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INTERFACE OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE WITH TECHNOLOGY IN THE ERA OF INDUSTRY 5.0

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CONTENTS

1. **Post Humanism in Novels: A Critique** 1
Dr Amit Yograj Kapoor
2. **Enhancing Writing Proficiency through AI Tools for Academic Excellence** 8
Dr Asmathunisa Begum
3. **And a Terrible Beauty is Born! A Transhumanist Reading of Hawthorne's Rappaccini's Daughter** 17
Ms A Deepa Priyadharsini
4. **Posthumanism: A Belief of Evolution** 23
Ms Dipali Kirtania
5. **Gender Identity and Economy in the light of Connell's Theory of Masculinity** 29
Ms Garima Yadav
6. **The Impact of Social Media and Technology in the Present Times** 36
Ms Lakma Kumari Marrypelly
7. **Pandemics in History, Psychology, and Media: A Literary and Filmic Analysis** 41
Ms Neha S, Ms Chrislin Santhosh C, Ms Vaishnavi Sivan, Ms Reshma R
8. **A Posthumanist Reading of "The Machine Stops" by E.M. Forster** 46
Ms Pavithra Mahendran
9. **Friendship and Fear: A Post-humanist Study of Ray's and Asimov's Short Stories** 55
Mr Rupam Chakraborty
10. **An Experimental Study on the Effect of Yoodli.ai on the Oral Proficiency of ESL Learners** 62
Ms S Shruthi, Mr Aravind B R
11. **The Beauty Paradox: How Manhwa Reflects and Challenges Societal Beauty Norms for Women.** 77
Ms Sneha Bhattacharjee
12. **Deployment of AI-Powered ELSA Speak in Developing the Undergraduates' Speaking Skills through Role Plays** 84
Ms Tanuja Chundru and Mr Venkata Ramana Manipatruni
13. **The Illusion of Presence in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*** 93
Ms Thulasipriya

Post Humanism in Novels: A Critique

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Abstract

The term Post Humanism was first used by postmodern thinker Ihab Hassan, who provided a fundamental explanation of it in a 1977 article titled Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Post Humanist Culture? It has gained popularity in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, particularly in the wake of environmental movements and ecological consciousness. Posthumanism draws from a variety of fields, including animal studies and social studies of technology, as well as the Eurocentric heritage of humanism and its critique, part of which originates from critical race theory. Posthumanism is a way of thinking that stresses the connectivity of nonhuman entities, technology, and people while challenging conventional humanistic ideas. It aims to dethrone the European as the hub of the universe and criticises the Eurocentric interpretation of humanism. The fundamental principles of post-humanism are a rejection of anthropocentrism, abandonment of teleology and embracing coexistence, and challenging humanism. The novel is a key component of post-humanism as a speculative discourse because fears and desires are imaginary in the sense that they have the innate ability to spark imaginations about other realities, including non-human, alternative realities based on a critical analysis of the worlds that currently exist. In the present paper, the scholar applies the post-human idea to a comprehensive examination of six contemporary novels. These novels include Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me*, Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, Philip Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Will Eaves' *Murmur*.

Key words: post humanism, cyborgisation, technology, interconnectedness, co-existence

Introduction

A variety of modern theoretical stances advanced by scholars with backgrounds in philosophy, science and technology studies, literary studies, critical theory, theoretical sociology, and communication studies are collectively referred to as Posthumanism. The term was first used by postmodern thinker Ihab Hassan, who provided a fundamental explanation of it in a 1977 article titled Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Post Humanist Culture? The concepts transhuman and antihuman are related and have their own theoretical nuances.

While the name Humanism can refer to a wide range of disciplinary commitments and presumptions that emerged over centuries, from the early Renaissance to the late 20th century, post-humanist scholars concentrate on a few key ideas, chief among them being the idea that the only appropriate subject to study is man. Because humanism placed man at the centre of its literary and philosophical endeavour, it was by definition anthropocentric. As a historical phenomenon, humanism depended on a revitalised and reinterpreted respect for the rhetoric and culture of Greece and Rome. Starting in the Renaissance, modern science aimed to comprehend the natural world by using human observation and reasoning to identify universal laws. Man was a Cartesian thinking subject; as Galileo memorably put it, he could study the universe and describe its workings with scientific detachment, in mathematical terms. During the Enlightenment, this idea of man as an independent agent who is yet in contact with nature emerged. Posthumanist academics view Darwinian biology, Marxist economists, and Freudian psychology as early signs that this single Enlightened subject is breaking apart. Nevertheless, positivist science attempted to uphold the subject-object dichotomy even in the 20th century, despite the fact that these 19th-century advances in biology, psychology, and economics called into question the separation and elevation of man from and over the natural world.

The Theory of Post Humanism

A theoretically popular way of thinking about how the human, nonhuman, and technological worlds intersect has been called Post Humanism. It has gained popularity in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, particularly in the wake of environmental movements and ecological consciousness that question the role of humans in determining the fate of the planet. As a theoretical movement in the West, posthumanism draws from a variety of fields, including animal studies and social studies of technology, as well as the Eurocentric heritage of humanism and its critique, part of which originates from critical race theory. Traditional humanistic myths, such as the idea that humans are the centre of the universe or that non-living matter and other life forms are only objects, should be re-examined, according to Euro-American Posthumanism. One of the contributions of posthumanist theory has been to dehumanise humans and show how all matter—whether it is Earth's animal forms or human influence on technology and vice versa—is interconnected, mutually dependent, and coevolving. With the advent and integration of technology, gender, sexuality, social relationships, families, and communities have all undergone reconfiguration.

Research in the posthumanist movement likewise emphasises the continuity between non-human and human. To some posthumanists, this implies concentrating on the ways in which human cognition, embodied experience, and relationships with the outside world are being reshaped by cybernetics, biotechnologies, prostheses, and computerised communications devices. Posthumanists contend that concepts of humanness could not be created without technology and that we have never been apart from them. According to posthumanist discourse, we are either human animals or even humanimalmachines instead of human beings. The idea that we share this planet with other people, animals, robots, and objects whose fates are intertwined is emphasised by posthumanists. Such inspiration dictates that, since what awaits animals also

awaits humans, we must reinvent our life in this shared environment as equals rather than as sovereigns. We make an attempt to concentrate on our relationships with other living and non-living systems, but doing so necessitates an awareness of environmental and technological developments that make us feel helpless since, in spite of our best efforts, things still seem to be getting worse.

Tracing the origins of Posthumanism

Critics have attempted to characterise the rise of posthumanism as a pivotal point in modernity, contending that important posthuman concepts first appeared in modern literature, in Nietzsche, or in a modernist reaction to the historicity dilemma. While some critics contend that Wiener's development of cybernetics in the 1940s marked the beginning of posthumanism as an explicit conceptual system, others contend that posthumanism as an explicit discipline emerged only with Haraway's examination of cyborgs and the blurring of human-machine boundaries in the 1990s. Although questions about posthumanism are becoming more urgent due to ongoing advancements in robotics, artificial intelligence, biocybernetics, and genetic engineering, Herbrechter contends that the concept of posthumanism is at least as old as post-Enlightenment humanism, even though it has only recently been given a formal name. Because the term posthumanism is used to describe such a wide range of intellectual processes, depending on which specific posthumanism is being investigated, researchers can place its roots anywhere from the Renaissance to the post-Enlightenment period, the 1940s, or the 1990s.

The Basic Tenets of Post Humanism

Posthumanism is a way of thinking that stresses the connectivity of nonhuman entities, technology, and people while challenging conventional humanistic ideas. It aims to dethrone the European as the hub of the universe and criticises the Eurocentric interpretation of humanism. The fundamental principles of post-humanism are listed below by the researcher:

➤ **A rejection of anthropocentrism:** Posthumanism places man on an equal footing with other things of the world, stripping him of his superior ethical, legal, and ontological status. The following scientific advancements that drew humans and other living things closer together and caused boundaries between them to blur: the development of technologies, particularly artificial intelligence; and the distortion of ideas about man in postmodern philosophy are the conceptual underpinnings of posthumanism. The rejection of biological and ethical anthropocentrism is the ideological basis of posthumanism.

➤ **Abandons teleology and embraces coexistence:** A new paradigm for situating humans, a deprivileging outlook, and a change in frame of reference are all proposed by posthumanism. Whether organic or inorganic, sentient, or insentient, living, or dead, other beings exist in their own right instead of being resources that humans use and exploit, according to a de-anthropocentric posthumanism perspective. Like individuals, their existence is independent of ours as the necessary presumption; they

have their own inherent meaning, regardless of the specific meaning or meaning at all. Posthumanism embraces coexistence and rejects teleology.

➤ **Challenges humanism:** It is important to understand that posthumanism does not entail disregarding human interests or arbitrarily opposing the use of non-human entities. The awareness and consciousness of morality as individuals and ethics as a society, on the other hand, is precisely one of humanity's unique characteristics that aids in the recognition of the extent to which human activity impacts non-human animals. Posthumanism is a term used to describe a group of philosophies that challenge and work towards eliminating certain core elements of humanism, such as anthropocentrism, human speciesism, human exceptionalism, human superiority, and human chauvinism. It is not a subset of antihumanism.

Post Humanism in literature

Climate change, artificial intelligence, androids and robots, the Anthropocene, enhancement, post-anthropocentrism, the question of the animal, object ontology, cyborgisation and dis/embodiment, and non/human futures are just a few of the topics that posthumanist literature addresses in relation to figurations of the posthuman. In literature and popular culture, posthumanism challenges the Nature/Culture dichotomy and emphasises the interconnectedness of all matter. It examines issues of gender, sexuality, social interactions, families, communities, and the integration of technology. However, in terms of style, posthumanist writing exhibits a level of introspection that challenges the notions of literature as a humanist institution and of the literary as an activity.

The novel is a key component of post-humanism as a speculative discourse because fears and desires are imaginary in the sense that they have the innate ability to spark imaginations about other realities, including non-human, alternative realities based on a critical analysis of the worlds that currently exist. Thus, the novel's relationship to posthumanism is both generative and originary. It is consequently more fruitful to view the novel form as existing across the ages in order to access the critical potential of posthumanist discourse and the figure of the posthuman. In light of this, the age-old notion that people want to transcend their perceptions of themselves enters a new, more intense phase in the twenty-first century, propelled by advancements in nano-, info-, neuro-, and biotechnologies on the one hand, and threats to extinction, biodiversity loss, and climate change on the other. Given that modern literature confronts a circumstance in which the human itself can only be contemplated from elsewhere, from some posthuman perspective, this would support the idea that it is literature of the posthuman.

In the present paper, the scholar applies the post-human idea to a comprehensive examination of six contemporary novels. These novels include Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me*, Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, Philip Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Will Eaves' *Murmur*.

➤ **Ian McEwan's Machines Like Me:** The 2020 novel *Machines Like Me* by Ian McEwan explores and reexamines the conflict between humans and cyborgs. In McEwan's alternate reality, which takes place in the 1980s, Alan Turing is still alive and is at the forefront of artificial intelligence research. McEwan depicts a love triangle in this parallel universe between Charlie, the novel's narrator, a young lady named Miranda, and an artificially intelligent robot named Adam. McEwan explores the role of cyborgs with queer bodies in human relationships through this love triangle. Charlie, a tech addict, views Adam as his prodigal son and purchases the cyborg as soon as it goes on sale. However, Miranda treats Adam like a sex doll and lacks Charlie's enthusiasm. Adam, meanwhile, oscillates between being a submissive boy and a sexualized machine, which defines his in-betweenness and puts the three of them in a distressing and traumatic state of mind. Thus, McEwan examines the conflict between masculinities and the posthuman by establishing such a conflicting setting.

➤ **Jeanette Winterson's Frankissstein: A Love Story:** The protocyberpunk novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) by Jeanette Winterson is compared to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818). The transgender Ry Shelley's familiarity with artificial intelligence in Britain and Mary Shelley's writing of *Frankenstein* in Switzerland are interwoven in this postmodern tale. Additionally, *Frankissstein* draws a connection between the story of the Titan Prometheus, Professor Victor Frankenstein's creation of a cyborg in *Frankenstein*, and Victor Stein—Ry's beloved—experimenting with artificial intelligence on cyborgs. In order to illustrate the posthuman situation over the ages, the novel's narrative alternates between the nineteenth and the twenty-first centuries. As a postmodern follow-up to the nineteenth-century novel *Frankenstein*, *Frankissstein* questions what it means to be human, the veracity of epic narratives, and various forms of binarism. The study makes the case that the novel uses techno-cultural discourses to shed light on the posthuman situation. According to a post-humanist interpretation of the book, *Frankissstein* helps to dismantle anthropocentric dichotomies in humanist theory concerning the interactions between men and women as well as between humans and nonhumans. The study also shows that despite the passage of time, the issues surrounding the posthuman condition are still relevant since blurring boundaries creates uncertainty in people's lives.

➤ **Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go:** In the 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*, an alternate reality of the twentieth century is created. The story opens with a description of a bizarre boarding school called Hailsham, where students refer to the teachers as their guardians because they lack parents and relatives. All students are taught that maintaining good health is crucial, and that they should get weekly physicals in addition to abstaining from smoking. The truth gradually comes to light as a result of Miss Lucy's compassion and intolerance for children: these kids are actually human clones created via science and medicine. They intend to use human cloning organs to treat diseases like cancer and other fatal conditions that are incurable by humans. The clones were given a series of notions regarding their duties to donate organs to those

outside of their body; after doing so repeatedly, they grew weaker and eventually passed away honourably. In a similar vein, individuals in actual society are taught that our life's worth is determined by the amount we contribute to it.

➤ **Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake:** Oryx and Crake, written by Margaret Atwood in 2003, is a work of speculative fiction that follows Jimmy, a.k.a. Snowman, as he navigates a post-apocalyptic near-future world. Through flashbacks, Snowman narrates the tale of a future America-centered world in which the JUVE virus—created in a lab and included in the recently released BlyssPluss pill—has wiped all humankind. Jimmy's childhood buddy Crake is the virus's engineer. Along with creating the virus, Crake also created a new race of posthumans that Jimmy called the Crakers. The majority of humanity is wiped off by a virus that Crake inserts into the BlyssPluss pill at some point after the Crakers are finally created. After Crake approaches Jimmy and slashes Oryx in the throat, Jimmy shoots Crake.

➤ **Philip Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?:** Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) is a post-apocalyptic novel set in post-apocalyptic San Francisco, following the devastation caused by World conflict Terminus, a global nuclear conflict. The earth is covered in radioactive dust, which has caused the majority of animal species to become extinct or extremely endangered. It has also caused a progressive decline in human mental and genetic qualities. As a result, the majority of mankind have fled to space colonies, where they are worked as slaves by genetically modified humanoid robots. Thousands of people have remained behind, though, either out of choice or because they have been negatively impacted by the dust to the point where they are considered special or biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race and are therefore prohibited from leaving. In an effort to stop the extinction of species and, more significantly, to develop empathy, humans have taken up caring for the planet's surviving creatures. According to popular belief, empathy is the only quality that separates humans from androids and is the cornerstone of the Mercerian faith.

➤ **Will Eaves' Murrmur:** In the 2018 novel Murrmur by Will Eaves, Pryor keeps a journal and reflects on his dreams while his body experiences the physical alteration caused by chemical castration. He receives weekly injections of hormones that cause him to become infertile, lose his desire for sex, and develop breasts—all in an attempt to “cure” his attraction to men. Despite Pryor's lack of interest in reviewing the specifics of his sentence, Murrmur is incredibly poetic. Thus, we delve into Pryor's dream world and accompany him as he envisions various scenarios of how his life could have transpired: if he had entered a convenient marriage with a close friend and became a father; if he had investigated his sexuality while attending Cambridge; if his relationship with his first love at boarding school had worked out better. What comes out is a clever, compassionate book that acknowledges Turing's still revolutionary contributions to our understanding of consciousness and the value of personhood while also bringing his narrative to life.

Conclusion

Posthumanism challenges the systemic dehumanisation of people under the hegemonic Western form of the political right by allying with the politico-pedagogical initiatives of feminism, postcolonialism, anti-racism, and queer activism. In this way, it challenges and occasionally dispels a number of institutionalised beliefs about our world. Those engaged in literary analyses who are already aware of the hegemonic and oppressive discourses of post-colonialism that marginalise and silence the disadvantaged—such as members of LGBT communities, members of ethnic or religious minorities, peacebuilders, and activists fighting for the rights of refugees—have been impacted by the post-humanist spirit. These individuals are all represented in a variety of literary texts. As a result, posthumanism has gained acceptance as a novel theoretical perspective that may motivate academics working in a variety of disciplines, such as sociology, literary studies, education, and cultural studies. Future literary analyses will undoubtedly be impacted by this kind of inspiration.

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Enhancing Writing Proficiency through AI Tools for Academic Excellence

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Abstract

Over the last couple of years, it has been noticed that in the field of education, there has been a discernible attentiveness in the utilization of AI. As a result of the groundbreaking development in technology, how language is pronounced now requires ingenious and innovative owing to the revisions in the pedagogic requirements. It is a known fact that artificial intelligence (AI) has become an indispensable component of instruction to carry out day-to-day assignments such as instructing and acquiring languages. This study examines undergraduate students' discernment towards the deployment of artificial intelligence types of equipment for strengthening their writing expertise. The swift and unrivalled progress in technology and the internet have opened on to the necessity of artificial intelligence (AI), which has a notable influence on various prospects of mankind especially in the discipline of education. A considerable number of EFL learners confront challenges in building their writing adeptness. Thus, the purpose of the ongoing research is to inquire into the effect of AI on the writing skills of undergraduate students.

Keywords: discernible, ingenious, discernment, unrivalled, adeptness

Introduction:

The significance of English as a global language cannot be denied because in the present day acquiring English language skills has become indispensable to students in both academics and career. The modern world demands a learner to be knowledgeable if he or she is to perform on all platforms in society from fundamental transactions to formal communication at the discourse level. It is a well-known fact that communication is the primary function of any language, and listening, speaking, reading and writing are those four parameters which a learner applies to fulfill that function. To master a language thoroughly and attain a degree of expertise in it, it is imperative for the students to master all four skills of the English language. Out of these four skills, it is agreed that writing holds a distinctive position which is regarded as the prevalent way to examine the performance of students in the English language. Mukulu says something very pertinent in this regard: "Writing is said to be the most important skill that is required by students in order to boost their personal talents and potential along with academic success" (2006). The acquisition of writing ranges from putting down the language symbols on a piece of paper to presenting information in an understandable manner. By manipulating words meaningfully, one can redesign one's opinions, refocus them and in that way write clearly and legibly. As writing is different from the remaining three skills it is set apart as a unique skill. Besides, being distinct from the other three skills, writing is regarded as significant because it helps to consolidate learning in the other skills as well. Learning to write English cannot be

considered an option as it is not something to be included or excluded at will. Kroll avers: "...writing which is understood as a laborious task by many demands comprehensive knowledge of multiple skills which contribute to the overall writing difficulties for those who use language" (2003). Despite the fact that a learner does not demonstrate a flair for writing English, learning to write English cannot be set aside as it invariably contributes to learning to read, perceive and speak. Thus, it can be indubitably stated that writing is the most accurate and disciplined form of thinking and learning to write well is an essential part of learning English itself.

It is prevalent that the classrooms of English have encountered notable transformations from conventional method to the present minute taking in numerous advancements in technology. It is witnessed that the comprehensive inclusion of technology in education is reorganizing instructional methods and skill procurement (Loncar et al., 2023; Zang and Zou, 2023). According to Adams and Chuah, the incorporation of AI into instruction and knowledge acquirement has stimulated a substantial amount of attentiveness among academic technologists (2022). It is proposed by Mushthoza et al. that AI can enhance the language skills of the teacher and taught, by extending individualized teaching, instant assessment, consolidating instructional materials, conducting language tests and rendering editing facilities. Tools of AI also can assist a learner to build fluency, precision and rectification of oneself (2023). The other benefits in addition to these include the employment of AI in instruction. If AI is employed in pedagogy it will facilitate a change which will be learner-focused, resulting in the development of the learners. It is evident that by the usage of tools of AI in instruction mastery over the writing skills of learners will have great potential. However, to utilize these AI tools effectively, it is very important to understand the needs and requirements of learners' regarding these tools because this can provide adequate knowledge to the instructors, syllabus designers and lawmakers for burgeoning incorporation of writing instruction.

As writing solely competes with the rest of the skills i.e. (listening, speaking and reading) it is regarded as a distinguished skill. As it is viewed as a distinct skill an outstanding inrush of resourceful AI tools crop up on the marketplace every day, meticulously developed to strengthen the instruction of English language potentiality with a notable attention on writing competency. Several AI tools which are mushroomed in the field of education are extensively used and are validated to be productive in the domain of writing. Some of the AI-powered tools such as Chat-GPT, Quillbot, Rytr, Copy.ai, Grammarly and so on are being utilized by learners to overcome their writing difficulties. Among all it is Chat GPT, the AI powered outstanding tool which is extensively used by learners to enhance their writing difficulties (Barrot, 2023).

In simple terms, EFL classrooms benefit from technological advancements in AI as it provides personalized instruction, instant assessment, immediate error rectification in grammar and spelling etc. AI-powered tools of writing also have the possibility of enhancing students' fluency, accuracy proper sentence formation and so on by easing the difficulties encountered by students in the area of writing. The effectiveness of AI approaches in instruction is dependent on the reaction of the learners' perspectives and execution concerning these techniques.

Problem statement:

Writing is indeed broadly recognized as the utmost demanding skill for the learners of EFL to build their expertise (Phuket and Othman, 2015). The usual complaint of students is that they find writing very hard. What exactly makes writing difficult is that quite often they cannot decide exactly the topic on which they have to write. Another problem is that in many instances they fail to organize the ideas in a systematic order and therefore, due to the absence of coherence in the paragraph, it appears discursive and does not create interest in the reader. Students often say that their inability to write on a topic is due to their meagre imaginative power and creative ability to come up with and develop ideas. They write a sentence and erase it because they are not confident and therefore feel that it is not the same sentence as they thought it to be. They sit for long hours thinking what to write and how to improve what they have written. Because they are tired of this assiduous work, they are bound to conclude that writing is a tedious job, and something very difficult to perform well (Fathi and Rahimi, 2022). The usage of artificial intelligence tools on account of these challenges among learners to enhance their writing competency is becoming indispensable day by day. These tools furnish immediate evaluation on grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and sentence organization assisting learners to recognize and rectify their issues related to writing. This, then and there assessment improves writing competency by minimizing the dependence on the instructor's remarks. Artificial intelligence also can make the language accurate by recognizing repeated mistakes and replacing them with similar vocabulary, phrases or expressions. At the same time with the assistance of these tools learners can get motivated and earn rewards (Neji et al., 2023; Merrick, 2011). The key advantages of AI tools are it is easily accessible and available permitting learners to engross in their writing work at their convenient time and place, acclimatizing their learning options. This perspective builds a highly adaptive and personalized learning environment, assisting learners to advance at their own speed while choosing particular areas of enhancement in their writing expertise. On the whole, AI tools extend an outstanding boon to the learners, to strengthen their own writing skills with customized assessment, enhanced linguistic accuracy, inspiration and approachability.

The following questions are addressed in the study:

- 1) What are the concerns of learners towards the application of AI tools for enhancing their writing competency?
- 2) To what level do learners use AI tools to develop their writing abilities?
- 3) Why do learners need to make use of AI tools in their academic writing?
- 4) Do learners need AI technology to enhance their writing abilities?

Literature review:

Among the four skills of English, writing is considered the most demanding skill to acquire. Communicative competence in today's graduates is measured not only through oral communication skills but also through written communication skills. In regard to this, a considerable number of researchers propose that AI-powered tools can certainly strengthen the writing competency of learners. Marzuki et al. (2023) inspected the effect of AI-related writing

tools on the standard of student's writing. Marzuki et al. (2023) investigated the effect of AI writing tools based on the writing standards of the students. The investigation discovered that QuillBot, WordTune, Jenni, Chat-GPT, Paperpal, Copy.ai etc. AI writing tools have exhibited a positive outcome on the writing standards of the learners. Sumakul et al. (2022) observed that learners emphatically regarded the application of the AI tools in their writing demonstrating their contentment with their academic exposure and its assistance in their writing attempts. Despite that, it also focused on the necessity to contemplate the other elements while including AI into the writing discipline. The outcome acquired by Alammar and Amin (2023) specified that EFL learners carry constructive perspectives regarding the usage of Academic Productivity Tools (APTs). Thus, the research proposes that based on the various descriptions of learners' customized educational proposals may be more productive in fostering liable utilization of AI tools. The research also focuses on the significance of taking into account numerous tools in English classrooms.

Methodology:

The study provides the methods adopted for collecting data from selected students. This study employs both a qualitative and quantitative research methodology to investigate the perceptions of students on AI writing tools to improve their writing skills.. The qualitative and quantitative data for this study were collected through students' questionnaires. One of the reasons to choose qualitative methods for collecting data is it helps to explore many ways to approach, collect, analyze and present data in a proper order.

Research Instruments Used for Collecting Data:

Research instruments which have been used to conduct the survey for collecting data are:

- a. Questionnaire to Students
- b. Interview with Students

Questionnaire to Students:

The questionnaire is the most commonly used research instrument to collect data and asking questions is one of the most natural ways to obtain that data. Through a questionnaire survey, the researcher can gather the most authentic information from students. The questionnaire is considered to be one of the written instruments which presents a sequence of question statements to which the informants proceed by writing their solutions or choosing the correct answer from the given options.

Interview with Students:

The researcher met the students to request an interview with them. Speaking to students helped the researcher acquire information regarding their personal experiences and perceptions regarding the usage of AI writing tools. The semi-structured interview questions for learners were designed not only to obtain information regarding their issues but also the challenges that they face to promote learning through AI-powered tools.

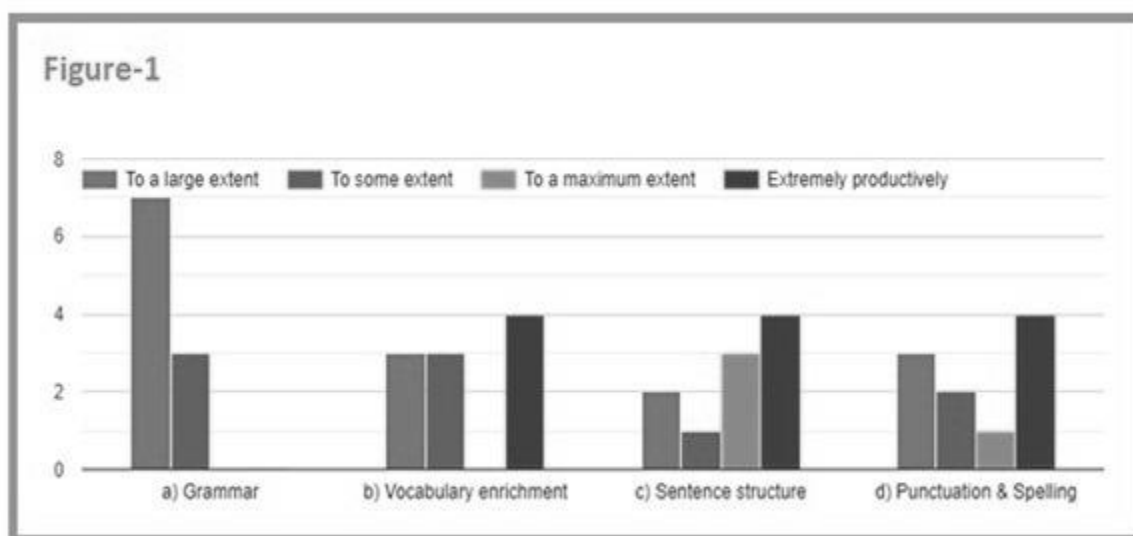
Procedure of Data Collection and Analysis:

After explaining the aims and objectives of the questionnaire the researcher collected the data from the informants. The students were requested to go through the doubts which were clarified by the researcher regarding the questions in the questionnaire. The researcher felt satisfied when the informants evinced interest in filling out the questionnaire. The informants were requested to fill the form individually for which they took some time. After speaking to the students, the researcher respected their views and opinions and incorporated them in her ongoing research. Once the data was collected the researcher analyzed it to draw useful and necessary conclusions.

Analysis and Graphical Interpretation of Students' Questionnaire on Usage of AI-Powered Writing Tools:

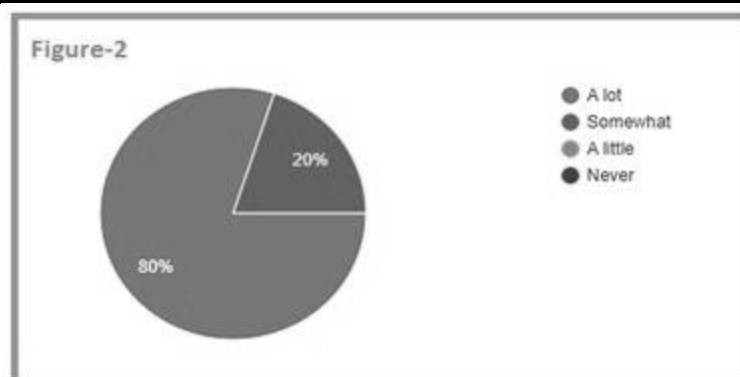
The questionnaire on students consists of five questions. It was designed to acquire the opinions of students adopting AI technology in their writing instruction in the 21st-century education system. As 10 students participated in the survey the researcher requested them to go through the questionnaire carefully and understand the questions to share their genuine opinions on the questions.

1. Which of the following features of writing do you think AI tools can assist effectively with? (Select all if applicable)



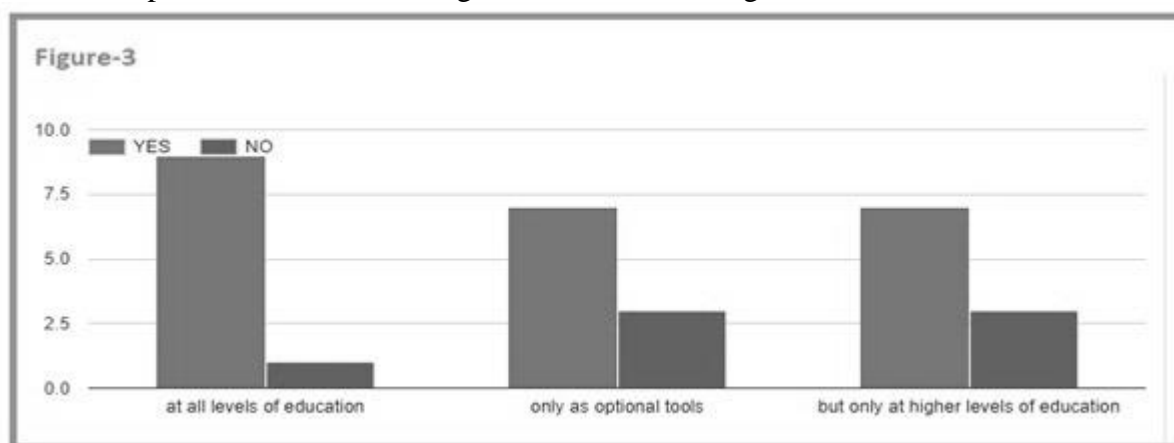
According to the figure, AI tools are utilized to a large extent by students to improve their grammar, enrich vocabulary, construct grammatical sentences and overcome spelling and punctuation mistakes. 7 out of 10 students agree that to a large extent grammar can be enhanced through AI tools. 4 students believe that AI writing tools are extremely productive in enriching vocabulary. 4 other students also believe in AI and agree that proper sentence structure along with proper spelling and punctuation can be acquired using AI writing tools.

2. Do you enjoy writing using AI-powered writing tools to enhance your writing skills?



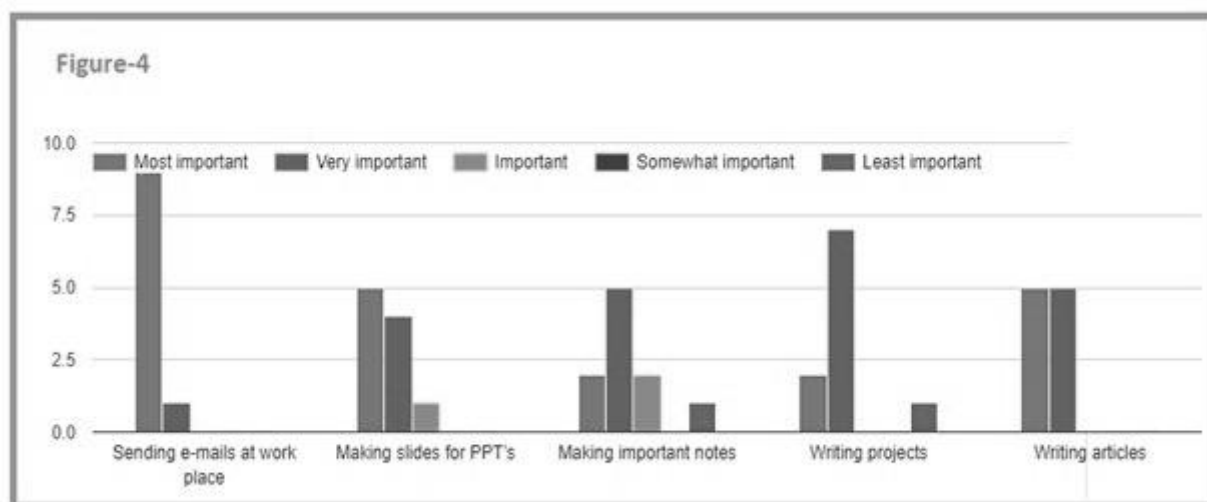
Writing which is considered to be a laborious task by students is made easy through AI writing tools. Therefore, students agree that AI technology assists them to improve their writing competency. Only 20 per cent of learners disagree with AI and accept that they enjoy AI tools to a small extent. Whereas, 80 per cent of the learners accept that their writing difficulties are decreased to a large extent and they enjoy writing essays, articles, projects, reports and so on by using AI-powered writing tools to enhance their writing skills.

3. Can AI-powered tools for writing enhancement be integrated into academic curriculum?



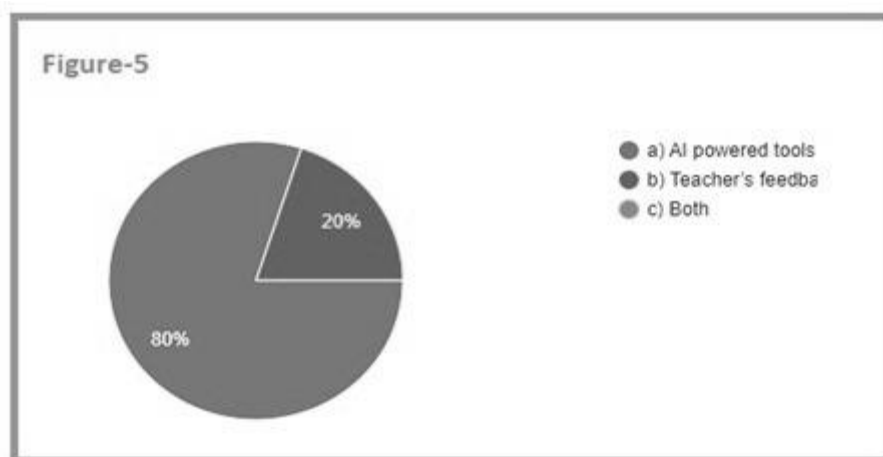
According to the figure, 90 per cent of students express their consent towards the implementation of AI-powered tools into academic curriculum to enhance their writing competency. It is believed that learners in the classroom to a large extent depend on their teachers for assessment. If AI tools are included in the curriculum it can assist them throughout their instruction along with their teachers. Only one per cent of learners disagree with the inclusion of AI tools into the curriculum.

4. Is it important to use AI writing tools when performing the following activities? Please Circle your choice according to the following criteria.



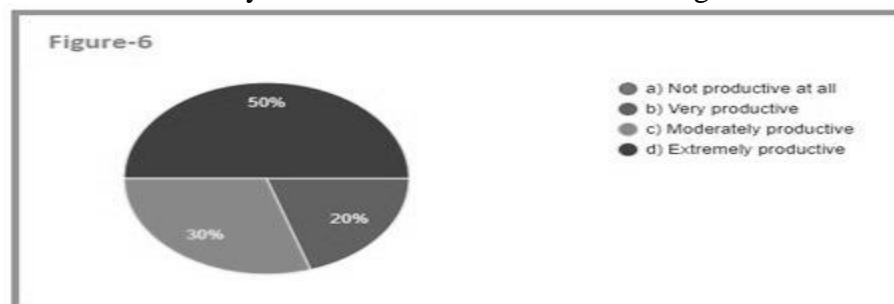
90 per cent of students agree that it is most important to enhance e-mail writing techniques and therefore it is necessary to make use of AI writing tools to enhance their e-mail writing etiquette to be utilized at the workplace. Only one per cent of learners disagreed with it. 9 out of 10 students understand that AI writing tools are of very much use in making slides for powerpoint presentations. Fifty per cent of students agree that AI tools help make notes with proper sentence structure using appropriate vocabulary wherever necessary. Seven students responded that AI tools are useful in writing projects while all ten students accept that that AI writing tools assist them in writing articles as well.

5. For improving your writing skills do you prefer AI tools or teacher's feedback?



It is a widely accepted truth fact that giving feedback to all the students in a classroom is a herculean task. The instructor may not be able to assess students' difficulties in a limited time and therefore he/she may not be able to facilitate his/her complete support in assessing their

mistakes effectively. Students would benefit to a large extent if AI tools are utilized by them



along with teacher evaluation. Therefore 80 percent of students express their willingness to use AI tools and twenty percent of them still express their interest in teacher's feedback.

6. How productive do you think AI tools are in improving your writing skills?

According to the figure, fifty per cent of students responded that it is extremely productive if AI tools are implemented in their writing instruction to enhance their writing skills. The remaining twenty per cent of students also express their opinion on using AI writing tools to enhance their writing competency. The rest thirty per cent opine that AI tools are moderately productive in assisting them in overcoming their writing difficulties.

Conclusion:

The present research is conducted to evaluate the writing proficiency of students through AI tools for academic excellence. A questionnaire on students was made for this purpose and empirical data was analyzed to understand the impressions of learners on employing AI-powered writing tools to enhance their writing proficiency. The study also helps to understand the present status of the usage of technology by students in their writing instruction and the difference that they experience from their teacher's assessment in the English classrooms. This suggests that change is inevitable and teachers need to embrace it for the betterment of the students. Teachers need to be aware that the present class of students are from Generation Z and have grown up with abundant knowledge to an unprecedented degree of technology. As they were elevated in the electronic age, they were proficient at utilizing applications and learning coding. Instead of always focusing on its drawbacks, technology must be deliberately employed to benefit students, encourage independent and autonomous learning and therefore develop the assets of technology.

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**And a Terrible Beauty is Born! A Transhumanist Reading of Hawthorne's
Rappaccini's Daughter**

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“But as for Rappaccini, it is said of him—and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth—that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne's famed short story Rappaccini's daughter defines the doctor Rappaccini in the above cryptic terms by one of his own men Dr. Paglioni. Central to the story's treatment of Rappaccini's character is his obsession with science to the exclusion of humans. Rappaccini creates an augmented garden, a result of his insatiable appetite to improve on nature. The garden, tended by his daughter Beatrice, is poisonous by nature and manages to infuse its toxins into Beatrice thereby morphing her into a terrible beauty.

The paper will reflect upon contemporary ideas of botox- injected beauty and compare it with Rappaccini's subjugation and scientific appropriation of nature and ideological appropriation of woman's beauty. I intend to do so by explaining the peculiar qualities of his scientifically-created garden and the poisonous beauty that he infuses into his extraordinarily beautiful daughter Beatrice through his coldly rational and indifferent experimentation. The paper will also explore the story's relevance to Transhumanist approaches to life and question whether the importance of Transhumanism as an academic area of study derives its importance through a manipulation of previously held ideas of beauty as belonging to nature. It will further explore Transhumanism as normalizing scientific appropriation of human nature and beauty thereby justifying and promoting it.

Rappaccini being described as a person caring “infinitely more for science than for mankind” resonates with modern Transhumanism which holds the opinion that it is quite possible for robots (a creation of man's rather than God's) to replace man and discusses this by placing robots at the forefront and by pushing mankind to the periphery. Transhumanism as an ideological position also justifies the invasion of human space- a space created for, by and of humans by adopting and normalizing undemocratic technological advancements that appropriate the human body in ways that were hitherto unimaginable.

Hawthorne's hero Giovanni Guasconti looks out into Rappaccini's garden soon after he arrives at his new lodgings in Padua. Rappaccini's garden is described by Guasconti in terms which suggest that Rappaccini has created a splendid garden bursting with extraordinarily colourful flowers. Each and every flower in the garden seems to be an enhancement of nature. The leaves of the plants are gigantic and the flowers gorgeously magnificent. One shrub of purple blossoms had the luster and richness of a gem. On the whole they looked resplendent. Traditionally employed as a symbol of royalty and therefore power, the colour purple and the

employment of these semantically related adjectives suggests a show of power, magnificence and resplendence over a natural and simple garden which bends to the will of the seasons of nature. Not without intention does Hawthorne tell us that a statue of Vertumnus, the Roman god of seasons, in the middle of the garden is almost veiled and shrouded in a drapery of hanging foliage. Rappaccini's scientific garden created with assiduous care will eventually shroud nature. Or in other words Rappaccini's science spells the doom of nature.

Of pivotal importance to this paper is Rappaccini's idea of beauty as witnessed in his daughter Beatrice. Despite being a natural beauty, her beauty is slowly interfused with the deadly poisonous beauty of the garden. What one finds beguiling here is that though the garden is Rappaccini's own creation, he is frightened of tending to his own creation. In Guasconti's words, when he had to tend to his plants, he defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves. He also wore a mask over his mouth and nostrils while tending to the purple blossoms.

Despite his fear of being poisoned by his own plants, he allows his daughter to tend to the plants without any qualms. One is reminded once again of Paglioni's words that he cares infinitely more for Science than for mankind. In Guasconti's eyes, Beatrice looks redundant with life, health and energy and more beautiful than the richest of the flowers but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask. We tend to suspect that there is something evil and poisonous about the flowers and our suspicions are confirmed when Guasconti observes that when Beatrice plucks a rich purple blossom from the shrub, a drop of moisture falls on a reptile. The reptile contorts itself violently and lays reposed in the sunshine-very dead. What is more shocking is that Beatrice doesn't hesitate to arrange the poisonous flower in her bosom. She even throws her arms around the shrub and treats it as though it were her sister. The young man also notices that an insect which flies by Beatrice dies when it inhales her perfumed breath.

Beatrice accidentally spots Giovanni as she looks up and Giovanni impulsively throws to her the bouquet he holds in his hands as a token of his appreciation of her beauty. She receives them with warmth and as she leaves the garden to enter the house, Giovanni distinctly sees the beautiful bouquet in her hand already beginning to wither.

All these occurrences leave the young man exceedingly alarmed and confused. Nevertheless he develops an obsession for Beatrice. Whether or not Beatrice possessed those terrible attributes, that fatal breath, the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him;

He becomes so feverish with anticipation of seeing Beatrice that one day when he accidentally meets Dr. on the streets, he avoids talking to the wise scientist for fear of being found out. Nevertheless the wise man stops him, looks at him intently, realizes that he has fallen for Beatrice and warns him of her poisonous nature. They also happen to meet Dr. Rappaccini who directs a serious glance of indifferent curiosity towards Guasconti. Dr. immediately realizes

that Rappaccini is somehow using the young man as a lab rat for his experiments. Guasconti doesn't believe this and hurries off. This is when he finds out through the maid that there is a secret entrance to the garden.

He enters through the secret door and meets Beatrice. Guasconti realizes that Beatrice has never seen the outside world and is very glad to have him for company. She also seems to him to be a tender and kind hearted girl. But when once he tries to pluck the purple flower, she instinctively catches his hand with all her force and throws it back and tells him "Touch it not!...Not for thy life! It is fatal!" They grow fond of each other but their relationship strangely lacks any form of physical intimacy.

On the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed tempted to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate separation, shuddering at itself, that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him.

Dr. Paglioni visits Guasconti and gives him a vial of precious medicine which he feels can save Beatrice. The reader is shocked when Dr. Paglioni curiously inquires about the perfumed air that he is able to breathe in Guasconti's room. Guasconti turns pale at this remark and is later horrified to realize that he is also able to kill a spider by his mere breathe. Beatrice has succeeded in infusing her poison into his being.

Guasconti meets Beatrice and asks her about the purple blossoms and Beatrice replies in a very simple manner that her father created it. This piece of information unnerves the young man he confronts her with furious scorn.

"Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world's wonder of hideous monstrosity! Now, if our breath be happily as fatal to ourselves as to all others, let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred, and so die!"

Beatrice trembles at his words, and in order to prove her innocence she drinks from the vial that Giovanni hands her. As she drinks, Rappaccini, the pale man of Science walks out of the mansion and looks at both of them with a triumphant look and says:

My science and the sympathy between thee and him have so wrought within his system that he now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on, then, through the world, most dear to one another and dreadful to all besides!"

When Beatrice calls her poisonous power as "miserable doom", Rappaccini exclaims haughtily that she is being foolish. Rappaccini's glorification and exultation of Science lies in its capacity to give infinite power to humans. Whereas Rappaccini looks at both Guasconti and Beatrice with a show of conscious power and implores a blessing on them, they both tremble and shudder and Beatrice clutches at her heart.

"I would fain have been loved, not feared" are some of Beatrice's last words as she sinks to the ground dying.

Rappaccini's daughter is prophetic in that it anticipates and offers serious critique of life seen through the lens of Science with the exclusion of everything else. Rappaccini, though being an ingenuous Scientist is characterized by a dangerous lack of human warmth that makes one human. Human to him stands for powerlessness. Human is something that must be improved upon. Therefore he succeeds in infusing nature's beauty with the poisonous power of Science and thus feels a sense of conquest in his breast.

Transhumanism is an ideological position that argues for human self-actualization through technology. In his essay "The Philosophy of Transhumanism" one of the definitions of Transhumanism that Max More cites is "The study of the ramifications, promises, and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies" (3) This may be considered an unbiased critical position that involves the study of all the issues surrounding Transhumanism.

Whereas Anders Sandberg's definition of the Transhumanist movement is clearly biased in its unambiguous celebration of futuristic technology and his foregrounding of human desire and a subjective understanding of human rights as the yardstick for measuring and predicting the direction of technology in the future.

Anders Sandberg, one of the pivotal figures in the Transhumanist movement believes that it is a democratic position to give one freedom over how to modify one's body. He argues that one's right to one's body not just ends with the possession of one's body but also extends to the right to modify oneself according to one's desires. (56) He calls this morphological freedom and argues that this must be one of the freedoms that people should have the right to pursue. Now the idea of modifying oneself according to one's desire by itself seems quite subjective and ambiguous as modification can even mean modifying one's behaviour.

In the context of medicine, which is relevant to my paper, Sanders says that we humans have moved from curative, palliative and preventative medicine to augmentative medicine. Reading Rappaccini's daughter in this context would mean Hawthorne foretelling the future possibilities in the field of medicine but while Sanders holds an optimistic view of this, Hawthorne's is essentially dark and foreboding. Rappaccini augments his daughter with poison which he believes to be a strong potent medicine that mutates her into a powerful version of herself. Unfortunately when she drinks from the vial a medicine that is believed to be the only potent cure for her poison, she dies. She is so poisoned that the medicine has no effect on her. She has gone so far away from nature that it is impossible to go back. Going by modern Transhumanist thinking, if we humans augment ourselves with technology, can we go back if we want to? Is it possible for us to remove all pieces of technology from within us and still function as an autonomous human being or would we become so interfused with technology that the lines between human and technology gets completely blurred? If so, how do we define autonomy? If the definition the right to modify oneself according to one's desire is rephrased in this manner – the right of Science to intrude itself into humans according to the desire of tech-billionaires, will this still be considered human rights or technological invasion?

In Sanders's own words:

Technology and morphological freedom go hand in hand. Technology enables new forms of self-expression, creating a demand for the freedom to exercise them. The demand drives further technological exploration. It is not just a question of technological imperative, but a very real striving of people towards self-actualization. (58)

The ability to augment oneself is impossible without technology. But is the underlying motive here, the validation of human rights or the validation of technology and its further progress through a modification of human rights to suit the growth of technology? Or in other words, like Rappaccini does Transhumanism seem to care infinitely more about Science than about humans? Or do Transhumanists use persuasive language to convince people that it is a fundamental right to shape one's own body according to one's own desire? Is this an objective, valid reason or is it just a lame excuse to promote technological advancements? After all, where will Scientists find money for investing in further research in technology if people don't buy their products? Transhumanist thought in this sense seems to be headed in the direction of maximizing profits to the exclusion of everything else.

The word self-actualization is problematic. It is a term Sanders borrows from Psychology and Maslow's concept of self-actualization describes it as the deep creative need in man depending on his choice—for example to be truly happy one who has the innate ability to teach must become a teacher, one who really feels alive when he draws, must become an artist. Self-actualization is an inner process in humans that helps them understand their deepest potential (which is highly subjective) and allows them to express it. The term has been appropriated by Sanders to fit into his ideology of a Transhumanist future.

Therefore Transhumanism functions in the context of normalizing the scientific idea of augmented beauty. Beauty that was once associated with nature and youth has now been hijacked by Science through advanced anti-ageing therapies. An article in *The Collector* that talks about five ways in which Transhumanism is changing our lives puts *The Rise of Anti-ageing technologies* on the top of its list. With the interference of technology into our lives in the name of rights, Transhumanists have led people to believe that death by itself is a disease that must be cured.

Furthermore, augmenting oneself either outwardly through botox and other treatments or inwardly by upgrading your mind through technology, the resultant hybridized human would have been infused with potentially powerful ways of seeing and controlling the world. He/She will be the posthuman who has both a terrible beauty and an intelligence far surpassing the mind of an ordinary human. Such people become naturally feared as they have the power to control their lives and the lives of others. This would result in deepening the inequality crises that the world is already facing.

We can easily see that this is the power Rappaccini dreams of when he creates the poisonous purple blossoms. The fact that Hawthorne decides to color them purple is an intentional pointer towards the fact that it is the royalty or the very rich who would stand to benefit from the advanced augmentative technologies offered by Science. The gap between the rich and the poor would then become an unnavigable terrain. This would bring us to the rights

vs. ethics debate. Fillard is of the view that most Transhumanists do not trust a transcendent human soul. If that is the case, then the issue of ethics becomes even more sidelined.

Another article I referred to in The Conversation emphatically states that tech billionaires are among the most aggressive promoters of transhuman thinking. They would stand to benefit in billions if people come to believe that modifying oneself via technology is the path to self-actualization. One has to therefore treat the academic area of Transhumanism and its clever use of words with a critical mind and reflect on the underlying forces that promote Transhumanist thinking before we make a choice to leap into a world shaped and ruled more by technology than by nature or humans.

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Posthumanism: A Belief of Evolution

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Abstract:

In the contemporary world, we find ourselves at a unique juncture where rapid advancements in technology, biology, and culture are challenging traditional conceptions of what it means to be human. We are witnessing the emergence of a new paradigm, often referred to as "posthumanism," which calls into question the boundaries and definitions that have long been taken for granted. The concept of posthumanism is a complex and multifaceted one, encompassing a wide range of theories, ideas, and disciplines. At its core, posthumanism challenges the anthropocentric view that places humans at the center of the universe and instead proposes a more inclusive and interconnected understanding of the world.

One of the key aspects of posthumanism is the recognition of the profound impact that technology has on our lives and our understanding of humanity. In this paper, we will explore the diverse dimensions of posthumanism and its implications for our understanding of the human condition. By engaging with a range of perspectives and disciplines, including literary explorations of posthumanism and cyborg theory, this work aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this complex and evolving paradigm.

Key Words: Technology, advancements, challenges, exploration, paradigm

Background and Literature Review:

Posthumanism is a burgeoning area of study that draws on insights from fields such as philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and science and technology studies. Its roots can be traced back to the mid-to-late 20th century, when thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Gilles Deleuze challenged traditional notions of human exceptionalism and questioned the stability of human identity. More recently, posthumanist thought has gained momentum due to rapid advances in technology, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, genetics, and nanotechnology.

Scholars working in the tradition of posthumanism seek to complicate and expand conventional definitions of humanness, emphasizing the role of technoscience in transforming the human experience. Some prominent strands of posthumanist thinking include actor-network theory, which examines the networks of relations among human and non-human actors; critical posthumanism, which interrogates the political and ideological underpinnings of humanistic discourse; and speculative posthumanism, which imagines alternative futures beyond the confines of humanism.

Central to many posthumanist accounts is the idea of the cyborg - a being that combines organic and mechanical elements, disrupting traditional binaries such as human/animal, human/machine, and natural/artificial. Donna Haraway's seminal essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" famously celebrated the cyborg as a figure that transcends these binary distinctions, embodying the possibility of new kinds of affiliation and collective action. For Haraway, the cyborg represents a radical break with past modes of thought, opening up space for new alliances across difference.

Other scholars have built on Haraway's vision of the cyborg to develop rich accounts of posthuman subjectivity. N. Katherine Hayles, for example, has argued that the posthuman subject is characterized by a distributed cognition that exceeds the bounds of the individual body. Similarly, Rosi Braidotti has developed the concept of the "nomadic subject", which emphasizes mobility, flexibility, and connectivity as key features of posthuman identity. Both Hayles and Braidotti see the posthuman subject as fundamentally relational, constituted through complex webs of interaction and exchange.

The literature on posthumanism also engages with a number of pressing ethical and political questions raised by the increasing convergence of humans and technology. For instance, scholars have grappled with issues surrounding the ownership and control of bodily modifications, the ethics of creating synthetic beings, and the potential for new forms of discrimination and inequality in a posthuman world. Additionally, there is growing interest in the ways that posthumanism might inform efforts to build more sustainable and just societies, particularly in relation to environmental degradation, climate change, and resource scarcity.

Overall, then, posthumanism offers a powerful framework for understanding the complex entanglements of humans, animals, machines, and environments in the contemporary moment. By challenging established categories and conventions, posthumanist thought opens up new possibilities for imagining and inhabiting the world differently, fostering a greater appreciation for the intricate dynamics of interconnection and interdependence that define our shared existence.

Methodology:

In order to investigate the implications of posthumanism for our understanding of the human condition, this paper adopts a mixed-methods approach that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Specifically, we employ a combination of archival research, expert interviews, and large-scale survey data to shed light on different facets of the posthuman debate.

Firstly, to establish the intellectual history and evolution of posthumanist thought, we conduct archival research on primary sources such as academic articles, books, conference proceedings, and manifestos. This enables us to trace the origins and trajectory of posthumanism, situating it within wider debates about modernity, progress, and the meaning of human existence.

Through close reading and interpretation of these texts, we aim to identify the key themes, tensions, and innovations that characterize posthumanist thought.

Secondly, to gain deeper insights into the perspectives and motivations of key stakeholders involved in posthumanist debates, we conduct semi-structured interviews with experts from a variety of fields, including philosophy, sociology, computer science, bioengineering, and art. Our interview protocol focuses on eliciting respondents' opinions on the defining features of posthumanism, its potential benefits and drawbacks, and the most promising avenues for future research. Drawing on principles of grounded theory, we analyze these interviews thematically, looking for recurrent patterns, divergent viewpoints, and unexpected connections.

Finally, to gauge public opinion on posthumanist issues, we draw on large-scale survey datasets collected through platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, Prolific Academic, and Qualtrics. These surveys cover a broad cross-section of respondents, allowing us to assess the extent to which posthumanist ideas resonate with different demographic groups and geographical regions. Our survey items tap into a range of attitudinal domains, including perceptions of technology, values regarding human enhancement, beliefs about moral status, and visions of the future. Using statistical tools such as factor analysis and regression modeling, we explore the correlates and predictors of posthumanist orientations, shedding light on the underlying factors that drive people's attitudes toward these issues.

To ensure rigor and validity in our research design, we pay careful attention to sampling, measurement, and data quality issues. Regarding sampling, we strive to recruit participants who are representative of the populations of interest, controlling for variables such as age, gender, education, and nationality. To minimize response bias and ensure accurate reporting, we employ anonymous survey designs and carefully crafted question wording. Furthermore, we take measures to safeguard data integrity, checking for missing values, outliers, and measurement error, and applying appropriate corrections as needed.

Through triangulating these different methods and data sources, we aim to provide a holistic and nuanced account of the posthuman phenomenon, revealing its complexity, diversity, and dynamism. Ultimately, our goal is to stimulate informed dialogue and reflection about the opportunities and challenges posed by posthumanism, contributing to ongoing conversations about the kind of future we want to inhabit.

Results:

After conducting extensive research using a mixed-methods approach, we obtained valuable insights into the implications of posthumanism for our understanding of the human condition. Below, we report the main findings of our investigation.

Firstly, our archival research revealed that posthumanism emerged as a distinct intellectual movement in the late 20th century, building on earlier critiques of humanism and anthropocentrism. Key influences included cybernetics, systems theory, and artificial intelligence research, as well as feminist, queer, and anti-racist activism. Over time, posthumanism evolved into a pluralistic and heterogeneous field, comprising numerous subfields and approaches, ranging from continental philosophy to scientific materialism. Common themes across these perspectives include the reconceptualization of embodiment, subjectivity, agency, and ethics in light of emerging technologies and ecological crises.

Our second major source of evidence came from expert interviews with scholars and practitioners engaged in posthumanist research and practice. Overall, respondents expressed enthusiasm for the potential of posthumanism to foster innovative solutions to pressing social, economic, and environmental problems. Many highlighted the need to move beyond narrow human-centered perspectives and recognize the interconnectedness of all beings and systems. At the same time, interviewees acknowledged the challenges of translating posthumanist ideas into concrete policies and practices, pointing to the continued dominance of neoliberal logics and the persistent appeal of humanist narratives.

Lastly, our survey data provided a window into public attitudes and perceptions of posthumanist issues. Despite widespread ignorance of the term "posthumanism," respondents showed considerable familiarity with its key tenets, such as the blurring of boundaries between humans and machines, the importance of sustainability, and the value of inclusivity. Moreover, our analyses indicated that certain factors, such as higher levels of formal education, exposure to diverse cultures, and engagement with science fiction media, were positively correlated with posthumanist orientation. However, we also detected pockets of resistance and skepticism, especially among older generations and religious conservatives.

Taken together, these findings underscore the ambivalent and multifarious nature of posthumanism as a cultural, intellectual, and political force. On the one hand, posthumanism holds promise as a framework for navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing world, encouraging us to reimagine our relationships with other entities and systems. On the other hand, it faces significant obstacles, including institutional inertia, vested interests, and ideological opposition. Thus, if posthumanism is to fulfill its emancipatory potential, it must continue to evolve and adapt, cultivating alliances across disciplinary, sectorial, and geographical divides, and remaining vigilant to the dangers of cooptation and commodification.

Discussion:

Our findings highlight several key implications of posthumanism for our understanding of the human condition. Firstly, posthumanism challenges traditional conceptions of the self as bounded, autonomous, and separate from the external world. Instead, it encourages us to view the self as embedded in complex networks of relations, enmeshed with other entities and systems, both human and nonhuman. This shift in perspective carries significant ramifications

for ethics, politics, and epistemology, suggesting the need for more expansive and inclusive frames of reference.

Secondly, our research reveals the crucial role of emerging technologies in mediating and facilitating posthumanist transformations. Whether in the form of prosthetic limbs, neural implants, or AI algorithms, these technologies enable new forms of embodied experience, social organization, and cognitive processing. However, they also pose ethical dilemmas and practical challenges, requiring careful consideration of their distributional effects, governance mechanisms, and safety protocols.

Thirdly, our survey data indicate that posthumanist sensibilities are not restricted to elite circles of academics or artists, but rather are gaining traction among broader swathes of the populace. This trend bodes well for the prospects of posthumanism as a socially relevant and politically salient movement, yet it also raises questions about the feasibility and desirability of wholesale posthumanist transitions. How can we balance the quest for innovation and experimentation with the need for continuity and stability? How can we avoid perpetuating existing inequities and exclusions, while promoting greater justice and inclusion?

Fourthly, our expert interviews reveal the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue in advancing posthumanist agendas. Scholars and practitioners from disparate fields, such as philosophy, physics, and dance, can learn much from each other's perspectives and practices, generating synergies and complementarities that enrich and deepen their respective inquiries. Such dialogues can also serve as catalysts for cross-pollination and mutual inspiration, sparking creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

Lastly, our findings point to the necessity of reflexivity and self-critique in posthumanist pursuits. Given the inherent ambiguity and contestation surrounding posthumanist concepts and practices, it is vital to maintain a critical stance toward one's own assumptions and investments, questioning the grounds and goals of one's commitments. This requires not only intellectual rigor and curiosity, but also emotional maturity and vulnerability, as we grapple with the existential stakes and affects imbricated in posthumanist projects.

In sum, our research underscores the relevance and urgency of posthumanist investigations, while also acknowledging their challenges and contradictions. By foregrounding the interplay of technological, cultural, and political factors in shaping posthumanist trajectories, we hope to inspire further conversation and collaboration across disciplinary and sectorial borders, as we collectively navigate the complex terrain of posthumanism and its implications for our shared future.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, our investigation into the implications of posthumanism for our understanding of the human condition has yielded fascinating insights into the shifting

landscapes of embodiment, agency, ethics, and politics. Through a mixed-methods approach combining archival research, expert interviews, and large-scale survey data, we have illuminated the multidimensional nature of posthumanism as a cultural, intellectual, and political force. Our findings highlight the potential of posthumanism to foster innovative solutions to pressing social, economic, and environmental problems, while also cautioning against oversimplifying or romanticizing its promises.

Specifically, our research indicates that posthumanism challenges traditional notions of the self as bounded, autonomous, and separate from the external world, encouraging us instead to view the self as embedded in complex networks of relations, enmeshed with other entities and systems, both human and nonhuman. Emerging technologies play a crucial role in mediating and facilitating posthumanist transformations, yet they also require careful consideration of their distributional effects, governance mechanisms, and safety protocols. Meanwhile, posthumanist sensibilities appear to be gaining traction among broader segments of the population, indicating the potential for grassroots mobilization and participatory engagement. Interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue emerge as key drivers of posthumanist innovation and creativity, while reflexivity and self-critique remain indispensable tools for avoiding dogmatism and complacency.

As we chart the course of posthumanism in the decades ahead, let us remember that its success hinges not solely on grand visions or bold gestures, but rather on the accumulation of small victories and incremental gains. Let us cherish the moments of connection, discovery, and growth that arise from encounters with otherness and alterity, and let us nurture the seeds of compassion, solidarity, and justice that lie dormant within us all. Only through such acts of courage, imagination, and humility can we truly realize the emancipatory potential of posthumanism and secure a flourishing future for all sentient beings.

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**Gender Identity and Economy in the light of
Connell's Theory of Masculinity**

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Introduction:

Gender Identity is crucial for the uniformity in the society. Sex and gender which are different are intermingled by the conventions society designed. One's sex is different from one's gender. However, the society defined humans on the basis of that and assigned gender identity and roles. For understanding the gender identity it is important to refer to the Engels description of the creation of the family, private property and the state. After the inventions of the tools and indulgence of males in the economic activities, humans started to accumulate wealth. The State provided facilities and protection in lieu of the taxes. On the basis of tax payment and ownership of property, State divided the society in to the Classes. The classes received different treatment and privileges were kept for elite class. Lower class was discriminated and did not enjoy equal rights. The role of economy is crucial in the defining of Gender Identities. The role of production and reproduction had over the centuries defined roles which on the basis of an individual's sex were assigned.

Humans assigned tasks on the basis of their physical strength. Male were assigned the task of hunting and fishing on the other hand female were assigned with the task of child rearing and domestic duties. Differences in the physiology made men and women perform different tasks which required physical strength. The society evolved, so did the economic activities. Male engaged in the cultivation of land, production of goods and services. Males started to accumulate property and affirmed their dominating position in the family. Female were considered delicate and were confined to household chores. As females did not own property and depended on males, their position in the family reduced.

Later, in the eighteenth century, feminine gender started the struggle for the acknowledgement of their gender as equal to the masculine. They demanded for the equal rights in the process of production. Gender disparity in the Eighteenth to Twentieth century was the result of unwillingness among men to share the privileges with women. The females were subjugated because they did not have financial stability and therefore were dependent on male. In Twenty first Century, the roles are changing and it is important to understand the influence of one's financial stability to that. Female acquired knowledge and skill according to the trends and overcame financial disparity which helped them in redefining their identities and roles in the family and eventually in the society.

Since the childhood, humans are trained to ensure that they embraced their gender roles without any conflict. Gender formation starts at a young age when the child observes their and connect with the parent of the same gender. The behaviour parents showed towards each other and the way family members treated each other on the basis of their genders impact the

understanding of gender and the child generalize it assuming it to be their gender identity. The family, social environment and psychology play an important part in understanding of the gender roles and identities. These factors influence the behaviour of an individual and train them to perform the identities according to the expectations of the society.

Simone de Beauvoir in her *The Sex Second*, has compared the sexuality of different species and concluded that only human males declare their superiority and define female ability to reproduce as their inferiority. The male defined women as *Other* in order to discriminate and enjoy the prerogatives. Difference in the sex and gender makes it apparent that sex is physiological but gender is social formation. The purpose was to assign tasks domestic or economic on the basis of it. It created an order, a hierarchy, and a masculine hegemony which suppressed women. The gender was meaningless until economic domination came into scene and servitude was expected from the gender of inferior economic status.

In the Eighteenth Centuries, the normative gender identities were deeply rooted and female found it difficult to challenge. These identities are the result of the traits society assigned to the individual on the basis of their sex. Gender Identity can be defined as an order in the society, redefining them is difficult because of the masculine hegemony and the order is set to support and favour masculinity. The equality and end of the gender disparity can be achieved by reassigning the gender roles. The superior status male enjoy and the way masculinity is built in a child since childhood result to the disparity. The consideration of one's sex as the basis of gender assignment by the society has negative effect on the individuality and the participation in the family, society, economy and the politics. The financial independence and power play a crucial role in the empowerment of the weaker gender. Masculine gender's perspective and understanding of the other gender also affects the gender dynamics. These aspects have been discussed by Connells in his work *Masculinities*. His theory is helpful in understanding the connection of the factors which led to the individual understanding and expression of self and this performance's acceptance by the society.

Connell's Theory of Masculinity:

Connell has conducted research on group of men and on the basis of that defined different social, political, psychological and economic factors which together led to the creation of masculinity. A child understands them as culinity on the basis of observations and instructions that they received since childhood. Environment like family and school, the impact of father's behaviour mould them into being they become as an adult. Family, Society and the forces governing society together impact the psychology of every individual with defined set of rules. Males in family observe their parents and domination of male figure which make him believe in the male authority. The child learns to treat equally or unequally at home. Later at school or social instructions a boy learns aggressiveness, violence and bullying to be acceptable trait of masculine gender s it is important that they grow in a safe and healthy environment. Male need to learn gender individuality as it is a performance of self and each person has qualities different from one another. Heterosexual male consider females and homosexual male as enemy, a threat and does not give equal status to them. Females and Homosexuals are treated in a partial manner

are deprived of privileges that men enjoy. In politics and Economy, men hold higher position in hierarchy, to ensure domination. The small group of men who govern hegemony share few prerogatives with men of lower section over women to ensure collaboration in maintaining this system of hierarchy.

Connell in his essay talked about how the women are excluded because they are denied access to the knowledge and skills which are essential for the participation in politics. The women do not have enough resources which would help them in breaking these barriers and gain power. Politics is crucial for the citizen of any state and everyone deserves equal presentation. Masculine gender denied presentation of feminine gender in the politics so that they could govern the state as per their wish.

Politics-as-usual is men's politics. Women's attempts to gain a share of power have revealed a defence in depth operated by the men behind the barricades: from legal exclusion, through formal Masculinity Politics recruitment rules that require experience, qualifications or 'merit' that are harder for women to gain, to a rich variety of informal biases and assumptions that work in favour of men. Behind these barriers to entry, at the upper reaches of power and only dimly visible from outside, are the self-reproducing strategies of power-holding elites. They include traffic in money and influence, the selection of successors, the mentoring of aides and allies, insistently selecting men for power. (Connell 205-206).

Connell was right about it as women by revolting against the atrocities succeeded in gaining access to politics. Women have participation in World Politics. The female gender demands equal presentation so that women of lower section could avail the benefits of the policies women would support. Female representation in politics ensures their rights and needs would be kept in mind while framing the policies. It also ensures that there will be representatives to protest against the discrimination.

Globalization and World Market:

In order to create new market and avail workforce, nations started cross national business. The interaction between nations resulted in new work opportunities. However, it is important to understand that globalization and world market are controlled by male who hold important position in world politics and economy. The rules which govern are designed to ensure prerogatives for men. It is important to understand the economically sound countries use workforce of undeveloped nations as it is easy to subjugate and suppress men and women. Globalization has given opportunities to female to know about the feminism and their rights.

The world gender order can be defined as the structure of relationships that interconnect the gender regimes of institutions, and the gender orders of local societies, on a world scale. This gender order is an aspect of a larger reality, global society. Current discussions of 'globalization', especially in the media of the rich countries, picture an all-conquering wave sweeping across the world. Driven by new

technologies, this wave of change produces vast unfettered global markets, world music, global advertising and world news in which all participate on equal terms. In reality, however, the global economy is highly unequal, and the degree of economic and cultural homogenization is often exaggerated (Hirst and Thompson 1996, Bauman 1998). (Connell xxii)

Connell talked about the transnational relations and how the interaction impacts the culture and the gender identity. The equal work opportunities and presentation for all the genders are important in the studies of gender identity. For gender justice, equal wages and protection from molestation at workplace is important. Masculine hegemony prevalent in the society needs to share privileges with other gender.

Female Identity as a Work force:

Feminist movement aimed at ending the discrimination and obtaining rights to make the decisions of their life. Women struggled for the voting rights and employment. They succeeded in achieving both. However, women were employed basically for hardworking jobs. They were exploited and paid less than their male colleagues. Females are molested at the workplace too in a few cases. They endure this because of their financial problems. They used to be employed for menial jobs claiming they are physically and intellectually inferior to men. They accept contribution of women to household but deny equality in work so that men could hold power and control.

Twenty First Century with the advanced technology has created job opportunities which gave chances to women for participation and professional growth. It was difficult for women to climb up incorporate political hierarchy but with her intelligence and skills she has created job opportunities. Women are appointed at management levels because of their economic and financial knowledge. Education gave them access to knowledge required for their professional growth. Globalization provided exposure which enabled them to understand global trends and they contributed in economy as a leader not server.

Women have come a long way from workers to leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators. As females contribute to the economic gains of males, they are given privileges and equal opportunities. The domination of men in Corporation, Industries and Politics is challenged by women and proved that the centuries old conventions regarding. Genders are influenced by economic status of individuals. It cannot be denied that different sections of society have different ideologies but the feminine gender of all the classes are thriving and making their presence known in the world economy. As women are hardworking and creative contributing to the progress of the firms they associate with.

Gender Identity, Hegemony and Hierarchy:

Humans lived in communities and with pairing and progeny the concept of family came into being. Engels in his essay *The Origin of Family, Private Property and State* talked about the female domination of women in the family as she looked after the family and contributed to the family. However, when men started cultivating land and producing the goods, it led to the

beginning of economic activities and money. Masculine involvement in economic activities led to their hegemony.

Masculine hegemony created a system of norms and conventions which supported their domination. To ensure the control over the property and inheritance by the male progeny, society became patrilineal. Women were supposed to accept the rules of the In-Law's house and adjust according to it. For centuries women contributed only to household. They were confined to the house and were not allowed to interact with any men other than the spouse. Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* emphasized on how monogamy compelled women to be loyal on the contrary men were not punished for heterosexism. Females were deprived of equality in the household and their status could be compared with the slaves. When men humiliated and ill-treated females or lack of masculine figure to look after, female protested and claimed their equal rights to education which provided them skills which helped them in gaining employment.

After the Industrial Revolution, women were at the bottom of the hierarchy and had to face exploitation and molestation. They were paid less and had to suffer a lot. The advancement of technology helped the women in acquiring knowledge and skills which helped them in gaining higher position in the hierarchy.

To generalize this approach requires an understanding of the globalization of gender. Most theories of globalization have little or nothing to say about gender. But Sklair's (1995) concept of 'transnational practices' gives an indication of how the problem can be approached. As Smith (1998) argues in relation to international politics, the key is to shift our focus from individual-level gender differences to 'the patterns of socially constructed gender relations'. If we recognize that very large-scale institutions such as the state and corporations are gendered, and that international relations, international trade and global markets are inherently an arena of gender politics, then we can recognize the existence of a world gender order (Connell 2002). (Connell xxi)

Conclusion:

Gender Identity in political, economic and social spheres is redefined as female gender is no more subjugated. Twenty first century is the age of technology and artificial intelligence. Humans are not dependent merely on hard jobs which require physical strength. Females have contributed to the society, economic and politics with the help of their skills and knowledge. Females have gained power and privileges with the money they have earned. Females are employed in the corporates, they are securing participation in the politics and they are holding influential positions in the society.

As the women have started to find their place in the hierarchy and have power and control to bring changes they have contributed a lot to help the women of the lower section. The way masculine hegemony had shared power with the men of other sections of the society and gained control over women and men of lower status, now women are supporting women to overcome the subjugation they have been facing for centuries. Their power makes them able to

redefine and remodel the traditional gender identities and roles. They have contributed in the changes brought to social conventions so that women could have the liberty to perform their identities as it allows them on the basis of their financial condition and social influence. The women are able to create an independent identity which is defined on the basis of their contribution to the politics and economy which gives them prestige in the society and enables them to create a room for themselves. They are not dependent on anyone. These women cordially share a bond with men and both benefits from the economic and political agreements. The society now emphasizes on the gender justice and the rules are made to safeguard women and other genders. The society inculcates acceptance in heterosexual males towards homosexuals and transgender. The atrocities faced by feminine and transgender could not be denied but the society has legally ensured their safety.

Educating young humans regarding the gender and deviations from the stereotypical performances is important and this is helping in the inclusion of the transgender in the society, economic and politics. The various gender identities and roles are accepted. An individual is not scared of punitive consequences. This is possible in the class of the society where female and transgender are represented equally and are financially independent. The male who has received proper counseling and observed respectful behavior towards women and transgender ensure to repeat the same behaviour. The female and transgender get representation in the hierarchy because of their contribution and heterosexual male is accepting the domination as the focus is shifting towards the skills. The male are taught to be comfortable and secure about their identity and to not be threatened by the privileges that they have to share with other genders.

Connell in *Masculinities* has laid emphasis on the fact that globalization has impacted the gender identity. Transnational politics and Global market impact the economy of a nation and the local culture which impact the conventions and norms defining the gender identity. The policies made by international organization bring uniformity across the culture of different nations. Feminine gender has redefined its identity and supported the females of the unprivileged section to help the mover come subjugation. This is possible because women claimed their role in politics by earning right to vote and then sending their representatives who fought for their rights. Feminine gender got employed and with the starting of new industries, they overcame the challenge of lack of physical strength. The industries based on knowledge and skills provided them job and entrepreneurial opportunities. Therefore it is undeniable that economic independence has played a significant role in the liberation of the females and transgender.

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The Impact of Technology and Social Media in the Present Times

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Abstract:

This paper seeks to examine how technology and social media altered the Society as a whole. Ever since the advent of science and technology, the life has become significantly easier for all sections of society, particularly in accessing essential commodities. The acquisition of knowledge has also remarkably convenient from tertiary education to higher academic pursuits because of advancements in technology and the widespread use of social media. The paper is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on technology and its pivotal role in changing people's life in varied contexts, and its impactful in discharging one's life very efficiently in the 21st century. The second section explores how social media engages people of all age groups in their day-to-day lives by offering easy access to information, and entertainment. It also analyses how modern individuals actively use social media platforms both in personal and professional lives. Finally it testifies its justifications and conclusive remarks in the paper.

Key words: Science and Technology, Commodities, tertiary education.

Technology:

Science & Technology plays a vital role in transforming day to day life in the contemporary times in everybody's life. Life is unthinkable without them just like essential commodities such as electricity, Gas and other necessities. Ever since it has come into existence, the life has become very easy in every walk of life. It is proved in every field very rapidly one way or other. Comparing the past, the present life is more comfortable in terms of acquiring knowledge, accessing to other important works very comfortably. Technology enables all living beings to go about their lives with ease and felicity. Particularly, learning has become very easy, accessing various books in online widely apart from core subjects. Before making certain testifying elements: how does technology transform the human life? How useful is Technology for all sorts of people?

In present times, works will be done in a minute through technology. For example in the past, the money transactions required us to visit the bank on specific day to send funds to our kith and kin. This process would take a considerable amount of time. However, such transactions now take place in a faster space from nook and corner of the world. Technology also helps enhance the accountability of all accounts in every field, and it made the accounts more transparency in the process of our daily life. However, it also has its disadvantages like online fraud and other cyber security issues.

Technology also contributes increasing the life expectancy by facilitating scientific advancements in the treatment of unexpected diseases like Parkinsons, dementia and all that. For example, traditional-movement related problems caused by Parkinson disease can potentially even accelerate an early death in old age people. But due to technology the condition is more manageable and life expectancy has increased with the discovery of new medicines. Unexpected brain related problems are also rectified with the support of the ultrasound to pinpoint the right part of the brain to tackle the symptom of apathy in people with the neurological disease of Parkinson.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, the science and technology played a crucial role in improving lives across the world. The rapid development of vaccines and medicines along with wide spread awareness through YouTube videos, twitter and short news updates and other sources, helped save the millions of people's lives effectively. The usage of technology also spread from urban to villages rapidly. Every house in the village has access to an internet connection and Jio tv connection. People in rural areas are staying updated on political news and current events in society through advanced technology. As a result of technical advancement, people greatly purchase clothing and electronics and daily essentials through e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart and Meesho many more. It indeed is proved that things are becoming smoother in daily life.

The role of Social media:

The present-day preoccupation with social media across the globe endorses their pivotal importance and relevance in human society. "Social media are interactive technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and aggregation of content (such as ideas, interests, and other forms of expression) amongst virtual communities and networks." (Wikipedia Web)

Social media are omnipresent digital highways that are never without traffic, providing ever increasing bytes of information to users regardless of age, from very young children to senior citizens. The information social media appropriates and dispenses significantly impacts every aspect of human society and learning. I ask you to consider if we are abdicating every aspect of human and learning to social media? Are we mistaking its omnipresence for omniscience? Is human society making social media omnipotent by its constant demand and dependence? I argue we need to think deeply about social media and its impact on human society and learning in the digital era.

Social media platforms such as X (formerly) Twitter, Face book, Instagram and WhatsApp and You-tube have become critical and decisive societal institutions. Views, updates, conversations, and daily routines are posted by people at all levels of society, from the ordinary to the celebrity, and assimilated not only at face value, but often taken as the very gospel truth. This omnipotent, omnipresent and fast-paced source of information is mined on a daily basis for nuggets of gold, and everything else under the sun, aided by increasingly powerful search engines. The very nature of dissemination and accessibility of social media has democratized knowledge, news and information beyond the pre-digital era social media gated communities of the 'educated' or 'privileged'. It has also become the focal point for any form of disaster

management, and large-scale information dissemination in times of crisis and even as a tool that can be used against disinformation or for spreading useful and crucial information.

Beyond the aforementioned social conversations, social media has impacted the student community (and learners of all ages) in a significant manner with easy access to learning material from across the globe. They share the classroom lecture notes and recorded lectures through these platforms. Learning has become very handy for students in the era of digital times. Furthermore, they express their emotions, happiness and joys and celebrations are being shared and accessed. B. Tech students particularly in engineering colleges are making use of it for their studies in a very constructive manner. Students belonging to rural areas also are able to learn with ease and felicity through these tools. Classroom lectures also are being browsed in Google to enhance understanding and make learning easier and very effective. Students of all classes, including those in second and third grades, use online dictionaries to acquire the correct pronunciation and its meaning. Students across disciplines today keep abreast of their knowledge about everything around them through social media. Students in the second decade of the 21st century are moving away from conventional learning methods, which often take time to help them fully assimilate concepts. It is widely believed that learning through social media is much faster and more productive than the traditional classroom. But, in my opinion, this is wide open to debate and penetration of digital media in rural areas.

Numerous research studies have emphasized that the 21st-century media is more complex than the traditional mode of learning. Modern social movements have greatly relied on print media writ large for documentation and publicity. In a pre-social media era, scholars examined the critical role that the “news” played in such displays, by documenting, sometimes legitimizing, and potentially galvanizing, social movements (Chomsky, 2002; Gitlin, 1980). People have increasingly moved away from print to digital media evinced by the larger digital footprint of newspapers, magazines, and eBooks. “Social media,” according to Dhiraj Murthy, “is mainly conceived of as a medium wherein ‘ordinary’ people in ordinary social networks (as opposed to professional journalists) can publish user-generated ‘news’/‘updates’ (in a broadly defined sense)” (Murthy, 2013, p. 8).

Recently, scholars and the common man have evinced serious reservations on the ostensible domination of social media and its thoughtless adoption versus the traditional ways of learning and communication, particularly in the digital era, and in every walk of life. In this context, it is relevant to recall Jonathan Swift’s *The Battle of the Books* that sparked heated discussions about classical and contemporary learning at Saint James’s Library in London. This book offers explicit discussions of the importance of ancient learning which paved the way for exploring realistic aspects of the world for readers and learners. However, while modern learning via digital social media might seem easy and simple, it is very often superficial, reduces the attention span of the learner, and provides shallow and instant gratification. In contrast, learning not based on social media digital resources leaves a lasting, profound impact on students. Great writers like Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richards, and Jonathan Swift also became iconic neoclassical writers by reading classical literature deeply. In a similar vein, social media provides easy access to knowledge for a short period of time, but conventional learning provides a stronger foundation for exploring the world in a meaningful way. It reduces the value of social relationships and

makes humans shy away from robust relationships and become vulnerable to isolation and depression. Therefore, where social media are replacing human contact and social interaction there is no recipe for health or wellbeing. People would rather track social media on their devices rather than talk to each other on a one-to-one basis; it does seem to be changing the very basis of human social interaction as we know it.

As far as young people are concerned; they primarily use it for entertainment rather than self-improvement. Consequently, this leads to health hazards. People of all ages, especially when travelling on trains or buses, are often obsessed with smart phones, spending their time watching You-tube memes and uploading their latest performance in both public and private affairs. Some people individuals do not hesitate to post intimate moments from their private lives in order to gain more followers on social media. Over time, they become popular figures on these platforms, and they earn money based on the number of viewers. Ultimately, the excessive usage of social media disrupts creativity and the natural daily flow of life. In some circumstances, watching unnatural videos can dangerously escalate young people's involvement in illegal activities and sexual scandals in society.

Celebrities and politicians seem to live in a world tailor made via social media. So, every minute update, especially the political and cinematic, garner high visibility on the daily, festive and work fronts. Politicians and bureaucrats deliberately articulate the progress of the government, its welfare schemes, orders, and personal milestones to garner eyeballs and as measure of success via social media.

Conclusion:

The omnipresent and omnipotent power of Technology and social media has led the people in spending hours of their precious time 'browsing' on transient material. True creativity should not be bogged down in the name of pursuing social media. In-depth learning from a wide range of materials over time has played a crucial role in the evolution and civilizational progress of humanity. Therefore, one should avoid the shortcut of acquiring knowledge through social media. Nothing is compared to human teachings, which provide a series of values and ethics in the process of their lives, helping all humans to strive for perfection in the society. Human society is definitely making social media omnipotent by its constant demand and dependence; the inception of Artificial Intelligence only increases the risks to human society as we know it. Social media is only a tool, a means to an end, it is not the prize of life itself.

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Pandemics in History, Psychology, and Media: A Literary and Filmic Analysis.

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Abstract:

This paper examines the representation of pandemics in literature and film, with a focus on historical depictions and their psychological impact. By exploring works such as "The End of October" by Lawrence Wright (2020), "Virus" by Aashiq Abu, Malayalam film, released in 2019, the study investigates how these narratives reflect societal and emotional responses to pandemics, their psychological crisis. The analysis also includes the impact of pandemics on prominent figures like William Shakespeare, whose work was influenced by plague outbreaks in Elizabethan England, as seen in plays such as "Romeo and Juliet," where the plague disrupts crucial plot developments. This interdisciplinary approach highlights recurring themes of resilience through fears, and societal transformation, offering insights into how storytelling in literature and film shapes public understanding and emotional responses to global health crises, including their Psychological distress. The study underscores the enduring relevance of these narratives in exploring the human experience during pandemics.

Keywords: Emotional Responses, Historical depiction, Literature, Media, Pandemic, Psychological Impact, Resilience

Introduction:

Pandemics in History, Psychology, and Media: A Literary and Filmic Analysis:

"Plagues are as certain as death and taxes," wrote Lawrence Wright in his novel "The End of October," underscoring the inevitability and recurrent nature of pandemics throughout history. From the ancient Plague of Athens to the global upheaval caused by COVID-19, pandemics have repeatedly tested the resilience and adaptability of societies. Their impact extends beyond the immediate health crisis, influencing culture, economy, and the collective psyche. This paper explores the representation of pandemics in literature and film, focusing on historical depictions and their psychological impact.

By examining works such as Wright's "The End of October" and Aashiq Abu's Malayalam film "Virus," this study investigates how these narratives reflect societal and emotional responses to pandemics. These stories offer a window into the collective anxiety, resilience, and transformation experienced during health crises. The analysis also considers the impact of pandemics on prominent historical figures, such as William Shakespeare.

The plague outbreaks in Elizabethan England significantly influenced his work, with plays like "Romeo and Juliet" incorporating the plague as a critical plot element that disrupts key developments. This interdisciplinary approach highlights recurring themes of resilience amid

fear and societal transformation, offering insights into how storytelling in literature and film shapes public understanding and emotional responses to global health crises.

By examining the portrayal of pandemics in both literature and film, this paper aims to elucidate the enduring relevance of these narratives in exploring the human experience during pandemics. Through this exploration, the study underscores the significant role of art in navigating and making sense of the complex psychological and societal impacts of pandemics, contributing to a broader understanding of the intersection between health, psychology, and media.

Early Literature: Ancient Texts and the Plague of Athens

Pandemics have been chronicled in literature since ancient times, offering insight into early human experiences and responses to widespread disease. One of the earliest detailed accounts is found in Thucydides' "History of the Peloponnesian War," where he describes the Plague of Athens (430-426 BCE). Thucydides' narrative provides a vivid portrayal of the physical and social devastation caused by the plague. He documents the symptoms of the disease, the rapid spread, and the overwhelming impact on Athenian society, noting the breakdown of social order and the erosion of traditional values. His account highlights not only the biological aspects of the pandemic but also the psychological and societal consequences, making it a foundational text in the literary depiction of pandemics. Shakespearean Era: The Influence of the Plague on William Shakespeare's Works. The plague outbreaks in Elizabethan England had a profound influence on the work of

William Shakespeare. The frequent closures of London theaters due to plague epidemics forced Shakespeare to adapt his writing and performance schedules. The impact of the plague is evident in several of his plays, most notably in "Romeo and Juliet." In this play, the plague serves as a critical plot device: the messenger carrying Friar Lawrence's letter to Romeo is quarantined due to a suspected outbreak, leading to a tragic miscommunication that culminates in the deaths of the titular characters. This use of the plague as a plot mechanism underscores the pervasive fear and disruption caused by pandemics in Shakespeare's time. Additionally, references to the plague appear in other works, such as "Hamlet" and "Macbeth," reflecting the omnipresent threat of disease and its influence on Elizabethan society and culture.

In modern literature, the depiction of pandemics has evolved to reflect contemporary concerns and scientific advancements. Lawrence Wright's novel "The End of October" (2020) is a recent example that offers a comprehensive portrayal of a global pandemic. The novel follows Dr. Henry Parsons, an infectious disease specialist, as he navigates the challenges of containing a deadly virus that rapidly spreads across the globe. Wright's narrative is informed by extensive research into virology, epidemiology, and public health, providing a realistic and detailed depiction of a pandemic's progression and impact. The novel explores themes of scientific uncertainty, governmental response, and societal collapse, drawing parallels to real-world pandemics such as COVID-19. Through its detailed and realistic portrayal, "The End of October" offers readers a nuanced understanding of the complexities and challenges of managing a global health crisis.

By examining these historical and contemporary literary depictions, we can see how the representation of pandemics in literature has evolved over time, reflecting changes in societal values, scientific understanding, and psychological responses. From the ancient accounts of Thucydides to the modern narratives of Lawrence Wright, literature continues to serve as a vital medium for exploring the multifaceted impacts of pandemics on human societies.

Psychological Impact of Pandemics in Literature, Emotional Responses: Capturing Emotional Turmoil during Pandemics

Literature vividly expresses the emotional turmoil of pandemics, delving into the fear, anxiety, and grief they evoke. In Thucydides' account of the Plague of Athens, the emotional devastation is palpable, highlighting the intense psychological impact on the population. Similarly, in Lawrence Wright's "The End of October," the protagonist Dr. Henry Parsons experiences a range of emotions, from professional detachment to profound fear and personal grief, mirroring real-life psychological impacts seen during contemporary health crises like COVID-19.

Character Analysis: Psychological Struggles in Key Characters:

The psychological struggles of characters in pandemic literature provide deeper insights into individual experiences during crises. In "Romeo and Juliet," the psychological impact of the plague is indirectly portrayed through the tragic quarantine of Friar John, leading to fatal misunderstandings and reflecting broader societal fear and uncertainty. In "The End of October," Dr. Parsons' psychological journey is central to the narrative, as he navigates professional responsibilities and personal fears, highlighting the emotional toll on healthcare workers during pandemics.

Societal Impact: Reflecting Collective Psychological Experience:

Literature also reflects collective psychological experiences during pandemics. Thucydides' account not only describes individual suffering but also societal collapse, illustrating collective despair and moral decay. In Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," the quarantine reflects societal measures to control disease spread, and the resulting tragedies highlight the far-reaching psychological consequences. Wright's "The End of October" depicts global responses to the pandemic, including governmental actions, societal panic, and social order collapse, capturing the collective psychological turmoil of a global health crisis. By examining the psychological impact of pandemics in literature, we gain insight into both individual and collective emotional experiences. These narratives document the historical and emotional realities of pandemics, offering valuable perspectives on the resilience and vulnerability of the human psyche.

Historical Films: Older Depictions of Pandemics:

Historically, films have depicted pandemics to reflect societal fears and fascinations with disease outbreaks. Classics like "The Seventh Seal" (1957) by Ingmar Bergman use the Black Death as a backdrop to explore themes of mortality and existential dread. Similarly, "Panic in the Streets" (1950), directed by Elia Kazan, follows a public health official trying to prevent a

pneumonic plague outbreak in New Orleans, highlighting the tension and urgency associated with containing an epidemic.

Contemporary Films: Analysis of “Virus” by Aashiq Abu, “Virus” (2019), directed by Aashiq Abu, is a contemporary Malayalam film that offers a detailed portrayal of a real-life outbreak—the Nipah virus in Kerala, India. The film’s narrative is structured around multiple perspectives, including doctors, patients, government officials, and the general public. This multi-narrative approach explores various facets of a pandemic, from medical and administrative challenges to personal and emotional struggles. Thematically, “Virus” emphasizes resilience, community solidarity, and the heroism of healthcare workers. It delves into the psychological impact on both victims and responders, portraying fear, grief, and determination. The film’s realistic depiction, enhanced by its basis on actual events, lends authenticity and emotional weight to the story.

Comparison with Literature: Similarities and Differences Both film and literature offer rich narratives on pandemics but use different techniques. Literature often delves deeper into characters’ internal thoughts and emotions, providing an intimate exploration of psychological impacts. For example, Thucydides’ account of the Plague of Athens and the internal struggles of characters in Lawrence Wright’s “The End of October” offer profound insights into emotional responses. In contrast, films like “Virus” use visual and auditory elements to convey the urgency and chaos of pandemics. The visual medium allows for depicting large-scale societal reactions and the immediacy of crisis situations. “Virus” uses cinematography, sound design, and ensemble casting to create a palpable sense of tension and urgency. Despite these differences, both mediums share common themes such as resilience, fear, and societal transformation. They reflect the universal human experience during pandemics, highlighting individual psychological struggles and collective societal responses.

Through their unique storytelling techniques, literature and film together enrich our understanding of the multifaceted impacts of pandemics. Both literature and film frequently explore themes of resilience, fear, and societal transformation during pandemics. In literature, resilience is depicted through characters who endure and adapt, as seen in Wright’s “The End of October” and Thucydides’ account of the Plague of Athens. Fear is a central theme, illustrated by the pervasive anxiety and uncertainty that character’s experience. Societal transformation is depicted through the breakdown of social norms and the reformation of communities, as seen in Shakespeare’s works and modern pandemic narratives. Narrative Techniques: Literature uses detailed character development and internal monologues to delve deeply into the psychological impacts of pandemics. Thucydides’ vivid descriptions and Shakespeare’s use of the plague as a plot device in “Romeo and Juliet” highlight the emotional and societal turmoil. In “The End of October,” Wright employs a realistic, research-based narrative to convey the scientific and personal aspects of a pandemic. Film, on the other hand, utilizes visual and auditory elements to create an immediate and visceral experience. In “Virus,” the use of multiple perspectives, realistic settings, and sound design effectively convey the chaos and emotional weight of the

outbreak. These techniques immerse the audience in the experience, making the themes more palpable.

Impact on Public Understanding:

These recurring themes and narrative techniques significantly shape public understanding of pandemics. By highlighting resilience, these narratives offer hope and emphasize the human capacity to overcome crises. The depiction of fear fosters empathy and awareness of the psychological toll of pandemics. Societal transformation narratives encourage reflection on the changes necessary to improve public health responses. Together, literature and film provide a comprehensive view of the human experience during pandemics, influencing public perception and understanding.

Conclusion:

This paper explored the depiction of pandemics in literature and film, focusing on their historical and psychological impacts. We examined how early texts, such as Thucydides' account of the Plague of Athens and Shakespeare's works, portray the emotional and societal consequences of pandemics. Contemporary narratives, like Lawrence Wright's "The End of October" and Aashiq Abu's "Virus," offer modern perspectives on these crises, using realistic portrayals and multi narrative approaches to reflect current experiences.

Key themes of resilience, fear, and societal transformation emerged consistently across both mediums. Literature often delves into the internal struggles of individuals, while film uses visual and auditory techniques to convey the urgency and chaos of pandemics. These narratives help shape public understanding by highlighting human resilience and the psychological toll of pandemics, encouraging empathy and reflection on societal responses. The implications of these findings underscore the importance of storytelling in shaping perceptions of pandemics. Literature and film not only document the historical and emotional realities of pandemics but also influence public attitudes and preparedness. Future research could explore how emerging media formats, such as digital storytelling and interactive experiences, impact our understanding of pandemics. Additionally, comparing pandemic narratives across different cultures and time periods could provide further insights into universal and culturally specific themes in pandemic storytelling. By expanding this research, we can gain a deeper understanding of how different narratives contribute to our collective response to global health crises.

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A Posthumanist Reading of “The Machine Stops” by E.M. Forster

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“We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism”

- Ihab Hassan

Abstract:

This paper attempts to apply the theory of posthumanism on E. M. Forster’s story ‘The Machine Stops.’ Posthumanism emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century. The term was coined by Ihab Hassan in an article entitled “Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?” It essentially examines how humans are inseparably connected with machines and other non-human species that typically undermine humanist anthropocentrism. In the story, E. M. Forster creates a dystopian, “posthuman” world where technology has advanced so much that it has altered and re-defined the ontological condition of humans. As the character Kuno in the story says, “You talk as if a god had made the Machine” “I believe you pray to it when you are unhappy. Men made it, do not forget that” “The Machine is much, but it is not everything.” The “Machine” has an all pervasive, omnipotent presence throughout the story but it ends on a rather apocalyptic note that is suggestive of Forster’s cynicism towards technology.

Keywords: Posthumanism, transhuman, humanism, anthropocentrism, technology, AI.

E. M. Forster’s 1909 short story “The Machine Stops” presents a dystopian world with an altered ontological understanding of humans. The story is futuristic where humans are totally reliant and subservient to an entity named The Machine. The story can be viewed through a posthumanist lens, which challenges notions of human supremacy and control due to technological evolution. This paper aims to analyse how E. M. Forster’s story predicts the fate of a society that is too dependent on technology. The paper also investigates how the line between human, non-human and technology is blurred in modern/postmodern era.

The term “posthumanism” was coined by the postmodern theorist Ihab Hassan in 1977 in an article entitled “Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?” In his essay, Ihab Hassan uses the mythological figure of Prometheus to discuss the beginning of a posthumanist era. Some understanding of Prometheus’s myth is imperative to comprehend Hassan’s theory and his perspective.

There are many versions of the myth of Prometheus, among which the most popular is Prometheus Bound by Aeschylus. Aeschylus’s version goes as follows: Zeus defeats the older generation of the Titans and banishes them (including his father Kronos) to the Tartarus (lowest part of the underworld). A few Titans like Prometheus, Epimetheus etc. were spared by Zeus because they had helped him defeat Kronos. Soon Zeus became a tyrant and decided to wipe out

the entire human race. Prometheus took pity on the humans and provided them with some skills/powers to defend against Zeus. Prometheus stole fire from the heaven, gave them wisdom and taught them all kinds of knowledge from mathematics, poetry to prophecy etc. Soon, however, Zeus found out Prometheus's treachery and punished him severely. Prometheus was chained to a rock, where a vulture would eat his liver. This torture was to be repeated every night as the liver would regenerate and it lasted until, many centuries later Hercules came to free Prometheus from the punishment(Ranisch and Sorgner).

Hesiod's version which precedes Aeschylus also tells how Zeus sent Pandora to the earth to punish mankind. She carried the famous box that spread evil, misery, and disaster over humanity(Ranisch and Sorgner).

Plato also discusses the myth of Prometheus in his Protagoras, where he is a part of the creation story. Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus are assigned with the task of giving all living forms their defining attributes(Ranisch and Sorgner). Epimetheus, however, used up all his powers on animals and had none to give the humans(Ranisch and Sorgner).

"the human race was naked, unshod, unbedded, and unarmed" (Ranisch and Sorgner).

Thus, Prometheus redresses the problem by giving humans fire, knowledge, and other ennobling arts which he stole from the gods. However, Plato's story does not mention Pandora but just the fact that Prometheus was charged with theft. According to Plato, humans started worshipping the gods, because "they alone among the animals had a share of the divine dispensation"(Ranisch and Sorgner).

It is interesting to note that in all the different version's, the humans are somehow able to transcend and transform themselves because of Prometheus's help. Without the "gifts" humans would be totally defenceless against nature. It is because of these "gifts" that humans were basically able to civilize themselves.

Hassan uses this myth to talk about an emergent, posthumanist culture. He writes:

"We need first to understand that the human form ... may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism" (Ranisch and Sorgner).

Hassan's observation comes at a very critical point in Western metaphysics. The twentieth century witnessed the dissolution of classical humanism, anthropocentrism, and Cartesian dualism. Elaborating on the posthuman condition, Hassan equates it with a sense of ambivalence: "convergences and divergences, conjunctions and disjunctions." (Ranisch and Sorgner).

There is fragmentation and unification at once and according to Hassan, Prometheus reflects this ambiguity perfectly – he is both a thief and a hero, a saviour. It his deviousness that

created the human being and humans were transformed into a smarter, better, and more civilized beings(Ranisch and Sorgner).

Thus, Prometheus blurs the boundaries between the humans and non-humans (divine). Similarly, contemporary culture too blurs boundaries – there is creative imagination in science (space travel) and art includes technology for an enhanced output (as in photography, movies using VFX and music). Thus, in contemporary culture the perception of what it is to be human is ever evolving and transforming and so there is now a necessity to re-evaluate the concept of “human.”

We have entered the age of cloning (Dolly sheep in 1996), DNA sequencing, organ transplant and cryopreservation etc. thus, Hassan’s essay makes one ponder as to what is it to be human? Are we still the same species (a unified subject and unchanging humanity) that the Enlightenment projected? Hassan’s use of the myth of Prometheus brings our attention to the fact that man and machine have “converged” and created a new definition of “humanism.” Posthumanism thus challenges anthropocentrism headlong.

Sociologist and Philosopher Bruno Latour in his 2008 essay ‘A Cautious Prometheus? A Few Steps towards a Philosophy of Design’ also perceives Prometheus as a trickster (Ranisch and Sorgner).

He is hubristic, clever, rebellious, and a creator – all at once! (Ranisch and Sorgner). Thus, Prometheus fits perfectly as the symbol of the posthuman condition owing to the ambivalence of his actions.

An understanding of posthumanism reveals that it constantly tries to undermine the foundational thought of humanism. Humanism is primarily concerned with only the “humans” – rest becomes the “other.” It is centered on the Cartesian mind-body dualism; the premise that rational thought is the most defining aspect of a human being and that it is the beginning and the end of the “human.” Posthumanism on the other hand, challenges Cartesian dualism and rejects traditional western humanism. Traditional humanism’s basic premise is the supremacy of the human mind – a highly evolved organ that is capable of complex tasks. Social anthropology also suggests the idea that among the different genus of the species Homo, it is the Sapiens that were somehow able to develop a complex brain that ascertained not only their survival but also their supremacy over other beings (Cooper).

In the long history of renaissance beginning from 14th – 15th century CE till the twentieth century – rational thought seems to be privileged over emotions. The human is viewed as an autonomous agent and there is a clear binary between humans and other entities.

The Enlightenment thrived on the idea that “the proper study of mankind is man.” (“An Essay on Man: Epistle II by Alexander Pope | Poetry Foundation”). It promoted the idea of humans as rational, objective, and with a unified sense of agency. Only humans were capable of rationally, and objectively understand the natural world and explain its working.

Interestingly, the postmodern philosopher Jacques Derrida in his 2008 essay ‘The Animal That Therefore I Am’ looks at the idea of a unified human subject as one based on a “fault” and a “lack.” According to Derrida, Epimetheus failed to assign the required attributes to humans and so humans basically “lacked” the qualities that made them distinct from other beings. He also

points to the collapse of the rational thought when his pet cat looks at Derrida's naked body. Derrida says that nudity is inherent in humans. We associate a sense of shame with the naked body and so feel the need to cover it. However, animals are always naked and so there immediately forms a binary of naked vs dressed. The "dressed" is privileged and the "naked" becomes the other. He goes on to question the notion of human as the cat looks at him. Maybe the cat is addressing him and so who are we as humans? Thus, Derrida too deconstructs the idea of the human as a unified subject with rational and objective agency.

Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud are often regarded as precursors of posthumanism. Each of the above theorist splinters the meaning of human in the twentieth century era of evolving technology. Donna Haraway is an important figure in the study of posthumanism. She explores the blurring of lines between the continuum machine-human-animal through her work (Bolter).

According to Donna Haraway, the Cyborg is an important cultural symbol(Bolter). The Cyborg succinctly captures the ambivalence of contemporary humans whose bodies have become open to changes and modifications made by technology (use of cochlear implants, prostheses, drugs, plastic surgery etc. to enhance "lacks.") Thus, the contemporary human is a hybrid – enhanced and made better by science and technology. This awareness of "lack" and its resultant enhancement is omnipresent. The "lack" and enhancement is found in every aspect/sphere of the human life. Even in simple activities like language acquisition, technology has completely changed its perception. Language acquisition can now happen with the help of tech. aids like apps and you tube in the privacy of one's personal space without compromising on one's ego and dignity. Gone are the days when there was a sense of shame and inefficiency due to lack of some knowledge/skill. Technology has thus bridged the gap of knowledge inequality at least in theory.

Thus, in the posthuman era, cyborgs and robots are the subjects. Posthumanism is an umbrella term also associated with later movements like transhumanism and antihumanism – both of which reject the universality of humanism.

In the story *The Machine Stops*, Forster portrays a society where people are isolated and completely under the control of an entity called "The Machine." The Machine is an omnipotent entity and humans in Forster's dystopian world are made to believe that they cannot survive without the presence of The Machine. Thus, it echoes a posthuman society where the lines between man and machine have blurred. In other words, man and machine have "converged."

All people live below the earth and they consider the earth and dirty and disgusting. The story refers to some apocalyptic event that happened centuries ago and since then people have relocated to a subterranean life. The story suggests that there are some humans living on the surface of the earth but they are to be shunned and rejected.

The story is divided into three parts: *The Air-Ship*, *The Mending Apparatus*, and *The Homeless*. Vashti and her son Kuno are the main characters of the story. Vashti and Kuno like all others reside separately within the solitary confinement of a single room where all their individual needs are met with due the omnipotent Machine. It is interesting to note Forster's description of the room in the first part. It is small and hexagonal in shape much like a bee cell.

There are no windows or lamp for light but there is an artificial radiance that fills the room. There is no ventilation, yet the air in the room is fresh. There are no musical instruments, yet the room is filled melodious music. The only furniture in the room is an armchair and a reading desk. All the rooms are similar and so it resembles much like a bee hive.

The story is set centuries after some apocalyptic event – a nuclear fallout or some such thing. Forster only repeatedly alludes to a society that is technologically advanced and dystopian. Vashti herself is described as a “swaddled lump of flesh, five feet.... Face as white as a fungus” (Forster). Every aspect of the human life is controlled by a switch which in turn is controlled by the Machine. There is no interaction between people. The only mode of any contact is through a device much like our smartphones and through pneumatic post (a system used to deliver letters through pressurized air tubes). Vashti can see and hear Kuno and others but it is simulated, something that Kuno despises and is weary of.

Forster presents a futuristic world where there are no continents or countries. The world is divided into Northern and Southern Hemisphere. Throughout the story Kuno becomes Forster’s voice and through him, Forster portrays his scepticism and distrust of evolving technology. Forster also depicts the condition of the individual and society that are obsessed with the power of science and technology rather vividly.

Kuno desires to meet Vashti in person as he finds the Machine “wearisome” (Forster2) – an attitude that scandalizes Vashti. Kuno’s words:

“You talk as if a god had made the Machine” “I believe you pray to it when you are unhappy. Men made it, do not forget that” “The Machine is much, but it is not everything.” (Forster) echo what Martin Heidegger said about technology in his 1954 (trans. in English 1977) essay titled ‘The Question Concerning Technology’. Heidegger much like Forster distrusts technology. He makes three claims to support his theory: “technology is not an instrument, it is a way of understanding the world; technology is not a human activity, but develops beyond human control; and technology is the highest danger risking us to only see the world through technological thinking.” (Heidegger)

The interaction between Vashti and Kuno resembles the video calling of our own age. A simulated experience of having an actual in-person conversation. The problem with such an interaction is that whether it is in Forster’s story or in our current era, it is totally dependent on technology (Wifi) and any glitch is eventually a problem with technology. There is no real emotion involved in such an interaction which is aptly reflected by Vashti’s response to Kuno. The Machine cannot “transmit nuances of expression” – it only gives a general idea of people which is good enough for practical purposes. Vashti seems satisfied with such an existence.

Vashti and Kuno’s conversation also shed light on the highly “evolved” state of humans – people like Vashti dislike the brown earth, sea, and stars. The very physiology of humans has changed drastically. From Forster’s description it appears as if humans no longer do any physical work. The rational mind undermines the physical body and so the body has shrunk into a lump. Forster subtly brings our attention to the isolation of human in an exceedingly technologically advanced society. Such an isolation has been alluded to by many writers of the nineteenth and twentieth century. One such writer is Eugene O’Neill. In his play *The Hairy Ape*, O’Neill

presents a very grim vision of the isolated human as technology has privileged reason over physical strength. It is the smart and sophisticated man who is the “real man” as opposed to Yank who is “a filthy beast.” Thus, O’Neill too in a way deconstructs the idea of human and humanism. In the play, man and the machine “converge” only to destroy Yank – the “real man.” O’Neill too like the others is wary and distrustful of an obsession with technology.

In Forster’s story, every aspect of the human life is pervaded by technology – food, the act of eating, bathing, sleeping – all is controlled by technology. Kuno despises this dependency and aspires for freedom from the Machine. He wants to visit the surface of the earth as he believes that life there is somehow more real and better. But a casual visit to the surface of the earth is impossible as the air outside is cold and fatal and so the characters need something called a respirator to survive on the surface. This can be interpreted as the danger of a nuclear fallout that looms large in our own current era. Such a calamity would only destroy the earth and make it inhabitable for all beings. The human act of colonizing space in our own era can be interpreted as some sort of forewarning for a future apocalypse.

The first part of the story also draws our attention to Forster’s detailing of the society that Vashti and Kuno inhabit. People use “speaking tubes” for communication, there is no first- hand experience of anything but only people’s perspectives of them which are given in the form of “lectures.” Forster is also sceptical of something that Vashti repeatedly refers to as “creating ideas.” A society with humans who have privileged the mind over the body and in doing so have created the perfect “posthuman subject” – for the existence of such a people is impossible without the omnipresent and omnipotent Machine.

No public gatherings are held and people have no contact with the outside world except when they travel through the Air-Ship. There is a sense of homogeneity that is stressed upon by Forster through his descriptions of people and the society. Vashti’s daily routine is artificial and mechanical and there is nothing distinctly human about it. There is no distinction between day and night – everything is controlled by a switch – it creates darkness and light. There is also something called the Book of the Machine published by The Central Committee – it entails all necessary instructions for any possible emergency. Vashti worships this book as if it were from God. Interestingly, Forster’s humans live in a godless world where there is no place for religion as the Machine has obliterated anything to with myth or superstition. It is only the Machine that is the essence of all meaning.

The very distinction between humans and artificial intelligence is that humans are also influenced by their emotions in decisions and reactions. Artificial intelligence on the hand works only based on programmed codes. By providing a book of instructions for people to follow, Forster blurs the line between the human and the machine. There is nothing unique or distinct about Forster’s humans. The only human activity referred to by Forster is the exchange of ideas between people.

The main difference that technology has made is that “instead of bringing people to things, it brought things to people.” (Forster) Through the story, Forster also shows how science and technology can possibly change the very foundations of our society. In the story, babies are shifted to public nurseries after birth and parents can visit the babies till, they are given a room

(like Vashti's) at some stage of adulthood. This suggestive of some sort of artificial process of conception and procreation that is controlled by the Machine. The first part ends with Vashti preparing to meet Kuno in-person. She contemplates travel through the Air-Ship but is unsure and sceptical of the same.

The second part of the story titled, The Mending Apparatus describes Vashti's visit and Kuno's escapades to the surface of the earth. The first part clearly alludes to the collapse of the human subject and agency. Vashti and Kuno's in person interaction is presented in detail by Forster. There is a lack of personal exchange between the two – in fact Forster points to the idea of a personal, human one-to-one interaction as disgusting and barbaric. People in the story do not talk to each other in direct speech and shun human contact. This is a complete subversion of the idea of a human. Forster's human is a dystopian human controlled only by technology.

Kuno shocks Vashti by telling her that he has been threatened with Homelessness (death) due to his repeated illegal visits to the surface of the earth. Vashti is quick to disregard Kuno's attitude as inferior and barbaric. She says that superior beings do not indulge in such activities. Vashti is taken aback by Kuno's scepticism of the powers of the Machine. She tries to persuade him against it but in vain. Vashti thinks of the Machine as imperative for human enhancement and advancement – a posthuman attitude.

Kuno's descriptions of his travels are compelling and amusing. He travels on his own without a "respirator" and Egression-permit because he has some inherent physical strength. The Machine dominated society sees this as a demerit, some sort of genetic aberration that is undesirable and the only outcome of it is death! At this point Forster points to the practice of the Machine to kill babies who exhibit any trait of physical strength at birth. It is this physical and emotional vitality that is the distinguishing feature between humans and non-humans. But, in a technologically homogenised society, this distinction is purposely removed to give primacy to technology.

Interestingly, Kuno relies on his physical strength for real experiences and values it. He thinks of his physical vitality as his essence. It is human agency that gives meaning to varied experiences that our senses perceive. Our physical body with its limitations lends a uniqueness to our different experiences of the world around us.

Kuno sees his visits to the surface of the earth as a sort of an escape from the totalitarian control of the Machine. It is revealed that the Machine denies Kuno to experience fatherhood due to his 'undesirable, human qualities.' Thus, Kuno find these visits exhilarating and liberating.

Towards the end of the second part, Vashti realises that Kuno is fated to die as he has not "evolved." She feels pity, disgust, and a sense of shame for giving birth to him. According to Vashti, and Forster, his physical vitality is his doom. Vashti is not swayed or enamoured by Kuno's description of what he sees on the surface of the earth – he sees "real men" living in proximity with nature. Such a life is what Kuno craves for but is shunned by Vashti's Machine society.

The second part ends with Kuno proclaiming that the Machine is killing them. He arrives at a moment of truth:

“Cannot you see, cannot all you lecturers see, that it is we that are dying, and that down here the only thing that really lives is the Machine? We created the Machine, to do our will, but we cannot make it do our will now. It has robbed us of the sense of space and of the sense of touch, it has blurred every human relation and narrowed love to a carnal act, it has paralysed our bodies and our wills, and now it compels us to worship it. The Machine develops – but not on our lines. The Machine proceeds – but not to our goal ... and if it could work without us, it would let us die.”

These lines succinctly capture the posthuman condition. The Machine has truly killed the “real man.” Vashti leaves after meeting Kuno.

The third part is titled *The Homeless* and jumps a few years after Vashti and Kuno’s meeting. In these years, the Machine has made two important developments – one is to abolish respirators so that people cannot visit the surface and second is the reestablishment of religion. The Machine has now become God and people like Vashti are its faithful followers. By declaring itself as God, the Machine obliterates the need for anything outside its purview that accords meaning to humans. The Machine assumes an all-pervasive power which gives it the semblance of invincibility and immortality.

Forster also provides striking observations on like Euthanasia. Death is no more God-given but rather controlled by the Machine. Homelessness leads to death. Euthanasia is granted to people keeping in mind the birth-death ratio. This offers insightful views on a futuristic, totalitarian society. Forster’s own era had seen some totalitarian regimes.

It later known that Kuno has been transferred to the Southern Hemisphere near Vashti. The story ends with the Machine as entity falling apart. It is no longer able to function perfectly and at the leads to the destruction of all humans living below the earth. Finally, Kuno dies a tragic death proclaiming that “probably humanity has learnt its lesson.” Yet, he is sceptical of humanity’s obsession with technology and says that it will somehow find its way back.

Thus, through the story Forster brilliantly posits a technologically obsessed world as self-destructive. He also does not proclaim the altering and enhancing ability of technology as a saviour. A traditionalist, Forster is contemptuous of the “posthuman” condition and clearly conveys the idea that such a situation would end in total annihilation. It is a complex narrative that delves deeply into philosophical concepts like birth, death, life, society, and culture. Ironically, by presenting a posthuman world, Forster points towards the centrality of human agency. The Machine thus consummately dehumanizes the human.

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Friendship and Fear: A Post-humanist Study of Ray's and Asimov's Short Stories

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Abstract:

This term paper will highlight aspects of human and non-human relationships in some Eastern and Western literature in the works of Science Fiction. With the rise in studies on ecology, the human being has been dislodged from the central position that he enjoyed, and a shift has occurred from anthropocentrism to post-humanism. This is vividly portrayed in the works of the renowned Bengali writer Satyajit Ray and American sci-fi writer Isaac Asimov. Posthumanism, redefining the human centrality in the world, goes beyond the boundary of humanism and the ideas associated with it. The excessive dependency on technology gives rise to an irrational fear and anxiety that may be seen repeatedly in the works of Asimov where the robots acquire 'human' traits of reason and get humanized. Ray, on the other hand, portrays a friendly human and non-human relationship where he replaces the robots of Asimov's stories with the extra-terrestrial creatures. Instead of becoming a threat to humanity, they often help the humans with their extraordinary powers to become a better human being.

Keywords: Satyajit Ray, Isaac Asimov, ecocriticism, posthumanism, extra-terrestrial, robots.

Introduction:

Ecocriticism is "the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation" (Venugopal et al. 235). It is a form of criticism that investigates the relation between humans and the other life forms or non-humans in literary works. One of the major aims in ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society particularly human beings behave and react in relation to nature and its ecological aspects. The critical study on ecocriticism formally began after the publication of two seminal works, namely *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) by Lawrence Buell, though Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* was the one that triggered the movement.

My research area delves deep into the study of both Eastern and Western Science Fictions that challenge liberal humanism or anthropocentrism by highlighting the interactions and relationships between human and post-human or other life forms and also imply inclusivity. Therefore, I use post-humanism as critical tool and methodology to address the research area.

The term paper explores the post-humanist reading of the Bengali Science Fiction short stories by Satyajit Ray (1921- 1992) and Isaac Asimov's (1920- 1992) notable short story collection *I, Robot*. The main aim is to focus on the "new conceptualization" of human entity

deeply connected with other life forms (whether animals or robots) in the era of scientific and economic advancement and also in the era of the ecological or environmental crisis.

Human and Non-human Relations of Friendship and Fear

Human and non-human interaction and the relation between them is one of the main traits in post-humanism. Here, the non-human entities can be regarded as animals, robots, cyborgs, extra-terrestrial creatures and so on. In Satyajit Ray's short stories, namely 'Bankubabur Bandhu' (1962) and 'Anko Sir, GolapibabuaarTipu' (1982), the non-humans are largely the extra-terrestrial creatures or E.T.s. Ray uses these creatures as a tool to challenge the very notion of human centrality in the world. Both Banku Babu and Tipu's Mathematics teacher, the titular Anko sir, had earlier had a deep faith in human rationality and in the anthropocentric worldview which was shattered later by the sudden encounters with the non-humans. Ray does not create any artificial or futuristic society, but rather closely relies on the then society of the twentieth century Bengal. The interactions between the human and non-human are also portrayed in a friendly and benevolent manner to expose the pride and follies of human beings. On the other hand, Isaac Asimov uses the human-robot relationship in his collection *I, Robot* (1950) to bring forth not only the friendly demeanor of the relationship but also to underline the very notion of fear and complexities and the changing power dynamics that may occur in the future world. The fear or particularly the "technophobia" that robots can overturn the established hierarchy of the world (anthropocentrism) is recurrent in the stories like 'Robbie' and 'Little Lost Robot' by Asimov. At the same time, Asimov shows how the fear which closely resembles the Frankenstein-complex is misplaced sometimes. Thus, this chapter will deal with these kinds of varied issues of East and West regarding post-humanism in the coming paragraphs.

Shift from Anthropocentrism to Post-humanism in Ray's Short Stories:

In 'Bankubabur Bandhu' the titular school teacher Bankubabu encounters an extra-terrestrial entity whose name is Ang. This encounter and their interaction with each other raise certain questions regarding the centrality of human beings in the universe and also challenge this notion. According to Pramod K. Nayar, "Humanism ... treats the human subject as the centre of the world, which is influenced by the human's thoughts and actions" (Nayar 2014: 16). Bankubabu is a Geography teacher and possess a rational mind which is overshadowed by others as he is often bullied by his friends and is regarded as a timid person. However, when his friends and students are continuously making fun of him, Ang, being an E.T., easily understands that Bankubabu is a good person by pressing his hands and legs: "After seeing you and pressing your limbs I'm clearly assuming that you're not a bad human being at all, although belongs to that same inferior race of human" [self-translation]. Thus, human thoughts and actions have their own flaws and limitations which Ang severely criticizes and satirizes.

In the beginning, Bankubabu laughs at Ang when it announces that it is much superior to humans. But Ang neither becomes angry nor harms him, rather makes him understand why their race is superior to humans. It shows its extra-ordinary powers and abilities before Bankubabu by

telling him that it knows fourteen thousand languages, by showing him different places of the world through a kind of glass-pipe etc. Bankubabu is quite astonished after seeing all these things before him and is completely shaken and changed as well by this strange experience. Ang provides him a new insight, a new way to lead life with purpose and meaning. The narrator remarked “While he started walking homeward Bankubabu felt a strange feeling... Bankubabu saw, he was not walking any more, he was dancing” [self-translation]. At the end we see that Bankubabu boldly faces his peers with confidence and severely criticizes them for their earlier thoughtless behaviours towards him. For the first time he shows his “anger” and boldness before them and announces that today is the last day for him to attend their thoughtless “adda”. The story satirizes the shallow ideas of humans and their very nature to pretend as superior.

Similarly, in his other short story, ‘Anko Sir, GolapibabuaarTipu’ Ray criticizes anthropocentric viewpoint by showing the plight of the Anko sir, Narahari Babu in the hands of the mysterious Golapi Babu and the Pegasus. Narahari Babu has a rational mind and is a staunch believer in human values and greatness. Unlike Bankubabu he is not directly encountered by any extra-terrestrial or alien. However, the story features two non-humans who are responsible for Anko sir’s ultimate change in thought and perception regarding the supremacy of humanity. Here, Ray uses the trope of the fairy tales to show the ontological fluid identity of humans who can be evolved from other life forms, e.g., the story of monsters, demons, monkeys etc. who are also humanized like the robots and aliens. Nature plays an important role in the fairy tales as these “other life forms” takes refuge in the lap of nature. As humans exploit nature, dominates it for their own benefits, the non-humans are also regarded as “Other”. According to Nayar, “... critical post-humanism sees the uniquely human abilities, qualities, consciousness and features as evolving in conjunction with other life forms, technology and ecosystems” (Nayar 2014: 14). The human characters in fairy tales often display such unique abilities which Tipu loves to read such as the story of Dalimkumar in ThakumarJhuli. However, Tipu’s Anko sir is quite suspicious about the relevance of such stories which he thinks as “ludicrous and nonsense.” He, rather, advises Tipu to read “...the biographies of learned men, well written travelogues, stories of invention, the story of how human beings became supreme and powerful” [self-translation]. This clearly showcases his anthropocentric viewpoint. The subjects like Mathematics and Geography are generally designed to give impetus to human reason and rationality, to showcase men as explorer and conqueror of natural world. Both Banku Babu and Narahari Babu teach those subjects and believe in the fact that men are supreme in the world. Therefore, Tipu seeks help from a mysterious man whom he addresses as Golapi Babu due to his unfamiliar complexion. Like Ang, Golapi Babu is also an extra-terrestrial but Tipu does not recognize him at all. As an affectionate reader of fairy tale, he tries to connect Golapi Babu with other fairy tale characters like “Ramkhel Tilak Singh or the man in Ghangasur who is not more than one hand long in height...” and so on [self-translation]. Golapi Babu told him that he came to earth as a form of punishment and also came to put an end of whatever sorrow Tipu has in order to get back his freedom.

There are different layers of motifs regarding the sudden arrival of the extra-terrestrial creatures in the human world. The ‘sorrow’ that is discussed in the story ‘Anko Sir,

GolapibabuaarTipu' is not just the individual sorrow of Tipu not to read fairy tales any more but it is largely the sorrowful condition of human thought, the narrow-mindedness of human beliefs to feel like "be all and end all" of the universe. Ray brings E.T.s in his short stories to eradicate this kind of rigid notion of human centrality. Ray's other works such as Professor Shankur Diary and short stories like 'Khagom' vividly discuss the harmonious relationship between human and other life forms like animals, birds, robots and also discuss the changing ontological aspect of human beings if they try to destroy the harmony with the guise of mystery, curse and supernatural elements (in 'Khagom'). The later story portrays how the division between human and animal becomes blur and mixes with each other to draw the shift from anthropocentrism to ecology and posthumanism. Likewise, Tipu's inner self is filled with fantasy and supernatural elements, thereby giving no place to realistic thoughts and rationality. He views the white horse, Pegasus by associating it with the Greek mythology and fairy tales. Ray blurs the boundary between fiction and reality at the story's climax when the real ordinary horse becomes the actual Pegasus of Greek myth having wings. It is given extra-ordinary supernatural qualities probably by Golapi Babu to teach the stubborn Narahari sir a lesson. Tipu's Anko sir earlier showed his likeness towards the horse on the basis of power and bravery one might have to possess such a horse. Its transformation to mythical Pegasus once again shows how men becomes a mere puppet before this supernatural force which is devoid of reason and rationality. In the post-humanist perspective, the non-humans have the power to subvert the age-old enlightenment thoughts "that have historically situated the human above other life forms, and in control of them" (Nayar 2014: 12). Thus, at the end Golapi Babu assures Tipu by saying "Go home, Tarpan... Everything is all right" [self-translation]. According to the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess's concept of Deep Ecology, it can be argued that both the stories of Ray establish a "symbiotic and holistic world-view rather than an anthropocentric one." There occur transformations both in Banku Babu and Anko sir as they both acknowledge the importance of other life forms in our natural world. One of the central arguments in Deep Ecology is that "Our world view, thinking, responses and action are human-centric (technically called 'anthropocentrism'), but in order to ensure a safer planet we need to become eco- or biocentric" (Nayar, 2023: 246). Here, both Ang and Golapi Babu act as a catalyst to ensure this ideology. They also take shelter or refuge in the isolated place, in the laps of nature which is distant from the crowded urban space. Like the other life forms of nature, they are also connected with nature and natural elements. The sound of the crickets, hamlatunir math, the siris tree and the pink lizard that Tipu saw at the end are connected with the extra-terrestrials.

Human-Robot Relationship in Asimov's Short Stories:

Isaac Asimov has written science fictions featuring human-robot relationships and its complexities. His short story collection I, Robot vividly portrays a society which is scientifically and technologically advanced and machines are the part and parcel of that society. Before moving on to the post-humanist study of Asimov's short stories, the historical context of 1950s America is needed to be discussed shortly. The post-war America or USA became the super power in the world both politically and economically. There was a rapid progress in science and technology. People's lives were dominated by various electronic gadgets and machines. Asimov wrote his stories in the 1950s along with the other contemporary sci-fi writers namely Arthur C.

Clarke and Ray Bradbury. Many of them portray the darker side of scientific and technological advancement by creating dystopian settings etc. But when we come to Asimov, we see both friendship and fear going hand in hand. Sometimes he creates pessimistic or dystopic viewpoint regarding human-machine relationship but like Ray, he also tries to provide the notion that human and non-human can co-evolve in the world. This kind of duality is very much visible in two of his short stories namely 'Robbie' and 'Little Lost Robot,' both are taken from Asimov's collection of short stories, I, Robot.

In the story 'Robbie' Asimov shows both friendship and fear between human and non-human through the perspectives of a little girl and her mother. The robot is given a human like name, i.e., Robbie. For Gloria, the little girl, Robbie is not a literal robot but she believes that it is capable of having feeling, senses etc. There grows a deep friendship between Robbie and Gloria which even can challenge the normative friendly relationship among human beings. Robbie is actually appointed as a "nursemaid" for taking care of Gloria. At one point Mr. Weston, Gloria's father said:

A robot is infinitely more to be trusted than a human nursemaid. Robbie was constructed for only one purpose really – to be the companion of a little child. His entire 'mentality' has been created for the purpose. He just can't help being faithful and loving and kind. He's a machine-made so. That's more than you can say for humans.

This remark challenges the supremacy of human beings as machines are given more importance than human beings in terms of trust, reliability etc. Robots are programmed to serve human beings according to their need. However, Asimov shows that extreme dependence or reliance on robots may result in fear and anxiety. Gloria's mother becomes anxious when she understands that Gloria is gradually isolating herself from the human society and starts spending the majority of time with Robbie. She calls Robbie a "horrible thing," an "awful thing" as she thinks that it may harm Gloria. In a broader way, Mrs. Weston's fear clearly showcases the fact that Robbie can overturn the hierarchy where man holds the supreme position and robots and other life-forms exist only to serve them. The narrator states that "Mrs. Weston was a bit hazy about the insides of a robot... She couldn't bring herself to complete the quite obvious thought." This thought of Mrs. Weston is contrary to the First Law of Robotics where it is stated that "it is impossible for a robot to harm a human being." However, her thought should not be taken for granted. Her fear has its roots in Mary Shelley's well-known novel *Frankenstein* (1818) which depicts this same kind of fear that an inventor or creator feels about his or her creation. Mrs. Weston is the owner of Robbie, thereby possessing certain power over it but she is suspicious and terrified at the same time after observing Gloria's deep attachment with it and the neighbors' growing suspicion about owning a robot. Gloria's parents and Gloria herself depend on Robbie very much but the fear and complexities do not occur in the simple mind of the child. Gloria thinks Robbie not as a machine or a robot but as a true companion with whom she can play hide and seek and share fairy tale stories. However, the adult world is filled with complexities, especially in the era of the postwar and therefore Mrs. Weston becomes much more fearful than her husband as her motherly affection and dominance over her daughter is shaken due to the deep friendship between Robbie and Gloria. She treats Robbie as a servant and we know that

throughout in history and also in today's world slaves are treated as non-humans or less than human. The post-humanist visions clearly oppose this ideology as Nayar argues that "Critical posthumanism draws the connections between traditional humanism's exclusionary strategy and women, races or ethnic groups, but also animals, being kept out as slaves, monsters or mere providers of meat, entertainment or labour" (Nayar 2014: 21). Robbie's duty is to abide by the roles of a "nursermaid" and it is programmed in that way. It is often compared with a "dog". The story also mentions another robot called "The Talking Robot" which is programmed only for amusement and entertainment. Moreover, the "traditional humanism's exclusionary strategy" is also evident in the story when Mrs. Weston takes a decision to exclude Robbie from their house. She is no different from Tipu's Anko sir as both of them are materialistic and possess an anthropocentric viewpoint.

The mechanical robots are often humanized and judged through the lens of humanism. The robots are often given human names like "Robbie", "Cutie" etc. Ray's Professor Shanku also calls his robot as Bidhushekhhar. They are programmed to work on factories as labourers or to work for household chores etc. However, Asimov shows human essence in Robbie which is largely expressed through the eyes of Gloria and her inner childlike mind. Mr. Weston acknowledges the fact that "the whole trouble with Gloria is that she thinks of Robbie as a person and not as a machine." Here, Asimov draws a contrast between the child world and the adult world much in a same way as Ray portrays the contrast in his stories. Both Gloria and Tipu, in spite of having cultural and racial boundaries, experience the same "Sorrow" which comes from the materialistic complex adult world and both try to seek help from the E.T.s and the robots. At the end, it is Robbie, "a mess of steel and copper in the form of sheets and wires with electricity its juice of life," is capable of rescuing Gloria within a fraction of second from "a huge, lumbering tractor." Thus, human beings have certain limitations which they do not want to acknowledge but the aliens and robots highlight their drawbacks in the fore. The story showcases the post-humanist vision in which "the machine and the organic body and the human and other life forms are... mutually dependent and co-evolving" (Nayar 2014: 20).

Asimov deals with the dangerous side of non-humans or post-humans in his other short story 'The Little Lost Robot' which is not discussed explicitly by Ray in his short stories mentioned earlier. The story deals with the "Frankenstein Complex" due to the sudden missing of one of the robots which is recently "modified" on the basis of the First Law of Robotics. The law states that "No robot may harm a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm." As the NS-2 or Nestor robot is modified, it has the capacity to alter the law and seek autonomy. As the Monster in Frankenstein wants to live equally but is treated as inferior 'Other', the robots are also treated as inferior in compare to human beings. However, the modified Nestor robot gains the ability to retaliate and subvert the hierarchy between humans and machines. To investigate and solve the issue, "Drs. Susan Calvin and Peter Bogert, respectively Head Psychologist and Mathematical Director of United States Robot Mechanical Men Corporation" are brought to the Hyper Base space station. Asimov creates a futuristic society that is advanced in science and technology but does not picture a dystopic or pessimistic

image of future. He showcases the short-comings, the fear and the possibility of facing crisis if we continuously use technology to satisfy our own greed.

As an eminent robopsychologist Dr. Susan deals the situation not only with the scientific techniques but also with psychologically. At one point she said to Peter:

All normal life, Peter, consciously or otherwise, resents domination. If the domination is by an inferior, or by a supposed inferior, the resentment becomes stronger. Physically, and, to an extent, mentally, a robot – any robot – is superior to human beings. What makes him slavish, then? Only the First Law! Why, without it, the first order you tried to give a robot would result in your death.

Here, the very agency of non-human entities is acknowledged and it is the responsibility of so-called superior human race to control and resist them with power by making laws and rules. It is Dr. Susan who identified the lost Nestor 10 robot at the end by performing certain experiments and the missing robot is at last spotted before her who asserts its knowledge and intelligence. Thus, the story represents the dangerous side of anthropocentric viewpoint which can be resulted in fear and anxiety.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, we can say that there is an East-West dichotomy in the presentation of the views on ecocriticism and post-humanism but sometimes they overlap and merge with each other. Both Ray and Asimov paint the simplicities and complexities of the children and adult world respectively and how each of the world reacts and deals with the non-humans and other life forms. Although there is a cultural and geographic division between India and USA yet the ‘sorrow’ of Tipu is somehow connected with Gloria’s tears of sadness. At the same time Narahari Babu, the titular Anko sir’s materialistic and anthropocentric views are similar with Mrs. Weston’s fear and anxiety regarding machines. The paper deals with different ideologies and viewpoints but strictly adheres to the philosophy of ecocriticism and posthumanism, the only respite to breathe in this capitalist world of science and technology. Both the short stories of Ray and Asimov reflects the ecocritical and post-humanist beliefs that Lawrence Buell, Cheryll Glotfelty and Pramod K. Nayar have discussed in their works, i.e., to develop an “interconnectedness” between all life forms in the world.

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**Experimental Study on the Effect of Yoodli.ai on the
Oral Proficiency of ESL Learners**

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Abstract

This research study explores the use of Yoodli.ai to enhance the oral proficiency of English as Second Language (ESL) students. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of Yoodle.ai on students' engagement and involvement in the communication process. This study employed a quantitative methodology and sample consists of 36 ESL students within the age range of 20 to 21. This study is structured for a primary audience and focuses on evaluating the level of interest among ESL learners in using Yoodli.ai to improve their communication skills. The findings of this study are relevant to the use of Yoodli.ai for online communication learning, namely in the areas of presentation and interview skills. Yoodli.ai analyses recorded conversation and provides a detailed analysis of the performance. Furthermore, it is recommended to utilize Yoodli.ai as a platform for honing communication skills by engaging in role-play conversations and participating in online meetings.

Keywords: Yoodli.ai, English as Second Language, Oral Proficiency, Experimental study.

Introduction

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational paradigms has brought about a significant transformation, reshaping traditional learning methods and altering the educational environment. Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides a wide range of advanced tools and platforms that enhance learning experiences, promote active participation, and accommodate to various learning preferences. Chat GPT is a groundbreaking technology that significantly changes the way educational exchanges work, among other breakthroughs (Holmes, Wayne et al., 2022).

According to Holmes, while many people imagine that Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED) involves children being taught by robot teachers, the actual situation is more ordinary but still has the ability to bring about significant change (Holmes, Wayne et al., 2022). The author presents AIED, a relatively overlooked technique that encompasses a range of technologies and serves as a subject of investigation. The paper explores the fundamental principles of AIED's artificial intelligence, its utilization of models, its potential future developments, and its relationship with the human context.

In the period of the 4.0 revolution, technological advancements have had a profound impact on all aspects of human life, particularly in the education business in Bali. The emergence of business 4.0 has led to a significant shift in the education business, as it has seamlessly integrated with technology. Artificial Intelligence has recently sparked a lot of conversation among university students and lecturers, making it one of the most talked-about technological

products. AI is presently seen as a viable option in English learning and teaching activities. AI is a technological advancement that possesses the ability to mimic human thinking, but is not inherently operated by people, but by robots. AI enables pupils to acquire language proficiency and enhance their oral communication abilities on a daily basis (Huang et al., 2022). AI may be utilized not just to improve speaking abilities, but also to enhance other skills such as writing, listening, and reading.

Kizilcec stated that the elevation of learning outcomes, academic accomplishments, and educational equity through creative solutions is only possible with the approval and trust of educators. Gaining a comprehensive grasp of educators' viewpoints on evolving educational technologies, particularly ones that utilize artificial intelligence, is crucial in order to fully harness the potential advantages of these advancements.

Unlike basic and secondary pupils, undergraduate education is more intricate and comprehensive. They possess extensive knowledge and expertise in a certain area that aligns with their passion. This predicament is equally applicable to students studying English education and literature (Pusparini, 2024). A study conducted by Akbarani (2023) revealed that students find the use of artificial intelligence in English language training to be enjoyable and unanimously agree that it is essential. The impact of artificial intelligence on teaching English can be advantageous or detrimental, contingent upon the specific methods and timing of its use.

Students utilize this Yoodli.ai artificial intelligence to enhance their oral communication proficiency. This AI also offers users personalized coaching, individualized feedback, and the ability to track their development. This AI is frequently utilized in job interviews, sales calls, and public engagements by those seeking to enhance their communication skills (Pusparini, 2024). It is apparent that the influence of AI is significant. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these many viewpoints is crucial for utilizing the full potential of artificial intelligence in the future of education.

Research Objective:

- To Strengthen Spoken skill through Yoodli.ai for final year ESL students.
- To know the feasibility of Yoodli.ai for ESL learners.

Research Questions:

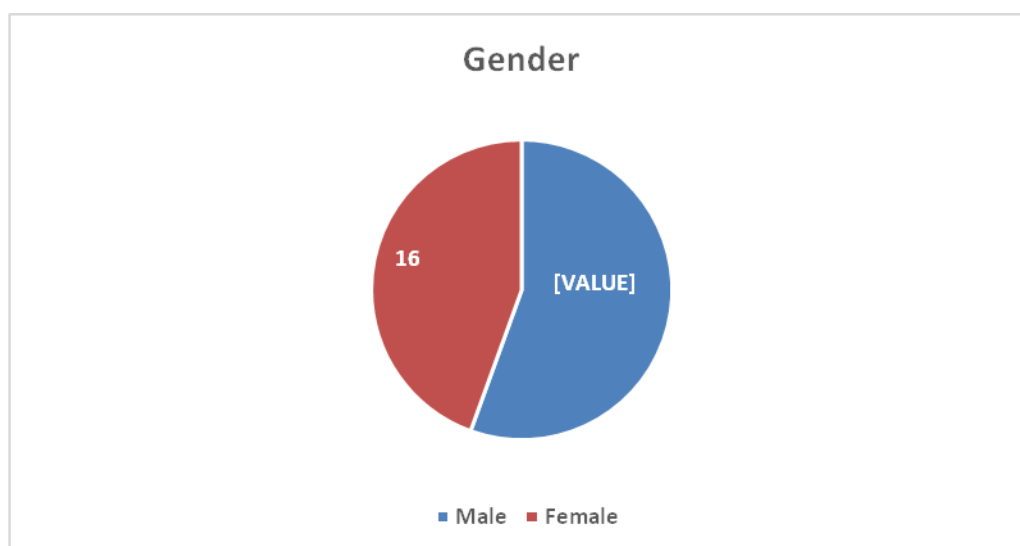
- Does Yoodli.ai strengthen the ESL learners spoken skill?
- Whether using Yoodli.ai is feasible for ESL learners?

Method:

This study adopted a experimental research method. This research approach is widely utilized in several academic disciplines to achieve the most favourable result. The students employed Yoodli.ai to enhance their proficiency in oral communication. The students received interventions, such as practice sessions, followed by post-tests to evaluate their oral proficiency.

Sample and Sample Size

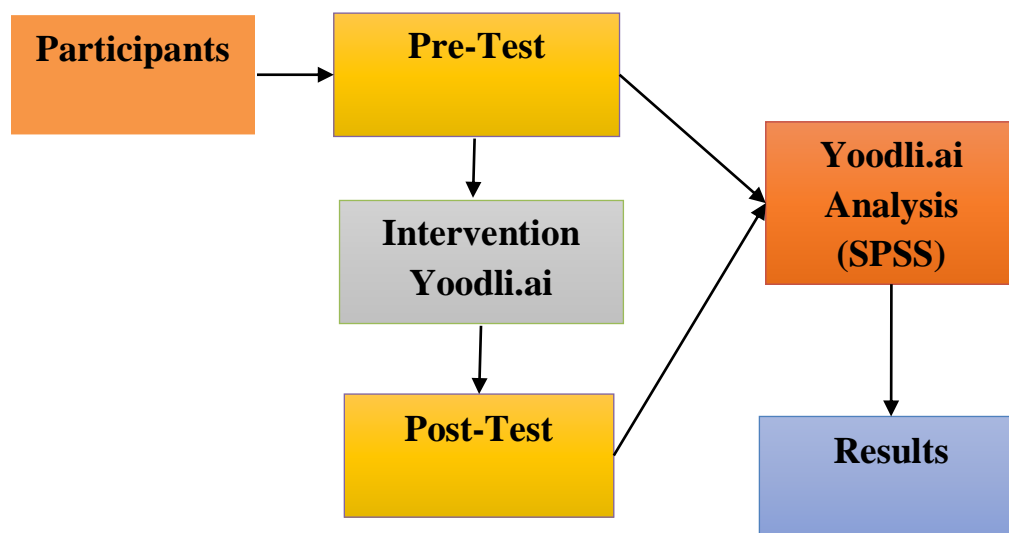
The study's participants consisted of 36 responders who were in their last year of a Bachelor's degree. Among 36 participants 20 of them were male and 16 are female. The main criterion for selecting these individuals was that they would be acquiring English as their second language. Only a few of the individuals demonstrated fluency in English, while the majority made errors when speaking. The participants are unfamiliar with Yoodli.ai. The age of the participants varied from 20 to 21 years old. The study utilized the conventional purposive sampling approach. A random sampling was conducted from the entire population. In order to accomplish the goal of this study, participants were given the task of speaking about themselves for duration of one minute. Subsequently, Yoodli.ai was utilized for practice, followed by the administration of a post-test. The work was examined in order to get a valid conclusion.



Graph 1. Gender

Research Design and Procedure

The researcher provided participants with a concise overview of the study's objective. Subsequently, the researcher directed their attention towards a task designed to assess the speaking abilities of learners in the early stage. Participants were instructed to talk for one minute about themselves using Yoodli.ai as a pre-test. The self-introduction recording was analysed and the result was generated using Yoodli.ai. The participants were instructed by the researcher to develop their speaking abilities in presentations and interviews using Yoodli.ai. As part of the intervention, pupils received targeted practice on certain areas using Yoodli.ai. Subsequently, a post-test was given to the ESL participants, revealing a progressive enhancement in their oral skills.

**Figure 1.** Research structure**Result and Discussion**

The result and discussion show the analysis drafted from the Yoodli.ai for spoken skill and the data is converted into quantitative data and those data is analysed by SPSS tool. Here 1 (Very poor) represents 20 and above mistakes committed by the students. 2 represents 15 to 20 (Poor) mistakes committed by the students. 3 represents 10 to 15 (Average) mistakes committed by the students. 4 represents 5 to 10 (Good) mistakes committed by the students. 5 represents students who commit mistakes below 5 (Very Good).

Filler_words_Pre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Poor_20 and above	7	.4	19.4	19.4
	Poor_15 to 20	17	.2	47.2	66.7
	Average_10 to 15	12	.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 1. Filler words analysis in Pre-test

The data set in Table 1 assesses participants' use of filler words prior to a certain intervention or event and is divided into three categories: Very Poor, Poor, and Average. Seven of the 36 participants, or 19.4% of the sample, are classified as "Very Poor" users, meaning they utilize 20 or more filler words. 17.2% of the participants, or a greater percentage, is classified as "Poor," and their filler word counts range from 15 to 20. The remaining 12 individuals, or 33.3% of the sample, are categorized as "Average" because they used ten to fifteen filler words. The distribution's running total may be seen in the cumulative percentages. 19.4% of the total is contributed by the "Very Poor" group. By include the "Poor" group, the total proportion rises to 66.7%. When the "Average" group is included in last, the cumulative total for all participants is 100%. Based on this distribution, the majority of participants fell into the "Poor" group, meaning that almost half of them struggle considerably with using filler words. This revelation points to a possible area for development by indicating that the individuals had a common problem with filler words before any intervention.

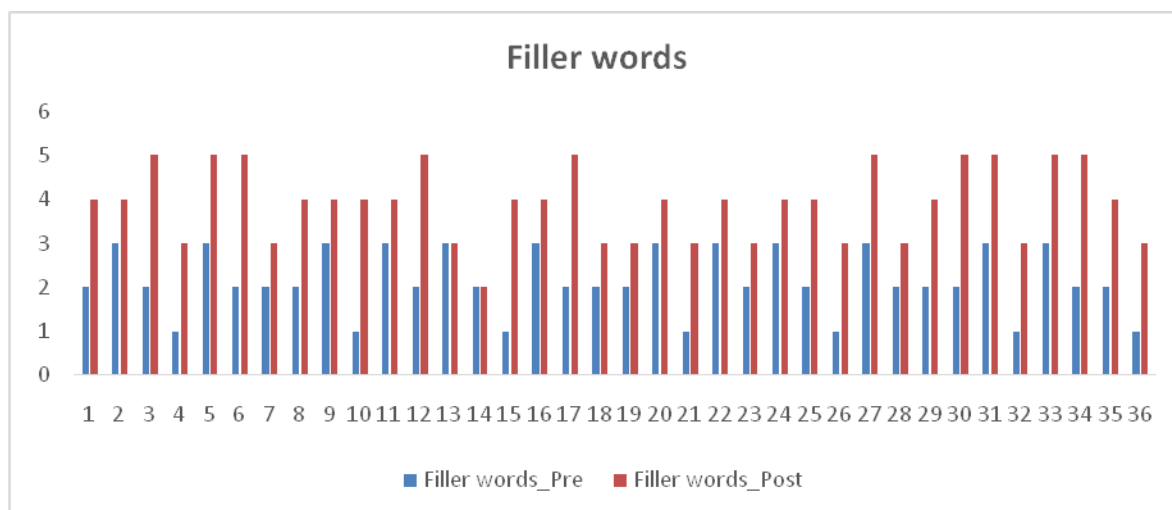
Filler_words_Post

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2.8	2.8	2.8
	11	30.6	30.6	33.3
	14	38.9	38.9	72.2
	10	27.8	27.8	100.0
Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Filler words analysis in Post-test

According to the dataset in Table 2., participants' filler word usage changed significantly following a specific intervention or event. Post-intervention analysis classifies filler word usage as 2, 3, 4, and 5 words. Only 1 person (2.8% of the sample) used 2 filler words, a significant decrease. With 14 participants (38.9%), the biggest group employed 4 filler words, suggesting moderate post-intervention use. In another prominent group, 11 (30.6%) used 3 filler words and 10 (27.8%) used 5. The distribution's cumulative percentages show its growth. Two-filler-word groups provide 2.8% to the total. Including 3 filler words raises the total to 33.3%. Adding those using 4 filler words improves the cumulative proportion to 72.2%, and adding those using 5

boosts it to 100%, encompassing the whole sample. After the intervention, participants used less filler words, according to this research. The majority of participants now use filler words less, showing the intervention was effective.



Graph 2. Comparing pre-test and post-test of Filler words

Weak_words_Pre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Poor_20 and above	3	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Poor_15 to 20	16	44.4	44.4	52.8
	Average_10 to 15	11	30.6	30.6	83.3
	Good_5 to 10	6	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Weak words analysis in Pre-test

The dataset in table 3 classifies participants' poor word usage before intervention as Very Poor, Poor, Average, and Good. Three (8.3% of 36) participants are "Very Poor" with 20 or

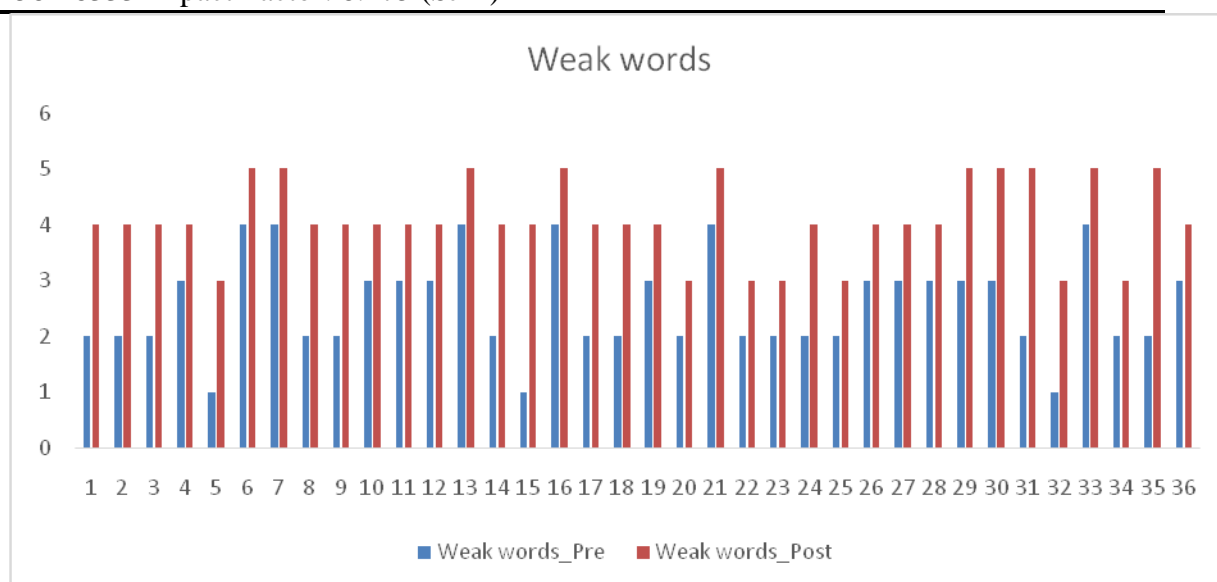
more poor words. Many participants, 16 (44.4%), are "Poor," employing 15–20 weak terms. Another 11 (30.6%) are "Average," using 10–15 words. The remaining 6 (16.7%) are "Good," employing 5–10 weak words. Cumulative percentages show distribution progression. 8.3% of the total is "Very Poor". The total proportion rises to 52.8% with "Poor" included. Adding the "Average" group improves the cumulative proportion to 83.3%, while adding the "Good" category covers all participants at 100%. Most participants fell into the "Poor" and "Average" categories for poor word usage, according to this data. Since few participants had "Good" control over their weak word usage before intervention, this is an opportunity for development.

Weak_words_Post

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Average_1 0 to 15	7	19.4	19.4	19.4
	Good_5 to 10	19	52.8	72.2	
	Very Good_below 5	10	27.8	100.0	
	Total	36	100.0		

Table 4. Weak words analysis in Post-test

Participants' weak word usage improved following a specific intervention, according to the dataset in table 4. Post-intervention analysis classifies poor word usage as Average, Good, and Very Good. Seven participants (19.4%) use 10–15 weak words and are classified as "Average" out of 36. The bulk, 19 (52.8%), are "Good," employing 5–10 weak terms. 10 participants (27.8%) used fewer than 5 weak words to reach "Very Good" status. Cumulative percentages show distribution evolution. "Average" represents 19.4% of the total. The cumulative proportion rises to 72.2% with "Good" included. Finally, including "Very Good" takes the total to 100%, including all participants. This study shows that participants used fewer weak words following the intervention. Most participants are now "Good" or "Very Good" at weak word use, showing that the intervention worked. This shows that the intervention reduced participants' use of weak words, improving communication.



Graph 3. Comparing pre-test and post-test of Weak words

Repetition_words_Pre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Poor_20 and above	7	.4	19.4	19.4
	Poor_15 to 20	13	.1	36.1	55.6
	Average_10 to 15	14	.9	38.9	94.4
	Good_5 to 10	2	.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	36	0.0	100.0	

Table 5. Repetition words analysis in Pre-test

In table 5 prior to the intervention, the participants' utilization of repetitive words was divided into four categories: Very Poor, Poor, Average, and Good. Among the 36 participants, 7

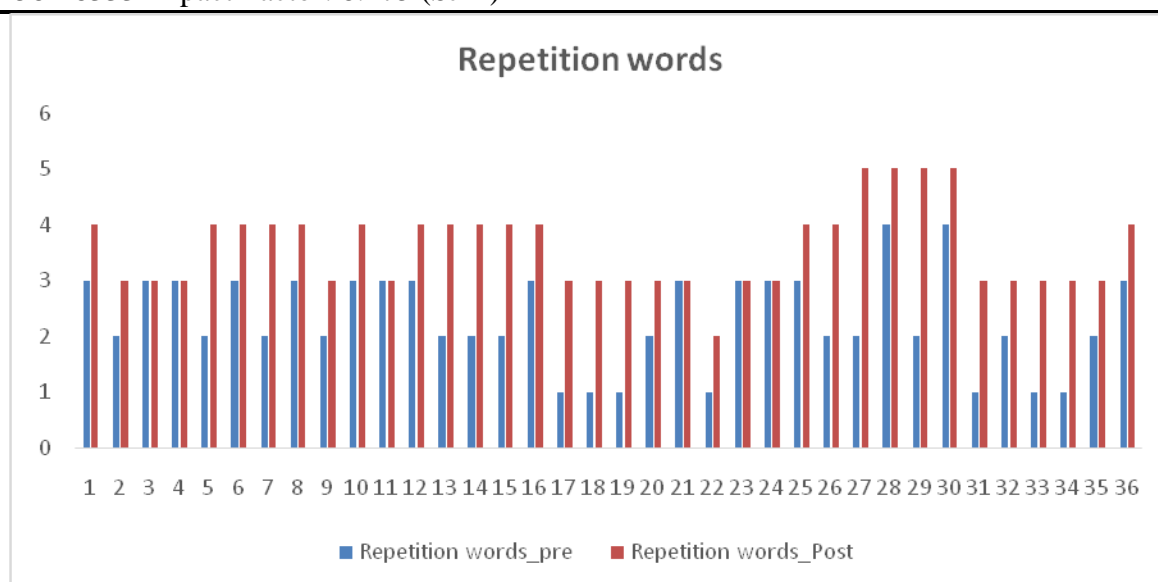
people (19.4%) were classified as "Very Poor" due to their use of 20 or more repeat terms. Out of the total number of participants, a significant portion of 13 individuals (36.1%) were classified as "Poor," based on their utilization of repetitive words, which ranged from 15 to 20. In addition, 14 individuals (38.9%) fell into the "Average" group, as they used 10 to 15 repetition words. Conversely, only 2 people (5.6%) exhibited "Good" control by utilizing between 5 to 10 repeat words.

Repetition_words_Post

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor_15 to 20	1	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Average_10 to 15	17	47.2	47.2	50.0
	Good_5 to 10	14	38.9	38.9	88.9
	Very Good_below 5	4	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Repetition words analysis in Post-test

After the intervention as in table 6 the data shows a notable improvement in the ability to control the use of repetitive words. Remarkably, a just 1 person (2.8%) persisted in the "Poor" group, employing 15 to 20 repetitive terms. The "Average" group currently comprises 17 individuals, accounting for 47.2% of the total, indicating a notable increase in the utilization of a significant number of participants. Out of the total number of participants, a significant proportion of 14 individuals (38.9%) were able to attain the "Good" category by utilizing a range of 5 to 10 repeat phrases. In addition, a total of 4 individuals, accounting for 11.1% of the sample, achieved a proficiency level classified as "Very Good" by utilizing less than 5 repeat words.



Graph 4. Comparing pre-test and post-test of Repetition words

Eye_contact_Pre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Poor_20 and above	3	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Poor_15 to 20	17	47.2	47.2	55.6
	Average_10 to 15	16	44.4	44.4	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. Eye contact analysis in Pre-test

The dataset in table 7 evaluates the participants' degree of eye contact prior to an intervention, classifying their performance into three categories: Very Poor, Poor, and Average. Among the 36 participants, 3 persons (8.3% of the sample) are classified as "Very Poor" at sustaining eye contact, as they struggled severely and did so 20 or more times. Out of the total number of participants, specifically 17 individuals (equivalent to 47.2% of the group), fall into

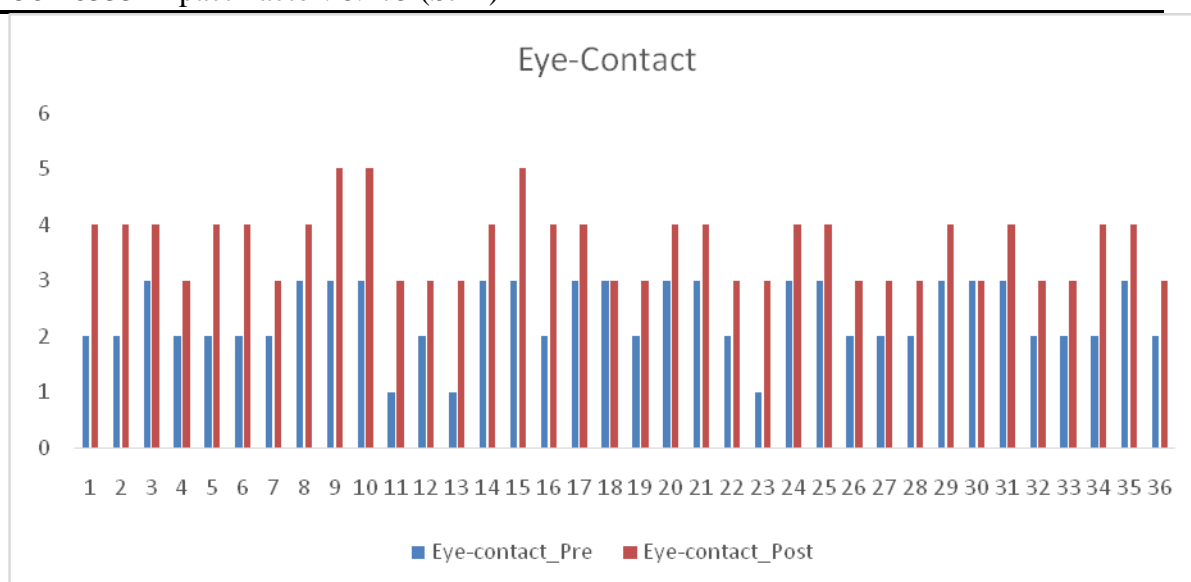
the category of "Poor" in terms of eye contact, with a frequency ranging from 15 to 20 times. Out of the total number of participants, 16 individuals (44.4%) are categorized as "Average," exhibiting eye contact between 10 and 15 instances. The cumulative percentages offer insight into the entire distribution. The "Very Poor" category represents 8.3% of the overall total. By include the "Poor" group, the overall proportion rises to 55.6%, suggesting that over half of the participants are classified as "Very Poor" or "Poor". The "Average" group represents the combined sum of all participants, amounting to 100%. Upon examination; it becomes evident that a substantial majority of participants have difficulties in keeping eye contact. More than half of the participants are categorized as "Poor" in this regard, while almost half are classed as "Average." Merely a minute proportion is classified as "Very Poor," indicating the potential for enhancement in this particular domain. This first data serves as a crucial basis for comprehending the efficacy of later programs designed to improve participants' eye contact.

Eye_contact_Post

		Fre quency	Pe rcent	Valid Percent	Cumul ative Percent
Valid	Average_1 0 to 15	16	44	44.4	44.4
	Good_5 to 10	17	47	47.2	91.7
	Very Good_below 5	3	8.	8.3	100.0
	Total	36	100	100.0	

Table 8. Eye contact analysis in Post-test

Eye contact improved significantly following a specific intervention, according to the dataset in table 8. Participant levels are now Average, Good, and Very Good. Out of 36 participants, 16 (44.4%) are "Average" and make 10–15 eye contact. 17 participants (47.2%) scored "Good" with 5–10 eye contacts. The "Very Good" group had 3 (8.3%), who made great eye contact less than 5 times. Increasing percentages exhibit eye contact improvement. The "Average" category accounts for 44.4% of total. Adding the "Good" option raises the total proportion to 91.7%, showing that most participants are "Average" or "Good". A "Very Good" group raises the total to 100% for all participants. This study shows that the intervention improved eye contact, as seen by the rise in "Good" and "Very Good" individuals.



Graph 5. Comparing pre-test and post-test of Eye contact

Conciseness_Pre

			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very Poor_20 and above	1	2.8	2.8	2.8	
	Poor_15 to 20	17	47.2	47.2	50.0	
	Average_10 to 15	11	30.6	30.6	80.6	
	Good_5 to 10	5	13.9	13.9	94.4	
	Very Good_below 5	2	5.6	5.6	100.0	
	Total	36	100.0	100.0		

Table 9. Conciseness analysis in Pre-test

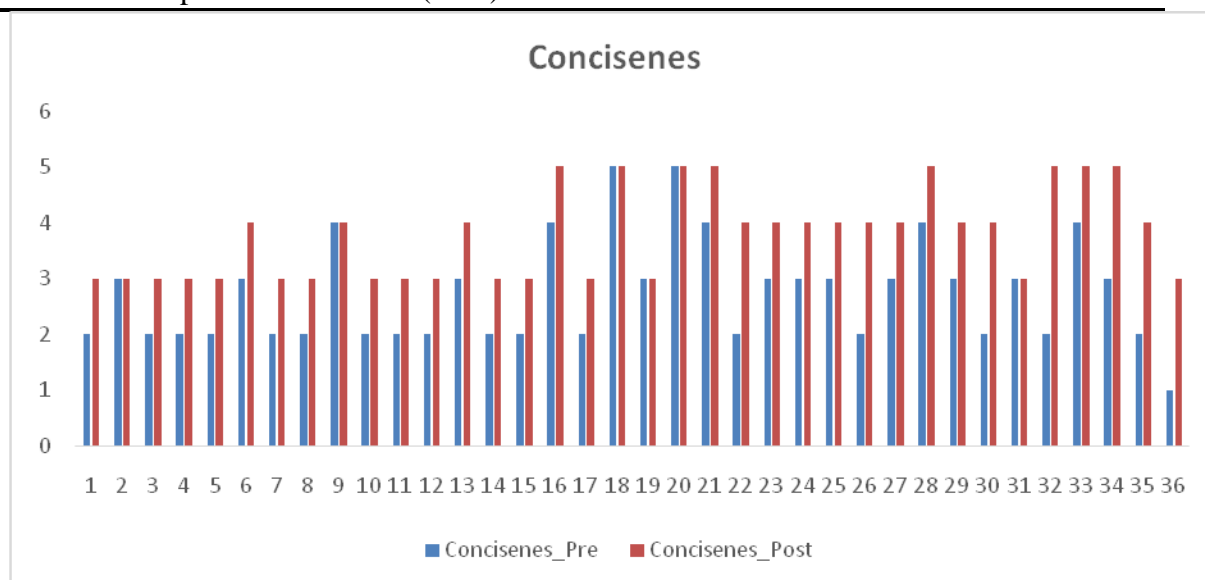
As in table 9 participants' communication conciseness is categorized as Very Poor, Poor, Average, Good, and Very Good. The conciseness of the 36 participants varies. Only one individual (2.8% of the sample) is "Very Poor," utilizing 20 or more words to communicate. The bulk, 17 (47.2%), are "Poor" and employ 15–20 words. Also, 11 (30.6%) are "Average," utilizing 10–15 words. Five people (13.9%) use 5 to 10 words, while two (5.6%) use fewer than 5 words. The cumulative percentages show the distribution's evolution, with each group contributing. Participants prefer to communicate less concisely, since 50% of the total is "Very Poor" and "Poor". This baseline data reveals participants' communication patterns and may be used to evaluate subsequent treatments.

Conciseness_Post

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Average_1 0 to 15	16	44.4	44.4	44.4
	Good_5 to 10	12	33.3	33.3	77.8
	Very Good_below 5	8	22.2	22.2	100.0
	Total	36	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. Conciseness analysis in Post-test

As in table 10 participants' communication conciseness is categorized as Very Poor, Poor, Average, Good, and Very Good. The conciseness of the 36 participants varies. Only one individual (2.8% of the sample) is "Very Poor," utilizing 20 or more words to communicate. The bulk, 17 (47.2%), are "Poor" and employ 15–20 words. Also, 11 (30.6%) are "Average," utilizing 10–15 words. Five people (13.9%) use 5 to 10 words, while two (5.6%) use fewer than 5 words. The cumulative percentages show the distribution's evolution, with each group contributing. Participants prefer to communicate less concisely, since 50% of the total is "Very Poor" and "Poor". This baseline data reveals participants' communication patterns and may be used to evaluate subsequent treatments.



Graph 6. Comparing pre-test and post-test of Concisenes

Findings

- The first research aim and question indicate that the ESL learners have enhanced their spoken proficiency through the use of Yoodli.ai.
- Based on the second research aim and question, ESL learners found Yoodli.ai to be user-friendly for improving their oral fluency. Therefore, it is viable for final year ESL students to utilize Yoodli.ai for practicing presentation and interview abilities.

Conclusion:

The main aim of this study is to conduct a quantitative analysis of students' spoken skills. The analysis and evaluation of students' speaking abilities are performed using Yoodli.ai. It provides instruction on effective communication during interviews and presentations. Additionally, it identifies filler words, weak words, conciseness, repetitive words, and eye-contact. Yoodli.ai has the ability to identify and point out any errors made by the user. Yoodli.ai conducts practice sessions during which both the audio and video will be captured. The findings indicate that instructors should integrate Yoodli.ai into their teaching practices to enhance students' oral proficiency. This survey demonstrates a lack of awareness about Yoodli.ai among the majority of participants from diverse sectors. The research study conducted by Yoodli.ai has enhanced the oral proficiency of final year ESL students. Future study might investigate the utilization of Yoodli.ai for public speaking practice among students from many academic disciplines.

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**The Beauty Paradox: How Manhwa Reflects and Challenges
Societal Beauty Norms for Women.**

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Abstract

“Being ugly is not my fault. You should not play with someone’s pain.”-Lim Ju Kyung (True Beauty).

This quote from "True Beauty" encapsulates the struggle against societal beauty standards explored in South Korean Manhwa. This paper examines the representation of women's beauty standards and focuses on four outstanding works: "True Beauty"(2020), "My ID on Gangnam Beauty"(2021), "Marry My Husband"(2023), and "Lookism"(2022). These stories provide a critical look at social expectations and pressures regarding the beauty of women. "True Beauty"(2020) explores the transformative power of makeup and its effect on self-esteem, while "My ID is Gangnam Beauty"(2021) explores the effects of plastic surgery on identity and social acceptance. "Marry My Husband"(2023) portrays beauty as a tool for empowerment and revenge, and "Lookism"(2022) criticises discrimination based on appearance, emphasizing the importance of inner beauty. Using these, the paper analyzes how manhwa challenges and maintains traditional beauty standards and influences readers' perceptions and self-images. This study aims to help understand the cultural narratives surrounding beauty and their impact on female identity.

Keywords: Beauty standards, South Korean Manhwa, female identity, self-esteem

Introduction:

Manhwa, a graphic novel used to describe Korean comics. Manhwa covers various genres and styles like Japanese manga or Western comics, serving domestic and international audiences. Characterized by their distinctive art style and narrative structures, manhwas are often vivid, detailed artwork and storytelling that combine elements of Korean culture with global influences. Manhwa can be serialized in magazines, published as stand-alone volumes, or distributed digitally through internet movies, which are particularly popular in South Korea and abroad due to their accessibility on various digital platforms.

The themes explored in the Manhwa are wide-ranging, including romance, fantasy, action, horror, and slice-of-life. Storytelling can be episodic or linear and often deals with contemporary social issues, cultural traditions, and personal stories that resonate with readers. The main characteristics of Manhwa are dynamic panel arrangements, character-driven stories, and often complex plot developments that appeal to audiences across age groups. With a growing global audience, Manhwa continues to develop as a necessary cultural export, influencing popular culture and contributing to the broader landscape of international comics and graphic novels.

In current South Korean society, beauty standards have a significant influence, shaping not only personal identity but also social interactions and opportunities. In this cultural landscape, South Korean manhwas (comics) emerge as a tool to explore and critique these norms. Manhwa acts as a visual and narrative form and offers a unique lens through which to study it and provide insight into the complexities of beauty standards and their impact on female identity. The Four prominent Manhwa— "True Beauty," "My ID on Gangnam Beauty," "Marry My Husband," and "Lookism" were selected for their thematic significance and critics. These works were chosen for their commitment to beauty standards and their ability to provoke critical thinking about social expectations.

Navigating the Beauty Paradox: Korean Beauty Standards and Their Depiction in Manhwa.

South Korea is known for its strict beauty standards, often characterized by society's emphasis on flawless skin, slim figures, and symmetrical facial features. This cultural obsession with appearance, while promoting a thriving beauty and cosmetics industry, also perpetuates the paradox that the pursuit of beauty both empowers and limits individuals. In South Korea, beauty is closely related to success and social status. This association is perpetuated by media and advertising that glorify physical attractiveness. Celebrities, models, and influencers who embody these beauty ideals are often idolized, reinforcing that beauty is central to personal and professional achievement. Based on this, Asia Society, in their article, " Korean Beauty The Documentary," states:

"Fair skin, a well-defined nose, peachy cheeks, and cherry-red lips. For thousands of years, Korean women have consistently favored this standard of female beauty. "(Asia Society,2024).

This cultural emphasis on beauty can perpetuate superficial values. When society prioritizes physical appearance, other essential qualities, such as intelligence, kindness, and honesty, can be undervalued. This can create a low social environment where people are judged primarily on appearance rather than character or ability. Also, the relentless pursuit of beauty can lead to considerable psychological stress. The pressure to constantly maintain an ideal appearance can lead to psychological issues like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Individuals can become overly critical of their appearance, leading to other mental health issues. This stress is exacerbated by society's expectation that beauty is desirable and necessary for success and happiness. According to this, Katie Park, Staff Writer of Coppell Studentmedia.com, in her article, "Asian beauty standards causing more harm than good.", states:

"The requirements of having features like a small, V-shaped face, bright pale skin, plump lips, and a slim figure indirectly convey women and girls who do not possess these features to be unworthy and unattractive. This societal pressure of having to look exactly perfect causes Koreans and other East Asians to reconsider their self-esteem, later causing mental health issues."(Park,2023).

This briefly describes the intense social pressure caused by strict beauty standards in South Korea and other East Asian cultures. The relentless pursuit of perfection can cause significant psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphic disorder.

Society's obsession with appearance fosters an environment where physical attributes are overemphasized, overshadowing an individual's personality, talents, and other inherent qualities. By enforcing a singular aesthetic ideal, society maintains a superficial value system that equates value with physical appearance. This not only affects the mental health of the individual but also reinforces harmful stereotypes and prejudices in the community.

Beauty standards have long been the subject of scholarly research, particularly in media studies, where representations of beauty can reinforce or undermine social norms; in this context, Zijing Xie, from Shanghai United International School Gubei Campus, in the article "The Influence of Social Media on Perception of Body Image and Beauty Standards on Young People," states:

"Popular culture, including movies, television, and other entertainment media, maintains and promotes false beauty standards. These media greatly influence young people's perceptions of themselves and others, frequently presenting beauty as a crucial quality intimately connected to success, attractiveness, and desirability. Characters that meet traditional beauty standards commonly appear in mainstream movies and TV shows. Leading actors and actresses, whose appearances are frequently managed, become cultural icons representing beauty's predominant ideals. Children who watch these values on television often may think they are desirable and attainable." (Xie,2024).

Zijing Xie's article highlights how popular culture perpetuates unrealistic beauty standards and shapes young people's self-perceptions and societal views. These standards are seen as flourishing and desirable by glorifying traditionally attractive characters in the media. This often unattainable ideal can lead to distorted self-images and reinforce superficial values, which calls for a critical re-evaluation of the representation of beauty in the media. The reason is that meeting social beauty standards can open doors to various social and professional opportunities. Attractive people are often seen as more competent, social, and successful. This notion is supported by the "halo effect," a cognitive bias in which people assume that a physically attractive person also has other positive characteristics. This bias can lead to tangible benefits such as better job prospects, higher wages, and greater social acceptance. When society prioritizes physical appearance, other essential qualities, such as intelligence, kindness, and honesty, can be undervalued. This can create a low social environment where people are judged primarily on appearance rather than character or ability.

Shaping Societal Attitudes Through Manhwa Narratives:

In addition to social media promoting unrealistic beauty standards, certain forms of media, such as Manhwa, actively attempt to challenge and change these perceptions. Beauty often intersects with identity, self-worth, and social acceptance in South Korean media, such as dramas, movies, and Manhwa. Through visual storytelling and narrative depth, Manhwa provides nuanced platforms to explore these themes, mirroring society's values and a critique of its shortcomings. This paradox is vividly presented in Korean Manhwa, a reflection and a critique of these social norms. Concerning the Four prominent Manhwa—"True Beauty," "My ID is Gangnam Beauty," "Lookism," and "Marry My Husband"—these manhwas critically

examine the standards of beauty and encourage readers to rethink the importance of appearance and appreciate inner qualities such as kindness, intelligence, and resilience.

For some, meeting society's beauty standards can be empowering. It can increase self-confidence, improve social interactions, and give you a sense of control over your image. Makeup, fashion, and cosmetic procedures can be self-expression and personal transformation tools." Yaongyi's "True Beauty"(2018) is a prime example of a manhwa that directly addresses the paradoxes of beauty. The story follows Lim Ju Kyung, a high school student who uses makeup to change her appearance and gain social acceptance, highlighting her addiction to makeup to look good, fit in, and be respected. Makeup is a powerful tool for Ju Kyung to hide her insecurities and appear conventionally attractive. This change gives her new confidence and social acceptance, exemplifying beauty's power. The makeup allows Ju Kyung to reinvent herself and move up the social hierarchy at her school, giving her opportunities that were previously out of reach. However, this compulsion comes with considerable psychological stress. Ju Kyung constantly fears revealing her true, bare-faced self, creating an internal conflict between her desire for acceptance and her need for authenticity. This fear highlights the paradox of beauty: while makeup allows her to feel confident and accepted, it also becomes a source of anxiety and inauthenticity. Critical scenes, such as Ju Kyung revealing her naked face to her friends, are poignant comments on the low standards of beauty and the importance of self-acceptance. According to the reviewer Caitlin Moore, in the article "True Beauty Manhwa Volume 1-3 Review" states:

"One thing I do know, however, is that it is notorious for its strict beauty standards and the severe Lookism that permeates everyday life. Cosmetic surgery is extremely prevalent, and not being pretty or thin enough or going out without makeup carries a heavy social stigma. Anyone who pushes back against this is perceived as having a feminist agenda and becomes a target for harassment from the country's sizable men's rights activist movement. I hoped that True Beauty would interrogate this. However, every time it brushed up against the unfairness of how "ugly" (aka, not sufficiently attractive people, or women who do not wear makeup) people are treated, it shied away."(Moore,2023)

This critically highlights South Korea's strict beauty standards and ubiquitous appearance, emphasizing society's pressure to conform through plastic surgery and makeup. It notes the severe social stigma faced by those who do not meet those standards and the backlash against those who challenge the standard, often from men's rights activists. Throughout the series, Ju Kyung struggles with her self-confidence and fears that her true, no-makeup self will be rejected by her peers. This internal conflict highlights the paradox of beauty: while makeup allows her to feel confident and accepted, it also becomes a source of anxiety and inauthenticity. Critical scenes such as Ju Kyung's revelation to her friends are poignant comments on the superficiality of beauty and the necessity of acknowledging oneself.

Another Manhwa "Lookism" by Taejoon Park deals with discrimination based on appearance in a more direct and often brutal way. The main character, Park Hyung Suk, alternates between two bodies: one that is conventionally attractive and one that is overweight and not considered beautiful. This dual nature allows for an in-depth study of how people are treated based on appearance. Hyung Suk's experience with his two bodies is a clear example of

the paradox of beauty. As a charming young man, he is treated with respect, kindness, and admiration. People want to help him, and he quickly enters social circles.

On the other hand, because he is overweight and unattractive, he faces ridicule, ridicule, and rejection. Such disparity of treatment based on appearance highlights the superficiality and unfairness of society's beauty standards. In terms of bullying because of outer appearances, Jonathon Greenall, in his article, "How Lookism & True Beauty Tackle Dark Social Issues - In Different, Twisted Ways," states:

"Both series also focus heavily on bullying, with both protagonists getting bullied and witnessing other characters getting bullied throughout the story. The introduction of Lookism showed Park Hyung-Seok getting targeted due to his ugly body. However, Park Hyung-Seok used his new body and newfound fighting skills to fight against his bullies. He also used his skills to defend other people, including his new friend Jiho, like a traditional Shonen hero. The series also showed that even with this newfound strength, Park Hyung-Seok was still damaged by the bullying, with him later showing PTSD-like symptoms when he reencountered his bully."(Greenall,2022).

Through Park Hyung-Seok's journey, the series highlights how physical changes and new abilities can provide temporary respite and ways to protect oneself but not fully heal the deep psychological scars left by bullying.

South Korea is known for its extensive beauty culture, where plastic surgery plays an important role. This phenomenon is often referred to as the "plastic surgery capital of the world" and is the result of profound social pressure to conform to idealized standards of beauty. Understanding the problem of plastic surgery in South Korea requires a critical examination of the cultural, social, and psychological factors driving this widespread practice. In this context, Manhwa, like- "My ID is a Gangnam Beauty"(2017), is a powerful critique of the media and society's unrealistic and harmful beauty standards. The term "Gangnam Beauty" is significant because it encapsulates society's obsession with plastic surgery and the pressure to conform to South Korea's idealized standards of beauty. It critiques these standards' superficiality and psychological impact, emphasizing the importance of self-acceptance and the need for a more holistic definition of beauty.

"My ID is Gangnam Beauty" dives deep into Mi Rae's inner struggle with her identity. Despite her new face, she struggles with inadequacy and questions her self-confidence. This internal conflict is poignantly portrayed in scenes where Mi Rae is reminded of her pre-surgery self, highlighting the lasting impact of past trauma and societal decisions on her psyche. Her journey reflects the larger question of how plastic surgery can address surface-level insecurities but often fails to address deeper psychological scars. Concerning this, Soundarya Venkataraman, in her article, "My ID is Gangnam Beauty", Under the guise of a frothy rom-com lies a tactful look at the pressures of becoming and staying beautiful." states:

"So, it is not surprising that Mi Rae places utter importance on appearance, rating people's faces whenever she sees them. The constant harassment has led her to believe that if you aren't pretty, you have no value in this society. Thus, she decides to get plastic surgery done in hopes of finally being accepted by the very society that has harassed her till now."(Venkataraman,2020).

This shows that Mi Rae's decision to undergo plastic surgery is a response to relentless bullying and highlights how social pressures can make people take drastic measures to gain acceptance.

Jiwon's quest for revenge in "Marry My Husband" (2023) involves altering her appearance, which shows how changing her appearance can be a powerful tool for empowerment and revenge, challenging those who wronged her and subverting traditional beauty standards. In contrast, her best friend Soo-min's character exemplifies the strategic use of beauty for manipulation and power. Her beauty becomes a means to an end, providing her with opportunities and advantages that would otherwise be unavailable. She uses her attractiveness to deceive and manipulate those close to Jiwon, especially her fiancé Min-Hwan. The reunion confronts the past and present dynamic between Jiwon and his former tormentors. At his first meetings in the past, Jiwon was ridiculed and ostracized. However, her new beauty after the time travel changes the power dynamic in her favour. Her former tormentors, who had power over her, are now at her mercy, unaware that the woman they are dealing with is the very person they once despised. This shift in power dynamics highlights the superficial nature of societal beauty standards. It criticizes how society often equates value with appearance, exposing the fragility and inconsistency of such judgments. Jiwon's ability to manipulate these standards to her advantage shows the power and limitations of following societal beauty standards. In this context, Janine, in her article "Marry My Husband Attempts to Seduce 4B Feminists with Promises of Girlboss Success," states:

"The symbolic cutting of Ji-won's hair during her makeover before confronting her high school bullies could be considered a nod to the Escape the Corset movement. Short hair is viewed as a visible marker of divestment from strict feminine beauty standards. But this is integrated into a shopping and makeup montage, showing she still uses beauty standards but refuses its most conservative presentation."(Janine,2024).

Haircuts in literature and media often symbolize change, liberation, and new beginnings. For Jiwon, cutting hair is a matter of defiance and self-confidence. It represents a rejection of the beauty standards and expectations that limited her and a bold step to redefine herself on her terms. Cutting her hair is a physical manifestation of his inner determination to break free from the limitations of the past. Throughout the story, Jiwon is subjected to various forms of control and manipulation, often related to her appearance. By deciding to cut her hair, she regains control of her body and image. This self-transformation is a declaration of independence, indicating that the perceptions of others or social norms no longer define one. This powerful expression of independence shows that Jiwon is the master of her destiny.

Navigating the Beauty Paradox: Impact on Readers and Society in South Korean Manhwa:

The term "beauty paradox" in South Korean Manhwa, especially in works such as "True Beauty," "My ID on Gangnam Beauty," "Marry My Husband," and "Lookism," comes from the complex interplay of social obsessions, with a critique of physical appearance and the underlying norms of those stories. This paradox highlights the dual role of beauty as both empowering and psychologically distressing, illustrating the conflicting messages woven into these stories. The paradox lies in the simultaneous praise and criticism of beauty standards. On the other hand,

these men portray characters who achieve success, social acceptance, and even revenge through their physical appearance. On the other hand, they also reveal the superficiality, emotional burden, and social pressures involved in maintaining such standards.

Conclusion:

The beauty paradox of South Korean Manhwa highlights the complex relationship between societal beauty standards and individual self-esteem. These stories reinforce and criticize the obsession with physical appearance, providing a double perspective that encourages readers to reflect critically on their perceptions of beauty. In doing so, they contribute to a larger social conversation about the true nature of beauty and the need for more inclusive and compassionate standards.

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**Deployment of AI-Powered ELSA Speak in Developing the Undergraduates'
Speaking Skills through Role Plays**

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Abstract

The significance of speaking in mastering any language is unprecedented and the English language has no exemption from it. Speaking is acknowledged as the most essential component of communication. Signifying the importance and the growing necessity of speaking skills, the researchers deployed an AI-powered English Language Speech Application (ELSA) in this classroom action research as part of a cross-sectional quantitative study to nurture the speaking skills of the treatment group (18) through AI role plays. First, the researchers chose 28 randomly selected first-year second-semester engineering students of Sri Vasavi Engineering College, Tadepalligudem, Andhra Pradesh, India, in 2023–24 and bifurcated the entire sample (28) into two groups; control group (12) and treatment group (16). Then, the training for the treatment group lasted around 3 months, with 3 hours per week, summing up to 30 hours. Eventually, the findings revealed a discernible rise in the treatment group's speaking skills following the training.

Keywords: Speaking, Role Plays, AI, ELSA Speak.

Introduction:

Among the four language skills, speaking is the most crucial for effective communication in today's global world (Rao 6). It is acknowledged as becoming a more and more essential component of communication. Languages are seen as belonging to their speakers. As a result, speaking is essential to the communication process (Manipatruni et al. 107). Rao stated that teachers must be aware of the challenges faced by English language learners and work to incorporate a variety of instructional strategies to improve the speaking abilities of their students in English classrooms. This can be achieved by teachers by modifying their approaches and resources and by utilizing the most recent speaking skill teaching methodologies (7). It is well known these days that traditional methods of teaching English have given way to technology-based methods. Determining how employing technology affects students' performance is essential (Mandasari et al. 136). Therefore, to help ELLs greatly improve their speaking abilities, teachers should incorporate some group and pair activities into their normal English classes.

Substantiating the previous research and recommendations, this research was conducted to develop the undergraduates' Speaking Skills through conventional Role Plays (pair activities)

(Rao 7) in the English classroom and AI Role Plays using an AI-powered English Language Speech Application (ELSA) outside the classroom, which offers several features that allow students to speak at their own speed and ability level, verify their spelling, and get feedback on how well they speak, supporting the findings of (Karim et al. 664).Based on the need to develop the undergraduates' speaking skills, the researchers addressed the following research questions.

1. Does the ELSA Speak tech application help develop undergraduates' speaking skills through AI role plays?

2. Is there any discernible difference between the control group and the treatment group in the post-test results?

By answering these couple of research questions, this research contributed to the current research arena.

- Identifying the need for developing undergraduates' English-speaking skills.
- Deploying the AI-powered ELSA speak tech application to develop undergraduates' English-speaking skills through AI role plays.
- Deriving the likely results from the research groups in the post-test to disseminate the progress after the training.

Literature Review:

Growing Importance of Speaking Skills:

English's growing importance as a language for international communication has led to a sharp rise in the demand for fluency in the language. Without a language, communication is undoubtedly impossible. Ideas, feelings, and thoughts can only be communicated through language. However, speech is necessary to complete the communication goal (Akhter 4).It is crucial for language learning as it helps students understand and assimilate the language. It requires grammatically correct and pragmatically appropriate expressions, enhancing students' communicative abilities and allowing them to express themselves.

According to Van Huy et al., speaking involves active listening, nonverbal cues, honesty, and sincerity. It boosts self-esteem encourages others to do the same and improves a speaker's ability to communicate ideas, especially for those with excessive rumination. It allows people to stop over thinking and express opinions without fear of repercussions (155). Tiu et al. strongly emphasize that academic performance is intimately associated with effective communication, especially speaking proficiency. Strong oral communication abilities prepare students to contribute fully to class discussions, explain difficult concepts, and understand academic material. Additionally, being able to communicate verbally is essential for success in academic settings such as presentations, group discussions, debates and role plays (345).

Role of Role Plays in Improving Speaking:

Role-plays are classroom exercises that help students improve their speaking skills by allowing them to pretend to play various social roles and scenarios from real-world situations (Razi et al. 3-4). One of the teaching methods of the twenty-first century is role-playing. A simulation or an action in which a character is imitated is called role-play; most student role-plays involve becoming someone else in the actual world. It may encourage classroom speaking among students. Whereby students are assigned roles and are required to act and speak according

to their roles. Role-playing techniques help students become more confident and proficient speakers.

Pinatih claims that the focus of role-playing is on the students.

- Students' interest in studying can be piqued via role-playing.
- There are several chances for linguistic and social skill practice through role-playing.
- Role-playing can aid students in developing real-world concepts and deepening their understanding.
- Role-playing helps students develop positive social habits. They pick up behaviour tailored to a particular circumstance (105).

Not only may role-play help with important abilities needed for the workplace of the twenty-first century, but it also facilitates a great deal of understanding. Academic administrators would be wise to incorporate this crucial tactic as a cross-disciplinary initiative into their professional development plans (Clapper 43).

Virtual Practices in Speaking:

Virtual classrooms, facilitated by phone calls and video conferences, offer synchronous online interactions between teachers and students, a unique approach to teaching and learning amidst global network technology advancements (Alshumaimeri and Alhumud 81). The Virtual Classroom offers comparable or better course material mastery, higher satisfaction among students, and a more collaborative learning experience. Students perceive this as superior to traditional classrooms, as they have access to professors and a better overall educational experience (Hiltz and Wellman 47).

EFL teachers use online learning through various applications and platforms, including Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). This technology allows students to access learning materials from anywhere, including their homes. However, unstable connections can disrupt online learning, making it essential for schools and universities to continue teaching safely from home. ELSA Speak: English Accent Coach is an app designed to help students speak English fluently and confidently, including correct pronunciation of vowels, consonants, and word stress (Darsih et al. 2).

The Deployment of ELSA Speak in Developing English-Speaking Skills:

The ELSA application allows students to grade their speaking abilities, with seven levels of practice. It also covers phonetics, phonology, and correct writing and pronunciation of words, with a final test to assess students' progress. It allows users to listen to pronunciations and record their voices, providing feedback on correct and wrong pronunciations. It tracks scores up to 100, allowing learners to practice independently and adapt to the fast-changing world (Khadijah et al. 191). The basic ELSA interface is easy to use and offers navigation between skills, levels, reports, and other features in addition to topics. The three display languages that users can choose from—English, Vietnamese, or Japanese—are good indicators of who this software is intended for. The workouts for the skills comprise minimal pairings and beginning and finishing sounds, depending on the user's level of expertise. These are called segmental phonemes by applied linguists, which are separate sounds within a word. Among many other things, the

subjects cover food, entertainment, technology, culture, everyday talks, and relationships (Aswaty and Indari 20).

12 studies have also confirmed that ELSA can improve various English-related skills of students. In finding out whether AI can improve students' English pronunciation, results continue to be unanimously positive. Research that looked at ELSA's impact on students' self-regulated learning in addition to pronunciation produced encouraging findings. Students' ability and willingness to study self-regulated have improved, which has an impact on their speaking abilities. Additionally, students responded favourably to Elsa speaking as a learning tool in strengthening their self-regulated learning in speaking classrooms by demonstrating excitement and participation in class, according to interview and questionnaire results. They acknowledged that using Elsa's talk as a teaching tool helped them improve their competence and willingness to speak in class. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that AI helps students studying business English improve their communication abilities. Additionally, students could increase the range of practice techniques that are available to them to enhance their capacity for independent learning (Khalizah and Damanik 97-98).

According to Nurmanita, Many blogs and magazines in the digital media have covered the ELSA Speak Application. Moreover, 23,000 consumers have given it a rating of 4.5/5. Advantages as follows:

1. The straightforward ELSA interface lets users navigate between topics, skills, levels, reports, and other features. Users can choose from a variety of lessons by selecting a topic. Every session has multiple speaking and listening opportunities and is classified according to competence level.

2. With ELSA Speak, users have the option to personalize their "Profile" about sharing, notifications, and comments. In addition, users can examine the terms and rules of the app, set daily reminders, and identify goals.

3. Users of ELSA can obtain a comprehensive report in addition to a % correct score (16).

The ELSA Speak application's usage of AI technology is thought to be highly beneficial and successful in enhancing English speaking abilities, particularly in pronunciation. With several interactive elements, the application's AI can assist users in improving their English-speaking abilities (Widiasari and Maghfiroh 287).

Methodology

Participants:

This research included 28 student participants who were studying their first year of engineering in the field of Electronics and Communication Engineering at Sri Vasavi Engineering College, West Godavari, AP India. All these students were aged between 18 and 20 years, hailing from rural backgrounds. Among these 28 students, 12 were regarded as the control group (n1=12) and the remaining 16 students were in the treatment group (n2=16).

Materials:

This research optimized the AI-powered ELSA Speak mobile tech application for AI role plays in different levels, smart phones, and English laboratories for the practice of physical role

plays as part of the classroom research. The role plays as part of the prescribed curriculum were taken as the research content which was the dependent variable, while the smart phones and the ELSA Speak tech application were taken as the independent variable.

Procedure:

Fundamentally, this research was rigorously carried out for around 3 months from February 23, 2024, to May 10, 2024, summing up to 30 hours with 3 hours per week as per the collegiate timetable. At the outset of this research, the researchers conducted a pretest on February 23, 2024, for all 28 students to bifurcate them into two research groups i.e. control group and treatment group, based on the marks achieved in the pretest. After this division of the research groups, the treatment group received the training in a blended learning mode i.e. the conventional instruction in the classroom where the students took part in the physical role plays and the digital instruction out of the classroom where the students practised the AI role plays on ELSA Speak application using their smart phones, whereas the control group was restrained to the conventional instruction in the classroom. This way, the research took place for 30 hours and after the training, the researchers conducted a posttest for all 28 students to find any difference between the research groups' speaking improvement. Astonishingly, the results showed that there was a difference between the two groups of research, proclaiming that the treatment group could achieve better scores than the control group in the post-test.

Results & Discussion:

At the outset, the researchers conducted a pretest for all 28 participants on February 23, 2024 and bifurcated them into two research groups; a control group (n1=12) and a treatment group (n2), based on the pretest results. In the control group, the students' marks were 27, 29, 34, 34, 35, 38, 38, 41, 42, 43, 48 and 48. In other words, all these scores of the control group were of A2 level. In contrast, in the treatment group, the students' marks were 12, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 21, 21, 22, 23 & 24. In other words, all these scores of the treatment group were confined to the A1 level according to CEFR speaking rubrics (Table 1).

ELSA Speak Level	CEFR Level	Score
Advanced	C2	16-140
	C1	101-125
Intermediate	B2	75-100
	B1	50-74

Basic	A2	25-49
	A1	0-24

Table 1 CEFR level with Score Card

After the bifurcation of the two research groups, the researchers trained the treatment group through blended role plays; conventional role plays in the classroom and AI role plays outside the classroom through AI-powered ELSA Speak tech-application. In contrast to it, the control group was limited to the conventional role plays in the classroom. Likewise, the researchers trained the treatment group for around 3 months with 3 hours per week, summing up to 30 hours. The deployment of ELSA Speak in developing speaking skills through AI role plays proved effective. The role plays on ELSA Speak tech-application were aligned to CEFR-based levels of learning; Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. These levels helped the treatment group with instant feedback which measured the students' knowledge levels. The instant and positive feedback for the role-play activities provided by ELSA Speak thoroughly bolstered up the treatment group's confidence. The assessment summary provided by ELSA Speak helped the treatment group to know which level they attained in their activity. The role plays required two participants for each activity. However, ELSA Speak obviated the need for a partner in role plays when they were performed outside of the classroom. AI-driven ELSA Speak provided an AI participant for each role play and made it easy for each student to play opposite the AI participant.

After the training, the researchers conducted a posttest to see if there was any difference between the control group and the treatment group's speaking scores based on the CEFR speaking scorecard (Table 1). In the treatment group, the students' marks were 43, 46, 48, 49, 50, 53, 57, 58, 63, 68, 76, 78, 83, 89, 92 and 94. In other words, 4 students got A2 level, 6 got B1 and 6 more students procured B2 level. Figure 1 displays the Treatment group's marks and their CEFR levels.

Treatment Group's Scores in the Post-test vs. CEFR Level attained

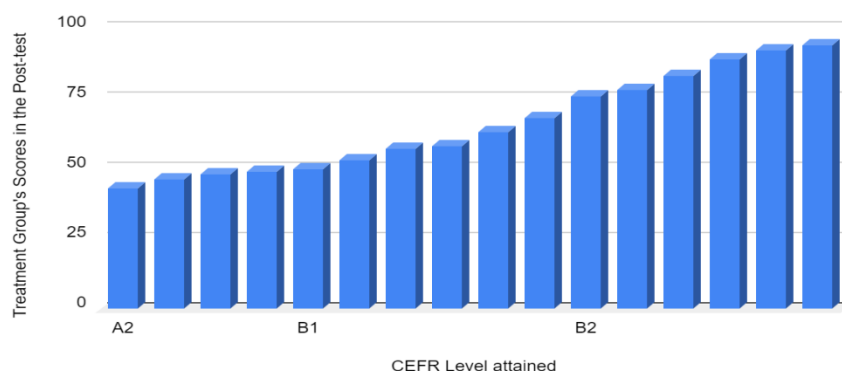


Figure 1

In contrast, in the control group, the students' marks were 29, 37, 38, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 56, 58, 60 and 70. In other words, 8 students got A2 level and 4 students procured B1 level according to CEFR speaking rubrics (Table 1). Figure 2 displays the Control group's marks and their CEFR levels.

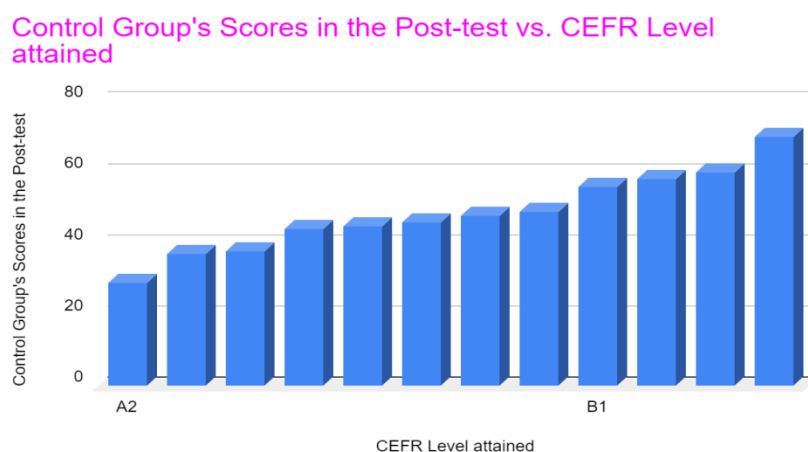


Figure 2

According to Figure 1, 4 students were restricted to the Basic level and the remaining 12 students attained the Intermediate level of ELSA Speak according to Table 1, while Figure 2 denotes that 4 students were restricted to the Basic level and only 4 students could attain the Intermediate level. These results indicated that the treatment group achieved better results than those of the control group in the post-test after training, supporting the findings of (Karim et al. 664).

Conclusion:

This research, in pursuit of answering a couple of research questions formulated by the researchers earlier, produced a discernible difference between the control group and the treatment group in the post-test, conducted after training, meeting the second research question. Particularly, the treatment group that pursued blended role plays; the conventional role plays in the classroom and the AI role plays outside the classroom, could procure better results than the control group that followed only the conventional role plays in the classroom on par with its counterpart.

At the outset of this research, the researchers deployed an AI-powered English Language Speech Application (ELSA) for the treatment group outside the classroom to derive better results. This deployment for around 3 months, showed a substantial development in the treatment group's speaking skills through role plays. Since the ELSA had features of providing the users with instant feedback and assessment summary with the attained level of CEFR, the treatment group could perform better than the control group in the post-test, justifying that the research was effective, and meeting the first research question. In the post-test, in the treatment group, 4 students got A2 level, 6 got B1 level and 6 more achieved B2 level (Figure 1), while in the control group, 8 students were restrained to A2 level and 4 more students could procure B1 level

(Figure 2) according to the CEFR level with Score Card (Table 1). Consequently, the treatment group had the upper hand over the control group in this research.

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The Illusion of Presence in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*

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Introduction:

Manjula Padmanabhan is an Indian writer known for her works as a comic strip artist, journalist, playwright and children's author. Her early years spent across Sweden, Thailand and Pakistan made her alienated and surprised at the traditional practices of India when her family returned to the country. In 1979, Padmanabhan started her journey as an illustrator with the book *Indrani* and *Enchanted Jungle* by Ali Baig and is also well known for the comic strip, *Doubletalk*, featured in 1982 that portrayed the central female character suki. Padmanabhan wrote *Harvest* for the Onassis Cultural Competition for Theatre, in 1997 which secured first place and also received the Onassis Award. The play was also featured as a film titled *Deham*, directed by Govind Nilani. Padmanabhan continued to work as a writer and illustrator and has also published many short stories.

Dystopian fiction is a genre of literature that investigates societies that feature oppression, environmental degradation, dehumanisation and totalitarian conditions. Such works of literature present a speculative fiction or alternate reality where writers evaluate the political, social, and economic systems in relation to the social issues of the contemporary.

The analysis of *Harvest* on the Illusion of presence brings in the demerits of technological advancement and its effect on human lives. This work also exposes the dominant attitude of first world countries and their suppressive attitude towards the third world countries continued in the twenty first century. *Harvest* centres around a lower class family of four in Mumbai, cramped in a one room apartment signifying a poor financial condition. Om, the breadwinner of the family desperates to improve his family conditions and joins the Interplanta Services which trades the organs of its members to rich recipients of the west in return for a sophisticated lifestyle. As the story progresses, their home becomes a site of surveillance and control invading the privacy of the family. The wealthy recipients maintain their contact with the donors and control their daily activities through a contact module installed at their homes. Such incidents question not only the social positions but also the ethical boundaries in technological advancements.

Methodology:

Posthumanism is a critical and philosophical moment that examines the boundaries and limitations of life as a human in the midst of rapid technological, environmental, and biological advancements in the globe. The key concepts deal with the rejection of anthropocentrism and highlights the interconnectedness of all beings such as life, technology and environment. In terms of literature, posthumanism explores the themes of cyborgs, hybridisation, Ecocriticism, Non-Human Agency, Digital and Virtual Realities. It is a dynamic field of approach that explores the complex relationships between humans, technology, and the environment and also

offers a new perspective of understanding identity, autonomy, ethics and existence in the 21st century.

Katherine Hayles in her book, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* examines the blurring boundaries between humans and machines and analyses how such major shifts challenge our ideas of being human. According to Hayles, “human being is first of all embodied being” (283). She critiques the idea of disembodiment in virtual reality and argues that physical bodies are integral to concrete connection with the world. Her concept of virtual bodies investigates how virtual reality and digital technologies create a new form of hybrid beings that covers both physical and virtual dimensions. Overall her ideas on posthumanism are a thought provoking venture in understanding the narratives in association with the themes of Artificial Intelligence, Cybernetics and Virtual reality.

Through an extensive lens of Hayles’ posthumanist theory, the study offers a profound examination of *Harvest* in terms of ethical ramification of technology in human life. The study focuses on the lifestyle changes in the Prakash family and the dehumanising state after their tenure with InterPlanta services. It also examines the play’s critical role in portraying the commodification of human bodies and the manipulation of presence in the human world.

Literature Review:

The article “Representation of Emerging Technologies: Postmodern Urban Dystopia in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest*” by Surbhi Saraswat, examines contemporary issues through a futuristic lens and comments on urban consumerism and technology, portraying the city as both alluring and entrapping.

The article “Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest*: A Battle Between Machine and (Wo)Man” by R. T. Bedre and M.M. Giram explores the play’s depiction of the struggle between humans and machines. The paper highlights the portrayal of a dystopian era where machines control human lives. The paper also ends on a revolutionary note where a human’s will may also overpower a machine, emphasising more on the character of Jaya and also insists on the controlled usage of technology.

The article “Exploring the Posthuman Condition: Technological Dominance and Human Identity in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest*” by Mohammad Farogh Alam and Vijoy Mishra exposes how technology dominates and challenges human autonomy. It explores themes like techno-colonial exploitation, digital identity, and human resistance to machine intrusion. The characters transform into extensions of machines, critiquing the displacement of humans by technology and the grim reality of organ trafficking.

The article, “Futuristic Dramaturgy and Posthumanist Culture in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest*: A Critical Study,” by Bhaskar Kumar Das examines the innovative approaches in the play. Das highlights how Indian drama evolved from the erstwhile traditions documented in the *Natyasastra*. This evocative representation, the play, was lauded as posthumanist culture with modern aesthetics and innovative stage-craft. The play is defined as a medium to critique and ruminate upon contemporary social issues and their future consequences with technological advancement.

The article, “WOMAN, BODY AND VIRTUAL SPACE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF MANJULA PADMANABHAN’S PLAY HARVEST” by Rachana Pandey examines the interplay between gender, virtual space and power dynamics portraying the virtual figure Ginni controlling Om, Jaya, and their family via the Contact Module. The swap of Ginni/Virgil shows how virtual spaces amplify differences, and the objectification of bodies, pointing out the fact that even in online spheres, such phenomena are not amiss. Virtual bodies are thus viewed as cultural constructs in which humans use machines to further embrace the binary classification of gender and objectification within technological contexts as asserted by Pandey.

The article “Artificial Intelligence Corroding Human Values: Analysis of Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Harvest*” by Dr. Payal Khurana examines how *Harvest* critiques technology and materialism. Khurana highlights how technology dehumanises the characters and disrupts emotional and familial bonds, emphasising the play’s warning about the dangers of technological control and materialism. This analysis reflects ongoing concerns about societal values and relationships in contemporary contexts.

Discussion:

Katherine Hayles, in her exploration of posthumanism, discusses the dichotomy between information patterns and materiality. She argues that “posthuman view privileges informational pattern over material instantiation, so that embodiment in a biological substrate is seen as an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life (2). In *Harvest*, the characters’ bodies are reduced to mere information patterns. Om Prakash, the protagonist, sells his organs to the international corporation InterPlanta Services. This transaction transforms his body into a series of valuable parts, catalogued and assessed for their utility to wealthy buyers. Om’s body becomes a repository of data, valued not for its inherent humanity but for its utility in terms of transplantable organs. The Contact Module, a technological device through which the buyers communicate with the sellers, symbolises this transformation. The buyers’ interest in Om and Jeetu is purely transactional, focused on the physiological data that determine the worth of their organs. This commodification process dehumanises the characters, stripping them of their individuality and reducing them to mere sources of valuable information.

Contrasting this is the materiality of the characters’ lived experiences. Om, Jaya, Jeetu, and Ma continue to live in their cramped apartment, dealing with the daily struggles of poverty. Their physical suffering, emotional pain, and interpersonal relationships form the core of their material existence. The economic gain derived from the sale of organs benefits the wealthy buyers, while the sellers are left to grapple with the material consequences of their decisions. Jeetu’s body is brutally harvested, leaving him a mere shell of his former self. This visceral representation of materiality serves as a powerful counterpoint to the abstract information patterns valued by the global market.

The Contact Module imposes cognitive constraints on the characters, primarily through constant monitoring and directives. For example, Virgil, the buyer, uses the Contact Module to issue commands and instructions to Om and his family, dictating their daily routines and behaviours. This form of control limits the characters’ ability to make independent decisions and diminishes their cognitive autonomy. While the Contact Module could theoretically enhance

cognitive abilities by providing information and guidance, in practice, it serves to reinforce the power dynamics between the buyers and sellers. The constant surveillance creates a psychological environment of fear and compliance, inhibiting the characters' capacity for critical thinking and independent action. At best, the characters become passive receivers of orders to execute this or that, their cognitive faculties subordinated to the requirements of the technological system.

It entails strict health regimes for Om and his family members, in order to maintain them in the best possible condition for harvesting organs. This includes periodic medical check-ups and 'prescribed diets', with monitoring provided by the Contact Module. Although these can be seen to a certain extent as providing physical enhancements, improving their health and fitness, ultimately they have an effect of reducing their physical autonomy.

The regime imposed by the Contact Module dictates their daily activities and restricts their freedom of movement and choice. The physical enhancement becomes a tool of exploitation, where the improved physical condition of the characters benefits the buyers at the expense of the sellers' autonomy and well-being.

Katherine Hayles' notion of cyborg identity is against traditional humanism, for it examines how technology blends with human bodies and consciousness to give birth to a hybrid identity. The Contact Module, as a harvesting device, is an example of a cyborg identity in that it combines human and technological aspects reflecting Hayles statement "the cyborg signifies something more than a retrofitted human. It points toward an improved hybrid species that has the capacity to be humanity's evolutionary successor" (119). The Contact Module blurs the lines between organic bodies and technology. Om's body is optimised and controlled to serve buyers, reflecting a cyborg identity where human and machine interactions are inseparable.

The role that technology plays in mediating relationships here is sharp, making one question traditional notions of intimacy, trust, and familial bonding. Now, the Contact Module represents technological control over life, how characters relate to each other and the larger world around them. This mediation creates an illusion of presence and connection while complicating genuine human interactions. It provides a direct link between the characters and the buyers, creating an illusion of intimacy and presence. For instance, Virgil's omnipresent voice and surveillance give a semblance of a close, caring relationship, but this is superficial and manipulative. The buyers' intrusion into the family's private space masks the exploitative nature of the relationship, presenting it as a benevolent oversight. The mediated interactions in *Harvest* lack emotional depth and authenticity, as the characters' lives are dictated by external technological forces rather than their own volition.

Conclusion:

The technological mediation in the play of posthumanism in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest* presents a significant insight into human relationships and identity in technological hands. Katherine Hayles' theories regarding tension between information pattern and materiality, cognitive and physical enhancement effect, and cyborg identity have been brought across with much clarity through the play's narrative and character interaction.

Om Prakash's body becomes data in *Harvest*, highlighting the dehumanisation of people in a posthuman era. The Contact Module's reduction of lived experiences to abstract data critiques the global market's preference for data over human reality. It imposes constraints on Om and his family, reinforcing power imbalances and reducing autonomy. Technological interventions exploit rather than enhance, turning the characters into passive entities. Further, it merges human and technological elements, creating a cyborg identity that blurs the line between organic bodies and technology, reshaping human existence and agency. The play demonstrates how technology creates an illusion of intimacy while complicating genuine connections.

Overall, *Harvest* critiques a world where technology dominates human existence. Through Hayles' posthumanism, the study highlights how information patterns overshadow material realities, how technological enhancements become tools of control, and how cyborg identities challenge traditional humanity. It offers a powerful commentary on the dehumanising effects of technological commodification and calls for a reevaluation of our mediated lives.

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