, many had resumed educational activities through digital platforms [8]. This rapid reconstitution speaks to an institutional resilience rarely documented in contemporary academic history.

The antecedent experience with remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic proved singularly valuable. Universities already possessed essential digital infrastructure—communication channels, assessment methodologies, and virtual platforms—facilitating a relatively smooth transition to emergency remote teaching [9]. This digital preparedness became vital as missile strikes and power disruptions generated persistent challenges throughout the conflict. One might cite the traditional maxim regarding necessity and invention; Ukrainian universities have certainly embodied this principle.

For institutions in occupied territories, physical relocation became essential for survival. Since 2014, eighteen public higher education institutions and one private institution have relocated from occupied regions to Ukraine-controlled territories [9]. The Council of the Rectors of Higher Education Institutions Relocated from the Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone was established in 2016 to coordinate these efforts [9]. Several universities, including Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, implemented what I would characterize as a "university without walls" paradigm—operating entirely virtually after losing access to physical facilities [10].

As the 2022-23 academic calendar approached, universities deployed several adaptive models:

- First-year students primarily attended in-person classes
- Faculty could select between online and offline instruction modalities
- "Mixed" formats permitted simultaneous in-person and remote participation
- Universities in comparatively secure regions established hybrid frameworks

The physical modifications were equally impressive. Several institutions constructed underground shelters containing classrooms and conference facilities, preparing for extended power outages with generators, water reserves, and sleeping equipment [8]. The Kyiv School of Economics was among the first to resume physical instruction in autumn 2022, largely due to these infrastructural adaptations [8].

Technical solutions were helpful in maintaining connectivity. Ukrainian educational institutions received Starlink equipment to provide reliable satellite communications in remote areas [11]. International partners contributed critical technologies—5,000 notebooks from UNICEF, 43,000 Chromebooks from Google, and approximately 5 million Microsoft Office 365 A1 licenses [11].

Beyond merely technical considerations, the resumption of studies served a psychological function. Classes provided what one observer aptly described as "an island of normalcy in a broken world" for both students and instructors [9], offering structure within chaos.

4. International Organizations Mobilize to Assist Displaced Students

The disruption of Ukraine's academic system has prompted a multifaceted response from international organizations seeking to preserve educational opportunities for displaced students. The International Task Force for Displaced Scholars has emerged as a coordinative nexus working in concert with the Association for Slavic, Eastern European & Eurasian Studies to aggregate and distribute information regarding available support mechanisms.

Financial assistance constitutes the pillar of numerous relief initiatives. The IIE Emergency Student Fund for Ukraine has disbursed grants to approximately 230 students at more than 140 American higher education institutions, with aggregate funding approaching USD 650,000. Concurrently, American Councils established their Emergency Support for Ukraine Initiative, generating more than USD 40,000 for immediate humanitarian intervention.

These organizations have directed their efforts toward several critical domains:

- Maintenance of academic continuity via scholarships and fellowships

- Procurement of housing and accommodation placement

- Provision of medical support and psychological counseling

- Facilitation of legal consultation and documentation assistance

- Distribution of direct financial aid for essential requirements

The IIE Scholar Rescue Fund has extracted 13 Ukrainian scholars specifically affected by the conflict. The Institute's Artist Protection Fund has likewise awarded six fellowships to Ukrainian artists requiring urgent support.

This mobilization transcends individual organizational boundaries. President Biden declared that 100,000 individuals fleeing Ukraine could secure refuge in the United States through the 'Uniting for Ukraine' program. Throughout European nations, universities have implemented tuition waivers, with dedicated scholarship initiatives launched across Germany, Poland, Denmark, and various neighboring states.

According to UNHCR data, more than 12.7 million people in Ukraine presently require urgent humanitarian intervention. This situation has catalyzed an unprecedented educational response from the global community. The Central European University has assembled comprehensive information regarding external scholarships specifically targeting Ukrainian students, guiding them toward viable educational pathways.

I've found it quite instructive for understanding the scope of this crisis to observe how international organizations coordinate their responses. Despite extensive efforts, the needs remain immense as the conflict continues to undermine Ukraine's higher education framework. What appears most crucial, as I contend, is the recognition that sustained support will prove essential for preserving educational opportunities for displaced Ukrainian students.

5. Neighboring Countries Open Doors to Ukrainian Students

The intensification of conflict has precipitated a rapid mobilization of educational support systems among nations bordering Ukraine. Poland has emerged as the principal host country, establishing eight border

crossing points and integrating approximately 173,000 refugee children into its educational framework. These Ukrainian students now constitute more than 4% of Poland's registered pupil population. Polish universities have demonstrated generosity in volunteering vacant dormitories, athletic facilities, and cultural centers as temporary accommodations for displaced scholars.

Polish educational authorities have noted, "Admitting 1.5 million refugees within two weeks is a challenge that no European country has faced for many, many years." This sentiment underscores the unprecedented scale of this educational migration. Concurrently, the Czech Republic has integrated 50,000 Ukrainian students into its educational institutions.

The continental response demonstrates considerable variation in support mechanisms. Estonian universities exempted all 274 Ukrainian students from tuition fees for spring 2022, with numerous institutions extending this exemption through autumn. German institutions expedited visa processing for refugee students, while Danish authorities formulated plans providing free education to all incoming Ukrainians.

Financial assistance programs have proliferated throughout Europe. France established a €1 million fund supporting Ukrainian artists and professionals, supplemented by an additional €300,000 specifically targeting Ukrainian art students enrolling at French colleges. Ireland implemented tuition reductions while offering complementary English language instruction and mental health services.

Beyond merely financial considerations, universities have constructed comprehensive support frameworks. The Medical University of Gdansk developed 'Midwives for Ukraine,' a program supporting pregnant women fleeing conflict. Law students at the University of Warsaw provide pro bono legal counsel for Ukrainians seeking residency status. Currently, the University of Lodz offers university dormitory accommodations to family members of enrolled Ukrainian students.

As I contend, the European response transcends simple educational accommodation, extending to administrative simplifications. Ukrainian citizens may legally remain in Poland for 18 months with unrestricted access to public healthcare. Hungary's

government has announced financial incentives for employers hiring Ukrainian refugees, thereby creating pathways to economic stability alongside educational opportunities.

An acknowledgement section may be presented after the conclusion, if desired.

6. Challenges in Academic Credit Recognition for Displaced Students

Recognition of academic credentials stands as perhaps the most formidable barrier confronting Ukrainian refugee students attempting to continue their education abroad. A recent OECD survey identified "equivalency issues with Ukrainian qualifications" as the second most significant impediment to enrollment in higher education systems, surpassed only by language difficulties [12]. This challenge persists despite Ukraine's membership in the Bologna process, which was designed to facilitate student mobility across Europe through standardized credit systems [12].

The chaos of wartime evacuation has predictably left many students without proper documentation. Credential evaluators face a particularly vexing dilemma when assessing qualifications that cannot be fully verified through traditional means. It is not sensible to state that universal recognition frameworks exist; Ukrainian diplomas are officially recognized in only 35 countries through bilateral agreements, and the process becomes significantly more labyrinthine for refugees without complete documentation [13].

Several international frameworks have emerged in response to these challenges:

- The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees provides standardized assessment for those lacking full documentation [14]
- The UNESCO qualifications passport aims to increase higher education access for refugees [15]
- The Erasmus+ Refugees and Recognition toolkit offers methodologies for credential evaluators [15]

As I contend, these frameworks represent laudable efforts but remain inadequate to the scale of the crisis. Host countries have responded with varying levels of flexibility. Norway has suspended its apostille requirement for Ukrainian educational documents [2], while in the United States, organizations like World

Education Services (WES) have established gateway programs to evaluate credentials of displaced individuals with limited proof of academic achievements [16].

Further complicating matters, many refugee students have partial qualifications due to interrupted studies [17]. The fragmentation of academic records mirrors the fragmentation of lives disrupted by war. Some ENIC-NARIC centers have developed procedures for assessing incomplete qualifications, aligning with the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention's commitment to recognize study periods [17].

Despite these efforts, educational institutions frequently lack adequate resources for proper implementation. When surveyed, universities cited insufficient staffing and the time-intensive nature of special recognition procedures as major obstacles to effective credential assessment [14]. Without proper recognition, refugee students risk losing years of academic achievement, thereby compounding the disruption of lives already upended by war.

7. Psychosocial Support Programs Launched for Refugee Students

The question of psychological trauma among displaced Ukrainian students presents a multidimensional challenge that extends beyond mere academic dislocation. Mental health experts have observed a marked reluctance among Ukrainian refugees to seek psychological assistance, primarily stemming from entrenched cultural stigma surrounding mental health interventions. "Ukrainian parents flat-out refused to allow their kids to receive mental health support," reports one program coordinator, illustrating the depth of these cultural barriers. This reluctance creates a complex therapeutic landscape requiring nuanced approaches.

Host countries across Europe and North America have constructed innovatively indirect intervention strategies. The TUTU Psychophysical Development Center in Poland, established May 2022, exemplifies this methodological sensitivity – deliberately avoiding explicit mental health terminology during initial refugee encounters. Rather than framing services in psychological terms, staff characterize activities as helping children "feel calmer," thereby gradually establishing familial trust. By November 2022, this center had served approximately 4,500

Ukrainian refugees, predominantly children, providing 15,000-20,000 participation sessions—a testament to the efficacy of culturally-sensitive approaches.

School-based interventions have demonstrated effectiveness in this domain. Educational environments provide natural contexts for psychological support, offering structure within which therapeutic interventions appear less explicitly clinical. Research indicates that peer support mechanisms, creative expression opportunities, and psychoeducational programs significantly reduce mental health difficulties among refugee children. Several educational institutions have developed comprehensive programs featuring:

- Art therapy sessions enabling visual expression of traumatic experiences
- Animal therapy for children struggling with verbal articulation of distress
- Integration rooms where specialists observe children for trauma manifestations such as aggression or withdrawal

I have found that gender disparities in help-seeking behavior merit particular attention in this population. Mental health professionals consistently report that refugee men pursue counseling services less frequently than women. Furthermore, the current demographic pattern wherein Ukrainian children typically flee with mothers while fathers remain in Ukraine creates a familial separation that compounds existing psychological challenges. This separation introduces additional layers of anxiety and adjustment difficulty beyond those inherent to displacement itself.

UNHCR and affiliated organizations have recognized that sustainable support must emerge from within refugee communities themselves. The training of refugee community outreach volunteers creates pathways through which culturally appropriate guidance toward services can occur. Notably, programs like the Ukrainian Mental Health Support Program in Los Angeles and McGill University's initiative in Montreal depend heavily on crowdfunding and donations—a financial model that, while demonstrating community commitment, raises questions about long-term sustainability. As I contend, the psychological dimension of educational

displacement may ultimately prove as consequential as the academic disruption itself.

8. Impact on Ukraine's Future Workforce and Economy

The mass displacement of students and scholars from Ukrainian universities constitutes a profound threat to the nation's economic resilience and future workforce development. One might cite the immediate humanitarian concerns, but the deeper implications warrant more careful consideration. This disruption to higher education critically undermines Ukraine's capacity to generate the specialized professionals necessary for post-war reconstruction and economic stability.

A more mathematically tenable approach to understanding this crisis involves examining the structural constraints it places on Ukraine's intellectual capital. The war has disproportionately affected STEM disciplines—mathematics, physics, engineering—that form the foundation of industrial development and technological innovation. The quantification of this impact reveals a stark reality: sectors requiring specialized expertise face talent shortages that will persist well beyond any cessation of hostilities.

From a conditionally nominalistic perspective, the brain drain engendered by this academic exodus creates both immediate and long-term economic vulnerabilities. Ukraine risks losing its comparative advantage in sectors previously sustained by locally trained specialists. The country's information technology sector, which contributed approximately 4% to GDP before the invasion and employed over 200,000 professionals, exemplifies this vulnerability to talent migration.

Equally concerning is the diminution of Ukraine's research capacity. With funding for research reduced by nearly 60%, applied research by nearly 70%, and research by young scientists by nearly 80%, the innovation pipeline faces severe constraints.

The educational disruption widens socioeconomic disparities within Ukraine through a process analogous to mathematical stratification. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds encounter greater obstacles in continuing their education abroad or accessing quality online alternatives. This asymmetry threatens to entrench inequality in professional

opportunities once reconstruction begins.

As I contend, Ukraine's economic recovery depends significantly on whether displaced students eventually return with their acquired knowledge. The longer the conflict persists, the higher the probability that these students will establish professional roots elsewhere, creating a permanent subtraction from Ukraine's human capital and future workforce potential.

9. Ukraine Universities Innovate to Survive the Crisis

The extraordinary pressures confronting Ukrainian higher education institutions have catalyzed remarkable innovations that ensure their continued operation. Rather than implementing conventional crisis responses, these universities have presciently reconceptualized their operational models, thereby establishing paradigms of academic resilience worthy of emulation.

Perhaps the most compelling example of this adaptability involves the geographic relocation of academic institutions. Since 2014, eighteen public higher education institutions and one private institution have successfully transplanted their operations from occupied territories to Ukraine-controlled regions [9]. V. I. Vernadsky Taurida University exemplifies this phenomenon, having transferred from Simferopol, Crimea to Kyiv in 2015, while Donetsk National University reestablished itself in Vinnytsia in 2014 [9]. By 2022, this migratory pattern had expanded exponentially to encompass 42 universities and 94 colleges from eastern and southern regions [18].

Beyond physical relocation, these institutions have developed academically innovative programs responding to emerging societal requirements. For instance, the Kyiv School of Economics introduced a memory studies and public history master's program predicated upon principles of community and collective future-shaping [9]. Concurrently, Ukrainian Catholic University established a "Future of Heritage" master's program addressing analogous societal imperatives [9].

Throughout this period of conflict, universities have undergone a metamorphosis into multifunctional institutions serving diverse purposes:

- Centers for volunteer coordination collecting

supplies and protective equipment for frontline regions [1]

- Research hubs addressing war-related challenges, including soil analysis for demining operations [1]

- Pioneers in digital education developing mobile applications facilitating remote access to materials [1]

I have found it particularly instructive to examine cases like Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, which manifests the "university without walls" concept—transcending physical boundaries through digital technologies [19]. Similarly, Sumy National Agrarian University persists in its educational mission despite constant shelling threats, leveraging international partnerships to sustain its development [1].

What strikes me as most significant is the transition from institutional competition to collaboration, as universities construct durable partnerships both domestically and internationally. This cooperative approach has yielded remarkable outcomes, including dual-degree programs exemplified by Sumy's "Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security" partnership with Royal Agricultural University (UK) [1].

The metamorphosis of Ukrainian universities demonstrates how academic institutions can not merely survive but flourish amid circumstances that would otherwise appear insurmountable. Their experience provides valuable lessons for higher education globally, illustrating how academic freedom and democratic principles can be preserved even as institutions transform into agents of societal change [1].

10. Global Academic Partnerships Strengthen Ukraine's Education Sector

Academic partnerships between Ukrainian and international universities have emerged as crucial lifelines throughout the ongoing conflict. These cross-border collaborations represent more than conventional aid mechanisms—they constitute strategic investments in Ukraine's intellectual sovereignty during a period of unprecedented disruption. The collaborative frameworks established by these partnerships preserve the continuity of scholarly inquiry despite widespread physical devastation of educational infrastructure.

I have found the emergence of formal twinning arrangements between Ukrainian and international institutions particularly instructive for understanding academic resilience during conflict. The UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative exemplifies this approach, pairing British universities with specific Ukrainian counterparts. Such partnerships transcend symbolic solidarity, facilitating knowledge transfer in crisis management, digital infrastructure development, and curricular adaptation. Similar collaborative frameworks have been established across Europe, with French, German, and Polish universities assuming leadership roles in this domain.

These partnerships focus on five primary domains of collaboration. First, joint research projects maintain Ukrainian scientific contributions despite infrastructure damage. Second, faculty development programs enable Ukrainian professors to continue professional growth amidst displacement. Third, student exchange mechanisms facilitate degree completion for displaced students. Fourth, curriculum internationalization strengthens global recognition of Ukrainian credentials. Fifth, digital library access ensures scholarly resource availability despite physical destruction of university holdings.

The European University Association has facilitated collaborative governance models between Western and Ukrainian institutions, thereby strengthening administrative capacity during wartime operations. As physical campuses suffer damage from military operations, virtual collaborations become increasingly valuable. Ukrainian faculty gain access to international teaching platforms, laboratory simulations, and digital classrooms when their facilities remain unusable.

Financial sustainability constitutes another critical dimension of these partnerships. International collaborators assist Ukrainian universities in diversifying funding sources through joint grant applications, social enterprise development, and philanthropic networks. Following traditional aid periods, these partnerships aim to establish self-sustaining educational models less dependent on uncertain governmental funding.

One might cite traditional humanitarian frameworks as the motivation for such collaborations, but this interpretation would neglect the reciprocal benefits

accruing to partner institutions. Ukrainian universities maintain intellectual sovereignty while gaining international integration—a strategic approach preserving national academic identity amid widespread disruption. These partnerships represent not merely humanitarian assistance but strategic investment in Ukraine's future intellectual capital and, by extension, its post-war recovery capacity.

11. Funding Initiatives to Rebuild Ukraine Universities

The physical recuperation of Ukraine's war-ravaged university infrastructure has become increasingly dependent upon financial commitments from international institutions. The European Investment Bank has designated a €10 million EU-guaranteed loan for energy efficiency improvements across 16 Ukrainian universities situated in cities including Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa [20]. These renovations encompass thermal insulation, contemporary heating systems, and enhanced facility accessibility—all practical necessities for institutions enduring the vicissitudes of wartime operation.

Such funding does not emerge in isolation. The Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P) Fund has supplemented these efforts with an additional €3.25 million grant directed toward renovations at six specifically selected universities [20]. I've found it particularly instructive that these upgrades aim not merely to reduce energy consumption—a perennial concern of academic institutions—but to create spaces of greater resilience and safety for students persisting in their studies amid extraordinary challenges.

The European Union's establishment of the Ukraine Facility represents a more reliable long-term commitment, providing up to €50 billion in stable financial support between 2024 and 2027 [21]. At the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024, the European Commission President announced €1.4 billion in new guarantee and grant agreements explicitly supporting Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction efforts [21]. These monetary allocations, while hefty, merely constitute the foundation of what must ultimately become a comprehensive rebuilding of Ukraine's intellectual infrastructure.

Private sector initiatives have not remained peripheral to these governmental efforts. XTX Markets created

the Ukrainian Global Excellence Fund, pledging £7.5 million over two years to foster excellence throughout Ukrainian academia [22]. This commitment builds upon their earlier Academic Sanctuaries Fund, which allocated over £16 million to 32 organizations [22]. Such private sector involvement represents a recognition that the preservation of intellectual capital requires diverse funding sources beyond traditional governmental allocations.

The Canadian government, recognizing the distinctive needs of displaced researchers, established a special fund supporting research trainees from Ukraine, modeled on a pre-existing refugee program [4]. Numerous American universities have likewise created targeted scholarship programs, with the University of Chicago offering full-tuition scholarships to Ukrainian undergraduates affected by the invasion [4].

As one reconstruction expert aptly noted, "Ukraine will need more higher education to keep up with the need for more trained people" [23]. This observation captures an immutable truth—that rebuilding higher education transcends mere physical reconstruction. What these funding initiatives ultimately support is the preservation and nurturing of Ukraine's intellectual foundation amid unprecedented destruction, an investment whose dividends will manifest in the nation's capacity to rebuild itself intellectually, culturally, and economically in the decades to come.

12. Lessons from Ukraine for Higher Education in Conflict Zones

The systematic dismantling of Ukraine's educational infrastructure furnishes a case study framework for understanding how higher education might persist amid violent conflict. Ukrainian universities present a natural experiment whose outcomes warrant philosophical and practical scrutiny. The Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, while established prior to the current invasion, have acquired renewed epistemological significance as they delineate parameters for minimizing the deleterious consequences of armed conflict on educational continuity.

One might naturally question whether such guidelines maintain practical utility when confronted

with the scale of destruction in Ukraine – where one in five higher education institutions has been either destroyed or significantly damaged during the Russian invasion. The Education Under Attack 2024 report, published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, identified approximately 6,000 attacks on educational institutions across thirty countries experiencing armed conflict during 2022-2023. This statistical regularity suggests that educational institutions consistently face targeting during conflicts, regardless of international norms.

The transfiguration of Ukraine's higher education system demonstrates that universities must adapt with remarkable celerity to conflict conditions. Ukrainian institutions relocated from occupied territories exemplify this adaptability – eighteen public universities and one private institution having relocated since 2014. This observed pattern of institutional migration suggests a generalizable principle: universities in conflict zones should develop contingency plans that transcend their physical locations.

Higher education, while typically accorded diminished priority during reconstruction efforts, possesses the potential to function as a catalyst for effective post-war recovery. Through specialized teaching programs in key subject domains, universities supply skills essential for rebuilding war-torn societies.

Ukrainian universities' experiences yield multiple practical derivations: establishing secure shelters within educational buildings, developing hybrid teaching models, and creating support systems for displaced faculty and students. The emotional toll of war necessitates psychological support mechanisms, particularly when 97.8% of students and staff report deteriorated psychoemotional states.

These lessons extend beyond Ukraine, establishing a framework for protecting higher education in conflict zones globally-preserving not merely physical infrastructure, but the intellectual foundation upon which post-conflict societies must necessarily rebuild. As I contend, understanding the preservation of educational continuity amid conflict requires a different conceptual approach than traditional humanitarian response models.

13. Prospects for Displaced Ukrainian Students

The long-term educational trajectory of Ukrainian refugee students remains inextricably bound to their intentions regarding eventual repatriation. The empirical evidence suggests that most displaced Ukrainians harbor intentions to return to their homeland, with approximately 65% expressing a desire to return when circumstances permit such movement. Only a small minority indicate no intention whatsoever of returning to Ukraine. While security considerations (94%) and access to fundamental services (91%) constitute the primary determinants of such decisions, educational factors nevertheless exert influence on these calculations.

A formidable obstacle impeding educational planning is the profound uncertainty surrounding credential recognition. Several European nations – France, Lithuania, and Spain among them – report that apprehension regarding the future recognition of academic qualifications upon return to Ukraine creates significant barriers to enrollment in vocational education programs. This challenge is compounded by the fact that approximately half of the 1.3 million displaced Ukrainian children have yet to secure enrollment in their host countries' educational systems.

I contend that a "dual-intent" approach represents the most prudent strategy – one that simultaneously prepares students for protracted sojourns abroad while facilitating their eventual return to Ukraine. Such an unprecedented approach necessitates extraordinary cooperation between host nations and Ukraine through several vital mechanisms:

The development of skills relevant to Ukraine's reconstruction needs (construction, engineering, healthcare, information technology) creates opportunities irrespective of students' ultimate geographical location. The simplification of qualification recognition systems between Ukraine and host countries would facilitate both current integration and future repatriation. Maintaining Ukrainian language instruction abroad preserves the cultural connections essential for successful reintegration.

As the third disrupted academic year concludes, more than 600,000 school-aged refugee children remain outside formal educational structures across the

European Union. Though 57% of families who have not enrolled their children cite online Ukrainian education as their primary rationale, UNHCR emphasizes that local school enrollment need not preclude eventual reintegration into the Ukrainian system.

The maintenance of financial and digital connections with Ukraine through technological solutions like the DIIA application may facilitate smoother transitions, yet the extended nature of this displacement demands strategic planning that transcends emergency responses.

CONCLUSION

The war in Ukraine has precipitated what I contend is the most significant educational catastrophe in recent European history. Russian aggression has methodically dismantled one-fifth of Ukraine's higher education infrastructure, displaced 665,000 students, and compelled approximately 200,000 students and scientists to abandon their academic homes. What distinguishes this catastrophe, however, is not merely its scale but the remarkable resilience demonstrated by Ukrainian academic institutions. Universities have reconstituted themselves through conceptual innovations like "universities without walls," physical adaptations including underground shelter-classrooms, and comprehensive digital transformations. These responses reflect not merely adaptability but an eminently humane determination to preserve intellectual continuity amid systematic destruction.

The international academic community's response has been considerable if imperfect. Global academic partnerships, though necessarily improvisational, have established channels for knowledge preservation that transcend physical infrastructure. Countries neighboring Ukraine deserve particular recognition – Poland's integration of 173,000 refugee children into its education system represents an unprecedented absorption of displaced learners. Despite these efforts, intractable challenges persist. The absence of standardized credential recognition mechanisms, pervasive psychological trauma, and uncertain repatriation timelines collectively create formidable barriers to educational continuity.

The Ukrainian educational community's persistence

against overwhelming obstacles provides a powerful demonstration of education's enduring value. Their experience makes evident that academic freedom requires active protection, particularly during periods of existential threat. Physical infrastructure, though essential, remains secondary to the preservation of Ukraine's intellectual capital—a task requiring sustained global commitment throughout this protracted conflict and eventual recovery.

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Understanding teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning: A theoretical framework

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 01 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 27 Jul 2025; Accepted: 30 Jul 2025; Available online: 23 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords—assessment for learning, teacher-based assessment, enactment, teacher agency, pedagogical nexus</p>	<p><i>Assessment for learning has received extensive interest in assessment research and practice. However, despite the research on teachers’ assessment for learning practices, there has been limited attention paid to understanding and theorising teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning. This paper develops a theoretical framework for understanding teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning in their situated contexts. Specifically, this paper draws on four layers of theories which address teacher-based assessment, the role of teacher, situated educational contexts and assessment practice transfer and enactment. This framework not only focuses on assessment practice itself but also focuses on the process in which assessment for learning is filtered through teacher agency and the situated pedagogical nexus. It understands teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning as a product inevitably shaped and transformed by teachers’ professional knowledge, agency, and wider educational contexts.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment for learning has become an area of research that has received theoretical and practical attention. Developed from studies typically conducted in Anglophone contexts, the idea of assessment for learning has been adopted, decontextualised and recontextualised in other contexts across the world. Studies have been conducted on teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning worldwide, and the challenges of implementing assessment for learning in different classroom settings have been acknowledged. For instance, Nusche (2016) argued that the alignment between curriculum, standards, teaching and assessment is difficult to ensure, especially in the case of teacher-based assessment. The lack of clarity in assessment goals, the transversal nature of students’ competencies and the pressure from

standardised testing regimes all contribute to the difficulties in teachers’ implementation of assessment for learning (Nusche, 2016). Klenowski and Carter (2016) reported that in contexts where increasing accountability demands occur, formative and teacher-based assessment receives less acceptance and support. Xu and Harfitt (2019) also noted that contextual factors such as large class size, limited opportunities for individual feedback and immense teaching and marking responsibilities could contribute to the challenges in any implementation of assessment for learning.

Despite the extensive research on teachers’ assessment for learning practices to date, there has been little effort at understanding and theorising teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning in situated settings, especially those in non-Anglophone contexts. By enactment, the researcher means “the

diverse ways [teachers] creatively work to fabricate and forge practices out of policy texts and policy ideas in the light of their situated realities – a process of recontextualisation that produces some degree of heterogeneity in practice” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 142). Baird et al. (2017) argued that assessment for learning risks becoming a group of practical techniques in classrooms with only implicit theoretical underpinnings. Leong et al. (2018) also suggested that assessment for learning suffered from a lack of debate around its theorisation in situated contexts. In response to these calls, the purpose of this paper is to propose a theoretical framework to help understand teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning in their situated contexts. The framework builds on multiple layers of theories, which address not only teacher-based assessment practices but also the role of teachers, the educational contexts they work in, the transfer of practice and the enactment of assessment for learning. The researcher argues that teachers’ enactment of assessment for learning should not be understood as a practice of an individual but rather should be viewed as a product shaped and transformed by their professional knowledge, agency, and wider educational contexts.

The framework draws on four layers of theory. Firstly, theories of teacher-based assessment help conceptualise key issues, such as the purpose and use of assessment and alignment between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The reasons for the challenges in implementing assessment for learning in classrooms are presented and explained. Secondly, Priestley et al.’s (2015) teacher agency model offers a lens to understand teachers’ role in assessment practices. Three dimensions of teacher agency – iterative, practical-evaluative and projective dimensions (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) – will be used to understand teachers’ roles as meaning-makers and agents of change in educational assessment and to understand the interplay between teachers and the environment in which they work. Thirdly, Hufton and Elliott’s (2000) concept of pedagogical nexus will be drawn upon to understand the situated contexts where assessment practices occur and the interplay between assessment practice and the established pedagogical nexus. Fourthly, theories of practice transfer and policy enactment will be addressed to illustrate how assessment for

learning can be filtered through teacher agency and pedagogical nexus, and then be transferred and enacted in a situated context. Fig. 1 shows the structure of the theoretical framework.

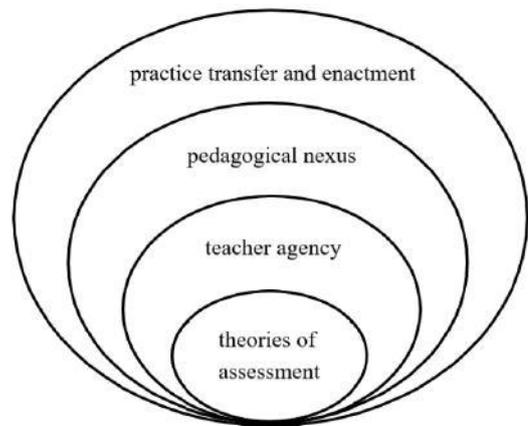


Fig.1: Theoretical framework

II. ASSESSMENT: PURPOSE, USE AND ALIGNMENT

In this first section, key issues related to teacher-based assessment are discussed to understand teacher’s assessment practices and the challenges in implementing assessment for learning. With the development of learning theories, the definition of assessment evolves accordingly. From behaviourist learning theory to constructivist theory then to sociocultural theory, learning is no longer viewed as adoption of behaviour, and assessment is not confined to tests that aim at error detection and correction but is more tightly interwoven with dynamic monitoring and progression (Baird et al., 2017). Contemporary understandings of teacher-based assessment draw on sociocultural theory (Katz & Gottlieb, 2012). From a sociocultural perspective, teacher-based assessment is distinguished from tests as expert instruments. Tests are usually formally administered procedures, which aim at measuring test-taker’s performance in a particular domain in limited time, while teacher-based assessment represents a much broader concept, which involves assessment practices that aim to promote students’ progress instead of judging them (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Assessment is given a more collaborative nature, and teachers are encouraged to collect information from a wide range of assessment tools in class, which are often integrated into everyday learning activities.

Among the assessment choices available to teachers, a distinction has been drawn between two types of assessment: assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessment). For many years, the distinction between the two has been explicated by many writers (for example, Black & Wiliam, 1998; Mansell et al., 2009). They typically differentiate between the two groups either by purpose (helping learning versus reporting on learning) or by timing (during a programme versus after a programme). However, other writers challenge such a distinction. Black (1998) argues that the differences between formative and summative are essentially a matter of purpose. He identifies three types of assessment purposes, namely “support of learning”, “certification, progress and transfer”, and “accountability” (Black, 1998, p. 24). Black (1998) believes that similar assessment practices can be used for both formative and summative purposes, and if the two purposes are completely separated, teacher’s assessment practice would be devalued. Harlen (2016) makes a similar suggestion that information collected for formative purposes may be used for summative purposes and vice versa. To decide whether an assessment practice is assessment for learning, it is therefore essential to know what the purpose of the practice is.

Besides the purpose of assessment, the use of assessment results also has an impact on the effect of assessment. Harlen (2016) argues that the purpose of conducting the assessment and the use made of its results should be distinguished. Although assessment can be conducted for different purposes, the uses of its results may not match the purposes. Different assessment purposes may also conflict with each other, which could result in a divergence between the intended use of assessment and its actual use. Mansell et al. (2009) report on assessment being used for different purposes in England, where assessment serves as a proxy measure to evaluate the quality of elements in the educational system. In this case, assessment data is used for multiple purposes such as judgments about the performance of schools, the differences between teachers’ performance, and whether a teacher is qualified. There have been unintended consequences for such overuse of assessment data, as the mixture of purposes makes it

hard to identify which purpose should be prioritised. While the main purpose is to ensure the quality of education, the focus of the assessment becomes monitoring the institutions and teachers. This raises concerns that schools might take actions to merely improve students’ test performance, which goes against what was originally planned for the students’ long-term educational needs, and teachers might ‘teach to the test’, which can narrow curriculum goals. While the original intention is to ensure better teaching and learning, the outcome turns out to be impeding instead of facilitating learning.

Such conflict between different assessment purposes may require compromises to be made. Newton (2007) argues that when an assessment system is designed, the key purposes should be prioritised in advance. From his perspective, the problem would be reduced to how to keep the results from being used for inappropriate purposes, or having perverse effects in curriculum and pedagogy. This would be an effective approach to assessment design if different assessment purposes operate separately. However, it is often the case that the purposes of an assessment system do not work separately. The purposes of informing learning, of summarising progress and of accountability co-exist and influence each other in the same educational system. All these purposes are important to some extent, but these purposes have different amounts of influence on teaching and learning. In most cases, teaching inevitably focuses on what will be assessed, and summative assessment usually has a greater impact on students’ learning experience (Harlen, 2007). Such an impact can be positive if the assessment addresses all the intended goals and helps clarify their meaning, but the impact can be restrictive if there is a mismatch between the curriculum and assessment. The predictability of a test contributes to the perverse practices of teaching to the test. The process of learning and assessment for learning might also be neglected when high-stake summative tests dominate the context (Carless, 2011).

The conflict between multiple purposes also relates to the relationship between assessment, curriculum and pedagogy. There is a saying consistently mentioned in the literature: “the assessment tail always wags the curriculum dog” (for example, Broadfoot, 2007, p. 8). The metaphor

vividly describes the influence of assessment on curriculum and pedagogy: although assessment is designed to support the curriculum and teaching, more often it becomes the lead that steers the curriculum and teaching. This axiom corresponds with the challenges in implementing assessment for learning and achieving alignment between assessment, curriculum and pedagogy in classrooms. In many contexts, teacher-based assessment is expected to be implemented in classrooms so that the complex competencies of students can be assessed with in-depth and diverse tasks. It is also expected that curriculum, pedagogy and assessment should work together and target the same learning goals. However, central high-stake assessments usually have a greater influence on teaching and learning, which makes teacher-based assessment an approach of secondary importance (Nusche, 2016). The way high-stake assessment is practised often dominates how teachers and students behave in their contexts, and the dominant assessment practice becomes the hidden curriculum that drives what is taught, learnt and assessed in classrooms (Smith, 2016).

The difficulties in reconciling purposes and uses of assessment and the conflicting assessment designs and realities explain the challenges in implementing assessment for learning from the assessment practice level. However, the nature of assessment is only one side of the Rubik's cube. Teacher-based assessment relies strongly on teachers' professional knowledge and judgments. Such knowledge and judgments are neither innate nor given abilities. Rather they are individual cognitive acts and socially situated practices (Allal & Mottier Lopez, 2014). To understand teachers' enactment of assessment for learning, teachers' role in assessment practices, their mediation of curriculum and assessment, and the interaction between teachers' belief, capacity and their working environment should also be understood.

III. TEACHER AGENCY IN ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

In this second section, the concept of 'teacher agency' is drawn upon to understand teachers' role in assessment practices. Agency is a term that receives extensive attention in social science. In social

theory, agency is often defined as "the capacity for autonomous social action" or "the ability to operate independently of determining constraints of social structure" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 135). It describes the ability to control one's actions or respond to a set of circumstances. Building on pragmatism, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) offer a three-dimensional way to understand agency, which, from their perspective, illustrates the complexity of the concept. The three dimensions are iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions, which represent "the influences from the past, the orientation towards the future and the engagement with the here and now" (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 23). Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 970) further define agency as "the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments - the temporal-relational contexts of action - which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations".

As Biesta and Tedder (2007) argue, Emirbayer and Mische provide a useful approach to understanding agency at a descriptive level. The three dimensions make it possible to characterise individuals' agency with events in their lives and associated human agency with factors in the situated environment, such as context, time and history. However, Biesta and Tedder (2007) suggest that description is merely the first step to understanding agency. The differences within individuals over time and contexts and the differences between individuals in similar time and contexts should also be understood. Building on Emirbayer and Mische's approach, Biesta and Tedder (2007) propose an ecological approach to understanding agency. They argue that more attention should be shifted to "the ways in which agency is achieved in transaction with a particular context-for-action, within a particular 'ecology'" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). Rather than seeing agency as a possession individuals hold, Biesta and Tedder (2007) argue that agency should be understood as something achieved by individuals and an emergent phenomenon during the interaction between individual and context.

In recent years, teacher agency, which is agency theorised specifically regarding the activities of

teachers in schools, has received significantly increasing attention (Biesta et al., 2015). Drawing on Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) three-dimensional perspective and Biesta and Tedder's (2007) approach to agency as a situated achievement, Priestley et al. (2015) develop their model to understand teacher agency. This model highlights three dimensions, which are similar to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) proposal: iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions. The iterational dimension refers to the influence of histories of a teacher, which include both general life histories and professional histories. The projective dimension looks at the teacher's short-term and long-term aspirations about their work which guide the teacher's future actions. The practical-evaluative dimension represents the influence of teacher's day-to-day working environment, which includes the practical conditions in the context and any judgments of risk. The model resonates with Biesta and Tedder's (2007, p. 137) idea that the achievement of agency relies on the "availability of economic, cultural and social resources within a particular ecology". It also highlights how the exercise of agency is informed by the teacher's past experience, orientation towards the future, and engagement with the present, which provides useful guidance for understanding teachers' enactment of assessment practices.

Regarding the first dimension of agency, teacher's assessment practice is affected by the iterational dimension. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the iterational dimension refers to "the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time. (p. 971)". Teachers can draw on many experiences from the past while designing and enacting assessment practices. For example, their professional education experiences could equip them with assessment theories, skills and subject knowledge; their day-to-day experiences in schools could expose them to the assessment practices of experienced colleagues; their own schooling experiences could provide them with assessment examples from their teachers. Forsberg and Wermke (2012) reported in their study that German and Swedish teachers considered their

learning experience as an important source of knowledge of assessment. The teachers also claimed the roles of their colleagues were valuable in terms of observing and cooperating. Carless (2005) also noted that failing to build on past experience has contributed negatively to the assessment reform in Hong Kong SAR, China. Thus, to understand teachers' assessment practices, it is important to probe their past experience and explore the origin of their beliefs and what histories contribute to their agency in assessment practice.

Regarding the second dimension of agency, teacher's assessment practice is affected by the iterational dimension. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the iterational dimension refers to "the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future. (p. 971)". This dimension explains how teachers' long-term and short-term aspirations affect their assessment practices. On one hand, such aspirations could be a product of teachers' prior experience, their educational values and beliefs and their aims for students' development and welfare (Lasky, 2005). On the other hand, teachers' aspirations could be more narrowly instrumental, as they might be shaped by the fabrication of school image and the performativity goals in school settings (Ball, 2003). For Priestley et al. (2015, p. 105), performativity is a "demand on schools and teachers to "perform", that is, to generate achievements in a clearly specified range of 'outcomes'". Teachers' assessment practices might be strongly influenced by the external purposes of assessment, which might conflict with their assessment values and beliefs (McMillan, 2003). Levy-Vered and Alhija (2015) pointed out that aspirations of assessment had a direct positive impact on teachers assessment literacy in their study with Israeli teachers. They argued that if the accountability purpose of assessment is given priority in policy and practice, teachers conceptions of assessment tend to respond negatively towards such pressure. Gu (2014), on the other hand, reported a high correlation between what is tested and what is taught, learnt and assessed in a language classroom in the Chinese mainland. The relationship between teachers' aspiration and their assessment practices

cannot be oversimplified. What drives their assessment practices is likely to be a mixture of, or a compromise between, their beliefs and such external demands. To understand teachers' assessment practices, it is therefore helpful to explore what the teachers' assessment values and beliefs are and what demands have been imposed on them.

Regarding the third dimension of agency, teacher's assessment practice is shaped by the practical-evaluative dimension. While the other two dimensions are associated with the past and the future, the practical-evaluative dimension considers the present conditions in which teachers work. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 971), the practical-evaluative dimension entails "the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgements among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations". For this dimension, Priestley et al. (2015) identify three aspects that contribute to the conditions through which teachers achieve their agency. The first is the cultural aspect, which refers to the culture of the situated contexts, such as the classes, the schools, and the wider society. Fler (2015), for example, identified the tensions that emerged while teachers worked against the discourse of traditional central assessment practices. The second is the structural aspect, which refers to the social and power relationships in a teacher's workplace. School-level policies on assessment, school managers' support for assessment, and expectations and demands from parents and the local community can also influence teachers' assessment practice (Liu & Xu, 2017). The third is the material aspect, which refers to the resources and the physical environment that encourage or impede teachers' agency. As Xu and Harfitt (2019) suggested, contextual factors such as large class size, limited opportunities for individual feedback and immense teaching and marking responsibilities could all determine whether a form of assessment practice could be successfully conducted.

Together, the three dimensions enable and constrain teachers' capacity for and achievement of agency, and shape their assessment practices in an ongoing ecology. These dimensions help to understand teacher's assessment practice and explore

how teachers interact with the past, present and future. Agentic teachers can identify opportunities to implement assessment for learning and exert their professionalism. Their practices are underpinned by not only personal dispositions but also the objective contexts in which their practices are enacted (Molla & Nolan, 2020). The discussion of an ecological context of teacher agency leads to another focus of this framework – the wider context in which assessment practices, in particular, innovative assessment practices interact with a taken-for-granted pedagogical nexus.

IV. PEDAGOGICAL NEXUS

In this third section, the concept of 'pedagogical nexus' will be drawn upon to understand the enactment of innovative assessment practices in a situated context and the interplay between innovative assessment practice and the established, historical *modus operandi* underpinning pedagogical settings. The notion of 'pedagogical nexus' was proposed by Hufton and Elliott (2000) in their study of patterns of educational phenomena in Russian schools. In their analysis, Hufton and Elliott (2000) noted that a consistent and steady framework that provided students with motivation and engagement was formed in these schools. The framework was constructed in elements in the schooling process, including the nature of lessons, assessment, curriculum structures, home-school relations and the continuity between school, class and teacher. These elements linked and interacted with one another over time and settings, and played mutually reinforcing roles, which set up a taken-for-granted nexus that could make reform of any element within the schooling system difficult. Hufton and Elliott (2000, p. 117) define pedagogical nexus as "a set of linked, interactive and mutually reinforcing influences on pupils' motivation to learn within and because of the schooling process ... some influences are in the deep background of the schooling process and could pass unremarked, because invisible to observation and so taken-for-granted by informants as to be beneath mention".

Although the main focus of Hufton and Elliott's (2000) study was learner motivation, the concept of 'pedagogical nexus' can also facilitate

understandings of teachers' assessment for learning practices within a situated schooling system. When an innovative assessment practice is introduced into an educational context, there are many contextual factors which might contribute to the acceptance or resistance of the new practices. For example, the local assessment system that has historically emphasised high-stake examinations might conflict with the promotion of assessment for learning practices (Tan, 2016). Although teachers might have faith in the innovative practices, they might also find it difficult to implement, as the system and other educational stakeholders in unspoken agreement require them to focus on exams. The established operative classroom culture might affect how teachers and students perceive and enact more innovative assessment (Carless, 2011). Whether exams and grades are considered important in the classroom culture could affect teachers and students' views and enactment of a new assessment practice. Parents' mindsets about how assessment and education might also influence teachers' enactment of assessment for learning practices (Ratnam-Lim & Tan, 2015). The combination of these factors represents the pedagogical nexus of an educational system and its tacit continuities. Whether and how innovative assessment practice could be embedded in the educational system will be decided by its interaction with the factors and the actors within the nexus.

As Schweisfurth (2015, p. 262) argues, "any imported or novel approach interacts with this nexus and needs to embed within it to thrive". To understand how an innovative assessment concept could embed itself within a pedagogical nexus, it is important to understand the nexus and investigate the compatible or incompatible factors within it. Schweisfurth (2015, p. 259) suggests that "teaching and learning are deeply embedded in the cultural, resource, institutional and policy contexts in which they take place". These factors are pertinent to understanding enactments of innovative assessment practices in a situated context and should be explored to achieve a full picture of how innovative assessment practices interact with the particular pedagogical setting. For the cultural context, how teachers and students perceive their teaching, learning and assessment should be explored. For the material context, the material resources and

educational resources available in the pedagogical settings should also be investigated. For the institutional context, any school-based assessment policy regarding how assessment is managed and how the social relationships are formed in the schools should be explored. For the policy context, the policies regarding high-stake assessment, classroom assessment, institutional monitoring and resource allocation warrant close examination. Most importantly, how the actors in the pedagogical nexus, namely students, teachers, parents and school leaders, interact with one another and with the context itself should be explored, as their tacit assumptions constitute an indispensable part of the situated nexus.

To balance the accumulated history and actors sustaining the pedagogical nexus, the transfer of assessment for learning ideas and the enactment of innovative assessment practices should also be addressed. Such practice transfer and enactment are influenced not only by the factors and actors within the pedagogical nexus but also by teachers' agency, which is guided by teachers' own experiences, commitments and needs. To understand teachers' enactment of assessment for learning, the relationship between practice transfer, enactment, teacher agency and the context should be jointly recognised.

V. PRACTICE TRANSFER AND ENACTMENT

In this fourth section, the transfer and enactment of new practices will be discussed to illustrate how assessment for learning can be transferred and enacted in a situated context under the combined influence of teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. Transferred educational ideas and practices often experience a "mismatch between the global agendas and the indigenous norms" (Schweisfurth & Elliott, 2019, p. 4). Although pure practice transfer rarely exists, the search for and adoption of 'better practice' continue globally. Cuban (1994, p. 2) offers a vivid metaphor to encapsulate the situation that takes place constantly when policymakers plan to bring a policy and practice change: "Hurricane winds sweep across the sea tossing up twenty-foot waves; a fathom below the surface turbulent waters swirl while on the ocean floor there is unruffled calm". The

metaphor captures how, at the policy level, a discourse of innovative change may appear disruptive, urgent and ambitious, while at the classroom level, the actual practices continue to be calm and stable, showing little or no impact from the policy changes. The local pedagogical nexus remains intact and unaffected by the attempted changes, and the original practices continue to thrive.

To understand the transfer and enactment of assessment for learning idea and practice, it should be borne in mind that educational changes do not happen on an empty stage. Rather, the practice transfer and policy enactment are filtered through teachers' agency and the context around them. Teachers could have little say in the design of the curriculum, assessment, or the educational policies they are involved in. However, at the same time, teachers are not naïve conduits of curriculum, assessment and policy – they can be creative and pragmatic practitioners, whose practices are shaped by their own interests, values, and external translation and interpretation of any educational idea and practice (Ball et al., 2011). Policies including the transferred assessment for learning idea and practice will not be seen as an unproblematic solution to a problem but will be contested by parties from different backgrounds and interpreted by them according to their own values and needs. This process leads to the recontextualisation of the assessment for learning in any enactment of transferred practices (Braun et al., 2011).

Braun et al. (2011) propose four contextual factors that could influence policy enactment in education. These factors are parts of the ecology that shape teachers' enactment of assessment for learning and are deeply intertwined with the influence of teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. The first factor is the situated context. This context refers to the locational and historical aspects of the educational settings, which could contribute to the translation and interpretation of policy from a broader perspective. The situated context of an educational setting could complicate the policy enactment if the transferred assessment for learning ideas and practices are adopted from a context with a different pedagogical nexus. To understand such a complication, the contextual factors within the pedagogical nexus that contribute to the

compatibility or incompatibility between the transferred ideas and practices and the situated context should be identified. The second factor is the professional context, which relates to teachers' values, experience and policy management within schools. Educational professionals, especially teachers and school managers, could determine how the transferred ideas and practices are enacted in classrooms, as they play a key role in translating the new ideas into reality. In this vein, professionals' understandings of and attitudes towards assessment for learning ideas and practices are crucial for the final transformation and enactment of the practices. The agency of teachers and school managers should be emphasised to understand this context.

The third factor is the material context, which refers to the physical aspects of schools, including available technology, the level of staffing, the available infrastructure, and budgets. These contextual factors could influence teachers' management of assessment activities, and decide whether an assessment for learning practice could be successfully enacted. This is an important source that contributes to the formation of pedagogical nexus and the achievement of teacher agency and thus deserves more thorough investigation. The final factor is the external context, which is concerned with the possible pressures and expectations from the educational stakeholders and the local authorities. This factor could be rather distinctive in the implementation of assessment for learning practices, as when external test, selection or accountability pressure is imposed on teachers, they might have little choice but to prioritise these purposes and to put formative aspects of learning and assessment aside. Working together, the four aspects of context are pertinent to teaching and assessment practices and may result in various pedagogical and managerial decisions and enactments in classrooms of different contexts. To understand teachers' enactment of assessment for learning practices, the four contextual factors should be jointly considered with the nature of assessment, teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. They offer a structured theoretical framework, which facilitates the understanding of teachers' assessment for learning practices from multiple perspectives.

VI. CONCLUSION

To understand and theorise teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in situated contexts, this paper built four imbricated layers of theory, namely, theories of assessment, teacher agency, pedagogical nexus and practice transfer and enactment. Firstly, the paper drew on the relationship between purposes and uses of assessment and the alignment issue between curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It explained the possible conflicts between assessment purposes and uses and how they contribute to the challenges in implementing assessment for learning. This theoretical layer contributed to the understanding of assessment practice itself. It argued that it is the purpose and the actual use of assessment that determine the nature of teacher-based assessment. It also acknowledged the influence of assessment on teaching and learning, as how assessment, especially high-stake assessment, is arranged can determine how teaching and learning are performed in classrooms.

Secondly, the paper drew on the teacher agency model proposed by Priestley et al. (2015) to understand teachers' role in assessment practices. The definition of agency was articulated, and the three dimensions of teacher agency - iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions - were explained. This theoretical layer focused on the interaction between teachers and assessment practices. As the meaning-makers and agents of change in educational assessment, teachers draw on multiple resources, including their experiences in the past, their orientation towards the future and their engagement with the present, to design and enact teacher-based assessment practices. Assessment practices become teachers' socially situated practices, which are based on their professional knowledge and judgments. To understand teachers' assessment for learning practices, it is useful to refer to these multiple dimensions and explore how teachers' past, present and future contribute to their assessment design.

Thirdly, the paper drew on the concept of pedagogical nexus proposed by Hufton and Elliott (2000) to emphasise the connection between the teacher's assessment practice and the context in which it is performed. While teacher agency plays an important role in designing and enacting assessment

practices, the pedagogical nexus provides a consistent and steady operational framework within the educational system and will enable or constrain teachers' practices. Teachers' assessment practices are embedded within the situated context, and the interplay between assessment practice and the context nurtures the design and enactment of the assessment practices. To understand teacher's assessment for learning practice, it is important to understand its embedded pedagogical nexus and investigate the compatible or incompatible factors that contribute to the interplay between the assessment for learning practice and the pedagogical nexus.

Finally, the paper drew on theories of practice transfer and policy enactment to understand how innovative assessment practices can be transferred and enacted in a situated context after being filtered by both teacher agency and pedagogical nexus. Acknowledging the fact that ideal practice and policy transfer rarely exist, the potential resistance to change and the mismatch between intended changes and longstanding practices need to be understood. The contextual factors that could influence the policy enactment in education, including the situated, professional, material, and external contexts, should be accounted for to achieve an overall understanding of teachers' enactment of assessment for learning.

This paper is concerned with understanding and theorising teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in situated settings. It proposes a theoretical framework to help explain teachers' enactment of assessment for learning from multiple perspectives and calls attention to the influence of these perspectives on teachers' assessment practices. It is argued by this paper that teachers' enactment of assessment for learning is not merely a practice of an individual but rather is a product shaped and transformed by teachers' professional knowledge, agency, and the wider educational contexts. To better understand assessment for learning in situated contexts and the recontextualization of assessment for learning idea and practice, these factors and dimensions should not be overlooked. More research is needed on investigating teachers' enactment of assessment for learning in their situated contexts based on this framework.

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Study on the Evolution of Global Clothing from Ancient Times to the Modern Era

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 15 Jul 2025; Received in revised form: 11 Aug 2025; Accepted: 15 Aug 2025; Available online: 25 Aug 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords—clothing, ideological, style, fabric, beauty, practicality</p>	<p><i>Through a comparative study of four countries during two key periods, this study reveals that clothing culture exhibited regular patterns, with each period, demonstrating distinct characteristics associated with specific countries or historical eras, such as the Song Dynasty, Ming Dynasty, the Renaissance period, and the Byzantine Empire. Focus this rule on the contemporary era, analyzing the changes in the clothing of the United States and South Korea under the influence of modern times and this historical logic.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Clothing serves as a reflection of social hierarchy, level of technological development, and the cultural aesthetic trends of a given period. This study focuses on two periods in history, employing a vivid contrast between the strengths and weaknesses of clothing styles so as to uncover unique material perspectives that reveal the underlying cultural narratives.

1. Take the Song Dynasty and the Renaissance as examples

1.1. Research background

Over the course of this century, through various ideological revolutions and liberation movements, American society has cultivated a more stable and open-minded mindset, marking a significant departure from previous eras. As the world's leading superpower with unparalleled comprehensive strength, the United States has demonstrated remarkable progress in fostering inclusive, particularly in areas of gender equality and aesthetic diversity. This cultural evolution is evident in the

widespread acceptance of diverse gender identities and the celebration of varied aesthetic expressions across different social strata.

The Song Dynasty boasted global economic dominance, with its prosperous economy and overseas trade fostering a relatively liberal fashion culture (marked by the prevalence of Hu-style clothing). Despite the rise of Neo-Confucianism advocating frugality and elegance, extravagant brocade garments and novel Hu-style attire remained common symbols of wealth and intellectual sophistication. Although numerous official prohibitions were issued, such ostentatious displays persisted. Song Dynasty attire thus embodied a paradoxical blend of luxury-seeking and refined elegance.

The special cultural background and social development made the Song Dynasty and the Renaissance show more vitality and openness than other dynasties in the period of the same terms of ideology and economy. The vitality and Renaissance

of the Song Dynasty emphasized the prosperity and warmth of humanistic under the ritual system, all of which demonstrated their resistance to feudalism and religious oppression, the resistance is more deeply reflected in the United States today.

1.2. Style, fabric and color

The Renaissance period witnessed a shift in fashion trends, as people began to adopt new styles in clothing combinations, with women adorning themselves with various types of jewelry. Wool and linen remained the primary fabrics, and the use of intricate patterns conveyed vibrant and expressive ideas. Alongside the popularity of the "body lines" influenced by the concept of "freedom", anti-religious sentiments grew stronger, reflecting a growing tendency among people to break free from religious constraints.

Song Dynasty garments emphasized simple and understated colors, reflecting a Confucian elegance. Although whole society advocates elegance and simplicity, and there is still various people using luxurious pearls and brocade clothes to show their financial resources, even ordinary people will use velvet and willow branches to create a golden scene all over the street. Yet even in an era that celebrated refined simplicity, some flaunted their wealth through lavish brocade and crimson garments. Commoners similarly adorned themselves with silk flowers and willow branches to create vibrant displays of jewelry and silk throughout the streets. While constrained by ritual codes that forbade luxurious fabrics and colors, ordinary people broke through plainness with "Yi Nian Jing" (annual landscape) patterns and defied color taboos through specialized dyeing techniques. The unstoppable fashion wave that defied the prohibition on extravagance further demonstrated the Song Dynasty's openness and vitality under feudal etiquette.

In the United States, fashion has broken free from color symbolism, with colors undergoing redefinition and shifting meanings. Pink has been revitalized as a feminine symbol, while the rise of neutral tones marks the dawn of gender-neutrality. Technology-driven color equality has shattered class barriers associated with "high-end exclusive hues." In textile innovation, stretchable functional fabrics enhance size inclusive, reflecting peoples growing emphasis on personal experience and asserting bodily autonomy.

1.3. Beauty and practicality

Technology is the material basis for the practicality coexist with aesthetics. The influence of the "freedom" ideological meant that most clothing reflected the beauty of body lines, and the public's preference became the dominant style during the Renaissance period. To cope with climate change, it evolved into "layered" dressing, which was very popular at that time and met people's needs for convenience. The working class adopted functional and simplified designs, such as wide-leg pants and leather aprons and gold thread embroidery, the women's skirts greatly enhanced aesthetics. Trade prosperity enhanced clothing technology and the quality of raw materials, which was advocated in the Renaissance periods.

Song Dynasty attire emphasized practicality and functionality, maintaining ceremonial propriety while ensuring convenience for daily activities. The widely popular bazi (a traditional undergarment) exemplified this philosophy. Functionally, its arched underarm design facilitated labor while adapting to seasonal conditions. Aesthetically, its silhouette aligned with court etiquette norms, showcasing refined elegance. While the imperial family wore bazi during festive occasions, commoners maintained their garments visual appeal. Although they can't use expensive fabrics and colors because of the ritual bondage, they broke through the simple and elegant restriction with the pattern of "one year scenery" and broke through the color ban with a specific dyeing process. Through these everyday choices, Song citizens practiced a subtle form of rebellion through their clothing choices.

At present, American fashion is challenging the traditional elite aesthetic by shifting away from an exclusive emphasis on formal wear toward more casual and comfortable attire. This new approach, emblematic of the fashion ethos of the new century, counters the ceremonial prestige associated with European luxury brands by prioritizing functionality and comfort. The trend of seamlessly blending styles across multiple scenarios—such as from the workplace to the gym—demonstrates the dynamic evolution of contemporary fashion.

1.4. Commonalities and extensions

Both Song Dynasty and Renaissance clothing embodied resistance against feudalism and religious constraints, reflecting intellectual openness and vitality. The comfort and diversity of these garments mirrored overt or subtle forms of defiance. This rebellious spirit finds deeper resonance in contemporary America: jeans, ripped jeans, and bell-bottoms challenge elite aesthetics; the popularity of miniskirts echoes women's liberation, while Victoria's Secrets declining sales reflect criticism of traditional body standards, demonstrating the prevalence of diverse aesthetic preferences. The rise of street culture and hip-hop trends deepened racial emancipation, while the global spread of American "minimalist style" alleviated societal anxiety about body dimensions.

2. Taking the Ming Dynasty and the Roman period as examples

2.1. Research background

The period of Eastern Rome, which is influenced by Christianity, combined church with imperial power, noble costumes show their identity and status. When the empire split, economy decreased, which is influenced by Islamic style, costumes are more simple. People are controlled by imperial power and divine power.

Because of the influenced by Chen Zhu's Neo-Confucianism in the Ming Dynasty, the clothing style were very simple, and the rules were very concerned about class level, and distinguished their status and rank by clothing colors and patterns. With the development of cotton, linen and silk technology, the style of Ming Dynasty gradually developed from conservative to luxurious, but the class division was always extremely strict.

The development of Korean fashion culture experienced the inheritance and innovation of traditional costume culture and the penetration of western pop culture, and formed Korean culture through self-digestion. The Korean Wave culture which represented by K-POP swept cross Asia and even Europe and America. However, due to the mandatory constraint of some policies and long-term ideological constrains, people have not achieved real freedom about dressing.

2.2. Style, fabric and color

In the Eastern Roman Empire, the distinction of costumes vividly reflected the social hierarchy. The nobility frequently adorned themselves with luxurious silk garments, intricately embellished with gold threads and precious jewels, symbolizing their elevated status. In contrast, common civilians typically wore clothing made from more modest materials such as wool and linen, which were both practical and affordable. Notably, the use of specific colors was strictly regulated; purple and gold were exclusively reserved for the royal family, serving as powerful visual indicators of imperial authority, while civilians were restricted to wearing simpler, more subdued colors that clearly demarcated their social standing.

Due to the rigid class hierarchy in the Ming Dynasty, significant distinctions existed in the fabrics, colors, and styles of clothing. The royal family, for instance, predominantly wore yellow robes crafted from premium materials like silk. In contrast, commoners at the bottom of the social ladder were clad in rough linen garments. As for officials, their robes varied in color and pattern in accordance with the strict ranking system.

Korean clothing has strict requirements and aesthetic hegemony for people, especially for women, in modern Korean culture, members of Korean girl groups need to wear the specific clothing such as miniskirts to show their sexiness, which is show the instrumentation of women from the perspective of male condensed. Traditional Korean clothing focus on the division of labour on gender, using colour to differentiate women who is married, unmarried and old age, solidify the cycle of life with colour, and the synthetic fabrics dominated by fast fashion have low cost, but their breath ability and wrinkle resistance are really poor.

2.3. Beauty and practicality

The costume of Eastern Rome combines beauty and practicality. Beauty is exclusive to the nobles, the different of religion symbols and religion colour, conveying rights and beliefs. But civilians clothes are more comfortable and useful, which is helpful for them to carry out daily productive and life, that is a explanation of practical.

The aesthetics of Ming Dynasty was in sharp

contrast to practicality; People paid more attention to practicality because of the war that countries were not rich. In terms of aesthetics, clothing is the visual inscription of norm of etiquette, and colors and patterns are not only aesthetic choices, but also identity marks. Women's horse-faced skirts restrain their actions, and scholars directly criticize the gender opposition of Ming Dynasty costumes.

Although the royal family and officials and people were distinguished with grading, all patterns have been simplified; Ordinary people wore coarse, cheap and simple linen jackets which convenient for working in the fields, although short brown is wearable, it is inconvenient to operate, the military uniform is light and practical, and the quality of civilian fabrics is stagnant. Later, because of the steady rise of the national economy, people began to pursue more beautiful and standardized clothing patterns, nobles paid more attention to the beautiful and exquisite clothing embroidery. It is always impossible to achieve both aesthetics and practicality.

In South Korea, both workplaces and daily life exhibit an excessive focus on aesthetics over practicality, affecting both the elite class and the general public. Unspoken rules permeate both professional and academic spheres: In workplaces, women are expected to wear skirts with heels exceeding five centimeters, while men must wear suits with ties. On campuses, men's collared uniforms create a constricting collar effect, women are required to wear knee-length skirts, and the prevalent practice of bare legs in winter inflicts dual physical and psychological harm on women.

2.4. Commonalities and extensions

From this, we can infer the commonalities of clothing in the two eras. To a certain extent, economic development and the degree of ideological openness influence clothing styles. In modern times, South Korea can be analyzed as a case. Clothing reflects social culture and ideology. Recognition of the Ming Dynasty is an endorsement of its "rites". Clothing embodies social values: people choosing diverse, unconstrained clothing manifests equality and liberation. Absorbing foreign cultures and integrating them with local ones is evident, such as the Ming Dynasty's adoption of Persian patterns. Similarly, 21st-century Korea has formed unique fashion trends

by combining the Western fashion system with local culture.

In all cases, clothing serves as a medium, interweaving traditional culture, economic technology and ideological trends in different eras. This is "the interpretation of the spirit of the times by material carriers."

3. conclusion

By comparing different dynasties and historical periods, it becomes evident that both practicality and beauty have been emphasized equally. Attention to and adherence to open aesthetics are also significant. The clothing of more prosperous eras, such as the Song Dynasty and the Renaissance, reflects a liberated spirit and thought among people, demonstrating humanistic ideals and a will for free rebellion. In contrast, during other periods—such as the Ming Dynasty in China or ancient Rome—society was often controlled by theocracy and monarchy. Consequently, individuals experienced a relatively low degree of freedom in their choice of clothing; this led to an era characterized by an "one-sided" approach that prioritized beauty and practicality but ultimately failed to achieve balance. In modern America, minimalist styles alongside functional fashion reflect ongoing tensions between liberation of thought and value discipline. Similarly, formal wear and high heels in South Korea embody this duality: they express humanistic ideologies of freedom and openness while simultaneously concealing traditional rituals and bodily discipline. Clothing serves not only as an external signifier of class but also as a reflection of human spirit. To advance societal equality and freedom, values must be rooted in bodily liberation while respecting individual identity or not.

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