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Sociolinguistic Study of Emotion Framing in Selected Doctor-Patient Encounters in Ilorin Metropolis

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Keywords

- Emotion framing
- Social Interaction
- Communicative Strategies
- Convergence
- Divergence

Abstract

Divergence patient encounters necessitates this research. This study examines how interlocutors use communicative strategies to construct and convey their emotions in doctor-patient encounters. The data were collected from hospitals in Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria and analysed using the tenets of Communication Accommodation Theory, Convergence and Divergence. The study found that interlocutors frame their emotions to converge using acknowledgement, intensifiers, hedges, honorifics and adjectives, adverbs and verbs but they diverge using interjection and conditional statements to frame positive and negative emotions. The study concludes that the second language does not significantly impact on how interlocutors frame their emotions. Also, conformity with social norms is not constant based on the influence of cognitive factors.

1. Introduction

Sociolinguistics is a linguistic approach which examines the relationship between language and society, including aspects of the people's culture reflected through the peoples' way of using language. It investigates the interrelationship between language and culture, social variations in language, as well as language use in different social contexts (van Dijk, 2009; Wardhaugh, 2010). From this definition of sociolinguistics, it could be inferred that sociolinguistics studies language variation across different social contexts as well as diverse linguistic categories, such as medical discourse.

The interactional value of medical discourse is mostly affected by certain contextual and anthropological issues. These issues often emanate from the sociolinguistic diversity of interlocutors. Apart from these, contextual factors such as the social variables of age, gender, occupation, etc. are important factors that impact on the interactional value of medical discourse. This also justifies the choice of sociolinguistics as the conceptual basis for this study. Additionally, the choice of the doctor-patient interaction as the data for this research is based on the peculiarity of the medical discourse, its professional attributes, as well as the contextual dictates which might reshape and affect the professional undertone of this discourse genre. Apart from this, due to the importance of doctor-patient encounter towards addressing the health challenges of patients, this study investigates selected doctor-patient interactions from a sociolinguistic perspective, to examine how the context of social interaction between the doctor and patient affects the way they frame their emotions.

Emotion is an expression of human feeling which is aimed at communicating one thing or the other in different social situations. It is a non-verbal category of language use which involves dramatic performance in face-to-face interaction (Pettinelli, 2016). As an expression of human feelings, emotion has been described as a social construct (D'Ambrosio, 2022). This is due to the fact that the peculiarity of social encounters often shapes the way human emotions are framed. For instance, people laugh together to celebrate while a frown can indicate dissatisfaction over an act.

However, in interactions between doctors and patients, the professional dictates of medicine constituting first impression and mannerism often shape the pattern of conversation, including emotional expression. Studies on emotion framing in doctor-patient interaction are limited in existing literature. Previous studies on doctor-Patient interaction include those carried out by Odebunmi and Adegbite (2006), Afzaal, Khan, Bhatti and Shahzadi (2019) and Odebunmi (2021). Odebunmi and Adegbite (2006) examined discourse tact in doctor-patient interaction in English using the pragmatic tools of speech act, MCB and politeness. Afzaal, Khan, Bhatti and Shahzadi (2019) investigated doctor-patient interaction using the discourse approach of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975)— IRF, Initiation Response and Feedback as well as Van Dijk (2001) critical approach to discourse analysis. This study therefore contends that framing in doctor-patient interaction, in hospital consulting rooms is different from an unofficial day-to-day social engagement. Therefore, the study hopes to investigate the way doctors and patients frame their emotion in hospital consulting room interactions in Nigeria.

1.1. Aim and Objectives of the Study

Going by the impact of social contexts such as the doctor-patient encounter on human emotions, the aim of this study is to evaluate emotion framing in doctor-patient interactions using the sociolinguistic approach and the tenets of Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles' (2016), Convergence and divergence. The objectives of the study are to:

- i) Identify the linguistic strategies of convergence and divergence for framing emotion in selected doctor-patient interactions in Ilorin Metropolis;
- ii) Examine how these strategies are used to frame emotion in selected doctor-patient interactions in Ilorin Metropolis; and
- iii) Evaluate the significances of the strategies towards the achievement of the communicative essence of doctor-patients' interactions.

1.2. Research Questions

The study sets out to answer the following research questions:

- i) What are the linguistic strategies of convergence and divergence for framing emotion in selected doctor-patient interactions in Ilorin Metropolis?
- ii) How are the linguistic strategies of convergence and divergence used to frame emotion in selected doctor-patient interactions in Ilorin Metropolis?
- iii) What are the significances of the use of the convergence and divergence strategies towards the achievement of the communicative essence of doctor-patients' interactions.

2. Literature Review

The sociolinguistic background for this study is Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state. Kwara state is one of the north-central states in Nigeria, where the inhabitants include the Fulanis, Hausas, Barubas, Yorubas and Nupes. The doctors and patients that constitute the studied participants are from diverse ethnic orientations in Kwara state. The Yorubas are members of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, dominant in the south-western states— Oyo, Ekiti, Osun, Ogun, Ondo and Lagos states with the minority in Kwara, Kogi and Edo states (Agboola, 2004). Kwara state is characterised by a confluence of diverse tribes and cultures, therefore, multilingualism is a major sociolinguistic phenomenon in the state.

Sociolinguistics is an umbrella concept in this study. Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society. According to Holmes (2008), sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. Chambers (2003, p. 6) remarks that:

Sociolinguistics is the study of the social uses of language, and the most productive studies in the four decades of sociolinguistic research have emanated from determining the social

evaluation of linguistic variants. These are also areas most susceptible to scientific methods such as hypothesis formation, logical inference, and statistical testing.

Chamber's description of sociolinguistics is historically inclined. He traces the trend of sociolinguistic studies from the scientific perspective through hypothesis formulation and verification in the early twenty-first century. These methods, according to him, were employed in studying language use in social contexts.

Trudgill (2000), Meyerhoff (2006), van Dijk (2009), Spolsky (2010) and Wardhaugh (2010) share an anthropological view in their definitions of sociolinguistics. To these scholars, sociolinguistics is an approach to language study which interacts with a variety of factors; since speech is a social behaviour that cannot be studied without reference to society and language has a close connection with the society, language should be studied from the cultural perspective. Furthermore, since the users of language are from distinct social classes, their language, which could be verbal or non-verbal, including emotion framing, is influenced by the social norms and cultural patterns.

2.1. Emotion Framing

Emotion is a psychological-physiological phenomenon which has sociological accompaniment. Brody (1999), Denzin (2009), Hockenbury and Hockenbury (2007), McCarthy (1989), Turner and Stets (2005) hold related view on the description of the concept of emotion. According to these scholars, emotion has three components: a subjective experience, a physiological response and a behavioral or expressive response. Subjective experience denotes the feeling that an individual has or conceives is the psychological aspect of emotion. This feeling is conveyed through the physical/non-verbal cues such as frowning of face to express annoyance, hence, the physiological aspect of emotion. Lastly, emotion may be influenced by beliefs and other factors such as social and behavioural reinforcements. This explains the sociological/sociolinguistic component of emotion.

In cognitive linguistics, the concept of framing has been psycholinguistically perceived as a cognitive presentation of the real world (Barsalou, 1992). Frames are image schemas, which are fundamental and universal across existing human languages; which largely deal with physical relations, motion and perceptions due to their importance in the brain for the understanding of more complex ideas (Chang & Schneider, 2007). According to Kogl (2019), framing means using the best resources to achieve the desired outcome.

Emotion framing is the dramatic performance in face-to-face interaction (Pettinelli, 2016), it involves using emotion to manipulate and deceive (Goffman, 1967, 19677) and using emotion to gain sympathy in social exchange (Clark, 1997), all of which explore the individual and the social differences of language, such as regional or occupational variation, which provide information about the speakers of a language. Salovey and Mayers (1990), Zukav and Francis (2001) state that emotion framing is of two types; positive and negative emotion framing. They aver that negative emotion framing is triggered by the body's response to physical discomforts such as pains while the positive emotion framing is triggered by the body's response to pleasant physical sensations. Many theories, such as Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (1921) of Linguistic Determinism and Relativity, Hymes (1962) Ethnography of Communication, Bernstein's (1970) Deficit Hypothesis, Giles' (1973)

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), Labov's (1972) Variationist Sociolinguistics and Lakoff and Johnson (1980) Metaphor Theory, have explained these notions of sociolinguistics. However, CAT will form the theoretical basis for this study.

3. Research Methodology

The data for the study constitutes three randomly selected doctor-patient interactions from a total of six conversations, collected from three (3) hospitals, a teaching hospital, state hospital and a private hospital in Ilorin Metropolis. The data samples are analysed using Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles' (2016) approach of CAT. Using this theory, the data extracts are analysed through the identification, description and interpretation of the marked accommodation strategies, that is, the strategies of convergence and divergence, in the doctor-patient interactions.

Due to the confidential nature of the participants' (doctor and patients) and hospitals' information, and the sensitivity of the ethical issues associated with the medical profession, the researcher designed a letter of introduction and a consent form, which were administered to seek the hospital's management's approval as well as the patients' consents. Also, the data samples were collected from the hospitals that granted the researcher permission to collect data. Apart from this, only the doctor and patients, who consented to the researcher's request helped with the recording of the doctor-patient exchanges.

The theoretical framework for this study, Communication Accommodation Theory CAT, is an approach to language style, which according to Giles (1973), was developed to explain and account for how interlocutors modify their speeches in complex situations of interpersonal encounters. It is a framework that was developed out of the desire to explain the potential of social psychological thought and processes for understanding the concept of speech diversity in social settings. It therefore aimed to explain the motivations underlying speech (Giles & Coupland, 1991, p. 6). Speech accommodation theory, according to Giles (1973), is narrowed to just speech. In the late 1970s, he re-conceptualised the theory to include the nonverbal behaviour and speaking patterns of interlocutors. The adjustment made by Giles is to encompass wider aspects of interaction under the label of CAT.

According to Giles (1973), when people interact, they modify their speech patterns to their fellow speakers' speech style. This modification is in most cases unconsciously derived but can be easily recognised. He re-counts that in a conversation with a toddler, the language user simplifies explanations, in interacting with a teenager, the speaker uses the teenage form of language, in a discussion with an eighty-year-old, the speaker tends to slow his speech pace, and use more facial expressions or tend to talk louder when conversing with someone who has difficulty in hearing. He describes this form of communication style or variation as the 'Communication Accommodation' approach.

According to Abrams, O'Connor and Giles (2003), 'accommodation is fundamental to identity construction' (p.221). Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is informed by social identity (Tajfel & Turner 1986). Giles (1979) submits that people are influenced by a number of behaviours. He argues that an individual's speech style (accent, pitch, rate, interruption patterns) can affect the impressions that others have over that individual

(Giles, 1973). In addition to this, Giles and Smith (1979) assert that the nature of the setting, the conversation topic and type of person with whom one converses, all intersect to determine the speech manner one adopts in a given situation. This implies that context of communication determines or controls the way or manner in which interlocutors use language. Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles' (2016) identify convergence and divergence as the two major tenets of the CAT. These concepts are discussed in the sub-sections.

3.1. Convergence

Convergence according to Coupland, Coupland and Giles (1991) is a strategy whereby interlocutors adapt to each other's communicative behaviours in terms of wide range of linguistic-prosodic-nonverbal features including speech rate, pausal phenomena and utterance length, phonological variants, smiling, gaze and so on (p.7). Convergence is based on attraction (Giles, 2008). When communicators are attracted to one another, they will converge in their conversations (Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016). Attraction is a broad term that encompasses a number of other characteristics, such as liking, charisma, and credibility. Giles and Smiths (1979) posit that a number of factors that affects attraction for others in communication: having similar belief, having a similar personality, or behaving in similar ways prompt convergence. Convergence which is attraction for others in communication is illustrated by: people having similar belief, having a similar personality, or behaving in similar ways (Smiths, 1979). Convergence is illustrated as follows:

Lucky Johnson: Hey, Mabel, na wa o, so it is now today that you remembered you have a brother in this town.

Mabel: Kai! Broda, I know I should be coming here often, I mean now that your kids are all grown. (Gambari-Olufadi, 2018)

In the extract above, the second speaker converges with the first using Pidgin English and name calling.

3.2. Divergence

Divergence refers to the art of dissociating selves in an interaction process. Giles (1980) describes divergence as a tactic of intergroup distinctiveness, by which individuals or groups differentiate themselves from other individuals or group. Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles' (2016) state that interlocutors accentuate the verbal and nonverbal differences between themselves and others through the use of interpersonal control strategies, such as the use of interruptions or honorifics to remind the partner of their relative status or role are used when speakers are focused on role relationships in an interaction. Divergence differs from convergence in that it is a dissociation process. Instead of showing how two speakers are alike in speech rate, gestures, or posture, divergence emphasises distinctiveness from one's interlocutor as a means to positively reinforce one's own social identity. This speech style is exemplified as follows:

Jenifer: Goodluck welcome, Ha! Ha! what is all these? (holding his pair of shoes)
Goodluck: (yawning) What is what?

(Gambari-Olufadi, 2018)

From the above excerpt, there is an instance of divergence using the question and answer strategy.

Corroborating Giles' (1973) description of the strategies of accommodation theory, Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles (2016) state that the linguistic elements of convergence and divergence are interpretability strategies, diversity of vocabulary, simplifying syntax or vocal intensity for increasing clarity; and non-verbal features (such as silence and specific sounds), etc. which enable an interlocutor to attend to his partner's ability to comprehend what is being said or otherwise. Interpretability strategies include strategies such as question and answer, acknowledgement, humour, analogy and name calling. Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, (2016) state further that to enhance diversity of vocabulary, the use of specific word classes, honorific terms and registers are used. Likewise, simplifying syntax such as conditional statements and hedges are also strategies of convergence and divergence in social interactions. These strategies according to Salovey and Mayers (1990), Zukav and Francis (2001), are means of expressing positive and negative emotions; and these accommodation strategies are used by speakers to converge and diverge by accentuating differences in communication (Coupland, Coupland, Giles & Henwood, 1988, p. 6).

In this study, the tools adopted for the evaluation of the selected doctor-patient interactions are: acknowledgement, question and answer, word class, honourific terms, registers, humour, analogy, conditional statements, hedges and nonverbal features. Acknowledgement refers to the act of recognising something received or an action which indicates a show of kindness, e.g., acknowledging a visit by saying 'thank you'. It is a widely used language of expressing gratitude towards an act of assistance (Kuhi & Razeal, 2014). While questioning refers to the act of making inquiry about something, the act of answering is meant to provide a response to an inquiry. Word class also refers parts of speech, the categories of words used in grammar. The major word classes are noun, verb, adjective and adverb. Honorific term refers to a title or word, implying or expressing respect, esteem and courtesy for position or rank when addressing a person. Brown (2020) describes honorifics as linguistic forms used for expressing regard towards an entity worthy of respect.

Analogy is a figure of comparison which refers to comparison between one thing and another, typically for the purpose of explanation and clarification. In making analogy, the information concerning one element is likened to another element through observed similarities (Fischer, 2019). Hedges in applied linguistics and pragmatics is a word or phrase used in utterances to express probability, caution and politeness. By using hedging language, certainty or uncertainty, which indicates caution is used (Liu, 2020). Registers in linguistics according Biber et al. (2021) are linguistic features commonly found in texts. They are a variety of language used for particular purpose or particular communicative situation. Hadiati (2018) describes humour as the kind of language use that invites laughter. It refers to the characteristic of being amusing in speech, the quality of being funny. Lastly, non-verbal features are features of language which convey information without using words. These include silence and gesture.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The data constitute three selected doctor-patient conversations. The first datum is a conversation that takes place between a patient, a young lady and a female doctor. From the conversation flow, it could be inferred that the doctor-patient encounter is not the first as the doctor demonstrates awareness of the patients' medical history. This exposition is an indication of common-ground between the patient and the doctor. Conversely, datum two is an interaction between a middle-aged male doctor and an aged female patient who could be estimated to be in her 80s. The flow of the conversation reveals that the doctor-patient encounter is the first; there has been no prior encounter between the doctor and the patient. Datum three is an encounter between a male doctor and a young male patient. The strategies include acknowledgement, question and answer, the use of specific word classes such as adverbials, adjectives and verbs; honorific term and registers, humour and analogy, conditional statements, hedges, name calling and non-verbal features such as tone, gesture, sigh, silence, etc.

3.1 Acknowledgement

At the opening of the two of the selected conversations, datum one and two respectively, the doctors and patients adopt greeting as a means of expressing positive feeling towards one another, an indication of convergence. An instance of acknowledgement is presented in the extract below:

Patient: Good morning ma.

Doctor: Good morning, how are you doing today?

Patient: Fine, thank you ma.

Doctor: So, what brings you to my office today?

In the extract above, the second turn of the patient, 'fine, thank you ma' illustrates convergence. Contrarily, the doctor's response is not indicative of positive feeling. This is deducible from the second turn of the doctor, which illustrates divergence; 'So, what brings you to my office today?'. Here, the doctor employs the interjection- 'so', to frame her emotion towards divergence. Unlike in the extract above, the doctor initiates the conversation with acknowledgement to express positive emotion towards the patient in the extract below.

Doctor: Good morning ma, welcome ma.

Patient: Thank you.

Doctor: Mama, be careful, come inside gently. I am here at your service ma.

In the illustration above, the second turn of the doctor also indicates convergence through acknowledgement used to express positive emotion by display of kindness towards the elderly patient. This shows the doctor's understanding of the cultural norm of opening a conversation with greetings. Out of the three selected conversations, acknowledgement at the opening of the discourse abound in the two conversations except in the extract below.

Doctor: What's your name?

Patient: Salako Onyechi

Doctor: How are you doing today, are you my patient or your mum?

Patient: Fine, my mum and I.

Doctor: Let me start with you, what is your complaint?

In the extract, the doctor opens the conversation with a question rather than acknowledgement. This goes against the cultural norm of the larger context of the social interaction. This does not indicate an expression of positive or negative emotion, rather, the doctor's initial negligence is possibly as a result of the remarkable age difference between the doctor and the patient. The subsequent turn of the doctor, a combination of greeting and interrogation reflects convergence and positive emotion as the doctor displays interest in who the patient is.

3.2 Question and Answer

In the selected exchanges, the emotion conveyed through the use of question and answer varies. In the first conversation, while the tone of the doctor in the second turn indicates divergence, however, the patient's response to the doctor's question indicates an exposition on her purpose of consultation.

Doctor: So, what brings you to my office today?

Patient: I started developing new pains and today is my check-up day.

From the exchange above, the patient frames her emotion to evoke the doctor's pity by converging to the doctor. While the patient evokes empathy on one hand, she became affirmative subsequently. The patient displays dual emotion. The first is empathy while second illustrates confrontation rather than evocation of empathy. This pattern of emotion framing illustrates the convergence-divergence pattern. Another illustration of the question-and-answer form of achieving divergence by the interlocutors is illustrated as follows:

Doctor: Did you have anything before coming to my office?

Patient: I had custard.

Doctor: Custard...wow! Okay, you need to like be eating more because this might like add to what's wrong with you. Do you understand me? And you know your blood is sickle cell? And asides that, do you drink enough water daily?

In the second turn of the doctor, instances of divergence abound through the use of questioning as an indirect act of reprimanding. Here, the doctor has diverged emotionally from her official role.

The manner of conveying emotion by the doctor and patient in the second conversation by virtue of converging and diverging varies from the foregoing. The first turn in the extract below indicates that the doctor is excited, hence his display of convergence towards the patient in an interrogative form. The patient's response however, is filled with both verbal and non-verbal forms of emotion expression. The patient uses interjection— 'haa', declaration— 'that is a big question but there is no problem' and structural hedge— 'look at me and estimate with my grey hair', all of which indicate divergence. The doctor also

converges in the second turn by asking another question and displaying positive emotion but the patient hedges again by stating that 'the young man with me is my fourth generation'. Even though the doctor's questions are meant to cross-examine the patient for diagnosis, as revealed in the doctor's last turn, the patient's responses are indicative of divergence through the use of hedges to display negative emotion.

Doctor: Sorry, please do not be offended, how old are you ma?

Patient: Ha! That is a big question, but there is no problem. Look at me and estimate with my grey hair.

Doctor: It is alright, how many children do you have? I hope you are not offended.

Patient: There is no problem, it is your duty, the young man with me is my fourth generation.

Doctor: Haa, it's been a long time, what complaint do you have?

Patient: Doctor, it is my leg.

Doctor: That is the reason for all my questions mama. Anything else? Patient: Nothing else.

Question and answer in the third conversation as illustrated in the excerpt below indicate the interlocutors' mechanisms of convergence and divergence. While the doctor converges throughout, the patient diverges in most cases as a result of his limited ability to express himself in words. This also makes the patient to resort to the use of negative emotion in his response to the doctor's enquiry in the second and third turns 'I don't know how to describe it, see it'; 'early this month I guess but not here'. In the last turn, the patient resorts to using silence as a response to the doctor's question, 'not here?'.

Doctor: Let me start with you, what is your complaint?

Patient: It is my hand.

Doctor: What about it?

Patient: I don't know how to describe it, see it, it comes every now and then like rashes.

Doctor: When was the last time you had it?

Patient: Early this month I guess but not here.

Doctor: Not here?

3.3 Specific Word Classes

Observed in the selected doctor-patient exchanges under consideration is the use of specific word classes, including adverbs, adjectives and verbs by the interlocutors to frame their emotion. Adverbial expressions, such as those that indicate place and degree are used in the selected exchanges under consideration as means of emotion framing by the interlocutors. For instance, the doctor's third turn in the first conversation illustrates the use of the adverbials; 'today', 'so' and 'indeed', to express a negative emotion towards the patient's initial submission. The exchange is presented as follows:

Doctor: Good morning, how are you doing today?

Patient: Fine, thank you ma.

Doctor: So, what brings you to my office today?

Patient: I started developing new pains and today is my check-up day.

Doctor: Okay, let me check your file and see, today is indeed your check-up day.

So, are you here to report any new pains or it's just the usual check-up you want to go through?

Patient: I discovered new pains that can be really frustrating and annoying.

In the illustration above, the doctor employs the adverb, 'so' as a metaphorical extension to tease the patient whose last statement is— 'fine, thank you ma'. This conveys a positive emotion towards the patient as the doctor converges to lift the patient's spirit. In the last turn, the doctor also adopts the adverb of degree, 'indeed' as a means of converging to the patient's claim. The patient also employs its synonym, 'really', to frame her emotion illustrative of annoyance. The choice and repetition of the adverbial, 'today' by the doctor and patient in the second turn are to diverge and to express negative emotion but in the last turn, the doctor's choice of the word indicate affirmation and convergence towards expressing a positive emotion. In the second conversation, adverbials indicative of manner and degree are used. While the doctor uses the adverb of manner, 'gently' to frame his emotion positively towards indicating convergence in the first turn, the patient employs the adverb of degree, 'indeed' to frame positive emotion and express appreciation towards the doctor in the second turn.

Doctor: Mama, take your time, come inside gently. I am here at your service ma.

Patient: hmm doctor it is my leg o.

Doctor: I have observed it mama. Sorry, you can have your seat.

Patient: Thank you so much I am indeed grateful.

Word classes that are used to convey emotion by the interlocutors in the third conversation include adverb, negative and performative verbs. Like the doctor in conversation one, the doctor in conversation three also uses the adverb, 'today' to express positive emotion (friendliness) towards the patient. Contrarily, the patient uses the negative verb, 'don't' and the performative verb, 'see' to convey his emotion illustrative of confusion towards the doctor. This is as a result of the patient's inability to describe the phenomenon.

Doctor: How are you doing today, are you my patient or your mum?

Patient: Fine, my mum and I.

Doctor: Let me start with you, what is your complaint?

Patient: It is my hand.

Doctor: What about it?

Patient: I don't know how to describe it, see it, it comes every now and then like rashes.

Apart from the use of adverbs and verbs by interlocutors to convey their emotion as illustrated in the forgoing, it has been observed that in the first conversation, the patient

employs adjectives to frame her emotion which is indicative of negative emotions in the fourth turn.

Patient: I discovered new pains that can be really 'frustrating' and 'annoying'.

The patient's choice of 'frustrating' and 'annoying' indicates an expression of negative emotion but such response is in convergence towards the doctor's question.

3.4 Honorific Terms and Registers

Aside the use of word classes, the patient in the extract below diverges through the use of the honorific term, 'ma'. The choice of this term repeatedly at certain points in time in the exchange indicates the patient's awareness of the social distance that obtains between her and the doctor. This also reflects the patient's understanding of the cultural norm of respect. Illustration abounds as follows:

Patient: I discovered new pains that can be really frustrating and annoying.

Doctor: In what area of your body?

Patient: My lower back, my phalanges my knee ma.

Doctor: When did this pain start?

Patient: It started sometimes last week, ma.

Doctor: Sometimes last week?

Patient: Yes ma.

In the illustration above, it has been noted that apart from the use of the honorific concept, the patient also diverges and indicate social distance through her choice of the medical registers for body parts; 'lower back', 'phalanges' and 'knee' in the description of her ailment. This further establishes that a formal relationship exists between the interlocutors. The patient uses the concept to express positive emotion. While the patient uses the honorific term "ma" in the extract above, the doctor uses it in conversations two and three.

Doctor: Good morning ma, welcome ma.

Patient: Thank you.

Doctor: Mama, take your time, come inside gently. I am here at your service ma. Patient: Hmm doctor it is my leg o.

Doctor: I have observed it mama. Sorry, you can have your seat.

Patient: Thank you so much I am indeed grateful.

Doctor: Sorry, please do not be offended, how old are you ma?

Patient: This young man is my fourth generation.

Doctor: Does anybody have asthma in your family?

Patient: No

Doctor: No allergic rhinitis nothing nothing

Patient's Mum: That's what I want to check, probably if he has because he's always eating.

Doctor: It doesn't look like allergy. Has he changed soap or cream?

Patient's Mum: We use dove.

Doctor: What of your cream?

Patient: Vaseline.

In the extracts above, it could be observed that the doctor uses 'ma' while asking the patient questions. In conversation two, the patient who is younger also uses the honorific. However, in the third conversation omits the honorific. Going by the consistency in the use of honorific in conversations one and two by the younger interlocutors and its omission in datum three, it could be concluded that the interlocutor's awareness of the difference in age or their lack of awareness (like in conversation 3) is a determining factor. The use of honorific is therefore a signal of convergence. Its omission if not an indication of divergence, rather, the patient's low level of understanding of the social norm and values.

3.4 Humour and Analogy

The doctor employs humor and analogy in the extract below as a convergence technique for framing her positive emotion.

Patient: Yes ma, I will increase my water intake ma.

Doctor: Yes, it can be a factor to what's wrong with you as at now, so let me write something for you to take to the pharmacy, so just get those drugs and you should be good to go, up and running in no time.

The analogies, 'good to go' and 'up and running', are used by the doctor to converge and express positive emotion by the doctor. The doctor's use of humour and analogy is aimed at stirring the patients' emotion after scolding her. This is a correction mechanism adopted by the doctor to cover-up her slip in the initial turn exemplified thus:

Doctor: Did you have anything before coming to my office here?

Patient: I had custard.

Doctor: Custard...wow okay you need to like be eating more because this might like add to what's wrong with you. Do you understand me? And you know your blood is sickle cell? And asides that, do you drink enough water daily?

In the conversation two, the patient adopts analogy.

Patient: Haa there is no problem— that is a big question, look at me and estimate with my grey hair.

Doctor: It is alright how many children do you have? I hope you are not offended.

Patient: There is no problem, it is your duty, the young man with me is my fourth generation.

In the extract above, the patient creates analogy using the expressions: 'grey hair' and 'my fourth generation'. The patient's use of analogy is to diverge and express negative emotion towards the question asked by the doctor.

3.6 Conditional Statements

In the selected conversations under consideration, important indicators of convergence and divergence employed by the interlocutors to frame their emotion are the conditional terms, 'okay' and 'yes'. In datum one, while the patient uses these terms to frame her emotion positively towards convergence, the doctor employs the term, 'okay', occasionally to illustrate divergence. In most cases, the patient and doctor use the term to signify agreement.

Patient: I started developing new pains and today is my check-up day.

Doctor: Okay, let me check your file and see.

Doctor: This is the prescription. Make sure you use the drug twice daily. Don't miss it, and drink enough water

Patient: Yes ma.

Doctor: I understand why I'm expatiating on that fact. Drink enough water.

Patient: Yes ma.

Doctor: Okay, when you go outside, call the next person in.

Patient: Okay

In the doctor's first turn, 'okay' is used to indicate an emotional divergence from the patient, which is indicative of an expression of doubt. However, the patient's turns indicate convergence to the doctor's position. In conversation two, the conditional terms are not used by the interlocutors, this is because the patient hedges instead of giving direct response like the patient in conversation one. This is illustrated as follows:

Doctor: Sorry, please do not be offended, how old are you ma?

Patient: Haa, there is no problem— that is a big question, look at me and estimate with my grey hair.

In conversation three, the doctor uses 'okay' like in conversation one while the patient use the negative conditional concept 'no' instead of 'yes'.

Doctor: Not here? Ma when was the last one?

Patient's Mum: I was not around so they took him somewhere.

Doctor: Okay, so you have not taken anything.

Patient's Mum: erm show him. I was thinking probably it's allergy or something.

Doctor: Let me see oya.

Patient: It's usually here.

Doctor: okay!

Patient: Not really on this part but usually there.

Doctor: And it only comes out of the right hand, any fever?

Patient: No.

Doctor: Does it itch?

Patient: Hmm no.

In the extract above, the doctor uses 'okay' to converge and express positive emotion. Likewise, the patient uses 'not really', 'no' and 'hmm no' to converge towards the doctor's enquiry, but the patient expresses negative emotion.

3.7 Hedges

The discourse participants in the data under evaluation adopt hedging, specifically verbal and adverbial hedges as well as vague language such as like, apparently, etc. The use of hedges in conversation one is illustrated as follows:

Doctor: When did this pain start?

Patient: It started sometimes last week, ma.

Doctor: Have you been doing any extreme sport lately? Like or maybe anything that has been stressing you lately than usual?

Patient: Err, I've been...it's exam period, so I am stressed like... I am very stressed...err... I do extra reading and all, I feel like it's part of what is causing the pain.

In the extracts above, hedges as used by the patient include 'sometimes', 'it's exam period' 'like', 'I feel like', etc. while the doctor uses 'Like', 'or', 'maybe', 'lately', 'than usual', etc. These lexical and structural hedges are used by the doctor and patient to converge towards the conversational pattern. Both the doctor and patient do not use hedges to express negative emotion, rather the doctor uses it to extract information while the patient uses to express pity.

Doctor: Sorry, please do not be offended, how old are you ma?

Patient: Haa, there is no problem— that is a big question, look at me and estimate with my grey hair.

Doctor: It is alright. How many children do you have? I hope you are not offended.

Patient: There is no problem, it is your duty, the young man with me is my fourth generation.

The extract above contains illustrations of hedges as used by the doctor and patient in datum two. The doctor uses adjectival hedge and a sentential hedge: 'sorry' and 'please do not be offended' to converge towards the patient and express positive emotion. This is as a result of the norm of showing respect to an elderly person. Unlike the doctor, the patient uses non-verbal hedge and structural hedges: 'haa', 'there is no problem— that is a big question, look at me and estimate with my grey hair', 'There is no problem, it is your duty, the young man with me is my fourth generation' to diverge and express negative emotion.

Patient: It is my hand.

Doctor: What about it?

Patient's Mum: Show him your hand.

Patient: I don't know how to describe it, see it, it comes every now and then like rashes.

Doctor: When was the last time you had it.

Patient: Early this month I guess but not here.

Illustrations of hedges as used in conversation three are presented in the extract above. The patient uses hedges while the doctor does not. The hedges used by the patient are 'see it', 'every now and then', 'like rashes' and 'I guess'. The patient uses these hedges to express both positive and negative emotions.

3.8 Name Calling

Name calling abound in two of the three conversations selected for this study, that is, conversations two and three. Illustrations of name calling in the two conversations are presented as follows:

Doctor: Mama, take your time, come inside gently. I am here at your service ma.

Patient: Hmm doctor it is my leg o.

Doctor: How are you doing today, are you my patient or your mum?

Patient: Fine, my mum and I.

Name calling in the illustrations above include 'mama', 'doctor', 'patient' and 'mum'. Name calling is a means of expressing the social distance that exists between the interlocutors. Not only this, the name, "Mama", as used by the doctor reflect the doctor's understanding of the cultural norm of respect.

3.9 Non-Verbal Features

In conversation one, it is observed that the patient frames her emotion using the non-verbal mode. The patient uses sound to signal negative emotion, an expression of pain, while the doctor was examining the patient. The patient uses the sounds 'oww' and 'umm' to express her emotion.

Patient: It sometimes makes me cry and it can be really frustrating and annoying

Doctor: okay, can you stand over there close to the wall? Let me examine you and I could check so I can diagnose some drugs. Okay how about here?

Patient: Oww...Umm it's painful.

Doctor: It's painful around this area?

Patient: Yes.

Likewise, in conversation two, the patient also uses the non-verbal mode, the sound, 'hmm', to express pain and negative emotion.

Doctor: Mama, take your time, come inside gently. I am here at your service ma.

Patient: Hmm doctor it is my leg o.

The implication for the use of non-verbal cues by the patient is not merely to express negative emotion and to evoke empathy but also to signal or caution the doctor.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined how emotions are framed in doctor-patient interactions from a sociolinguistic perspective. The data samples, which constitute three doctor-patient exchanges, were analysed using the theoretical tenets of Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles' (2016) Accommodation theory; Convergence and Divergence. From the analysis of the data samples, it has been established that the studied interlocutors adopt strategies including acknowledgement to express positive emotion and display convergence towards the co-interlocutor; they neglect acknowledgement to express negative emotion and diverge. Specifically, acknowledgement is used in the data to display kindness towards interlocutors.

Question and answer are used by the interlocutors to converge or diverge. They adopt questioning to express positive emotion or negative emotion towards their interlocutors, they respond to questions to arouse empathy and to affirm. They adopt both words and non-verbal language as response to questions to converge or diverge towards expressing negative or positive emotion. Specific word classes such as adverb of place and degree are used to convey negative emotion such as annoyance, while other kinds of adverbials are used as metaphorical extension to express positive emotion and to converge. Negative and performative verbs are used to convey emotion, which illustrate confusion. This kind of emotion framing by interlocutors indicates divergence. Also, adjectives are used to convey negative emotion, but they are used to converge.

Apart from the use of specific word classes, honorific terms are used to indicate social distance, they are used by interlocutors to either converge or diverge depending on the context of situation. Contrarily, medical registers are used by interlocutors to express positive emotion and to converge towards the speech styles of co-interlocutors. Omission of honorific terms are indicators of interlocutors' low level of understanding of the social norms and values. Humour and analogy are deployed by interlocutors to frame positive emotion and converge, with the aim of stirring the emotion of co-interlocutors. In reverse situations, analogy is used to express negative emotion and to diverge by interlocutors, depending on the emotional disposition of the interlocutors.

Conditional terms are used occasionally and interchangeably to express positive emotion, converge and signify agreement towards co-interlocutors. Also, the conditional terms are used to express negative emotion, for the expressing doubt and diverging, depending on the context of situation. Verbal and adverbial hedges as well as lexical and structural hedges, are used by interlocutors to converge. This is especially used by the doctors to extract information from the patient while the patients use hedges to arouse pity or express negative emotion and diverge. By name calling, interlocutors express social distance and both positive and negative emotions depending on the speech context. Non-verbal linguistic modes such as sounds are used by the interlocutors, in most cases, the patients, to express pain and negative emotion. However, these are means of converging towards the doctors.

Even though the interaction is a medical discourse which is supposed to be guided by the ethics and norms of the medical profession, factors of social orientation such as age disparity and social stratification between interlocutors supersedes the institution. This has remarkable impact on how the interlocutors frame of their emotions. The one at the receiving end is the one with the less power and the one with the lower social standing.

Having examined how interlocutors frame their emotions in selected doctor-patient encounters from a sociolinguistic perspective, it has been established that emotion framing is the manifestation of the interlocutors that is dictated by the context of the interaction. Also, because an interaction can take multiple directions, interlocutors tend to frame their emotion in multiple ways depending on the dimension of the discourse as well as how their co-interlocutors frame their emotions too. Going by the reality established in the doctors and patients' interactions under consideration in this study, the study concludes that social norm as well as other socio-cultural variables impact on how interlocutors frame their emotions. However, there is no strict compliance to the social norm as well as the discourse tenor as a result of the instability of the emotional state of interlocutors which could trigger unconscious deviation from the norms. This study has identified specific areas of needs such as the need for training of medical professionals in emotion-sensitive communication strategies. Additionally, the study recommends that future research should explore cross-cultural comparisons of emotion framing in doctor-patient interactions.

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Discursive Construction of Female Victimhood in Conflict Narratives: A Feminist Narratology approach in Anthony Doerr’s Novel All the Light We Cannot See

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Abstract

Language is not only a crucial tool for constructing social and cultural narratives, but it also defines women’s roles. A complicated and multidimensional concept of victimhood arises at the intersection of language, culture, and power, profoundly and permanently influencing the identities and lives of people, especially women. This research aims to investigate the linguistic and narrative construction of victimhood in conflicted contexts, by taking Anthony Doerr’s novel All the Light We Cannot See into consideration. By adopting a qualitative and interpretive paradigm, this study employs textual and narrative analysis methodology. Drawing upon Female Narratology theory, proposed by Susan S. Lanser, the research critically explores the rationale for reinforcing how language constructs and heightens gender inequalities, specifically disempowering women. The selected novel serves as a primary source for the data. The text is examined through close reading and thematic analysis and the data collected from the relevant bases is in the form of excerpts, dialogues, and linguistic patterns which reveal the adversity of women molded via language. Scholarly Literature is also referred to support the theoretical framework and contextual grounding of the research. The findings reveal that these women, perceived as frail and jeopardized, are shaped by conflicts, wars, and hostilities of any society. The critique reveals that while the text offers nuanced portrayals of resilience, it also reinscribes certain silences around female agency, as a result it invites interrogation of gendered politics in storytelling. Consequently, this research contributes to emerging feminist literary criticism, offers a deeper understanding of how language produces narratives that prioritize suffering over agency, and presents women as victims of the conflicted situations in literature.

1. Introduction

As a fundamental constituent of human lives, language serves a significant role in communication, social interaction, and conveying thoughts and emotions. Not only does language have a significant role to play in communication, but it is similarly essential in the construction of narratives as well as recounting of the experiences. It is primarily via language that individuals get to exchange their narratives with another. Van Dijk, in his research study, argued that narratives of the individuals that incorporated debates, arguments, and influences are ordinarily shaped by society and its language (2009). These arguments and debates are not confined to some particular society, instead they are relevant across both local and global boundaries. However, as much as language interplay is seen in influencing discourses within cultures, it also plays a requisite role in the region concerning gender discourses. A research study by Robin Lakoff proposed that in gender discussions, language highly frames the narratives of people (1975). Language is also carried out by narrative strategists in order to embed certain viewpoints. Taking into account the current considerations of the twentieth century men, it is evident that language is treated as a vital instrument in molding the figure of males as prevailing whereas that of females as subjugated bodies. It is essentially via language that certain narratives, implicating some genders as powerful while other as victims, takes its form.

Language, in addition to constructing discourses, plays a pivotal part in determining the role of genders with reference to their contextual circumstances. The nature of context significantly determines the nature of a constructed viewpoint. In sight of this particular research, the notion supremely emphasized is the work of language in forming the roles of females, regardless of their age dynamic, in conflicted circumstances. Experiences of women, specifically those who survived or witnessed conflicted circumstances such as wars, genocides, or hostilities, are primarily mounted by discourses that objectify them as victims. These adversarial environments seem to affect women tremendously no less than men. Considering the context of warfare circumstances, as said by Cockburn, they frame women as victims in terms of physical damage, mental instability, and financial disruption (2004). This victimization of females using warfare contexts is often framed via language. It vocalizes women victimhood by building discourses on subjugated women's behalf (Ní Aoláin, 2000).

The construction of narratives with the help of language is frequently achieved through literature. As suggested in the book, *Living to Tell About It* by Phelan, literature acts as a bridge to connect narratives with the real world (2009). With the operation of multifaceted diction and exclusive narrative practices, literature underpins the communication of voicing the victims to the world. Within the scope of this research, the primary emphasis is on the literature as the mechanism of language for exhibiting the victimization of females in conflicted circumstances such as warfare. Discourses maintained in literature represent the vulnerable positionality of women, underlining their roles as primary victims of warfare.

A work of literature that builds upon this manufacture of female victimization via language in warfare circumstances is Anthony Doerr's novel *All the Light We Cannot See*. Doerr is an American author who wrote this historical fiction inspired by the then ongoing World War II and its aftermath. The novel is set in France as well as in Germany during the times of Second World War. It explores mental, emotional, and physical turmoil people, particularly women, went through in destructive war context. The novel reveals the story of a young French blind girl, Marie-Laure and a young German enthusiastic boy Werner

Pfennig. Marie-Laure lives with her father, while Werner with his sister Jutta Pfennig. Mozaffor Hossain, in his research article writes that Marie-Laure's father, Monsieur LeBlanc, was enormously determined to assist his daughter be self-reliant, and he understood what he must do for that purpose, that is why he did everything possible to put Marie-Laure's day-to-day life at ease (93). LeBlanc was a locksmith as well as keeper of the keys at a French Museum. The German attacks on France that initiated the WWII had worsening impacts on the lives of Marie-Laure and her father. Daniel had to leave his daughter for duty purposes not knowing he would never see her again, a daughter who never spent a single day without her father not around. Eventually, after the WWII ended in the novel, Marie-Laure continued with her life without a father. On the other hand, the orphaned boy Werner was living a life in Germany with his younger sister Jutta. Werner was an inquisitive boy with curiosity for the world of physics particularly. Later in the novel, he was made to go to the military German force. His journey as a soldier then started where he struggled immensely as a young military. He, in later part of the novel, got himself killed and left his sister Jutta alone to grief. Jutta suffered tremendously as her only family left was dead because of the warfare. This delineates the basic story framework of the novel which explicitly presented females as victims of the war conflicts in various ways.

The exclusivity of the objective of this research makes it extremely significant in academia. So far, the existing body of literature related to women's victimization is mostly focused on the psycholinguistic aspect of these accounts and critically analyzes the impact of warfare contexts on the psychological health of individuals. In other words, no such research is made visible to highlight the sociolinguistic aspect of the entire discourse. This research builds upon the sociolinguistic aspect i.e. how language is shaping narratives in light of their contexts which interconnect the language hegemony in constructing narratives in warfare circumstances. It contributes to the literary as well as gender studies by foregrounding intersection of language and female victimization.

1.1 Aim of the Study

The objective behind this research is to examine how language constructs females as victims of the intense and destructive warfare setting as portrayed through literature taking Doerr's novel *All the Light We Cannot See* as primary text. The narrative technique which Doerr used in this novel is directly implying the character of female bodies as victims of their surroundings. Taking this piece of literature as the primary source, this research examines how its language used to represent emotional burden of females, their physical delicacy, and dependence of on other individuals, ultimately constructs them as victims of their surrounding circumstances, in this particular study, the World War II. With critical enquiry of the stances from the novel, this research aims to emphasize the role of language in shaping narratives. The theoretical framework this research is grounded on, is the theory of female narratology proposed by Susan S. Lanser, (1992), this research aims to rationalize how language frames role of females as victims with the help of this theoretical evidence.

1.2. Research Questions

This research is guided by two central questions:

- i. In what ways language, as a fundamental medium of communication, constructs the roles of females as victim of their conflicted warfare contexts, in literature?
- ii. How these female victimhood portrayals are reinforced through narrative strategies, through the lens of female narratology theory?

2. Literature Review

Over the years, Language has been considered not just as a means of communication but also as a tool for communication but also constructing identities. Within this shift in discursive construction of identities, the role of language in gendered communication has emerged as a field of research as gender has been a significant variable (Anjum et al., 2018). Numerous scholarly works have examined the novel *All the light we cannot see* from different perspectives. Novel's thematic construction has been examined by Evelyn Beck and Judy Murray. They provide valuable insights to novels' themes and intersection with gender, violence and victimhood. Their research aids this study in understanding female victimization. Building on Egie Danarko's study of gendered narratives, this study further examines the ways in which narrative discourse contribute to the construction of female victimhood. The portrayal of the protagonist explored by William T. Vollman (2014) supports this study's argument and explores how linguistic frameworks structure identities and contribute to the construction of victimhood. This novel has been examined from the lens of postmodern aesthetic by Dave eagle (2014). He studied the fragmented narrative structure and storytelling technique. His study helps to understand how victimization dynamics are established through such aesthetics. Pandit (2019) employed psychoanalytical lens on the novel. This work not only provides the psychoanalytic inquiry on female characters but also highlight the notions of emotional dependencies and vulnerabilities. Judith Butler theory of performativity argues that repetition of linguistic acts plays a crucial role in creating and reinforcing gendered hierarchies. This theoretical perspective helps us analyze hoe language is reinforcing the traditional representation of female victimhood. Mills (2002), also highlights the crucial role of language in constructing gender roles and gendered narratives. His theory aids in understanding language a s a powerful tool. Another work on gender discourses by Sunderland (2004) investigates the gendered ideologies embedded in cultural discourses. Her findings support the notion that narratives can construct women as victims. In parallel to this study, another work by Litoseseli (2004) foregrounds this ideological purpose of discourses and implies that such notion not only reflects the hierarchical structures but also reinforces gender power plays. The contribution of language in reflecting patriarchal norms and societal patterns was studied by Esteal et al (2012) who posits that linguistic frameworks can reflect the patriarchal norms and also hints at the broader culturally embodied ideological patterns. Litosseliti (2014) provides a broader perspective on the interrelation of language and gender, illustrating the linguistic discourses actively take part in shaping narratives. Similarly, Hussain's research examines the intersection of blindness and language used through the character of Marie Laure. The study reveals how her physical condition influences her linguistic expression, ultimately portraying women as victims. Existing

researches focus on thematic analysis or psychoanalytical concerns. of the novel *All the Light We Cannot See*, but a little attention has been paid to framing the role of women as victims, and sociolinguistics perspective This study attempts to bridge this gap by adopting Susan S. Lanser's (1992) feminist narratology theory as an analytical lens to foreground the role of language in portraying women as victims through discursive construction female victimization.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method by employing textual and narrative analysis as its primary methodological approaches. Textual analysis is best defined by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009, 2010), as an analysis, identifying signs and critically analyzing them. On the other hand, Narrative analysis gives space for subjective yet systematic exploration of text's structure, and its connection with language and meanings. The primary data source for the study is the novel *All the Light We Cannot See*, from which different passages have been selected for close reading and analysis with a focus on framing of women as victims. Secondary sources for the study include different scholarly articles, journal papers, thesis that engage with relevant framework and aims. This novel suits best the respective argument since its story revolves around a female protagonist who is directly exposed to war conflicts, where the language is directly portraying her as a victim. There are numerous instances in the novel that could be used to explore the research objectives. This study creates categories of instances or excerpts from the novel for thematic analysis. The events and excerpts our study incorporated in the research were categorized on the basis of content relevancy, and similar implications, where the victimization of females in the war conflict is explicitly unveiled. First among them is the treatment of a female by the society. The next category is familial relationships, the way the protagonist is emotionally dependent on her father, and how the relationships are built to construct her as a victim. Third is the personal account of a female that implies her role as a victim. These three categories were selected on the basis of their different yet interconnected aspects of victimization.

In this study, the data taken from the novel; *All the Light We Cannot See* is analyzed at different linguistic levels. The words, phrases, clauses, sentences and passages are used to deconstruct the role of language in framing women as victims. The primary focus is examination is linguistic structures that construct the identities of victims. As a result, language appears as a powerful tool that reflects and constructs the reality and identities. To support the aim of this study, Susan Lanser's (1992) feminist narratology theory is being used. Lanser's work reimagines the narrative theory by incorporating feministic notions. It is actually an interdisciplinary methodology which blends the descriptive methods with the narratology domain and exposes gendered dimensions of narratives. As Singh (2019) studies the subject and offer similar view points, he mentions that feminist narratology enables us to view the standpoints if women as victims within texts. Thus, by incorporating this theoretical framework, this study tries to examine doers' use of linguistics patterns that support female victimization.

To systematically extract, organize and analyze the data, the research design is structured around four step qualitative approach, to critically examine the discursive victimization of women in literature. First, a close, comprehensive and critical reading of the primary text is

done for its deep analysis. Second, the most relevant and specific instances from the text were selected, where language reflects or constructs the female identity as subjugated or victimized. Third, the selected data is categorized based on its relevance to research objectives. Finally, for the nuanced interpretation of data, the analysis is situated within the theoretical framework of female narratology. Through these above mentioned steps, this study ensures both textual specificity and theoretically grounded methodology that aids in critical examination of victimization of women through discourse narrative.

4. Data Analysis

This study set out to explore the ways in which the female characters are represented and subjugated under the influence of World War II, hence portraying them as victims specifically through the lens of female narratology by Lanser. For instance, the female protagonist Marie-Laure, in the early years of her life, was intensely attached to her father. She depended on him as any other kid depends on their parents. This connection is reflected in the novel's lines when Daniel says to his daughter "i will never leave you, not in a million years" (Doerr, 2014; 31), which underscore the relation of Marie-Laure and her father. Marie-Laure, out of her unwavering incorruptibility, took these words as literally. Marie-Laure and her father were never subjected to leave each other's side before the conflicted war circumstances of WWII. A dialogue in the novel implying their strong relation says, "have we ever spent a night apart? "No" (Doerr, 2014; 190). These conversations between Marie-Laure and her father underscore their strengthened bond. However, the initiation of World War II in the novel caused chaos for all individuals including Marie-Laure and her father. That was the period when their relationship started to go in a downward spiral where the father had no choice but to leave his daughter due to increasing threats around. Marie-Laure, forever yearning for her father, was left alone to live the rest of her life without the person who was her everything. This was the point when the diction of this novel molded the role of Marie-Laure being as a female, victimized due to the war horrors.

Focusing on the first research question regarding the ways in which language constructs the role of women as victims. By employing the close reading method, in the light of Lanser's Female narratology theory, this study demonstrates that the linguistics device used in the novel are not just narratives, but a reflecting of culturally embedded ideologies which ultimately frames women as victims. This is evident in the character of Marie Laurie. She is portrayed as a victim of war as well as the societal and cultural structures which construct her identity. Her physical disability, emotional dependence on her father, and her emotional turmoil on her separation from her father is narrated through linguistic device which convey a sense of hopelessness, darkness and consequently victimization. Her interactions with the society, and her inner voice exemplifies how she is subjected to victimization. For instances when narrator describes her situation as she has lost all her colors, on her father's disappearance, it is not just a linguistic element, but the actual reality of her life that foregrounds the emotional turmoil and situates her as a victim. Marie-Laure lost her only support of life, i.e. her father, because of war like situation. This narrative pattern perfectly aligns with the female narratology theory proposed by Lanser, which interrogate how language and narrative structures are inherently gendered. By examining the language and voices attributed to characters, and critically analyzing how the female experiences are framed within the story, female narratology theory provides a lens through which portrayal

of women victimization can be uncovered. Hence it reveals that through language and narratives, not only reflection of the cultural ideologies of victimhood is traced, but we also examine how discursive patterns reinforce or resist them.

Additionally, another instance is examined where female victimization in the novel takes place. Zhornokui puts it in his research that in order to seek protection and refugee from Nazis invasion in 1940, Marie-Laure and her father escaped towards coastal city of Saint-Malo, to Marie's grandfather's brother named Monsieur Etienne. After a short period of time, Marie was left alone with Monsieur, as her father got arrested by Germans and he disappeared forever (83). Marie-Laure, as innocent as she always was, kept looking for her father. The words, "I will never leave you, not in a million years" (Doerr, 2014; 31) were dancing in her mind. This anxious state of Marie-Laure depicted through the language of the novel implies how she is gradually subjected to victimhood under the war mayhem. At another instance in the novel, she recollects, "if only she had begged him to stay" (Doerr, 2014; 226) underlines how she yearned for her father to come back who left her because of the conflicted war situation they were facing. She was particularly affected severely because this was apparently the first time she had to live without her Papa, and that alone for this long. Another occurrence when language revealed Marie-Laure as a victim of her surroundings was when the novel says, "every second it feels as if her father slips farther away" (Doerr, 2014; 226). The absence of her father for this long implied for Marie-Laure that she was on her own, and that she had to live through these hard times all by herself. Thus, the female victimhood framed with the help of language in the warfare circumstances is depicted via the relationship of Marie-Laure and her father. Ultimately, Lanser's theory of female narratology is reflected through these instances where the perspective of Marie-Laure is given prime emphasis via novel's diction that how war situation is affecting her personal life.

Secondly, the portrayal of females as victims in the warfare circumstances with the use of language in the novel is represented through the encounter of Marie-Laure with a group of children. The encounter takes place in a street near the house of Marie-Laure. The lines are,

A group of children comes tramping through the leaves. A boy's voice says something; several other boys laugh. Marie-Laure lifts her fingers from her novel. The laughter spins, turns. The first voice is suddenly right beside her ear. "They're mad for blind girls, you know." His breath is quick. She extends her arm into the space beside her but contacts nothing. She cannot say how many others are with him. Three or four, perhaps. His is the voice of a twelve- or thirteen-year-old. She stands and hugs her huge book against her chest, and she can hear her cane roll along the edge of the bench and clatter to the ground. Someone else says, "They'll probably take the blind girls before they take the gimps." The first boy moans grotesquely. Marie-Laure raises her book as if to shield herself. The second boy says, "Make them do things." "Nasty things." An adult's voice in the distance to her left calls out, "Louis, Peter?" "Who are you?" hisses Marie-Laure. "Bye-bye, blind girl." Then: quiet. Marie-Laure listens to the trees rustle; her blood swarms. For a long and panicked minute, she crawls among the leaves at the foot of the bench until her fingers find her cane (Doerr, 2014; 69).

The narrations of this novel strips women from their individuality, identity and merely reduce them to the identities constructed by their disability or their imposed gendered role.

In the above stated instance taken from the novel, it is apparent that the character of Marie-Laure is subjected to victimhood by some bullies. The horrors of war are reinforced through the speech of the boy who was trying to scare Marie-Laure for being a 'blind girl.' The language used by the boy is offensive since it is objectifying the blindness of another child making it appear as if someone with abnormal trait is the target of Germans. In the lens of female narratology theory, androcentric narration is identifiable and Lanser highly critiques such notions where women subjectivity is displaced. Furthermore, the words like "They will probably take the blind girls before they take the gimps", exemplifies how the identity of protagonist Marie Lurie is reduced to just her physical disability. Her whole presence as an individual and a girl is nullified and she is confined to her identity given by her blindness. The possessive tone of the word "take" reduces her autonomy over her life and dehumanizes her to a subject of possession or utility. Such narration finds its parallel in wartime discourses where women are portrayed as voiceless and active and passive victims of conflicted situation. Similarly, in the selected passage there is another instance where the boys utter phrases like "make them do nasty things"(69). This kind of narration reinforces the idea of dehumanization of women, where female is victimized through make adolescent humor. The language of the selected novel reinforces the trends where female victimization is normalized and taken as mean of entertainment. It perfectly aligns with Lanser's assertion in her feminist narratology theory that language in itself is never neutral; it is gendered and politically charged. This theory dwells upon the idea of patriarchal storytelling where males' voices often dominate in different levels of narration. The suggestive language here positions female body as a site of violence, entertainment, spectacle, and ultimately leads to broader discourses if patriarchal notion of language. Furthermore, the phrases like "anything that can be used must be used, just like all of us" equal females with some material or object that should be "utilized". The boundary between human and object is collapsing her. It solidifies the notion of female victimization in warlike situations.

Lastly, the language used by Doerr in the novel to represent female characters as victims in the conflicts of warfare is the interaction of male protagonist Werner and a letter given to him by his younger sister Jutta. Since Werner was in the military and Jutta in Germany, she used to communicate with her brother via letters. In a letter she wrote to her brother, she mentioned,

Dear Werner, why don't you write? The foundries run day and night and the stacks never stop smoking and it's been cold here so everyone burns everything to stay warm. Sawdust, hard coal, soft coal, lime, garbage. War widows and every day there are more. I'm working at the laundry with the twins, Hannah and Susanne, and Claudia Förster, you remember her, and we're mending tunics and trousers mostly. I'm getting better with a needle so at least I'm not pricking myself all the time. Right now I just finished my homework. Do you have homework? There are fabric shortages and people bring in slipcovers, curtains, old coats. Anything that can be used they say must be used. Just like all of us here. Ha. I found this under your old cot. Seems like you could use it. Love, Jutta. (Doerr, 2014; 264).

Through this excerpt, it is evident how language is portraying Jutta, a female, as victim of the warfare surroundings. The selection of the words reflects women's subjugation due to the unjustifiable war crises. Jutta expressed her vulnerability to her brother telling the

mental exhaustion she suffered all due to extensive labour she was subjected to. Her letter implies that the only reason there was an increase in the labor even for young individuals was the ongoing war. Similarly, the phrases like "war widows and every day there are more" (Doerr, 2014; 264) appear to be sympathetic but in actually contributes to the idea that individual suffering is being equaled worth the numbered loss, and also presenting female as a subject of men's war loss. This instance exemplifies what Lanser (1992) calls as "suppression of female narrative agency" in her feminist narratology theory. Lanser puts emphasis on the suppression in the context that women are not granted the space to articulate their own traumas rather they are narrated through external focalization. The character of Jutta in the novel also exemplifies similar notions. Her letter to her brother further solidifies this paper's objectives. In her letter to Werner, she is not just focusing on her tensions, but also reassuring her brother, consoling him, and maintains the emotional stability in the situation of chaos. Jutta's role of caregiver/consoler, hints at gendered expectations inscribed by a patriarchal society. Collectively, these outcomes of horrific war situations that disrupted not only the individuals but also undermines societal structures. As a result women are awfully affected and portrayed as victims.

5. Conclusion

Hence, the findings illustrate that in the novel *All the Light We Cannot See*, Doerr uses highly gendered language which contributes to framing women as victims of society and conflicted situations, through emotional states and physical disability of the protagonist. By employing Lens of female narratology, the focus is grounded on language's role in framing of women as victim of conflicted situations. While the novel revolves around a female protagonist but her voice is silenced at many instances, or mediated through some external narrations. Her internal state of mind is often under looked, reducing her to a mere symbolic figure rather than one having certain autonomy. Moreover the narration as well as linguistic structures exemplifies the notions off female narratology theory that echoes the subjugation of women and their voices. These findings suggest that even in the present world, the contemporary literature that appears to be female centered and giving limelight to female characters, occlude the gendered voices and narrations, Lanser's theory enables a critical interrogation of the ways in which language and narratives contribute to the framing of women as victims of conflicted situations.

To conclude, it is evident that in literature, narratives are constructed via language that outline the victimization of females in war regions, as examined in the novel by Doerr. Through the diction used by Doerr, females in the novel are represented as oppressed, submissive, and bullied mainly because of one sole reason; the World War. This subjugation faced by females creates a grounding imagery that dictates them as victims of their surroundings. On the other hand, the use of gender binaries in the novel where males, who are frontiers of war are shown tough, and strong, capable of overpowering women whereas women objectified as vulnerable due the horrific consequences of war further solidify their role as victims. This research examined this victimization of females via two of the leading female figures in the novel, Marie-Laure and Jutta. The language of novel portrayed them as someone who lacked individuality and had personalities that foreshadowed their dependency on male characters who, in fact, ended up losing their lives to the war thus leaving their female dependents alone to deal with the consequences. This, as a result depicted them as victims of the conflicted situations. The linguistic items and

narration used in this novel hints at female subjugation. Literature is considered as a powerful tool which not only reflects the dominant ideologies but also creates and shift narratives. The narratives framing women as victims are also reflected and shaped by language and literature. The primary text of this study "All the Light We Cannot See" exemplifies this notion. Through different metaphors, symbols and narration, women are presented as victims of warlike situations and eventually it delves into the broader themes of women marginalization. While this study explores framing of women victimization through female narratology theory, the future researchers can expand on exploring other war narratives to interrogate whether similar structures persist. Similarly this study offers a strong foundation to future comparative studies on historic and contemporary literature providing insights to the evolving narrative dimensions when it comes to female victimization.

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Writing Back or Writing for? Re-Orientalism and the Burden of Representation in South Asian Fiction

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- Postcolonialism
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Abstract

*Postcolonial studies have critically deconstructed Eurocentric narratives, exposing the ideological constructs embedded in colonial discourse. Eastern writers have actively contested these representations, resisting the West's portrayal of the East as an inferior "Other." Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) elucidates how Western discourse systematically depicted the East to reinforce its own dominance. Expanding on this critique, Lau (2009) introduced re-Orientalism—a phenomenon in which diasporic writers, often from formerly colonized regions, reproduce and internalize Western stereotypes about the East. This study examines *The Good Muslim* (2011) by Tahmima Anam, analyzing how Bangladeshi diasporic authors engage in re-Orientalist portrayals by accentuating negative cultural tropes. Through textual analysis, the paper argues that such narratives risk perpetuating, rather than subverting, colonialist frameworks by exaggerating and distorting indigenous traditions. The findings contribute to ongoing debates on re-Orientalism, revealing the complex ways postcolonial literature both challenges and reinforces hegemonic representations.*

1. Introduction

As a distinct literary canon, postcolonial studies opened new avenues for scholars to challenge the West's Eurocentric perspective. The extremely subjective ideology construct of the colonial agenda was contested by this canon, which was created by many Eastern authors (McLeod, 2000). Most of the Eastern writers documented opposition to this subjective ideological construct (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002). The agenda was referred to as Orientalism by Said (1978). Lau and Mendes (2011) believe that during the colonial time period Western writers portray the East as the West's alter ego and the West as a highly good self-image. This action was taken with knowledge and purpose by the Western authors to further their Eurocentric agenda.

Lau (2009) introduced the idea of re-orientalism in the last ten years, keeping in mind the brief history of postcolonial studies and orientalism. According to her paper, re-Orientalism is the practice of Orientals depicting the Orient as "other," which has been done in ways that are strikingly like those used by Western authors and academics in the past. Most frequently, diasporic writers who were born in colonized nations and now reside in the West employ re-orientalism to highlight the negative aspects of their own culture. This study examines selected South Asian works and concludes that the primary trait of diasporic writers is the distortion of Asian culture and the depiction of its negative aspects. It is hoped that while examining the chosen novel's text, it will become clear that authors have appropriated more brutal and deceitful elements of the local way of life.

2. Literature Review

To comprehend orientalism, Loomba (2007) highlights that power and knowledge are connected to power actions rather than existing in a physical location. She claims that this relationship between power and knowledge is the foundation of Edward Said's orientalism, which shows how much colonist ideological ideas shaped the conversation about the Orient. According to Said (1978), history, literature, and philosophy all contributed to the west's representation of the East and the development of a discourse about the Orient to support colonization. By analyzing colonialism through the prism of discourse, Orientalism shows how colonists' perceptions of the East were reinforced by literary and cultural works as well as scholarly research on the region. In the Orient, these works influenced not only knowledge but also reality. Additionally, she asserts that these texts supported colonial cultures in their activities. Orientalism highlights the power of colonial writings, showing that they are more than just sources of information for analysts and that books have the same authority as organizations and scholars.

This subject has been expanding and creating new hierarchies, and post-colonial scholars like Edward Said, Homi K. Bhaba, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have all contributed to this changing post-colonial process, according to Shands (2008). Furthermore, Spivak (as cited in Karishna 2009) argues that the culture of imperialism is inextricably linked to the post-colonial. According to Brouillette (2007), several factors, such as post-colonial literature's complexity, skepticism of nationalism, use of exile and subjective language, and anti-realist inclinations, contribute to its success in the current market.

According to Huggan (2002), post-colonial writers both support and undermine the global "alternative industry," which uses cultural differences and post-colonial literature as top commodities. This phenomenon is known as the "global commodification of cultural differences in post-colonial literature." Several academics have attempted to investigate the issue of contradictory self-representation in postcolonial literature. According to Said (1978), this negative representation of the East in western literature is linked to a larger Western scheme to justify the entire colorization process, in which the civilized West seeks to rescue the barbarian East.

By identifying its origins in the language and philosophy of the West, Spivak provides a more thorough explanation of the purported process of self-othering in postcolonial writers and critics (Krishna, 2009). Spivak argues that the writers' mental freedom is not ensured by the physical absence of western authority because, even in postcolonial times, the east is defined in relation to the west, and they defend their national identity through dialogue with western ideology. Orientalism (Said, 1978) has shown how the East's dispositions were shaped by the West's distinct discourse. Furthermore, by drawing a contrastive line between the East (the other) and the West (the self), the western elite defined the East as simply an alien place. Lisa Lau was influenced by this idea of Orientalism and created re-Orientalism, an updated theory that was thought to reflect the Orientals' preservation of Orientalism in its infancy. The theory describes how South Asia's current global positionality is reshaping contemporary discourse.

It is also important to note that the associated rhetoric has an Eastern tone even though it was clearly produced by the postcolonial diaspora. It's also important to remember that re-Orientalism is not the same as orientalism. It considers not only the apparent dichotomy but also the active participation of diaspora literature and its reception and acceptance in India (Mendes & Lau, 2015). Scholars have debated orientalism and re-orientalism, so Lau (2009) is not the first to voice concerns about how India is portrayed in Anglophone Asian narratives. Lau and Mendes (2011) claim that the terms "reverse orientalism," "internal orientalism," "self-orientalism," and "ethno-orientalism" have become more popular in discourse over the past two or three decades, adopting a few terms for themselves. As a result, the idea of re-Orientalism generated controversy and harsh criticism globally.

Many critics have expressed interest in the new Orientalism practices of diasporic writers (Salagado, 2011). In his view, the literary endeavors of Oriental 'elites' expose their part in maintaining a cultural dichotomy between the Orient and the Occident, where the Occident holds the top spot. However, in contrast to Lau's (2009) concept of re-Orientalism, he emphasizes the importance of portrayal authenticity. His ideas about representation transform the more general problem of Orientalism and re-Orientalism into a claim that diasporic authors offer an earlier version of the Orient that aims to accurately portray the East.

The legitimacy of Oriental fiction authors writing in English has been questioned by numerous South Asian critics. The problem of representation and authenticity seems to be a two-pronged phenomenon, where the author attempts to satisfy both the expectations of the source culture to be accurately represented and the demands of Western readers and publishers. According to Raja (2018), to satisfy the demands of the foreign reader and publisher, the authors deliberately ignore the norms of the source culture in this instance. Chambers (2014) claims that Tahmima Anam's book *The Good Muslim* (2011) creates an incredibly permeable wall between religion and secularism. Both concepts now share some similarities in terms of illogical, reason, radicalism, and moderation. However, Majid and Jalal Uddin (2018) believe the play merely portrays a religious and secular way of life.

Habib (2015) examines traditional feminism's work patterns and contrasts them with the lives of women in developing nations. Ahmad and Ahmed (2024) discussed the presence of re-Orientalist aspects in Pakistani English literature while focusing majorly on Aslam's narrative in his *The Wasted Vigil* (2008). Afzal and Abbas (2025) observed Oriental othering through gender stereotypes is prevalent in the portrayal of Pakistani Muslims, portraying women as oppressed yet alluring beings and men as violent. Additionally, it presents Pakistani food, culture, and urban areas in an exotic way as a paradox of sensuality and chaos. Similarly, Ahmad, Ullah and Ammar (2021) discussed the exotic representation of Pakistani culture and the othering of Pakistanis on a foreign land in their study. Previous research suggests that the South Asian literary canon needs to investigate re-Orientalism techniques. The chosen South Asian fictional work was not previously examined from a re-Orientalism perspective, and the evaluated work primarily deals with different topics. Because of this, it could be argued that the selected work is not assessed using re-Orientalism, which leaves a gap that the current study could fill.

3. Research Methodology

Using the interpretive research paradigm, the study looks at the hidden realities in the selected work. Since the interpretive research paradigm maintains that reality is not static and fixed, it makes it easier to discover various interpretations of it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To accomplish its goals and address its research questions, the study also uses a qualitative research approach. This study is qualitative in nature. The aim of this study is to examine the selected work from the perspective of Lau (2009) and Lau and Mendes' reorientation (2011, 2015). Several extracts that illustrate re-orientalism are examined using interpretative paradigm techniques.

Lau (2009) claims that there is an unexpected power dynamic in South Asian fiction that upholds the colonial goal of depicting Eastern cultures and societies in a peculiar way. According to her, the argument of orientalism is being revived by South Asian literary writers with its new, complex dimensions, wherein the authors themselves portray an Orientalized view of the East. Lau's concept of re-orientalism emphasizes the role of eastern writers who practice orientalist agendas to meet the demands of western readers. Additionally, South Asian literary writers use a western perspective to present a cliched representation of eastern civilization and culture, which is noticeable to western readers and publishers. Orientals' role in preserving orientalism while positioning the West at the center and themselves and the East at the periphery or as alien is the focus of re-orientalism. They intentionally and generally harm the entire Orient in the process. The positionality of re-orientalists and the paths they asserted to Orientalize the east are clarified by the second characteristic of re-orientalism. The third element of re-orientalism is "strange internal coherence," which portrays the perpetrators of deceptive orientalism and deceptive behavior while preserving a coherent story. The radical instability of representation must therefore always be considered by re-orientalism theory and nowhere is this truer than when Orientals engage in (new forms of) orientalism, which brings up the difficult, troublesome questions of representation accuracy and realism, or, to put it briefly, authenticity.

Textual analysis is the study method used to examine the selected literary work. The researcher has concentrated on a detailed analysis of the chosen literary work rather than a cursory understanding of the data. According to McKee's (2003) methodical approach to

textual analysis, choosing a topic should be the first step in the process, followed by the formulation of research questions to help the researcher stay focused on a specific subject. Considering the stated research topics, the next step should be to highlight the pertinent texts and use further research to find more pertinent examples from the chosen text.

4. Data Analysis

In his book *Orientalism* (1978), Said referred to the Western agenda as "Orientalism." In the West, he was seen as promoting, creating, and projecting a positive self-image while at the same time portraying the East or Orient as antithetical to the West. He talked about how the West and Western authors negatively portrayed the East by maintaining a Eurocentric canon and image. In most Western literature, the colonized were portrayed as primitive and uncivilized, while the Westerners were portrayed as the epitome of civilized behavior and etiquette. This dichotomy of "Us" and "Them" pushed the East to the periphery as a marginalized nation because, to put it simply, the West saw itself as a center and the East as othered. Lau (2009) presented a similar idea in her article, but this time the roles are reversed. This time, the Orientals themselves have begun self-othering, and the West is no longer interested in portraying the East or Orient as othered. During the presentation of the concept of re-Orientalism, Lau believes that the writers from the Orient are intentionally portraying a negative image of the Orient. The Orientals take this action to improve their ties with their former colonizers and masters. Furthermore, this self-deprecating portrayal is an attempt to gain acceptance and recognition in the canon of Western literature.

Tahmima Anam, in her book *The Good Muslim* (2011), depicts Bangladesh in 1984. Her main character, Maya, is a female doctor who embodies Bangladesh's contemporary ideals. However, Sohail, Maya's brother and a former army officer, stands in for Islamic customs and principles. Anam portrays a conflict between "old" Islamic traditions and values and modern ones; as an Oriental, she paints a negative picture of Islamic values that began to flourish in Bangladesh following the country's independence and that it is an Islamic nation. Anam portrays Islamic principles as primitive. In the book, Silvi, Sohail's wife, wore a burkha. She delivers this act in a highly ironic manner. She also cites this as the cause of Maya's more than seven-year self-exile from her home. "The prospect of facing Silvi sanctimonious, her face packed tightly into the burkha she hadn't been seen without since the war – was largely what had kept Maya from her home." (p. 9). Although wearing a burkha in an Islamic nation is not unusual, Anam points out that it is a significant problem for self-exile. She appears to represent burkha as a manifestation of the contemporary, westernized Bangladesh.

Maya chooses to keep her distance from her family and embarks on a new life as a lady doctor. She is forced to relocate to Rajshahi after her initial encounter with Nazia in the hospital city, where she is convinced to pursue a career as a lady health doctor. However, Maya quickly departs Rajshahi because the locals view her as a curse. Additionally, she leaves the village because Nazia received a hundred and one lashes in front of her as punishment. "That Chink is not my baby. Lying cheating whore of a wife. The punishment was one hundred and one lashes." (p. 23). It is crucial to note that Anam depicts Bangladesh in the 1980s in *The Good Muslim*. In 1971, Bangladesh gained its independence from Pakistan, and thirteen years later, Nazia was living in a completely ruled and judicially powerful nation. In addition, Bangladesh was ruled by a dictator in

1984. It is hard to imagine carrying out such actions and enforcing the law in a dictatorship. Anam, however, portrays the situation in a way that makes it appear extremely primitive and uncivilized. Such misrepresentations are referred to as re-Orientalism by Lau (2009), in which an Oriental person distorts their own culture and society.

“Instead of a word, she was marked by the whip, her hand rushing to the place on her neck where it has touched her and returning with blood. And was that a smile in the man’s eye? The one who was only following orders, protecting the village, the name of the village.” (p.23). From one perspective, it is evident that Anam is misrepresenting her own nation by harshly depicting its people and culture. It is also evident that in Islam, whipping is a form of punishment for a guilty individual whose offense has been established following a protracted legal procedure. Anam, on the other hand, makes a very weak case in which Nazia, the accused, is given a hundred and one lashes despite not having been proven guilty. The protagonist Maya is forced to leave Rajshahi because of the incident because Nazia, her only friend and hope, rejects her and won't meet her. Without knowing what will happen to her, Maya departs Rajshahi.

After a long and stressful journey, she finally makes it back to her childhood home, where she had resided since she was a small child. Throughout the novel, Maya encounters conflicts regarding the notions of so-called "extremism". She feels uncomfortable around Silvi, her brother's wife, who is wearing a burkha, so she chooses to go into home exile for herself once more. Maya has observed many architectural changes, so she anticipates her home will have changed significantly by the time she returns after seven years. However, she is startled to see women in burkhas wandering around her home and standing in the kitchen when she first gets there. “Instead, she found the kitchen packed with women. They wore long black burkhas and squatted over the grinding stone, the sink, the stove... One of the women rose to greet her. Maya couldn’t make out her features beneath the loose black cloth.” (p.14).

The incident demonstrates how Anam creates a stereotype of women in burkhas. Her depiction of wearing a burkha is a misinterpretation of the Islamic significance of the garment as well as its culture and customs. Furthermore, wearing a burkha while preparing breakfast or any other meal in front of a stove or sink is not customary. These incidents demonstrate how Anam has distorted the perception of religious women in her nation. Islam places a lot of significance on the burkha, and it is evident that the West constantly seeks to disparage and discredit it. According to Lau (2009), Eastern writers present such images to suit the Western agenda to appease former colonizers and improve ties with them. This is not the end of the struggle between Islamic and Westernized traditions. Anam portrays a different picture of Bangladesh and society through her main female character, Maya. Islamic values are denigrated by Maya, who stands for westernized and modern values and views them as civilized values. Maya has wished for Sohail's son to be westernized and away from religion since his birth. “She had loved him, how fiercely she had needed him to be like her, how she has turned away when he had leaned towards God.” (p. 17).

For Maya, liberty and civilization are defined as the ability to choose for oneself, and she views herself as a liberal and free woman who can do so. However, she would rather avoid Sohail's son when he makes his own decisions. Is it not a paradox? These instances clearly demonstrate how Anam has misled and misled the readers. Anam also demonstrates how Sohail has forgotten his earthly obligations and is only interested in his afterlife because of

his propensity for reward. "Only that he had moved upstairs, that his wife had delivered a son, that she saw hardly anything of them, so busy were they with their religion." (p. 21). All world religions advocate for a well-rounded outlook on life. This portrayal of Sohail's personality misrepresents a devout individual who is constantly preoccupied with religious matters. According to Lau (2009), Anam's goal as an orientalist writer is to foster an orientalist mindset in which the West presents a very good image of itself while changing the East's image. Anam, however, is occupied with presenting a favorable image of the West and a terrible image of himself since he is Oriental. Furthermore, Anam has depicted Silvi's and Sohail's religious gatherings in a highly dubious light. These kinds of gatherings are a common occurrence in Islamic societies, and people eagerly and freely attend them to learn about Islam and other topics. Nevertheless, they are sometimes portrayed in a highly dubious manner. "Silvi had held discussion meetings upstairs, preaching to the women about everything there was to know about being a Muslim. God, men, morality. Purdah and sex." (p. 22)

The characteristics of Lau's (2009) idea of re-Orientalism are obvious. It primarily emphasizes three key points. The first is that Westerners portray themselves positively, while Orientals portray themselves negatively. According to the second, their efforts are conscious and purposeful since they wish to please and get acceptance from the former colonists or masters. The idea of publication politics is emphasized in the third element. According to Lau (2009), the writers fabricate and offer a bad picture of the East to get acceptance and recognition in the Western literary canon and publication market. In the findings section, the researcher notes that Tahmina Anam is misrepresenting Islamic traditions, values, and rituals. Through her characters in the book, it is easy to see her attempts to gain popularity in the western market. Through its characters, the story vividly depicts a clash between the West and the East, or between modernism and Islam. Furthermore, she establishes a dichotomy of good and less good or terrible through this fight, which demonstrates how Islamic and local values are purposefully marginalized and pushed to the side.

5. Conclusion

In his *Orientalism* (1978), Said highlighted Eurocentrism's Western objective while referring to it as Orientalism, a name he had created. According to him, the East or Orient is being emphasized as the negative and opposing ego of the West, while the West is marketing, projecting, producing, and portraying itself as a very positive self-image. In order to preserve a Eurocentric image and canon, he discussed how the West and Western writers negatively depicted the East. In most Western literature, the Western occupants were presented as icons of culture and manners, while the colonized were depicted as uncivilized and savage. The 'Us' and 'Them' duality, in short, drove the East forward, while the West regarded itself as a center and the East as othered. Lau's (2009) concept of re-Orientalism is quite clear in many respects. It mainly highlights three crucial components. The first is that Orientals portray themselves negatively while Westerners portray themselves favorably. The second claims that their endeavor is intentional and purposeful because they want to win the approval of their former colonists or masters. The third element emphasizes the idea of publicizing politics. Lau (2009) asserts that authors present a negative image of the East to gain acceptance and recognition in the Western literary canon and publishing market. According to the researcher's conclusions, Tahmima Anam

misrepresents Islamic customs, values, and practices. Throughout the story, her characters demonstrate her attempts to get recognition in the western market. Through her characters, the novel powerfully portrays a conflict between Islam and modernism, or the West and the East. Through this conflict, she also creates a binary of good and less good or horrible, which shows how Islamic and local values are deliberately pushed to the sidelines and troubled.

Numerous queries and suggestions are also brought up by the current investigation. The conflict between Westernized and Islamic traditions is evident in this study, but it is not over yet. Through her protagonist Maya, Anam presents a skewed picture of Bangladesh and its culture. Maya disparages Islamic values since she represents modern, westernized standards and views them as admirable. Given all of this, I, as a researcher in the field, propose that future researchers should investigate new facets of the subject to fill this enormous gap. While analyzing the author's proficiency in depicting a culture in a unique way, the scholars could examine previous works by the same author. Furthermore, given that South Asian texts in English are currently becoming recognized as a distinct literary canon, it is advised that other Eastern authors be chosen for comparable research.

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**Pre-service EFL Teacher's Attitudes, Perceptions and Competence
Level towards the Use of Technology**

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Keywords

- Technology integration
- language classrooms
- Digital resources
- English language teaching
- Teacher technology training

Abstract

The research focused at exploring the attitudes, perceptions and level of competence of pre-service EFL teachers towards using technology in English Language classrooms. This research took place at Air University which is in the capital city of Pakistan: Islamabad. Participants were selected by random sampling. 62 participants took part in the study. The study employed a mixed research methodology for collection of data. Educational Technology questionnaire (Albirini, 2006) was used to collect quantitative data. Focus group interview sessions were conducted as part of qualitative data collection process. The quantitative data was analysed by SPSS 25.0. Thematic analysis was used for the interpretation of qualitative data. The results indicated that pre-service EFL teachers had above average level of competence towards technology usage. The participants had moderately positive perceptions towards using digital resources and exhibited positive attitudes towards technology integration. The results also indicated that perceptions of the teachers towards use of educational technology is largely impacted by their attitudes towards technology integration. In addition, the study pointed out obstacles in three primary areas in the process of technology integration: individual, technical and lack of resources and knowledge.

1. Introduction

The advancement and development in the field of technology has made it crucial to everyday life. Technology has improved life's standard by advancements in the fields of health, research, economy, transportation and communication. In the last few decades, educationists have researched about the impact of integrating technology in the education sector. Efforts are being done to improve the education sector by incorporating computers and other technology items in the study design (Inan & Lowther, 2010).

A lot of efforts are being done in Pakistan to improve the standard of education by incorporating ICT. However, this is not a short and easy procedure. There exist problems like lack of resources and lack of training for staff. Implementation of technology that facilitates in learning procedures have some conditions for successful integration. Firstly, dissatisfaction with the current system is required. If people are not satisfied by the outcomes of the traditional ways, they will feel the need of incorporating modern ways. Secondly, knowledge, skills and resources are required. Also, all the staff members, teachers, facilitators and administration must be committed to the cause. (Ely, 2014)

The successful integration of technology in classrooms depends on a lot of factors. Some of these factors include available resources (software and hardware), perception and attitudes of teachers towards using technology in language classrooms and available content and pedagogical knowledge for incorporating technology for effective outcomes. The availability of sufficient knowledge and skills to carry out the desired task is referred as "competence" (Verspoor, 2010). It is very essential to have technically trained staff for desired outcomes. Another factor that contributes largely in successful incorporation of technology in language classrooms is the perception of teachers towards using technology in classrooms. Perception has multiple facets like behavior, environment, social and personal. Researches have proved that the teacher's perceived importance of technology and its management varies with various factors (ChanLin, 2007). Teacher training is an important factor. Seminars, teacher training programs and internships can greatly benefit teachers. Such programs can help to train teachers in a way that they can introduce new technology items in classroom settings in an 'intelligent and smooth' way (Warschauer, 2002).

1.1. Problem Statement:

English Language is taught in most Pakistani schools from kindergarten, but the level of English proficiency is much lower than that desired at national level. Most of the schools in Pakistan employ traditional methods and pedagogical practices for teaching. Some private schools have started using modern ways of teaching English by incorporating technology into the teaching system however, educational technology is still a new concept in Pakistani education system and the staff lacks technical training. This research will address this issue by finding out the perception, attitudes and competence of pre-service teachers towards the use of technology integration.

1.2. Purpose of the Study:

The main objective of this study is to explore the attitudes, perceptions and competence of pre-service EFL teachers regarding technology use in English Language learning. The competence will be measured by available knowledge, expertise and ease of using technology in classroom environment. Also, the perception and competence will be measured across the variable of gender.

1.3. Research Questions:

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the level of competence of Pakistani pre-service EFL teachers towards the use of digital resources in classrooms?
- ii. What are the perceptions of pre-service EFL teachers towards the use of digital resources in their future classrooms?
- iii. Does gender influence perceptions and attitudes of pre-service teachers towards the use of educational technology?
- iv. How are perceptions and competence of teachers correlated with their attitudes towards the use of digital resources?
- v. What challenges do pre-service teachers face in the integration of digital resources?

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The research employed mixed design to conduct this research. Most of the researchers believe that a mixed research design is the one which combines qualitative and quantitative ways of collecting and analyzing data. However, some researchers also believe that a research design can be classified as a mixed design if it employs a combination of 'qual-qual' techniques or 'quan-quant' techniques (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). This study contains a 'qualitative-quantitative' mixed research design. The quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire and the qualitative data was obtained by focus group interviews.

2.2. Setting and Participants:

Participants of the study comprised of students from sixth and final semesters of bachelor's program, students from Masters' program and some lecturers. All of the participants were from English department. All participants were selected through the procedure of convenience sampling.

For qualitative data, four focus group interviews were conducted. For simple research questions, three to four focus groups are deemed sufficient and appropriate (Krueger, 1994). A total of 62 participants (N=62) took part in the quantitative part of the study. 49 of the participants were females and 13 participants were males.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

Two instruments were used of this study: (1) a questionnaire, (2) semi-structured interview sessions with focus groups.

2.3.1. Questionnaire:

In view of the research questions, the already piloted and tested questionnaire developed by (Albirini, 2006) was used for this study. Albirini developed this questionnaire after careful and extensive study of literature and scales that are used in various educational contexts. For content and face validity, a panel of experts (three content experts, two bilingual experts, one measurement expert, and four population experts) evaluated this questionnaire.

2.3.2. Focus groups:

Four focus group interviews were held in the month of February. The researchers acted as the moderator. All the group interviews were videotaped for data analysis. The participants were selected through random sampling.

2.3.3. Data Analysis:

The collected data was analyzed by the following methods:

2.3.4. Analysis of questionnaire

The data collected by means of the questionnaire was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25.0). Tests were conducted on this statistical package for descriptive and inferential statistics. The results of the research questions were justified through these statistics.

2.3.5. Analysis of focus group interviews

A lot of approaches and methods have been laid out by researchers about the procedure of analyzing data obtained by focus groups. These methods include thematic analysis, conversation and membership categorization analysis, CAQDAS approaches, and narrative analysis (Gilbert & Stoneman, 2016).

Data analysis procedure employed by the researchers for this research was thematic analysis. The thematic analysis used was semantic and descriptive in nature. "Critical realist/ contextualist" approach of thematic analysis was used for this study. Critical realist or contextualist approach is the one which says, "Reality is 'out there' but access to it is always mediated by socio-cultural meanings" (Smith, 2003). The researchers adopted the six phases of thematic analysis developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A short description of these six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

- i. Familiarization: This refers to the knowledge of in-depth meaning of the conversation. It involves the listening and re-listening of the audio/ video recordings, reading and re-reading of the transcripts in order to be better familiarized with the data set.
- ii. Coding: This is the first step in which the patterns in the data set are recognized. It involves labeling the data segments in accordance with the research questions.
- iii. Searching' for themes: This is always a tough task. It needs careful analysis of the data in order to find out the matching sequences which can be transcribed into

- themes. Themes are not easily established. They require careful interpretation so that every theme has a specific central point or essence.
- iv. Reviewing themes: This is done to check if the developed themes fit with the original and coded data. In this step the process is stopped and reviewed for better understanding of the data. This step may lead to some changes in the developed themes.
 - v. Defining and naming themes: After the themes have been developed, they need to be named or labeled. This is done to ensure that the themes are coherent. This step is also very helpful in the report writing process.
 - vi. Writing Report:

In the final step of the process, the results are compiled and reported. This involves a detailed and coherent display of all the themes that have been constructed from the data obtained.

Trustworthiness: It is important to add trustworthiness in the qualitative data. To ensure that the present study is credible and trustworthy, Guba's constructs of trustworthiness were keenly followed in this study. It has four categories: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

The study employed a very well researched and well-constructed data collection method through focus groups. Previous studies were carefully studied to ensure smooth research and quality work synthesis. Early familiarity with the university was established by staying in contact with some of the employees and frequent university visits. Random sampling also helped in making the data credible. Consent was taken from all participants, and they were free to abstain from answering questions.

3. Data Analysis & Discussion

A mean score of 2.95 on this scale shows that the participants consider themselves moderately competent towards digital resources for educational purposes. The participants were reported to be most competent in using technology for communication purposes like email, chats etc. They were least competent towards the digital resources like database programs ($M=2.35$) and graphic programs ($M=2.32$). From the focus group sessions, it was noted that participants have used digital resources in language learning classes. "Duo-linguo" and "Google translator" were the most frequently used.

The competence of the pre-service teachers was not reported to be low. One explanation for it could be that all the participants were pre-service EFL teachers with ages ranging between 20-30 years. (Akin, 2015) argues that the younger the people, the more their interest towards technology, and they tend to learn it. This reason seems to be true in the case of the study under discussion.

It was concluded from the focus group interview sessions that most of the participants have used computers since their childhood; however, most of them did not use computers efficiently for educational purposes. (Cuban, 2001) states that schools and colleges frequently purchase computers for use in academic settings, however, technology does not seem to be successfully integrated into the academic settings. He proposes two basic

reasons for this. First, teachers lack sufficient pedagogical knowledge about the integration of technology in classroom settings. Second, the institutions do not actively facilitate the teachers in successful integration of technology. This can also be seen true in the case of the study under discussion.

The attitudes of pre-service EFL teachers were measured by 20 Likert-scale items which were divided into three subscales: Computer attitudes ($M= 3.59$), Cognitive domain ($M= 3.75$), and Behavioral domain ($M= 3.57$). The analysis showed that the attitudes of pre-service teachers were moderately positive and not very high towards the integration of technology. In the focus group discussions, the participants showed a positive attitude towards the use of technology in language learning. They seemed happy about the easy accessibility of knowledge because of the advances in technology.

It was observed from the results that the attitudes of teachers towards use of technology can be affected by the attitudes of administration. (Shattuck, 2009) has conducted a study in which he states that the efforts of ‘early adopters’ of educational technology are not enough to bring radical changes. The role of ‘school-leaders’ is very important in the process of successful technology integration. This study aligns with the results of the study under discussion. Active participation on the part of the administration may improve the attitudes of teachers.

3.1. Teacher Perception towards the use of Digital Resources:

Teachers’ perceptions:

The perception was calculated in the areas of their perceived advantages of computers, the compatibility of computers with teaching, simplicity and Observability. A mean score of 3.78 ($SD=0.51$) was obtained. This shows that pre-service teachers have moderately positive perception towards using computers in language classrooms.

The participants showed positive attitudes and agreed that computers have advantages ($M=3.8$). Most participants ($n=47$, 75.8%) agreed that computers can improve education. Participants ($n=46$, 74.1%) also agreed that computers are useful for language learning. The participants reported moderate compatibility of computers with teaching ($M=3.6$). A mean score of 3.7 was calculated for computer simplicity.

4.01 mean score was recorded for Observability. This mean score shows that the participants have seen and used computers in the academic settings of Pakistan.

Teachers’ attitudes:

The overall mean score calculated from the participants’ responses was 3.65 ($SD=0.48$), which is a little above the average. This indicates that the participants’ have moderately positive attitudes towards using technology for educational purposes.

A mean score of 3.59 ($SD=0.55$) was obtained on the computer attitude subscale. A large number of participants ($n=46$, 74.2%) said that using computers is enjoyable. Participants ($n=38$, 61.3%) also expressed that they feel comfortable using computers.

A mean score of 3.75 ($SD=0.49$) was obtained for cognitive domain. Most of the participants ($n=52$, 83.9) agreed that the use of computers can save time and effort.

However, many participants (n=22) gave neutral response when asked about the increased motivation of students with the integration of computers.

A mean score of 3.57 (SD=0.72) was obtained for the behavioral domain. A large number of participants (n=48, 77.5%) expressed that they are likely to use computers in the near future.

4.2. Does Gender Influence Attitudes and Perceptions of pre-service Teachers towards Technology Integration?

Independent sample t-tests were conducted in order to know if there exists any difference in the attitude and perceptions with respect to gender. There was a large number difference between male (n=14) and female (n=48) participants. Welch's test is used because the group sizes are considerably different. (Delacre, Lakens, & Leys, 2017) suggests that Welch's t-test is better than student t-test even with equal group sizes. Welch's test (t-test with 'equal variances not assumed') was conducted. Table 3.1 shows the results.

Table 1: Means differences of gender on teacher attitudes, computer attributes, cultural perceptions, computer competence and computer access (N=62)

Variables	Male (n=14)		Female (n=48)		t(62)	P	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Teachers Attitudes Questionnaire									
All questionnaire items	3.74	.51	3.63	.48	.693	.496	-.215	.430	.22
Computer Attitudes	3.66	.65	3.56	.52	.512	.615	-.301	.495	.17
Cognitive Domain	3.91	.43	3.70	.50	1.50	.145	-.076	.489	.45
Behavioral Domain	3.52	.85	3.58	.68	-.237	.816	-.581	.463	.08
Computer Attributes Questionnaire									
All questionnaire items	3.74	.45	3.79	.52	-.315	.756	-.343	.252	.10
Advantages of Computer	4.01	.62	3.77	.57	1.30	.206	-.145	.632	.40
Computer Compatibility with teaching	3.54	.58	3.63	.54	-.525	.605	-.460	.275	.16
Simplicity	3.39	.70	3.79	.744	-1.86	.076	-.853	.045	.56

Observability	4.01	.58	4.01	.71	.040	.969	-.377	.392	.64
Cultural Perceptions Questionnaire									
Cultural perceptions	3.08	.37	3.17	.38	-.763	.454	-.328	.151	.24
Computer Competence Questionnaire									
Computer Competence	2.78	.74	2.99	.52	-1.01	.325	-.666	.233	.33
Computer Accessibility Questionnaire									
Access to computers	2.26	1.0	2.58	.90	-1.01	.323	-.984	.342	.34

The table shows the results of the t-tests. If $p < 0.05$, there is little or no significance. For all the scales and subscales, the p value is very large which suggests that there is no difference, with regards to gender, in the attitudes and perceptions of pre-service teachers towards the use of digital resources in classrooms.

4.2. How are Teachers Perceptions and their Competence Level Correlated with Teachers Attitudes towards Technology Integration?

Table 2

Correlation

Correlation matrix between Teachers' Attitude, Computer attitudes subscale, Cognitive domain subscale, Behavioral domain subscale, Computer attributes Scale, Relative advantages subscale, computer compatibility subscale, simplicity subscale, Observability subscale, computer competence scale(N=62)

	Teach. A	Com. A	CD	BD	Com.At t	RA	CC	Simp	Obs.	Comp. C
Teach. A	-	.780*	.911*	.866**	.752**	.694**	.666**	.577**	.472**	.322**
Com.A		-	.561*	.500**	.433**	.395**	.285*	.370**	.334**	.245
CD			-	.717**	.748*	.752**	.685**	.529**	.432**	.312*
BD				-	.715*	.589**	.695**	.570**	.439**	.261*
Com.At t					-	.819	.857	.803	.733	.366
RA						-	.671	.505	.448	.197

CC	-	.603	.492	.306
Simp		-	.444	.391
Obs.			-	.280
Comp. C				-

Note. Teach.A= Teachers attitudes, Com.A= computer attitudes, CD= cognitive domain, BD= behavioral domain, Com.Att= computer attributes, RA= relative advantages of computers, CC= computer compatibility with teaching, Simp= simplicity, Obs= Observability, Comp.C= computer competence.

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Table 2 shows inter-scale correlation of Teacher's Attitude Scale, Computer Attributes (perceptions) Scale and Computer Competence. Teacher's Attitude Scale and its sub scales have significant positive correlation with Computer Attributes Scale and its sub scales and Computer Competence Scale.

Regression analysis:

Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to predict the effect of perceptions (computer attributes) and competence (computer competence) on Teachers' Attitudes towards using digital resources in classrooms. Table 3.3 shows the results.

Table 3:

Multiple Regression Analysis of Computer Attributes and Computer Competence on Teachers' Attitudes (N=62)
Teachers' Attitudes (N=62)

Variables	T	B	B	F	adj. R ²
Constant	2.65**	.874		38.75***	.55
Computer Attributes	7.96***	.702	.732		
Computer competence	.583	.045	.054		

Note. The dependent variable for regression is teachers' attitudes *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3 shows a multiple linear regression to predict teachers' attitudes based on computer attributes and computer competence. A significant regression equation was found $F(2, 59) = 38.75$, $p < .001$ with an adjusted R^2 of .55. The value of R^2 show that 55 % statistically significant variance in teachers' attitudes is explained by computer attributes and computer competence. Change in teachers' attitude is 70 % due to computer attributes and 4.5 % due to computer competence. Computer Attributes (perceptions) were seen to

significantly predict teachers' attitudes. (Teo, 2011) stated in a paper that 'perceived usefulness' of digital resources can lead to motivate teachers for the integration of ICT in educational settings. Similar relationship can also be observed in the study under discussion.

4.4. What Challenges do pre-service Teachers Face in the Integration of Digital Resources and what are their Possible Solutions?

The focus group interviews were analyzed using the 6 phases of thematic analysis as described in the methodology – *familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and, writing report*. The audio recordings were listened and the manuscript was read many times in order to gain *familiarization* with the content. In order to put meaningful labels to data, *coding* was employed. Next, similar labels were identified and put together in the process of '*searching*' for themes. The emerged preliminary themes were checked against the original manuscript in the process of *reviewing themes*. In *defining and naming themes* stage, the emerged names were given clear, concise and meaningful labels. In the final stage of *report writing*, the emerged labels were explained in a cohesive and coherent manner.

Following themes emerged from the data:

Obstacles:

The participants were asked about the difficulties that they encounter in the use of technology and in the integration of digital resources into academics. The participants explained that they have to face certain hurdles in the integration of digital resources. After careful observation of data and systematic coding following the 6 phases by Braun and Clarke, obstacles of two primary natures emerged which are explained under.

Accessibility: The participants expressed that the digital resources are not always readily accessible. They expressed that although the administration realizes the importance of availability of digital resources, they still do not have sufficient equipment. A student expressed:

“Equipment is not sufficient. Not readily available either. (FG-1)”

Participants also expressed that sometimes useful data is not accessible. They said that university has blocked certain websites and applications on university internet. Participants said that universities have given access to reach some sites and journals, but they are not enough.

Technical Issues: The participants also expressed that they have to face technical issues sometimes. The power-cutouts are very common in Pakistan and the generators sometimes take a few moments to start. This can interrupt their proceedings. Also, technical issues are unforeseen and sudden. Some quotations about this issue: *“Sometimes projectors don't work or stop working suddenly.” (FG-1)* *“I lost my flash data once due to electricity fluctuation. Something went wrong with my USB.” (FG-4)*

Lack of Knowledge and skills: The participants expressed deep and disturbing concern about the lack of knowledge and skills of people to cope with technological advances in academics. They expressed that it is a challenge to successfully integrate technology in

classrooms. Sometimes teachers integrate digital resources but fail to deliver the content effectively. Some quotations from the participants are as follows:

“Students don’t like listening to boring stuff. It is a challenge to use technology and to also make it interesting.” (FG-4)

5. Conclusion

The study focused on exploring the attitudes, perceptions and level of competence of Pakistani pre-service EFL teachers towards the use of digital resources in general classrooms and language classrooms. Mixed research method was employed to conduct this research. The quantitative data was collected from the scale developed by (Albirini, 2006). Quantitative results were analyzed by SPSS 25.0. Qualitative data was collected by focus group interview sessions. The focus group interviews were analyzed by thematic analysis steps laid down by (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The results demonstrated that pre-service teachers at Air University, Islamabad have moderately high level of competence towards the digital resources used for educational purposes. The participants also showed moderately high attitudes and perceptions towards technology usage in language classrooms. The study indicated that the prime obstacles faced by the participants in technology integration were individual and technical in nature. Also, insufficient knowledge of computers for educational purposes causes hindrance. The results also indicated that perceptions of teachers towards digital resources can strongly affect their attitudes towards technology integration.

There were some limitations in this study which need to be addressed. Firstly, all the participants in this study were from one university. More universities, public and private, can be used to get more in-depth knowledge. This study only focuses on the university settings; similar research can be conducted on school and college levels. Only pre-service teachers were focused on this study. This kind of study can also be used to gain information about the technological attitudes, perceptions and confidence of more experienced teachers.

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Breaking the Binary: A Structuralist-Semiotic Analysis of Fashion and Gender Fluidity in Pakistan

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Key Words

- Gender Fluidity
- Westernization
- Structuralism
- Semiotics
- Cultural hybridity

Abstract

This study explores the intersection of westernization, semiotics, and structuralist theory in shaping contemporary understandings of gender fluidity in Pakistan, with a particular focus on fashion as a semiotic system. As global fashion trends influence Pakistani youth through social media, celebrity culture, and consumer markets, traditional gender binaries are being challenged and redefined. By applying a structuralist lens, this research examines how fashion and aesthetics function as signs that contribute to the evolving discourse of gender identity and nonconformity in Pakistan. The study employs semiotic analysis to decode gender-related symbols in contemporary Pakistani fashion, including androgynous designs, gender-neutral clothing lines, and shifts in grooming trends. Through an analysis of visual media, fashion campaigns, and youth engagement with Westernized American aesthetics such as jeans, sneakers, hoodies, hip-hop fashion, Hollywood glam and influencer culture, the research investigates how signifiers of masculinity and femininity are being renegotiated in the Pakistani cultural context. Findings suggest that while urban, progressive youth specifically in Pakistan embrace gender-fluid aesthetics as a form of self-expression, cultural resistance persists, particularly in conservative and religious circles. The hybridization of western fashion with traditional South Asian attire reflects a localized negotiation of gender identity rather than a wholesale adoption of Western norms. This study contributes to the broader discourse on gender performativity, cultural hybridity, and the role of media in shaping societal perceptions of gender.

1. Introduction

The great radical improvement has been confessed in the field of fashion, especially, due to the acceptance of fluidity and non-binary gender representations. The difference has been applied as a brand of defiant gender conventions in seeing fashion as one of the tools of discourse. The fusion of Western fashion and the local one has led to a unique statement that raises the question of the binaries of genders in Pakistan. The Pakistani society has traditionally been strict in terms of dress code. These norms are closely related to the cultural and religious traditions. Contemporary fashion is nonetheless getting out of these set recipes. Designers and brands are designing through androgynous creation to interest more individuals by uniting both sexes. In the recent years, these changes have been experienced in Pakistan. This is a larger movement in the world that challenges old fashioned gender rules, and fashion has a lot to say in this debate. The fusion of the western culture with the homegrown fashions has led to an emergence of a new language of dressing that acts as a challenge to the gender binaries in Pakistan. In the past, the dressing of both men and women in the country has been influenced by the culture and religion. Nevertheless, a recent phenomenon of the fashion business is marked by the violation of such strict classifications. The wider view of both genders identities is being embraced by the androgynous and unisex designs that are becoming more popular in the usage of the designers and brands. Rastah, as an instance, is a Pakistani streetwear brand established in 2018 that blends the Eastern traditional culture and the Western fashion. The products that Rastah employs include hand looms, wood block printing and manufactures clothing that represents a cultural blend and that would appeal to the local and the international market. The brand's recognition at London Fashion Week in 2023 highlights the global interest in this hybrid fashion story. The fashion industry is another part showing this change as there are more transgender people in the industry. The performance of actress Alina Khan in leading roles of the movies such as "Darling" (2019) and "Joyland" (2022) is a landmark as it was the first trans to be cast in the lead roles in major Pakistani films. Her success challenges the standards of the society and gives the tool of more representative media and fashion. Herein this paper, I will do a study of the semiotic elements of this sartorial change and explain how clothing and fashion is used as signifiers in the renegotiation of gender identities in Pakistan. The study targets to unravel the frameworks of informing and challenging the traditional gender constructs through studying the current fashion trend, media and experiences of individuals affirming to gender fluidity. This question is important to the perception of fashion as cultural expression and the comprehension of the general transformation of the society into inclusivity and diversity in Pakistan.

The study uses structuralist and semiotic explanations with the aim of investigating the shifting gender relations amongst the Pakistani youths due to the influence of the Westernization and digital media culture. The author uses this paper to analyze how the West (Tik Tok, Instagram, Netflix) as a digital culture and media space is the contributor to the semiotically mediated change in how Pakistani youth construct and negotiate their gender identities. It may also shed some light on how the language and the discourse on social media create new gender narratives, replacing or blending with the old one (Noor, Akram, and Zafar, 2024; Batool and Malik, 2024). The study will aid in understanding how language is used to construct gender identity within Pakistani society through the study of language structure and the mechanisms used in the semiotic code. It provides a localized distinct perspective of gender discourse in a non-Western context to expand gender studies to other non-Eurocentric hegemonies. Through the structuralism-semiotic analysis of

gender nonconformity, this paper presents a holistic model of how globalization, media and westernization are redefining gender perceptions in Pakistani society. It is critical to academic discourse, media representation and social policy, which makes sure that discussions on gender remain culturally relevant and theoretically grounded.

Most existing research on gender identity in Pakistan is sociological, feminist, or psychological, but few studies use a structuralist approach to analyze how binary gender systems are being disrupted by Western influences. The structuralist framework helps uncover how traditional gender oppositions (male/female, strong/weak, public/private) are being reshaped by globalized narratives. Although social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Netflix play a major role in shaping youth identity, limited research explores how they function as agents of semiotic transformation in Pakistan. This study investigates how digital media disseminates new gender signs and how Pakistani youth engages with or resists these changes. While there is research on gender resistance in Pakistan, it primarily focuses on conservative vs. progressive debates, without considering semiotic and structuralist shifts in how gender is represented and internalized. This study explores how Pakistani youth develop hybrid gender identities by merging traditional values with Western influences rather than fully rejecting either. This research bridges the gap by using a structuralist and semiotic lens to analyze how Westernization is transforming gender perceptions in Pakistan. It moves beyond Western-centric gender studies and provides a culturally specific analysis of how Pakistani youth negotiate gender nonconformity in a rapidly globalizing world.

1.1 Research Questions

- i. In what ways does Westernization introduce new sign systems that disrupt traditional structuralist frameworks of gender and reshape the semiotic representation of gender fluidity among Pakistani youth?
- ii. How do linguistic and visual semiotic elements (e.g., language, clothing, symbols) contribute to shifting gender perceptions in Pakistan?

2. Literature Review

Fashion, gender and cultural discourse have been viewed as a critical zone of academic investigation especially in globalization and non-conformity. According to scholars like Judith Butler (Butler, 1990) gender is performative, created by repetition of actions and symbols of a culture and not being biologically based. This paradigm has played a key role in the literature on the functioning of fashion as a means of disrupting normative gender categories. This is extended by such semiotic theorists as Roland Barthes who show how clothing can be used as a system of signs, which generate meanings that can be reflexive of, or subversive to, cultural ideologies. In the South Asian contexts, scholars have observed the increased effects of the Westernized aesthetics in the construction of youth identity. Safina, in her work (Safina, Pushkar, Yao, & Emanova, 2021) emphasizes the fact that fashion industries promote more and more global trends that disrupt the traditional gender binaries by introducing unisex designs and presenting androgynous figures. He suggests that such digital platforms as Instagram enhance these changes, making non-binary expressions visible, overcoming local borders. Nonetheless, these changes are not devoid of controversy because researchers. He also highlights that cultural resistance to

such depictions exists, and gender-fluid fashion tends to create controversy concerning authenticity, ethics, and cultural maintenance.

The binary opposition of male/female, modern/traditional and Western/Eastern is found across discourse in Pakistani media through structuralist analysis. Semiotic methods also demonstrate that visual information like clothing patterns, color scheme and body language are ideologically loaded when it comes to constructing gender fluidity as either enlightened or deviant. However, available sources also warn of unreservedly glorifying Westernized fashion as being liberating. The idea of hybridity, as discussed by postcolonial critics like Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994), may subvert colonial dynamics and reproduce them at the same time, an aspect that is equally apparent in fashion discourses in Pakistan. In such a way, the literature explains the concept of fashion as a disputed zone where international discourses of fluidity bump into the local cultural frameworks. This two-sidedness provides room of resistance and negotiation in that Pakistan is an interesting place to study the dynamics of binaries that are both broken and rewritten in fashion.

The gender and media studies of Pakistan indicate the role of cultural texts in reproducing and disrupting binaries of normativity. In a semiotic study, (Iftikhar & Islam, 2017) presents the evidence that advertising is still strongly connected with patriarchal concerns using Pakistani television commercials as an example. In their results, they demonstrate how women are constantly presented in domestic positions and how men are portrayed as authorities and decision-makers with the use of visual indicators, linguistic signs and other symbolic elements. However, minor changes come to their analysis, and the dressing style and gestures start to blur strict descriptions, and it is possible that they can be read differently concerning gender identity. In the same vein, Hazir (Ullah et al., 2016) critically analyze the ideas of print media, showing how gender discourses tend to keep marginalizing women by labeling them as victims or subject of moral judgment. Simultaneously, discourses of modernity and fluidity are gradually infiltrating fashion and lifestyle magazines, and this is an indication that representational practices are changing. Expanding on these arguments, Shah (Shah & Ibupoto, 2024) uses ethnographic perspective to study the youth fashion in Sindh and demonstrate how clothing serves as a cultural capital to negotiate identity. Their results draw special attention to hybridization, in which unisex theme and the fusion of traditional and Western style challenge the established binaries in a subvert way.

3. Research Methodology

The introduction of a qualitative research methodology will be involved to explore the effects of westernization on gender nonconformity in Pakistani youth through structuralist and semiotic methodologies. In this way, an in-depth and multi-level analysis of symbols, discourses and media portrayals as the main factors of creating and reforming gender identity can be made. Qualitative inquiry is especially appropriate to the study since it does not aim at quantification but interpretation, meaning-making and contextual understanding.

This study has used a semiotic analysis, structuralist analysis and thematic analysis as the analytical tools to study in detail the phenomenon of gender fluidity in fashion in Pakistan. The semiotic analysis will be based on the decoding of gender-based signs, symbols, and visual indicators of media and fashion writing, especially in terms of the way Westernized aesthetics transforms the concepts of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. Such binaries

as male/female, modern/traditional, and Eastern/Western will be noted by structuralist analysis as they are strengthened or disrupted in these narratives. Lastly, the theoretical analysis of recurrent motifs, discursive practices and how youths perceive these emerging genres will be followed using thematic analysis to determine how individuals can interpret and negotiate these emerging gender expressions within the context of the local cultural values.

The importance of Semiotic Analysis is that it enables the study to go beyond the surface level of observation and into the inner culture that is tangible in media texts and in the fashion campaigns. Gender identity in a context such as Pakistan is still strongly structured by heteronormative binaries; therefore, semiotics offers a method by which the subtle mechanisms of conveying non-binary images through symbols, colors, dress code, and body representations can be deciphered. In such a way, it is possible to observe how, when localized, Westernized aesthetics can be both a locus of dissent and assimilation. Semiotic analysis, therefore, bears direct relevance to the purpose of the project to interrogate the ways, in which gender fluidity is marked, contested, and re-visioned within modern-day discourses of fashion.

The Structuralist Analysis adds value to the study by accentuating the binary structures that still heavily influence the cultural discourses of Pakistan. Fashion campaigns and media representations tend to be swinging between the extremes of male/female, traditional/modern, and Eastern/Western, and that the space, where gender is negotiated, is created. The study will look at how these oppositions are maintained or destabilized through a structuralist lens, and in the process, find out how fashion is a potent instrument of cultural negotiation. This plays a key role in the study, in the sense that it locates the fashion industry as not only a location of aesthetics, but a social discourse that either supports or disrupts the cogent ideologies about gender.

The value of Thematic Analysis is that it relates media texts to the lived realities and perceptions by youth audiences, and makes the research not merely theoretical. Thematic analysis helps to reveal how people internalize or challenge cultural messages within fashion by identifying the repetitive motifs and patterns in the way youth respond to fashion (acceptance, resistance, or hybridization). Within the Pakistani context, where the generation change and globalization affect identity construction, this is a way of positioning media discourse within the context of daily cultural negotiation. Therefore, the thematic analysis reinforces the purpose of the project of learning how gender fluidity is not merely represented, but it is also enacted in the society.

The semiotic, structuralist, and thematic analysis jointly will guarantee a multi-layered methodological framework that puts into focus not only the symbolic but also the experiential aspects of fashion gender fluidity. Interpreting visual cues, interrogating cultural dichotomy, and following recurring patterns in the perceptions of the youth, this study creates a suitable and balanced way to connect theory with lived reality. These combinations allow the triangulation of these approaches to improve the validity and richness of results and enable the study to go beyond a single textual interpretation and embrace the wider cultural and social context. Further, the placement of westernized aesthetics into the Pakistani setting allows one to study the localization, resistance, or re-definition of global influences. This methodological approach is hence more than a suitable approach, it is a prerequisite towards unpacking the entangled relationship between fashion, media, and gender within a society that is a negotiation of tradition and modernity.

Finally, it gives the instruments to unveil how fashion works as the locus of identity and cultural change.

4. Data Analysis & Discussion

4.1 Semiotic Analysis: Generalizing Contemporary Gender Trends in Fashion

Semiotics, as developed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes (Saussure, 1916/2011; Barthes, 1967), is the study of signs and symbols and how they create meaning in society. In traditional Pakistani society, gender roles have been strictly coded through fashion; men in shalwar kameez, neutral colors, simple patterns and women in embellished dresses, bright colors, elaborate jewelry (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). However, Westernization and globalization have introduced new gendered signifiers that challenge these rigid distinctions. There are contemporary gender trends in Fashion which are amalgamation of western and local hybridization. Gender-Neutral fashion has completely broken the binary. The signifiers of this current fashion include oversized clothing, monochrome outfits, unisex tailoring. That suggests a meaningful shift in moving away from hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine aesthetics to a fluid identity (Entwistle, 2020). For instance, Pakistani fashion influencers like Hussain Rehar and Mohsin Naveed Ranjha incorporating flowing silhouettes, unisex cuts, and softer fabric choices into men's fashion. This results in challenging gendered dress codes. The picture shown below is the latest display by Hussain Rehar on their website (Hussain Rehar, 2025).

Social media also normalizes blurring gender lines in clothing. The Farshi shalwar, a voluminous and regal garment traditionally worn by men during the 1970s and early 1980s in Pakistan, made an unexpected yet powerful comeback in the spring of 2025—this time reappropriated by women as a dominant fashion statement during Eid celebrations.



Reviving a silhouette once worn by aristocratic men, the Farshi shalwar re-emerged in Eid 2025 as a modern, gender-fluid fashion statement.

The renewal provides foreshadowing to a broader, more intersectional feminism movement in Pakistan whereby not outgone aesthetics are discarded but repackaged. Women are coming to own their culture by having control on how it is worn and how it sounds. The trend of the Farshi shalwar, which lacks political motivation, collides with and poses questions to space (how women inhabit and negotiate physical and visual spaces), labor

(the handiwork embedded in the creation of such objects), and memory (what comes to mind and what gets forgotten in the history of fashion). When re-adopting a male garment in the fashion archives of Pakistan and flooding the digital sphere with it, women of 2025 do not only follow a trend, but carry out a minor performance of feminist historiography. The Farshi shalwar thus comes to be symbol and performance: a garment that comes with it the after-effect of an alternate period, and yet, in the crevices of its cloth, opens new significances to a generation who are recapturing tradition in their own way. Over the last few years, androgynous street wear has risen to prominence among the Pakistani young generation and is a blend of western culture, identity and defiance to their region. This can be observed in its style that entails slack silhouettes, neutral cuts, oversized hoodies, cargo pants, monotone colors (The Express Tribune, 2024). It is especially widely spread in the Pakistani metropolitan areas of Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad. In any case, sociocultural resistance greets such a change. All the more digitally enabled and younger and urban layers have embraced more fluid ways of expressing gender, though the conservative and religious aspects consider such changes a betrayal of culture and religion. Gender, specifically, appears to be the most disputable question with uncontrolled hatred and toleration in the case of social media where part of youth attempts to express themselves and part of it attempts to suppress it.

Gender identity and other identifiers are bound to be faced with a never-ending war of traditional and modern, acceptance and denial, rigidity and fluidity, as Pakistan enters modernity. This change is indicated by the apparent changes in the patterned systems of signification according to gender in clothing, media and the daily activities (Butler, 1990). In the Pakistani case, for example, fashion serves not only as an act of identity but also as a dynamic form of resistance to the prescribed gender norms. This social development is bound to escalate as young people all over the world make their voices heard in a world that is becoming more and more global. The other factor is Men makeup and grooming trends. Increase in Pakistani men in terms of the makeup and grooming habits signifies an impressive shift in the socio-cultural gender aesthetics and the changing cultural perception of the male identity (Salam-Salmaoui & Salam, 2024).

In South Asia, men in the region have not been afraid of cosmetics. The Mughal court performers used to often perform wearing rich makeup. The Viable transformation to modern cosmetics in the male gender is an effort of trying to dilute traditional perceptions about masculinity. Small local companies and L'Oréal and Maybelline are also selling products that target all genders, which means that the people are changing their attitudes. Since there has been ages of stoicism and austerity, the fact that one bears the beauty practices of men is a breakthrough move in the society and culture. Such changes permit different manifestations of fluidity and identity with gender. The consideration of cultural changes in the case of masculinity and beauty promoted gender identity change more inclusively in a socially accepted way. Signifiers that relate to masculinity include: lip color, eyeliner, shaping eyebrows and skincare. As an example, the idea about men possessing a soft appearance and light cosmetics has changed the story of Western fashion and K-pop (Khalid, 2024). HSY and Ali Xeeshan fashion campaigns feature gender deviation norms. Urban young men have begun to embrace new methods of self-care that have gone beyond the rugged masculinity stereotype. The transition is a shift in conventional masculinity. Rural and more conservative areas have risen in opposition to this change.

The adoption of "power dressing" by women in Pakistan and embracing of masculine cuts reflects an underlying change in the attitude towards gender, power, and fashion (Breward, Lemire, & Riello, 2023). Power dressing which consists of rounded shoulders and waist blazers, collared shirts, smart kan boot trousers, and precise stitching, has become the norm for women in urban centers across education and professional women in creative fields. These garments, traditionally viewed as markers of Western corporate aggression, are now being usurped by Pakistani women as emblems of autonomy, intellect, and resistance to femininity with its grace and submission. Kamiar Rokni, Generation, and Zara Shahjahan weave these flamboyant gowns into mainstream fashions with traditional fabrics and androgynous sharp cuts. Saba Qamar and Sadaf Kanwal, Pakistani celebrities, are good examples of this nonbinary gender image as they don and promote structured suits (Reviewit.pk, 2021). Even Hijabi and modest fashion feminists are adding oversized blazers and loose silhouettes to modern Islamic fashion. Women are reclaiming masculine-coded clothing through modern identity in Hijab. Feminism and fluid fashion trends blur the lines of gender constructs. All of this draws inspiration from Western corporate culture, where suits represent both formality and equality (University of Leicester, n.d.). Another prominent example of hybridization of fashion is the combination of embroidered sneakers worn with bridal lehngas (Usmani, 2024). That single trend grew so popular that almost every bride to be sought out the style.

4.2 Structuralist Analysis: Examining Gender Binaries in Pakistani Fashion

The development of structuralist analysis allows scholars to explore how gender binaries are inscribed, reinforced, or resisted within the Pakistani fashion discourse. This particular approach incorporates Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs alongside Roland Barthes' semiotic critique of fashion and looks into how language, dress, and visual culture function as signifiers within a meaning-making system that both upholds and contests sociocultural gender structures in Pakistan. Saussure stressed that the link between a signifier (a garment, color, or fabric) and its culturally evoked meaning is, by definition, arbitrary and socially contrived. The Pakistani pastel-shaded, floral-patterned, and gown-like style categorized as feminine and dark-colored, stiffly-tailored, and sparsely decorated outfits categorized as masculine underscore this association in the Pakistani fashion context. These signs operate within binary oppositions of soft/hard, passive/active, or embellished/plain that underpin the structuralist framework of gender differentiation. Fashion practitioner's mythologization processes, with reference to Roland Barthes in *Fashion System and Mythologies*, 'explain' ideology and fashion, classifying 'myths (Barthes, 1967).' Pakistani fashion entities such as Sana Safinaz, Maria B, Gul Ahmed, and men's Amir Adnan or J. narrate orthodox patriarchal mythos centered on honor and authority; for them, middle-class divides are aestheticized in unemancipated form. Women are gown clad, often positioned as graceful, hierarchically subservient, and idealized "feminine," while men are uninhibitedly portrayed as strong "macho" figures.

More recently, some fashion brands began to transcend such binaries. Generation is an emblematic urban "forward" label that portrays women in utility wear, darker hues, imposing stances, and dresses them conscripted to traditionally male warriors. Feminist re-signification. In the same vein, Zaha and Elan started expanding their male lines, and with them blur the boundaries of cross-dressing. Previously deemed 'feminine' pastel-colored floral embroidered ensembles now adorn male models, defying ensemble stylistic restrictions and challenging rigid hierarchical gender sign systems discourses (Kress & van

Leeuwen, 2006).. Fashion influencers and public figures in Pakistan are increasingly challenging traditional gender norms. Many are known for their bold, gender-fluid fashion choices, often blending masculine and feminine elements.

4.3 Thematic Analysis: Identifying Recurring Patterns in Youth Perceptions and Media Discourse

Thematic analysis overviews the unique and even conflicting attitudes and experiences of gender and fashion among the youth of Pakistan towards the same and the presence or absence of such views in the media. It enables the identification, analysis, and description of themes in phenomena of text, images, and other visual materials, which clarify convoluted accounts of culture and gender fluidity. The youth people in Pakistan make it an interesting youth-ill phenomenon as they are deeply connected with the modern world, and yet are connected to the culture. They visualize gender and fashion in multiple places through social media (Instagram and Tik Tok), fashion magazines, television talk shows, and adverts (Vaingankar et al., 2022). The thematic analysis could not be done without the analysis of the young consumers, social media influencers, social media content and comments, and media and advertising, which critically define the scope of the data needed.

One of the key themes that surfaced from youth narratives is “Negotiating Tradition and Modernity.” Pakistani youth, in particular, seem to struggle with being more open and embracing fluid views of gender expression while still respecting the cultural and religious traditions (Lukens-Bull, 2005). For instance, young women view fashion not only as a form of self-expression but as a means of defiance to overly critical stereotypes. Yet, many women still grapple with societal expectations of modesty and family honor. Similarly, male youths have the desire to play with and deviate from the monochromatic styles of boxy, deep-voiced male figures to brighter, more colorful attire. The unfortunate thing is that the majority of them are subjected to social ostracism or stigma. In this theme, there is a grey space in which fashion is an instrument of compliance and an instrument of resistance. The other important theme is “Visibility and Representation. Majority of the youths discuss about being overlooked or not being counted in the media and fashion industry since they mainly promote a narrow-minded and heteronormative perception (Evans and Thornton, 1991). The absence of representation also encourages the necessity of fashion that in fact represents more than one face such as transgender and non-binary people. Social media celebrities that endorse gender nonconformity or non-normative appearances are proclaimed as heroes who narrate different narratives, and who encourage young people to embrace themselves.

Style empowerment is repeated to the fashion and is an instrument of empowerment, confidence and even struggles. Teenagers tell about the way they feel empowered to escape their identities and bodies through non-traditional or genderless dressing. Primarily, as an illustration, a young girl can wear sensational, neutral garments as a political boldness to oppose a gendered feminism provoked by patriarchy in the dominant society. In the meantime, a boy can play with cosmetics or ornaments to demonstrate his personal identity. These acts transcend the dressing and are an expression of trying to gain social approval and a control over one’s life. Thematic analysis of Pakistani media discourse reveals a co-existence of traditionalist and progressive narratives though in conflict with each other at times. Adverts and television shows are commercially inclined to capitalize on artistic and stylish displays of the fashion shows and propagate strict gender roles.

Women are subordinate to men and males are dominant. These kinds of representations reinforce the dualism above. However, the new media and digital spaces are considered counter public spaces which challenge the mainstream discourses. Alternative narratives are beginning to take shape in Independent and Social Media Content and they involve gender non-conformity and fluidity, hence becoming extremely appealing. Fashion brands are selling change without gender inclusivity and ambiguity that is used by progressive gap-fillers.

The theme of backlash and resistance is also covered in media discourse. The evolution of fashion and gender-fluid manifestations are commonly met with a conservative backlash, both online and offline. The discussion of social media arguments and remarks on newspapers indicates certain trends of moral panic in which non-conformist gender manifestations are taken as a threat to cultural and religious conservatism. The latter resistance highlights the precarious position of gender-fluid fashion in Pakistan and the cultural brokering of hybrid identity that young people have to engage in. Pakistani young generation is trying to change gendered relations with the help of fashion. It describes how fashion is being packaged not only as an emergent style, but as an extremely strong tool of self-identification, cultural expression and political expression. The above-mentioned structures reflect a predominance of a single logic: in the former, the perennial existence of deep-rooted traditions and binary systems; in the latter, a hastening movement towards inclusiveness and fluidity.

4.4. Discussion

The findings highlight how Western influences and transnational media are reshaping the socio-cultural frameworks related to gender norms in the society. Usually in the Pakistani culture, there was an emphasis and reliance on clear and stable gender binaries of male and female, with clothing, colors, and accessories serving as markers of gender identity. For example, the shalwar kameez worn in muted and broader icy colors was labeled as “masculine,” while bright-shaded, fitted, and embroidered garments were “feminine” markers. Within the structuralist approach to culture, these gender markers were treated as natural and immutable within the system. However, the introduction of Western styles, alongside the emergence of Instagram, TikTok, and global advertising, are rapidly changing and challenging these systems. Systems of meanings that were once defined are now endlessly redefined, and changing signifiers of gender are detached from their signified.

With Pakistani urban youth, and those more advanced in social trends, fashion is an avenue for experimentation that has, and is, undergoing rapid transformation. Through their adoption and exposure of androgynous branding and gender-neutral styles, young people are engaging in activities of semiotic reclassification and they are defying the idea that clothing must. New sign systems are presented in visual fashion campaigns, in particular, the ones on social media. The androgynous cuts, unisex branding, and neutral color palettes that are linked to it re encode gendered clothes as well. This effect demonstrates that in accordance with Roland Barthes, it is possible to say that fashion is a system of signs with signification where a system of meaning variably and mutually changes and develops. This

fashion does not simply represent a Western imitation to the Pakistani youths. Rather, it is a negotiation of identity: an effort to inhabit global modernity without yielding to local norms of hardcore gender performance. The overall results show the hardness amid eminence and resistance. The reaction to the backlash reacts oppositely which is manifested in cultural conservatism. But current trends have become a field of liberation and conflict. The structuralist-semiotic approach shows how the western signs have been re-packaged in Pakistan with a variety of concerns in the result, although not complete cultural obliteration.

5. Conclusion

The general effect of westernization, social media, and other shifting fashion trends has changed the way gender identity is imbibed amongst Pakistani youth. On the other hand, Pakistan was a strict fashion and grooming society; which clearly expressed masculinity and femininity in the past through fashion, in clothes, trend or lifestyle. These sorts have gradually been eclipsed by the mainstream media discourse on gender, especially facilitated by digital media, popular culture and Western celebrities. The rise of unisex dress, masculine casual and other progressive tendencies among men characterizes the development of rigid masculinity traits to loosely display gender expression. In the meantime, power outfits that are made of feminine energies but with the qualities of masculinity means that femininity is not confined to delicacy, colors and vibrancy. All these developments indicate that gender identity in Pakistan to a greater extent is undergoing a semiotic metamorphosis in which the connotations that used to be predetermined earlier are being redefined by modernism and globalization, individualism and self-expression. Notably, this transformation cannot be directly attributed to a copying of Western gender trends, but it is a hybrid form. Young Pakistanis are combining such traditional garments as shalwar kameez and embroidery with jewelry and such current trends as oversized fit, sneakers and neutral colors. One of the aspects of resistance that the hybridization entails are the ways in which the youth attempts to confront modern gender discourses, but they also find their identity through the lens of their culture and religion. Nevertheless, this transition is not associated with a sociocultural blowback. Even though the younger, more cosmopolitan and digitally-savvy generations have adopted less structural representations of gender, the conservative and religious elements of society consider such changes to be the erosion of cultural and religious faith. Gender, in particular, has proved to be the field where a part of the youth can express themselves and the rest of the society examines them. As Pakistan traverses into the modern world, issues around gender identity are interested to provoke a dilemma of the traditional values and modern, acceptance and reject, non-moving and movement. This change is manifested in significant alteration in the gendered apparatus of signification in garments, media and daily routines. This is one way of how the Pakistani context uses fashion as a dynamic means of resistance- not only as a way of self-presentation, but also of deconstructing, redefining and reconstructing gender identities. This trend is bound to continue as the international youth declare their entitlement to possess more of the globalized society.

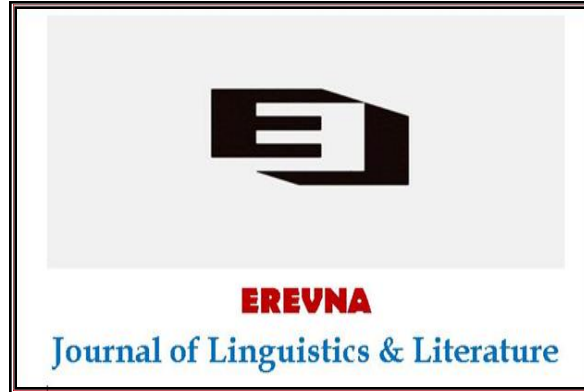
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