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Research ought to be active to create a major boundary in the academic world. It must enrich the neo-theoretical frame that facilitates re-evaluation and enhancement of existing practices and thoughts. Eventually, this will effect in a primary discovery and lean-to the knowledge acquired. Research is to establish, confirm facts, reiterate previous works ant to solve issues. An active endeavor to endow rational approach to these types for educational reformations through academic research has become the focal intention of the journal. Now, we feel very proud to bring the Volume 8, Issue 3, July 2026 Issue contributed by the academicians and research Scholars of the literary field.

Dr. M. Vinoth Kumar & Dr. S. Kulandhaivel
Editors'-in-Chief

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Constructing and Weaponising Gender: Masculinity, Femininity and Psychological Manipulation in *American Psycho* and *Gone Girl*

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Abstract

Gender in contemporary American literature and cinema is seen as an identity class and an antisocial social performance through which energy, status, vulnerability, and management are negotiated. This paper examines how Bret Easton Ellis's American Psycho (1991) and Gillian Flynn's Gone Girl (2012) construct and weaponise masculinity and femininity in the novels. Although the texts differ in genre, setting and narrative method, both thriller novels reveal the psychological consequences of inflexible gender expectations. This demonstrates how gendered performances can become instruments of identity manipulation. Patrick Bateman embodies an excessive form of consumerist and competitive masculinity wherein wealth, body appearance, sexual entitlement, professional reputation and emotional detachment are transformed into signs of masculine authority. Amy Dunne, through comparison, develops and strategically deploys culturally recognisable sorts of femininity, mainly the idealised 'cool girl' persona, domestic perfection, emotional vulnerability, and victimhood. The analysis uses a qualitative comparative technique that combines feminist literary criticism, gender performativity, masculinity studies, psychoanalytic methods of identity, and theories of energy and illustration. The analysis argues that both works portray gender as constructed rather than fixed, while also showing that social expectations can be manipulated from within. The thriller "American Psycho" depicts a masculinist culture in which identification will become inseparable from consumption, opposition and domination. At the same time, "Gone Girl" interrogates the expectations imposed on women and the strategic possibilities those expectations create in life. The comparison portrays that psychological manipulation in the works is inseparable from the gender oriented overall performance. Bateman's masculine character produces invisibility, while Amy's feminine character generates social credibility and interpretive power. Nevertheless, the texts reveal the instability of gender stereotypes and the traumatic effectiveness of weaponised identity.

Keywords: Gender Creation, Psychological Manipulation, *American Psycho*, *Gone Girl*, Patriarchy, Identity Crisis, Power, Feminist Complaint.

Introduction

Gender is not a mere a biological distinction; it is also a cultural gadget that organises expectations about appearance, behaviour, sexuality, authority, emotion, relationships, and social cost. Many literary and cinematic narratives often make these expectations and have visible presentation of characters that conform to gender norms, resist them or deliberately perform them for strategic ends. In such narratives, masculinity and femininity can grow to



be types of social situation. A person may gain credibility or social safety by acting conventionally, while others may gain respect by acting unconventionally. The mental dimensions of this system come to be especially sizeable whilst gendered identities are consciously manipulated.

Bret Easton Ellis's thriller novel *American Psycho* (1991) and Gillian Flynn's thriller novel *Gone Girl* offers distinctive complementary examinations of this phenomenon. *American Psycho* presents Patrick Bateman, a wealthy Wall Street professional whose carefully maintained identity rests on status, consumption, physical appearance, competition and masculine dominance. His narration destabilises the difference between reality and fantasy while it exposes a social environment in which extreme violence can coexist with professional success and superficial respectability. Bateman's identity is therefore no longer built in isolation; a subculture rewards particular performances of masculinity. *Gone Girl* (2012) centres on the characters Amy Dunne and Nick Dunne, whose marriage becomes a struggle over competing narratives, expectations, and public perceptions. Amy's construction of the 'cool girl' identification demonstrates how femininity can be shaped according to male expectancies and later strategically repurposed. The novel explores the pressure on women to seem appealing, sexually confident, emotionally accommodating, and, at the same time, easily perfect, while also criticising them when they fail to meet these contradictory expectations. Amy's manipulation is stressful precisely because it exploits assumptions about what a lady, spouse, sufferer, or proper character is expected to look and behave like. Therefore, the two works can be examined as research on gender as performance and approach. Bateman and Amy are not equal and their works should not be treated as morally symmetrical. Their juxtaposition shows how exceptional gendered scripts produce exclusive varieties of power. Bateman benefits from systems of masculine privilege and institutional credibility, while Amy identifies the cultural scripts surrounding femininity and uses them to assemble persuasive narratives. Both characters display that social identity depends, in part, on others' recognition.

This paper investigates three important questions by the intensive study of the novels. The first one is how is masculinity and femininity built in *American Psycho* and *Gone Girl*? The second one is, how do the protagonists rework gender expectancies into instruments of mental manipulation? And the third one asks, what do the two works suggest about the connection among gender performance, social strength, and identity? The analysis argues that both texts present gender as risky and performative. However, they emphasise unique social mechanisms; the novel *American Psycho* focuses on masculine privilege, client capitalism, and institutional normalisation and the novel *Gone Girl* focuses on gender expectations, marriage, media narratives and the politics of victimhood. Indeed, both validate the gender oriented concerns through the novels.

Literature Review

Gender studies are the fundamental theoretical basis for studying these texts. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* has been the foundational distinction between biological intercourse and the social procedures that produce femininity, famously by emphasising that womanhood is culturally fashioned rather than biologically given. This sort of perspective is useful for the novel *Gone Girl* because Amy's character identity is repeatedly shaped by expectations surrounding desirable womanhood, marriage, sexuality and emotional behaviour.

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity further develops the idea that gender is



constituted through repeated acts, gestures, conventions and social expectations. Overall, gender performance does not necessarily mean people are consciously pretending to be someone else; instead, gender becomes recognisable through repeated cultural practices. However, in both novels *American Psycho* and *Gone Girl*, the protagonists make the strategic dimensions of overall performance visible in a strange manner. Bateman consciously manages his career identity and intake practices while Amy intentionally assembles recognisable versions of femininity for a one kind of audiences.

R. W. Connell's paintings of hegemonic masculinity apply especially well to *American Psycho*. Hegemonic masculinity describes culturally dominant varieties of masculinity that legitimise male authority and set up hierarchies amongst masculinities and among women and men. Bateman's world is organised around competition, wealth, bodily health, sexual fame, professional prestige and dominance. His identity is linked to a broader masculine hierarchy rather than simply being a personal psychological abnormality.

Michael Kimmel's scholarship on masculinity also helps explain the importance of fame, opposition, and masculine validation. Masculinity may be understood as a social achievement that should be tested and known. The intense opposition among Bateman and his friends, which includes their fixation on enterprise cards, restaurants, clothing, bodies, and professional fame, illustrates how masculine identity becomes performative and comparative.

Consumer culture is another important lens for reading *American Psycho*. Jean Baudrillard's theories of the spectacle and the sign value provide a useful framework for understanding how commodities operate as markers of identity. In *American Psycho*, the restaurants, generation, physical appearance and professional reputation often function as signs and symptoms through which characters distinguish them. Bateman's obvious individuality is ironically produced through conformity to a shared client code. His identity will become difficult to separate from the gadgets and rituals that symbolise elite masculinity.

Feminist scholarship on media illustration is specifically relevant to *Gone Girl*. Susan Bordo's paintings on the cultural creation of the women body demonstrate how femininity is regulated through expectations about appearance, field, sexuality, and desirability. Amy's self-presentation can be studied as an excessive fictionalisation of this process. Her 'cool girl' identity is produced through a deal of cultural expectations. She is expected to be appealing but convenient, sexually confident yet not threatening, unbiased yet accommodating and thrilling while remaining ideal.

Laura Mulvey's influential paintings on visual culture and the male gaze also help explain how femininity can be organised around being seen and evaluated. Although *Gone Girl* is a literary text, its adaptation and media-focused narrative make questions of spectatorship, public photography, and visual credibility especially important. Amy knows people no longer respond absolutely to information; they respond to recognisable pictures of innocence, marriage, femininity and victimhood.

Psychological approaches to identity and manipulation similarly light up both works. For example, Erving Goffman's "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" conceptualises social interaction as performance where the people manage impressions for specific audiences. This model helps to explain Bateman's expert character and Amy's multiple public identities through their novels. Their characters distinguish between non-public expertise and public presentation, but their strategies operate within distinct power systems of their own character.



The existing criticism of *American Psycho* focused on misogyny, customer capitalism, postmodern fragmentation, violence and the instability of Bateman's narration. The studies on *Gone Girl* often examine marriage, media subculture, women's anger, misogyny, unreliable narration, and 'cool girl' discourse. This study contributes to those discussions by placing the two works in a comparative study and treating gender itself as a strategic technology of social recognition rather than arguing that masculinity and femininity function identically. Hence, the paper examines how each gender dialogue offers specific possibilities for strength and manipulation.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative textual evaluation of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. The analysis is interpretive rather than statistical and focuses on narrative construction, characterisation, habitual motifs, communication, social behaviour, and representations of gender. The two texts are tested against selected theoretical views from feminist critique, gender studies, masculinity research, consumer-culture theory, and performance theory.

Analytical Framework

The analysis is organised around four interconnected standards such as gender creation, gender performance, mental manipulation, and social power. Gender creation refers to the cultural expectancies through which masculinity and femininity come to be recognisable. Gender performance refers to the repeated behaviours and appearances via which characters keep socially legible identities. Psychological manipulation refers to deliberate or strategic attempts to shape how others perceive, interpret, or respond to a man or woman. Social energy refers to the capacity to shape results through repute, credibility, institutional position, cultural expectations, or control over narrative.

Comparative Perspective of the Novels

In particular, five major comparative classes guide the analysis. First, the study examines body presentation, apparels, grooming, physical fitness, sexuality, and appearance. Second, it analyses professional and financial reputation as sources of gendered authority. Third, it investigates relationships and emotional expectations, particularly marriage, intimacy, jealousy, and management. Fourth, it studies public photography and narrative credibility, including the role of media and social institutions. Fifth, it considers the ethical effects of weaponised gender performance and the extent to which the texts critique the social structures that make such manipulation viable.

Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on the two primary literary texts rather than attempting a comprehensive evaluation of each model, evaluation, or essential interpretation. Because each work incorporates worrying fabric, the analysis emphasises mental, cultural, and representational significance in preference to reproducing photo descriptions of violence. The argument also avoids treating either protagonist as a customary representation of men or women. Instead, Bateman and Amy are analysed as exaggerated fictional figures through which particular cultural anxieties are being seen.

Masculinity as a Performance of Status in *American Psycho*

American Psycho constructs masculinity through a tightly connected device of financial fulfilment, bodily field, client knowledge, sexual competition, and expert authority. Bateman's identity depends heavily on external markers. His condominium, clothes, physique, restaurant reservations, business cards, and knowledge of luxury goods repeatedly



establish his social function. These gadgets and practices do not merely decorate his identity; they help create it. Bateman's expert surroundings intensify this process. The guys around him are remarkably similar, and their conversations regularly revolve around symbols of reputation. Their identities become interchangeable because shared cultural codes produce them. This interchangeability subjects Bateman to the fact that it partly makes his overall performance seem legitimate. Masculinity is consequently represented now not as an inner essence but as a competitive public success.

Consumerism and Masculine Identity in *American Psycho*

The novel's distinctive interest in commodities shows how consumer culture turns fabric gadgets into signs of masculine identity. Bateman's consumption is obsessive because he uses merchandise to talk difference. His individuality is caught within a standardised system of elite wish and desire. Therefore, Ellis links masculinity to a client tradition that promises distinctiveness while producing conformity. This relationship between consumer ideology and masculinity reveals the emotional emptiness of Bateman's interiority. Therefore, the inability to form meaningful human connections is not always presented as a private mental disorder for this novel. Yet, it is reinforced by an environment that mechanically evaluates people by appearance, price and social usefulness.

Violence, Entitlement and Institutional Invisibility

Bateman's violence should not be reduced to an easy statement about male nature. The novel presents an alternative location of severe violence within a social environment characterised by misogyny, competition, objectification and indifference. One of the most traumatic factors of the narrative is how easily Bateman's social identity can overshadow or make it difficult to understand recognition of his motives. His professional popularity gives him a form of credibility that people no longer possess. Bateman's volatile narration complicates interpretation of the novel in a critical mode. Whether the precise activities are literal, imagined, exaggerated or ambiguous, the cultural critique remains substantial. The social world is so devoted to recognising the successful masculine professional that it can ignore evidence that contradicts this identification. Therefore, masculinity operates as a simple and personal performance but operates as a social shield.

Femininity and the 'Cool Girl' Construction in *Gone Girl*

Gone Girl offers a different version of gender production through Amy Dunne. The 'cool girl' identity represents a culturally ideal rather one than a true personality. The idealised girl is appealing, sexually confident, socially adaptable, humorous, easy and willing to revel in traditionally masculine interests. Amy's critique of this well-known character shows the contradiction at its centre: women are anticipated to perform handy compatibility while hiding the labour required to maintain it. Through Amy, Flynn shows that femininity can become a disturbing form of emotional labour. The person recognises that social approval depends on acting to embody a great. Therefore, her manipulation is constructed on cultural familiarity. She no longer invents an entirely new identity; she selects and exaggerates existing expectations. The overall performance works because other characters already apprehend and accept it as true within the gender script.

Marriage as a Site of Gender Performance in *Gone Girl*

Marriage in the novel *Gone Girl* functions as a social stage on which both partners perform expected roles. Nick is expected to look like a loving husband, while Amy is expected to look like a suitable, supportive, and dedicated wife. As the marriage deteriorates, the gap between private enjoyment and public presentation becomes increasingly critical. The



novel suggests that modern marriage can involve constant identity control because partners are judged not only by one another, but also by a circle of relatives, friends, neighbours, and the wider public. Amy's portrays the trivial marital expectations to demonstrate how gender stereotypes have become tools of narrative development in the novel. Her presentation is persuasive and aligns with familiar cultural assumptions about endangered women, troubled marriages and male responsibility. The novel examines the social conditions that make certain kinds of deception plausible on women.

Media, Victimhood, and Narrative Power

The relevant insight of the novel *Gone Girl* is about how storytelling can produce public reality. Media institutions seek emotionally legible narratives, and gender stereotypes offer ready-made frameworks for decoding complicated activities. Amy knows this dynamic and constructs a story that may organise public sympathy. The novel never argues that girls are manipulative and the men are suspicious all the times. In fact, it shows how cultural narratives shape public judgment. The lacking wife, the grieving husband, the imperfect marriage and the innocent woman are all recognisable narrative roles. Once someone convincingly occupies any such role, the audiences may also interpret ambiguous evidence in ways that strengthen the existing story.

Comparative Findings on Gender as Social Technology in the Novels

The comparative result portrays gender as a form of social production. Bateman uses masculine credibility, wealth, professional identification, and social conformity to create a persona that commands recognition in male perspective and Amy uses femininity, vulnerability, marital symbolism and culturally recognisable narratives to persuade belief in women's perspective. Their methods differ because the social assets available to masculine and feminine performances differ. Bateman's concept stems from social privilege and works toward invisibility and Amy's power operates through strategic visibility in the novels. She understands how visibility, sympathy and gender expectations can shape a persuasive narrative in their works. This distinction is crucial because it prevents a false equivalence between the characters—the texts, as an alternative, show that gendered power is structurally uneven and context-dependent.

Psychological Manipulation and the Fragmentation of Identity

Both works link gender performance to fragmented identity. Bateman's self is split between an outwardly successful professional identity and a deeply unstable inner life. Amy further splits into several versions of herself, alongside her spouse: the 'cool girl,' the sufferer, and the strategic narrator. In each case, manipulation becomes viable because identification is treated as something that can be designed for a target audience. The psychological outcomes vary in the both novels. The novel *American Psycho* emphasises vacancy, repetition, alienation and the collapse of distinction between public identity and private identity. The novel *Gone Girl* emphasises resentment, performance fatigue, marital warfare and the desire to manipulate how a character could be interpreted. Both of the novels suggest that extreme dependence on external validation can produce profound instability.

Neither text endorses its protagonists' manipulative behaviour. Instead, their extremity allows social grievance. Bateman's behaviour exposes the risks of a lifestyle that equates masculine fulfilment with dominance and consumption. Amy's behaviour exposes the risks and contradictions of gender expectations, especially the strain placed upon girls to encompass impossible ideals. In the same time, *Gone Girl* requires an analysis because its critique of gender politics may be appropriated in simple ways. Amy is not a proof that



femininity is inherently deceptive as like Bateman who is not a proof that masculinity is inherently violent. The characters of the both writers are built as awesome and traumatic figures. Their narrative function is to show how cultural assumptions can be manipulated when audiences rely on stereotypes rather than complexity.

The analysis of the novels *American Psycho* and *Gone Girl* demonstrates that gender performance is inseparable from systems of power and recognition. The institutions of finance, consumer capitalism, male peer culture and prestige help to construct Bateman's masculinity. Amy's femininity operates within a specific field that has been fashioned through the expectations of splendour, marriage, emotional labour, sexuality and victimhood. Therefore, the novels offer complementary critiques of gendered social structures rather than interchangeable models of manipulation.

The novels also enquire the reliability of appearances. In *American Psycho*, the surface of corporate respectability conceals, or at least obscures, Bateman's inner and outer behaviour. In *Gone Girl*, apparently the intimate marital identities are revealed as constructed performances that can be strategically revised. Thus, the reader is compelled to distinguish between who characters are, whom they claim to be and whom others want them to be. A full-size theoretical implication is that gender performativity has outcomes beyond identity. Repeated gendered behaviour can become a mechanism of authority, credibility, exclusion, or manipulation. This suggests that each instance of gender performance is consciously deceptive. Rather, the texts dramatise the point at which normal social performance becomes deliberate, strategic performance. The boundary between identity and manipulation will become volatile. Another point is that the cultural stereotypes can be characterised as shortcuts for interpretation. People frequently make judgments by familiar classes such as a hit businessman, devoted spouse, grieving husband, harmless female, dangerous guy and so forth. Ellis and Flynn show that such classes can be exploited because they simplify complicated the realities. Hence, psychological manipulation succeeds in part because audiences help to assemble what it means for them and for the society.

Conclusion

This study has examined the construction and weaponisation of masculinity and femininity in Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* and Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*. By using a comparative framework on gender performativity, hegemonic masculinity, feminist critique, purchaser-subculture theory and performance research, the research study shows that each text treats gender as a socially produced and strategically recognisable identity. The novel *American Psycho* provides masculinity as deeply related to repute, consumption, bodily field, professional opposition, sexual entitlement and social authority. Bateman's identity is strong not because it expresses a proper masculine essence, but because it aligns with institutional and cultural expectations of elite male fulfilment. The novel's ambiguity further shows that a society focused on surfaces may fail to recognise what lies under them. In comparison, the novel *Gone Girl* emphasises the construction of femininity through sexuality, emotional labour, marriage and public sympathy. Amy's 'cool girl' character exposes the conflicts of an idealised femininity that demands simultaneous attractiveness, independence, accommodation and effortlessness. Her manipulation demonstrates how expectations can be repurposed to shape public perception. The long-term comparison is well known and shows that gender can function as a form of social strength. Masculine and feminine performances do not have identical resources. However, each can shape how individuals are interpreted and treated. The protagonists weaponise gender now not necessarily by pretending to be another



person but through information about the expectations that audiences already attach to gendered identities. Therefore, the novels *American Psycho* and *Gone Girl* remain major texts for examining current questions of identity, sexuality, media, consumerism, marriage and psychological manipulation. Their lasting contribution lies in making visible the distance between identification as lived experience and identity as social performance. By exposing them, both works encourage readers to impeach the stereotypes through which masculinity and femininity are regarded, rewarded and occasionally exploited.

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The Effectiveness of Voiceprints in Criminal Investigations and their Role in Achieving Justice

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Abstract

Forensic linguistics is a relatively young scientific field characterized by a proliferation of terminology and a broad range of concepts. It seeks to analyse spoken texts scientifically within the context of criminal justice, relying on rigorous, systematic analysis of texts and discourse to extract verifiable linguistic indicators that support the judiciary and law-enforcement agencies in cases where language plays a central role. This field also studies the linguistic fingerprint, drawing on methods inspired by text linguistics and discourse analysis. The voiceprint is a modern technique used in criminal and security investigations. It relies on analysing the unique characteristics of the human voice to establish identity. As technology advances, this technique has become an effective tool for detecting crimes and identifying perpetrators, thereby contributing to justice. This paper examines the effectiveness of the voiceprint and its role in criminal evidence, focusing on practical applications and the legal and scientific challenges, to uncover the linguistic evidence that helps establish or refute a defendant's guilt.

Keywords: Voiceprint, Forensic Linguistics, Judicial Linguistics, Criminal Investigations.

Introduction

Forensic voice comparison has evolved from early impressionistic methods into a standardised scientific framework that combines auditory-linguistic analysis, acoustic measurement, statistical modelling and validated automatic recognition systems to quantitatively assess the strength of evidence when matching recorded calls to suspects' voices. Recent literature confirms that the likelihood-ratio framework is the correct approach for evaluating evidence strength, using an “empirical demonstration” approach that requires relevant data, quantitative measurements, statistical modelling, and experimental testing under conditions similar to those of the case. International bodies have also established standard practice guidelines—such as OSAC (United States) and ENFSI (Europe)—that guide experts on analysis procedures, quality control, documentation and interpretation, reducing methodological and procedural risks in voice-identity cases.

Research Problem

Despite the growing reliance on voice evidence in criminal investigations, central methodological and legal problems arise. The study investigates how to ensure the scientific reliability of matching recordings to suspects' voices. Moreover, what international standards govern sample collection, verification, calibration and interpretation to provide the court with scientifically defensible results and limit the risk of wrongful conviction? The problem becomes more complex when recordings are short, noisy, or in a dialect different from the comparison samples, requiring selection of an appropriate reference population, empirical validation of the analysis system under case-like conditions, and an expert report that discloses the strength of the evidence and the associated uncertainty.



People often take language for granted, but for you and me it is anything but; we recognise the latent power in words and their meanings. This observation, inspired by the federal investigation series *Manhunt: Unabomber* reflects language's importance and its vital role in legal fields—language can convict or exonerate in the world of crime. This interplay between language, the judiciary, law, and crime gave rise to forensic linguistics, a diverse scientific field that overlaps with numerous disciplines. Its importance is tied to legal and judicial practice, making it an engaging and influential field; in addition, forensic linguistics connects to a range of linguistic and non-linguistic areas of knowledge, such as phonetics, lexicology, morphology, syntax, semantics, dialectology, functional, social, psychological and neurological linguistics, as well as computational linguistics, criminology and sociology, and law, among others (Antar Salhi, n.d., p. 1320).

Despite the importance of this scientific field, published research in Arabic remains very limited compared to what is available in English; the field is developing rapidly, with active efforts to define it, delineate its scope and applications, and highlight its importance. Among the most notable works published on this subject in Arabic is the book *Forensic Linguistics: An Introduction to Language, Crime, and Law*, translated by Muhammad ibn Nasser Al-Haqbani from the original by John Olsson in 2008; an article by Dr. Abd al-Majid Omar published in the *Naif Academy for Security Sciences journal* in 2009 titled “Forensic Linguistics: Its Origin, Development and Applications”; and the book *Forensic Linguistics: Its Definition, Fields and Applications* by Salih ibn Fahd Al-Usaimi, published in 2020. Nevertheless, the Arabic library still lacks sufficient sources and references in this field. Among the notable studies that sought to shed light on the extent of legal practitioners’ (judges’ and lawyers’) knowledge of forensic linguistics in the Arab world is the research conducted by Ahmed Nouredine Belarbi, who surveyed 100 legal practitioners from ten Arab countries to measure their level of knowledge of this field and the extent of its application in the courts. The study’s results showed that only a small number had superficial, limited knowledge of this area.

Concept of Forensic Linguistics

Forensic linguistics is a modern branch of applied linguistics that analyses language and its role in criminal and legal contexts. It focuses on linguistic texts associated with criminal cases, such as threatening letters, kidnapping, and terrorism, as well as audio recordings; verifying dialect authenticity; and attributing texts—whether written or spoken—to their authors. Linguistic analysis helps detect crimes, refute accusations, and present linguistic evidence in court (Al-Usaimi, 2020a, p. 4; Al-Rashoudi, 2022, p. 7; Coulthard et al., 2017, p. 15). Forensic linguistics occupies an important place within the field of applied linguistics, a field that researcher Abduh Al-Rajihi defined as “not merely a set of methods and procedures, but an independent science that links together various disciplines studying human linguistic activity, such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education,” affirming that this science rests on theoretical foundations (Al-Rajihi, 1995, p. 12). This definition confirms the interdisciplinary nature of this science, which combines the humanities (particularly linguistics) and legal sciences (specifically criminal aspects).

Defining Forensic/Judicial Linguistics

In the *Dictionary of Linguistic Terms* (English–Arabic), the term “Forensic Linguistics” is defined as a branch of linguistics that employs linguistic tools in criminal investigations; linguistic usage in certain crimes is considered evidence for identifying perpetrators, such as analysing the writing style of a suspicious letter related to a crime, or



examining audio recordings as evidence (*Dictionary of Linguistic Terms*, n.d., p. 196). However, the most widely accepted technical definition of forensic linguistics comes from Asher (1994), who defines it as a branch of applied linguistics that uses linguistic methods in criminal investigations when language forms part of the evidence. This science aims to study, analyse, and evaluate linguistic evidence related to a crime to establish the identity of the perpetrator or suspect (Omar, 2008, p. 276). It is thus a science that studies crimes in which language plays a role and seeks to decode them by analysing spoken or written discourse containing threats, using established scientific tools (Hisham, 2019, p. 6). Although the term has been translated as “judicial linguistics,” it focuses primarily on criminal aspects and aligns with the technical meaning of Forensic (criminal, or related to legal proceedings). In contrast, the general meaning of 'Judicial' in English relates more broadly to the courts. Forensic linguists use linguistic knowledge to achieve justice and analyse written or spoken texts in various legal contexts. Their functions include investigating linguistic style to determine a writer's or speaker's identity and providing linguistic interpretations in court (Antar Salhi, n.d., p. 1311).

The Problem of Terminology

Forensic linguistics has several Arabic terms for a single concept, including forensic linguistics, criminal linguistics, the science of criminal, judicial, or legal language, judicial linguistics, and canonical linguistics. Al-Usaimi, author of *Forensic Linguistics: Its Definition, Fields and Applications*, argues that the most accurate translation of “Forensic Linguistics” is “forensic linguistics” (al-lisaniyyat al-jina'iyya), based on several considerations:

1. The word “Forensic” in the compound term means “criminal.”
2. The English term does not use the word “law” or “legal,” even though both concepts exist within the discipline; one could therefore say “judicial linguistics” when discussing the analysis of language in the judicial domain, or “legal linguistics” when discussing the analysis of language in the legal domain.
3. The word “criminal” is associated in the United States with the investigation of crime and offences, whereas in Britain it is associated with the investigation of the judiciary and law (Al-Usaimi, 2020b, p. 29; Al-Shahri, 2022, p. 761).

The Emergence of Forensic Linguistics

In the early 1980s, American linguists led by Roger Shuy laid the foundations of forensic linguistics (Shuy, 1997). These studies addressed a wide range of criminal cases and civil disputes in which language played a pivotal role; interestingly, most of these research efforts focused from the outset on language used in legal contexts (Levi, 1994; Belarbi, 2017, pp. 3–6). In Australia, this field emerged in the mid-1990s, when researchers began applying sociolinguistic theories to crime and legal disputes. These scholars focused on protecting individuals' rights during investigations and legal proceedings, particularly the challenges Australia's Aboriginal population faces in police and legal investigations (Eades, 1994, pp. 161–170).

How Did Forensic Linguistics Begin?

Pinpointing an exact date for the beginning of forensic linguistics as an independent science is difficult, as with any other science; its roots and early ideas are scattered across different places and times. Western researchers trace its earliest beginnings to *The Bible*, particularly *Genesis 27* (Omar, 2008, p. 277). The story recounts how the prophet Jacob, the younger son of the prophet Isaac, was destined to receive the title of firstborn, though he was



not in fact the eldest; rather, he imitated the voice of his older brother Esau, and Isaac — who had lost his sight in old age — failed to detect the deception and granted Jacob the title. This account exemplifies voice as an important means of personal identification, and can thus be regarded as one of the earliest references to forensic linguistics (Omar, 2008, p. 278). Gotterill, meanwhile, argued that this science dates back to ancient Greek and Roman times, as those civilisations were deeply concerned with disputes over “establishing the authenticity of the attribution of certain literary and dramatic works” to their authors, since writers frequently accused one another of plagiarism and forgery.

Defining the Voiceprint

In physics, sound is a vibration that propagates as longitudinal mechanical waves through a material medium; “it is a physical phenomenon produced by humans on various occasions through the speech apparatus, whereby human speech acquires properties that reflect individual characteristics” (Bawadi, 2005, p. 67). The voiceprint is a digital analysis of each individual's unique vocal characteristics—such as frequency, pitch, speed, and vocal register—that distinguish that person from others. Banks could thus verify a depositor's identity solely through their voice, and police could positively identify criminals whose conversations have been recorded, since the rate of frequency transmission differs from one person to another (Ladefoged, 2001, p. 214). Each individual has what linguists call an “idiolect,” a term referring to a person's personal language, as shown in their vocabulary, verbal behaviour, and particular manner of expression and speech. This concept is paired with another term, “sociolect,” used to describe the distinctive characteristics of a dialect or language associated with a group of individuals belonging to a single community — examples include the secret street language of drug trafficking, the language of organ trafficking, or the language of prostitution (Al-Fasi Al-Fihri, 2008, pp. 89–92; Omar, 2001, pp. 45–47).

Voiceprints are one tool sociolinguists use to analyse the individual characteristics of members of linguistic groups, aiming to identify precise features and extract traits shared among members of these groups. In forensic linguistics, both the “idiolect” and the “sociolect” are considered raw material for forensic evidence used to establish suspicion against a suspect—what is known as the “linguistic or speech fingerprint.” The voiceprint is a modern forensic technique that analyses an individual's verbal behaviour, manner of expression, and speech delivery style. This includes the phonetic, semantic, visual, social, psychological, and cultural characteristics that distinguish a person's language and that are, at the same time, connected to a legal case (Al-Hindi & Bani Amer, 2020, p. 212). The German professor Raimund Drommel, one of the foremost scholars of forensic linguistics, noted that “in many cases, a small sample of linguistic evidence can be sufficient to open a criminal case against a suspect — such as a personal dialect, the repeated use of a particular type of word or phrase, or distinctive syntactic structures” (Drommel, 2015, p. 166).

Voiceprint technology also uses advanced analytical tools to extract each person's unique vocal characteristics; voice-recognition systems rely on these traits and require the person to read a given text or utter specific words so the system can analyse their voice precisely (Salama, 2008, p. 232). Forensic analysts use these results to help detect crimes and identify perpetrators based on their voice. The voiceprint matters because it is an effective modern tool in criminal investigations, as it can establish or refute charges by matching an unknown voice to a suspect's. It relies on precise scientific criteria such as frequency, tone, rhythm, and articulation patterns, making it a powerful tool for identifying a defendant even



when traditional evidence such as fingerprints or photographs is difficult to rely on. Moreover, the effectiveness of the voiceprint depends on the quality of the audio recordings and the accuracy of the analysis, and factors such as background noise or deliberate attempts to alter the voice can affect it. For this reason, courts often use voiceprints as supporting evidence alongside other evidence in criminal cases, particularly in serious crimes such as murder and kidnapping (Sadiq, 2024, p. 42). Voiceprints have become widespread because people have accepted this technology in daily life and because speaker-recognition systems have rapidly improved in accuracy; so far, no two identical voices have ever been found.

Scientific Foundations of the Voiceprint

As forensic evidence, the voiceprint rests on the theory of forensic individualisation, as with fingerprints. Every voice has individual characteristics, and two people can rarely share the same capability and manner of articulation through the movement of the tongue, lips, and uvula (Kersta, 1962, p. 1254). Consequently, the human voice remains stable and unchanged throughout adulthood and into old age (Al-Ma'aytah, 2008, p. 558). The voiceprint also relies on artificial intelligence techniques as an aid in processing audio signals, whereby acoustic features are extracted, such as: Spectrogram, Pitch and Formants

Methods of Voiceprint Identification

Among the most prominent mechanisms used to determine the linguistic fingerprint of suspects and identify the perpetrator are the following approaches:

The Listening Method:

This method relies on specialised experts listening to audio recordings and attempting to link a particular voice to a specific suspect in the crime (Al-Tuwaisi, n.d., p. 79), or to match voices with their owners; however, it remains limited due to the absence of fixed standards, as it depends heavily on human expertise and the analyst's ability to interpret voiceprints. The expert relies on the defendant's verbal lexicon, since some criminals unconsciously select particular lexical items, whether along the paradigmatic axis (synonyms) or the syntagmatic axis (composition).

Direct Listening:

The human ear is a primary tool in speaker identification through analysis of vocal frequencies, including dialect, speech pattern, and target audience; experts therefore rely on the sense of hearing in addition to specialised techniques and devices to determine a speaker's identity (Al-Dhib & Al-Qudsi, 2017, p. 93). A suspect's syntactic composition can also serve as evidence against them, since a speaker's syntactic composition clearly reflects their personality, as stylistic studies have shown through the use of syntactic elements such as fronting and postponing, ellipsis, and predication.

The Visual Method:

This method relies on converting the transmitted sound signal into an "image" using the sense of sight (Al-Ghamdi, n.d.-a, p. 20); through this image, different voices can be compared to draw conclusions. The graphical representation used is the spectrogram, which emerged in the late 1930s and early 1940s during World War II. This technique is distinguished by its ability to analyse the voiceprint based on its frequency components and physical characteristics.

The Automatic Method

It is known as automatic voice recognition. This method uses computers to match linguistic voices, carried out with high efficiency and independently of human intervention. The computer relies on pre-programmed algorithms to compare speakers' recordings and



then assess the probability of the voice's source (Al-Ghamdi, n.d.-a, p. 20). This method is currently the standard because it is more objective than auditory methods, significantly reducing human bias and making it the most accurate choice.

Biometric Voice Recognition:

This method uses specialised computer systems to record and analyse the unique characteristics of a person's voice, comparing a newly recorded voice sample with previously stored reference samples to determine the speaker's identity (voice matching). This process relies entirely on machine processing and supports various security applications, such as secure access to online accounts or electronic door access for offices and homes.

Voice Recording Devices

Distinctive voices cannot be documented with full precision and security except through the use of specialised devices used during voice processing, including the following:

1. **Recording Device:** A dedicated tool for receiving sound via a microphone and storing it; it can also play back the recorded sound immediately after capture.
2. **Amplifier:** Helps relieve the pressure on the ear caused by using headphones and provides even sound distribution while preserving quality and clarity.
3. **Software:** A specialised application for the precise analysis of sound waves, displaying analysis results as graphical representations or during spectral processing, such as Speech Analyser software.
4. **Sound Pickup (Headphones/Microphone):** Headphones are used to transmit sound to the listener's ear, while the microphone is the primary means of capturing or transmitting sound through electronic connections.
5. **Computer:** Used as a visual tool for performing digital sound processing.
6. **Storage Media (Floppy or Hard Disk):** Used to save and retrieve audio data as needed.

The Spectrograph Device (Sound Spectrometer)

A device used in auditory phonetics to produce a visual image of speech sound, i.e., acoustic spectra and vibrations showing sound frequencies; it is printed on special paper in three dimensions — a horizontal dimension representing time, a vertical dimension representing frequencies, and a third dimension representing sound intensity, shown in black shading that darkens with increasing loudness. It is also called the sound spectrograph (Al-Usaimi, n.d.-a, p. 1437) — the acoustic spectrum of sound waves, or the visual image of speech sound as it appears in the frequency-domain plot in which the wave falls, with frequency represented on the horizontal axis and amplitude on the vertical axis (Al-Usaimi, n.d.-a, p. 1438). The spectrogram is still used today in phonetic studies and many applications, including speaker identification (Al-Fifi, 1445 AH, p. 22).

The spectrograph device analyses the human voice electronically. It converts it into readable visual lines, allowing comparison with suspects' voices and indicating the degree of match or difference. The way words or sentences are pronounced differs from one person to another. Individual differences are greater than the variations that may appear in a single person's speech — even if that person tries to alter their voice by whispering or pinching their nose while speaking, this does not change the fundamental features of their voiceprint. The same applies to attempts at vocal mimicry or speaking from deep in the throat: the voiceprint remains constant (Al-Abboudi, 2022, p. 38). Accordingly, it can be said that the voice has become a unique fingerprint through which a person's identity can be established using modern, precise techniques; these means contribute significantly to the detection of crimes,



particularly those related to extortion through telephone threats using cassette-tape recordings, as well as in cases of criminal conspiracy and defamation and slander committed through audio media.

The voiceprint is thus an effective means of establishing a defendant's identity and contributing to their arrest through audio recordings; a specialised expert compares these recordings with the defendant's recorded voice. Defendants have often been confronted with audio recordings during interrogation, which can lead them to confess guilt.

The "Auras" Device

Among the scientific devices that have recently appeared is one called "Auras." Experiments show it is extremely accurate, with an error rate of no more than 1%, meaning it is correct up to 99% of the time. This feature has made it the best among similar devices in distinguishing a large number of voices with unprecedented accuracy. The device identifies various vocal characteristics; it consists of a computer that analyses acoustic signals and stores each voice distinguishing features (Barhami, 2006, p. 558).

Advantages of the Voiceprint

Fingerprints — whether traditional or modern — represent an important type of forensic evidence and possess a set of unique characteristics that distinguish them from other types of evidence, as follows:

Immutability of the Biological Composition of the Fingerprint: A fingerprint has a unique feature that distinguishes it from other forensic evidence: the fine ridge lines that form the fingerprint never change; they form at a certain point in a person's life and remain the same throughout their lifetime. They cannot be altered even when exposed to accidents or external influences that might cause deformation, disease, or chemical burns. This stability, confirmed by scientific studies, makes the fingerprint reliable evidence that surpasses other means of criminal proof in evidentiary strength (Al-Ma'aytah, 2015, p. 150).

Uniqueness of the Biological Composition of the Fingerprint: In addition to its stability, the fingerprint has another important feature: its absolute uniqueness in biological composition. Modern scientific studies have confirmed that fingerprint composition differs entirely from one person to another, and even a single person's own fingerprints do not match one another. To this day, science has not found two identical fingerprints belonging to two different people (Al-Hiti, 2014, p. 112).

Other advantages include:

1. It does not take a long time to identify the person behind a voice, nor does it require specialised devices to capture biometric data from the person, such as fingerprint or iris scanners, telephone handsets, or the microphone attached to computers; the voiceprint has thus sped up the identity-verification process and does not require the presence of an employee (Al-Ghamdi, 2005, p. 17).
2. The ability to identify a person's psychological state.
3. The inability to imitate a voice convincingly: an imitated voice may resemble the original to the human ear, but computer systems use methods that allow them to distinguish between the original and the imitated voice.
4. The voiceprint can be used to identify and verify a person remotely (Al-Ghamdi, 2005, pp. 30–31).

Applications of the Voiceprint

The voiceprint is used in multiple fields, including:



1. **Security and Criminal Investigation:** Used to identify callers in cases of threats or extortion.
2. **Banking Services:** Some banks use voice authentication to let customers access accounts.
3. **Smart Voice Assistants:** Such as Siri and Google Assistant, which rely on recognising the user's voice to provide personalised services?

Advantages of the Voiceprint as Forensic Evidence

1. **Non-invasive:** Does not require biological sampling as with genetic fingerprinting.
2. **Speed of analysis:** Voices can be compared automatically within minutes.
3. **Availability of evidence:** Many crimes are recorded by telephones or audio surveillance systems. (Gonzalez-Rodriguez, 2017, pp. 92–99):

Case Studies on the Effectiveness of the Voiceprint

Scientific interest in using voice as forensic evidence began with the kidnapping case of the son of Colonel Charles Lindbergh in 1935, in which the voice of the defendant Hauptmann matched the voice that had called Colonel Lindbergh to demand ransom, contributing to the criminal investigation (Eriksson, n.d., p. 3; Solan & Tiersma, 2003, p. 373). (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2020) The Assassination of Malcolm X (1965): Audio recordings of suspects were used, but the evidence was not conclusive due to the limitations of the technology available at the time (Al-Habib, 2022).

Criminal Cases Resolved Using the Voiceprint

The voiceprint has played a pivotal role in numerous criminal investigations worldwide by providing decisive evidence to identify perpetrators or exonerate suspects. The following notable case demonstrates this technology's effectiveness.

The Murder of a Minnesota Police Officer (1970)

This case is among the foundational cases in the history of judicial acceptance of the voiceprint as forensic evidence. The police department in St. Paul, Minnesota, received an emergency call requesting help for a pregnant woman; when two officers arrived at the address, one was killed by a high-calibre rifle shot. Police recorded the emergency call that lured the officer to the crime scene, then recorded the suspect's voice and compared the voiceprints of the two calls (North Dakota Law Review, 1972, pp. 584–585).

These cases make clear that the voiceprint is a multifaceted forensic tool and it can serve as the primary evidence for issuing an arrest warrant, as in the Minnesota case; as supporting evidence reinforcing witness testimony; or as part of the digital evidence framework in modern crimes, as in the “Craigslister Killer” case. Nevertheless, the accuracy of this technology remains tied to the quality of recordings and the analyst's expertise, underscoring the need to rely on specialised experts to ensure justice.

Legal Challenges

The voiceprint faces several challenges that include:

- The difficulty of proving the absence of manipulation in the age of deepfakes (Clark, 2023, pp. 201–210).
- Balancing security use with privacy protection (Harris, 2021, p. 63).
- Variation in standards among courts (Roberts, 2021, p. 147).

Disadvantages of the Voiceprint

1. The speaker's psychological state, which may affect the voiceprint.
2. Noise, since background noise can obscure or affect speech waves.



3. Advances in devices and technology have enabled fraudsters to alter vocal characteristics.
4. The voiceprint is subject to the possibility of error in user identification.
5. Voiceprint identification has been criticised for being limited to living persons rather than the deceased, and to healthy individuals rather than those with vocal-cord or respiratory conditions.

Research Findings

There is a pressing need to establish specialised research centres and coordination teams in forensic phonetics, and to create university programs focused on this field to train qualified professionals capable of obtaining a specialisation certificate in “forensic phonetics.” Such professionals could be integrated into various sectors, including the courts, military systems, judicial police, forensic evidence laboratories, and acoustic engineering centres.

Recommendations

1. **Adopt a Standardised Methodological Framework for Assessing the Strength of Voice Evidence:** Experts should be required to adopt the likelihood-ratio framework within an empirical-demonstration approach when comparing recordings, requiring relevant reference data, quantitative measurements, statistical modelling, and experimental testing under case-like conditions, ensuring a quantitative estimate of evidentiary strength and reducing subjectivity.
2. **Align National Procedures with International Practice Guidelines:** It is recommended that forensic laboratory protocols be aligned with the guidelines of international bodies such as ENFSI in Europe and OSAC in the United States, including analysis procedures, quality control, documentation, and reviewability, to ensure consistency of results and their cross-border judicial acceptance.
3. **Build Reference Voice Databases Representative of Local Contexts:** This involves developing data matrices containing labelled recordings covering diverse Arabic dialects, age groups, genders, formal and spontaneous speech patterns, and different recording environments, in order to reduce model bias and improve the validity of comparisons in real-world cases.
4. **Integrate Auditory-Linguistic Analysis with Acoustic Measurements and Automated Models:** Encourage a “hybrid system” combining the expertise of forensic linguistics in analysing dialect, style, and individual idiolect with spectral-acoustic analysis — such as formant measurements — statistical modelling, and validated automatic recognition systems, while reporting statistical uncertainty.
5. **Improve Recording Quality and the Integrity of the Chain of Custody:** Establish standards for collecting and preserving recordings: appropriate equipment, sufficient sampling rate, description of the recording environment, complete documentation of the chain of custody, disclosure of any digital processing performed, and the adoption of tools for detecting tampering, editing, and excessive compression.
6. **Develop Expert Competencies and Multidisciplinary Training:** Design accredited training programs for experts combining linguistics, phonetics, applied statistics, and machine learning, alongside the ethics of expert testimony and judicial communication, with periodic proficiency testing and inter-laboratory exchange of expertise.

7. **Raise Awareness Among Judges, Prosecutors, and Defence Counsel of the Limits of Voice Evidence:** Organise brief guidance materials and introductory sessions for judicial actors on the nature of voice comparison, the requirements for valid inference, influencing factors (noise, coding compression, stress, voice spoofing), and how to interpret likelihood ratios without overstating the strength of the evidence or falling into prosecutorial fallacy.
8. **Address Legal, Privacy, and Data-Protection Considerations:** Establish clear legal controls for obtaining, processing, and storing recordings, with judicial authorisation where required, data encryption, defined retention periods, identity-erasure mechanisms, and ensuring that procedures comply with defence rights and fair-trial standards.
9. **Exercise Caution Regarding Individual Idiolect and Social Dialects:** It is recommended not to rely on isolated stylistic or dialectal indicators as conclusive, but rather to evaluate them within a package of testable quantitative indicators, while warning against unsupported social or geographic generalisations not backed by representative data.
10. **Comprehensive, Judicially Reviewable Documentation:** Require experts to submit detailed reports including: description of the data, processing methods, criteria selected, statistical measures, uncertainty estimates, limitations, and sensitivity tests, allowing for reproduction and review by independent experts.
11. **Develop Tools and Techniques Resistant to Spoofing and Synthetic Generation:** Encourage research into detecting spoofed and AI-generated voices and multi-factor biometric verification controls, adopting additional checks when tampering or synthesis is suspected, and not relying on a single algorithmic result alone.
12. **Hierarchy and Integration of Evidentiary Proof:** Emphasise that the voiceprint is a technical indicator to be evaluated alongside other evidence (physical, digital, linguistic, circumstantial), and should not be presented in isolation without context, while highlighting its consistency or inconsistency with other indicators to form a balanced judicial conviction.

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Religion, Kingship, and Political Power in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*

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Abstract

Girish Karnad's Tughlaq (1964) is a historical drama that uses the fourteenth-century reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq to interrogate the complex relationship between religion, kingship, political authority and social justice. Even the protagonist initially appears as an enlightened and visionary ruler committed to equality, administrative reform, Hindu-Muslim harmony, rational governance, political expediency, violence and authoritarianism gradually compromise his idealism at the end. So, this paper examines the real tension between religious authority and royal power in the play of Karnad by focusing on prayer, political manipulation, the abolition of jizya, the relocation of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, the treatment of religious leaders and the Sultan's eventual psychological and political disintegration in the end of the play. The study also considers the historical and postcolonial dimensions of Karnad's dramatic reconstruction of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. By placing a medieval Muslim ruler within the political imagination of post-independence India, Karnad creates a dialogue between past and present, particularly around secularism, communal identity and the failure of idealistic political leadership. Nevertheless, the paper argues that Tughlaq ultimately exposes the dangers of letting religious legitimacy and political power become tools of mutual manipulation.

Keywords: Girish Karnad, *Tughlaq*, Political Power, Secularism, Hindu-Muslim Relations, Historical Drama, Idealism, Political Authority.

Introduction

Theatre has accompanied human civilisation as one of its most enduring forms of collective expression. From ritual and religious performance to entertainment and political commentary, drama has given societies a medium to represent and question human emotions, conflicts, and institutions. In India, dramatic traditions possess a particularly long history, with Sanskrit theatre occupying an important place in the literary and cultural history of the subcontinent. Bharata's *Natyashastra* conceptualises drama as a representation of human action and emotion and establishes an elaborate aesthetic and performative framework for theatrical expression. Modern Indian drama expanded theatre's possibilities by bringing Indian history, politics, social conflict and contemporary anxieties into the dramatic representation through the art. Girish Karnad occupies a significant position in this development. His historical and mythological plays repeatedly transform the past into a medium for interrogating the present. As Dharwadker observes, Karnad's historical fiction is shaped by the interaction between historical narratives and contemporary political and cultural concerns (Dharwadker 1995). *Tughlaq* was first written in Kannada in 1964. It is perhaps the most striking example of historical method.

Karnad does not reproduce Muhammad bin Tughlaq's history as a mere history. Instead, he reconstructs the historical ruler as a complex dramatic figure whose political aspirations, religious beliefs, intellectual convictions and personal contradictions gradually collide. The play thus moves beyond conventional historical drama to explore the nature of political power. Dharwadker argues that *Tughlaq* uses religious difference as a central problem through which premodern and contemporary Indian political experiences enter into dialogue (Dharwadker 1995). This paper examines the connection between religion and kingship in the play and it argues that Karnad presents neither religion nor monarchy as a destructive one rather it as the tragedy that emerges when religious faith,



political legitimacy and personal ambition become inseparable. Tughlaq seeks to establish a rational state under his rule. However, his inability to distinguish moral idealism from political expediency eventually turns him from a visionary ruler into an increasingly isolated, authoritarian monarch.

Historical Drama and the Reconstruction of the Past

Karnad's use of history is neither a documentary nor a mere antiquarian one. They are historical plays that reconstruct the past in order to illuminate contemporary political and social realities. So, the play *Tughlaq* is based on the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq but Karnad reshapes the historical facts through dramatic compression, symbolic characters and theatrical irony. Dharwadker shows that Karnad's representation in the play is mediated by earlier historical accounts. It is particularly based on medieval Muslim historians whose attitudes towards Tughlaq's religious unorthodoxy differed from later colonial interpretations of Indian history (Dharwadker 1995). Therefore, the play does not offer an uncomplicated historical truth. It stages history as a contested narrative so this method allows Karnad to establish a dialogue between fourteenth-century kingship and post-independence India. The Sultan's dreams of rational administration, national integration and social justice recall the aspirations of a newly independent nation. At the same time, the gradual collapse of his idealism reflects the disillusionment associated with political failures in post-independence India. Karnad himself later discussed the relationship between modern Indian theatre and the political and cultural circumstances within which it developed (Karnad 1995). Indeed, the historical character Tughlaq becomes a dramatic vehicle through which the playwright Karnad examines a larger question such as How an idealistic ruler create an ethical state when political power itself depends upon coercion, manipulation and control? The answer becomes hypothetical and remains incomplete.

Tughlaq as a Visionary Ruler

In the beginning of the play, Tughlaq has been introduced as an unusual ruler. He is intellectually sophisticated, philosophically inclined and apparently committed to justice. Tughlaq imagines a political order based upon reason and equality rather like a conventional medieval monarch who derives legitimacy principally from religious identity and hereditary authority. He tries his level to implement it to his people. His radical ideas for the Hindu people have been a significant act in the play. He decides to abolish the Jizya Tax that has been levied on the Hindus and his decision on equal justice on the Hindus and Muslims appear to challenge conventional religious hierarchies of that day. The episode involving the Brahmin Vishnu Prasad demonstrates the Sultan's stated commitment to impartial justice. The ruler acknowledges that legal authority should operate beyond religious identity.

Karnad establishes an important contradiction in the play. The character Tughlaq seeks to create a rational and equitable state yet he remains an absolute monarch in the entire play. His progressive policies depend on a single ruler will be stable on democratic institutions. This contradiction becomes the foundation of his tragedy. Tughlaq's vision may be progressive but the means he uses to impose it are often authoritarian. The play observes Tughlaq is presented as a ruler whose progressive policies attempt to overcome existing religious and social divisions, yet whose inability to secure public confidence contributes to their failure (Dharwadker 1995). The problem, therefore, is not simply that Tughlaq's ideas are ahead of their time; it is that his methods increasingly contradict the ethical principles behind those ideas.

Religion, Secular Governance and the Clergy

Religion occupies a paradoxical position in *Tughlaq*. On one level, Tughlaq is deeply religious. He repeatedly invokes Islam and prayer and regards himself as intellectually and spiritually committed to the word of God. On another level, he tries to prevent orthodox religious authorities from shaping the state's political direction. The Ulema, the Sayyids and other religious authorities represent an established structure of religious influence. Tughlaq perceives this influence as potentially incompatible with his vision of rational governance. His conflict with religious figures consequently becomes a conflict between two conceptions of authority: religious authority grounded in tradition and political authority grounded in the ruler's conception of reason. In fact, the conflict



becomes visible in the relationship between the king Tughlaq and a religious saint Sheikh Imam-ud-din. The Sheikh represents an uncompromising religious position and challenges the Sultan's policies. However, Tughlaq manipulates his religious authority for political purposes by persuading him to act as an intermediary in the conflict with Ain-ul-Mulk. So, Tughlaq turns the stereotypes of religious idealism into a political tool. The Sheikh becomes a victim of the Sultan's political calculation. The episode exposes one of the play's central ironies: the ruler who claims to protect the moral principles of governance violates them to preserve his political authority. Hence, religion does not disappear from the political sphere instead it becomes increasingly instrumentalised.

Hindu-Muslim Unity and the Politics of Inclusion

Tughlaq's most ambitious objective is to reduce the tension between Hindus and Muslims at his regime. The rational policies appear to be motivated by a desire to create a unified political community in which religious identity does not determine access to justice. So, the abolition of Jizya Tax is significant in this context. Hence, it challenges the distinction between religious communities and suggests that political citizenship should not be determined exclusively by faith. However, Karnad refuses to romanticise the policy. The Sultan's attempt to create harmony does not automatically produce trust. Both communities remain suspicious of him, while political opponents interpret his policies through the lens of their own interests. The play is one of the central insights of the play and the royal decree cannot create political equality when social and religious divisions have deep historical roots. Dharwadker reads this aspect of the play in relation to the crisis of secular nationhood in post-independence India. According to her, Tughlaq turns religious difference into a way to reflect on the possibilities and limits of secular political identity (Dharwadker 1995). The play anticipates a problem that remains relevant to plural societies: whether political institutions can maintain equality as religious identities continue to shape public life.

The Shifting of the Capital

The shift of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is the most important political decisions of the play. Tughlaq justifies the move through administrative, geographical and political arguments. Daulatabad sits more centrally within his expanding kingdom and its Hindu-majority character also lets him present the move as a symbol of Hindu-Muslim integration. On the layout, the decision of Sultan reflects the rational and long-term vision. However, in practice the execution causes enormous suffering. Forced migration separates families, creates hardship, and alienates the population. The episode illustrates the keen difference between political intention and political consequence. So, a ruler may conceive an apparently rational policy, but when political authority is exercised without sufficient attention to human realities, reform can become oppression. Karnad uses this episode to expose the limits of political and religious idealism. Tughlaq believes that because he can justify his decision intellectually but the decision must necessarily be correct. His intellectual confidence becomes political arrogance. The failure of the first political experiment becomes emblematic of his wider failure. He tries to reshape society according to an abstract vision without adequately considering the people who must live through that transformation.

Prayer as a Symbol of Religious and Political Contradiction

Perhaps, prayer is the most important religious motif in the play *Tughlaq*. It operates simultaneously as an expression of faith, a symbol of political authority and a theatrical device through which Karnad reveals the Sultan's contradictions. At the beginning of the play, prayer is associated with public religious order. Tughlaq appears to uphold Islamic practice and allows prayer to occupy a central place in public life. However, the audience gradually discovers that political violence has entered this sacred space. The Sultan's father and brother are murdered during prayer and later political conspiracies are also associated with prayer. Thus, an activity intended to connect human beings with God becomes entangled with murder, conspiracy and political manipulation. The motif becomes increasingly ironic as the play progresses. Following the attempt on his life, Tughlaq becomes disillusioned with prayer and eventually bans it. Later, however, prayer is restored. Bayapa Reddy's discussion of the play's symbolism is useful here: prayer operates simultaneously on the personal level as an expression of Tughlaq's religious idealism and on the broader level as humanity's



search for divine reassurance in moments of crisis (Reddy 1990). So, prayer becomes a dramatic representation of the psychological journey of King Tughlaq in the play. It traverses from the public compulsion to the state of prohibition and finally to restoration by reflecting the Sultan's shift from religious confidence to alienation and desperation.

Political Manipulation of Religion

Often, the play demonstrates how political leaders exploit religious sentiment. Tughlaq is not the only character who engages in such manipulation. The Ulema, Sayyids, nobles and political conspirators also attempt to use religious identity to advance political interests. This is why the conflict between religion and kingship in the play cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between a secular ruler and religious extremists. Karnad presents a much more complicated picture in which both political and religious authorities seek to control the meaning of faith. In fact, Tughlaq's manipulation of Sheikh Imam-ud-din is a striking example and he appeals to the Sheikh's religious commitment while using him for a political mission that leads to his death. Thus, the episode shows how political power can exploit religious idealism in an easy way. At the same time, the religious establishment attempts to mobilise public sentiment against the Sultan. Thus, religion becomes a field of political contestation. The result is a society in which neither religious institutions nor political institutions retain moral credibility.

Violence, Kingship and the Collapse of Idealism

The greatest tragedy for Tughlaq is the gradual transformation of his idealistic politics into authoritarian rule in the play. The ruler who speaks initially about justice and equality becomes increasingly dependent upon executions, surveillance, suspicion and punishment finally. His killing of political opponents marks the decisive deterioration of his moral authority. The murder of Sheikh Imam-ud-din, the killing of Shihab-ud-din and the execution of his own stepmother demonstrate the extent to which political power has consumed his personal relationships. Therefore, the contrast between the early and later characteristic qualities of Tughlaq becomes crucial. At first, he believes political authority can reform society. Later, he becomes concerned primarily with preserving political authority itself. The ruler who wanted to create an ideal kingdom ends by creating what he himself recognises as a kingdom of death. This sort of transformation reads as the central tragedy of the play. Tughlaq does not simply fail because his policies are impractical. He fails because the political system gradually turns the reformer into the very kind of ruler his original ideals were meant to oppose.

Barani and Najib

Karnad portrays this contradiction through the characters Barani and Najib. Barani is the historian who represents memory, reflection and moral consciousness. His presence reminds Tughlaq that political actions will eventually become history and be judged by future generations. The character Najib is the minister of Tughlaq who represents political pragmatism and he understands the mechanics of power and uses violence and deception to protect the Sultan. So, the two characters can be read as external manifestations of Tughlaq's own divided personality. One represents intellectual and historical reflection; the other represents political calculation. This episode supports the interpretation that Tughlaq is not simply a cruel ruler. He is a ruler divided between philosophical aspiration and political necessity. Hence, the tragedy occurs when political necessity overwhelms philosophical idealism.

Aziz and the Inversion of Kingship

The character Aziz is an evidence to provide one of Karnad's most effective dramatic strategies. Aziz is a washerman and opportunist who repeatedly disguises himself to exploit the political and religious system Tughlaq created. His ability to move between social and religious identities exposes the artificiality of the structures that the Sultan attempts to control. Aziz eventually assumes the identity of a Caliph's descendant and becomes associated with restoring prayer. The irony is profound: the great Sultan bows before an impostor. The relationship between Tughlaq and Aziz therefore reverses the traditional ruler-subject hierarchy. The emperor possesses formal power, while the washer man possesses practical intelligence. The parallel between the two characters is central to Karnad's dramaturgy. Both are intelligent, strategic and capable of manipulating others. The



difference is that Tughlaq believes in a grand political vision, whereas Aziz is driven primarily by self-interest. Through Aziz, Karnad shows how a corrupt political system creates opportunities for individuals willing to exploit its contradictions.

Chess, Sleep and the Symbolic Structure of the Play

Karnad strengthens the political argument through recurring symbols. Chess becomes an especially apt metaphor for Tughlaq's world. Political life resembles a chessboard in which rulers, ministers, religious leaders and ordinary people become pieces in a game of strategy. The irony is that the apparently insignificant Aziz ultimately proves capable of outmanoeuvring powerful political figures. Sleep is another important symbol. Tughlaq repeatedly seeks peace but cannot achieve it. His final sleep during the restored prayer is particularly significant. The ruler who has attempted to control religion and politics is finally unable even to remain spiritually awake during prayer. Reddy interprets sleep as representing not merely physical rest but the larger peace that continually eludes Tughlaq (Reddy 1990). The rose may also represent Tughlaq's aesthetic and idealistic sensibility, while its decline parallels the gradual withering of his political dreams. These symbols prevent the play from becoming merely a political chronicle and give its historical material psychological and philosophical depth.

Tughlaq and the Post-Independence Indian Context

Tughlaq's significance is inseparable from its historical setting. It has been written in the early years of post-independence India. The play speaks to anxieties about political idealism, national integration and secularism. Dharwadker identifies the play's relationship to the crisis of secular nationhood and argues that Karnad's medieval setting lets him reflect on post-independence India's political and cultural problems (Dharwadker 1995). The relevance of the play does not depend upon identifying Tughlaq with any single modern political leader. Rather, its power lies in examining a recurring political phenomenon: the gap between idealistic promises and actual governance. Karnad's theatre explores the relationship between history and contemporary political experience. His later talks on theatre also demonstrate his concern with the relationship between inherited cultural forms and modern social realities (Karnad 1995). So, recent scholarship continues to place Karnad within the larger development of postcolonial Indian theatre and to emphasise the political and cultural significance of his dramatic engagement with history and tradition. (Dutt 2026)

Central Contradiction of Religion and Kingship

Therefore, the central conflict in the play Tughlaq is not between religion and secularism. It is between ethical religion and institutionalised political power. Tughlaq wants to govern it rationally but he also seeks religious legitimacy. He wishes to establish equality but he exercises absolute royal authority. He values prayer but political violence enters the sacred spaces. He desires Hindu-Muslim unity, yet his policies generate suspicion among both communities. This contradiction explains his character's complexity. Karnad does not suggest that religion is inherently opposed to political progress. Nor does he suggest that secular government is automatically just. Instead, he shows the danger that arises when either religion or political power becomes an instrument of domination. Religion becomes political when people mobilise religious identity for power. Kingship becomes corrupt when political authority is justified by manipulating religious sentiment. The tragedy of Tughlaq is consequently a tragedy of failed separation and failed balance.

Conclusion

Girish Karnad's play Tughlaq offers a complex and sustained exploration of the relationship between religion, kingship and political power. Through Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Karnad creates the portrait of a ruler whose initial vision is strikingly progressive. His commitment to equality, Hindu-Muslim harmony, rational administration and impartial justice suggests the possibility of an inclusive political order. But, the play gradually shows the limits of idealism when exercised through absolute political authority in a society of two extremes. Tughlaq's reforms are undermined not by the opposition from religious conservatives or by the ignorance of his subjects, but it is mainly by his inability to reconcile ethical principles with political expediency. His manipulation of religious figures, his use of prayer for political purposes, his violent suppression of dissent and his



increasing reliance upon punishment transform the visionary ruler into an authoritarian monarch. Prayer becomes one of the most powerful symbols of this transformation. It begins as religious devotion that becomes an instrument of political control. It is banned and finally returns as a desperate search for spiritual refuge in his life. The changing status parallels the psychological and political disintegration of Sultan. Further, the characters Barani, Najib and Aziz illuminate the contradiction within Tughlaq. Barani represents historical consciousness of sulthan, Najib represents political calculation, and Aziz represents the common man's opportunistic intelligence. So, their interactions with the Sultan reveal that political power cannot be sustained by intellect and authority alone. Karnad's historical reconstruction enables Tughlaq to speak to the concerns of post-independence India. The play's engagement with religious difference, secularism, national integration and political disillusionment gives the medieval narrative a distinctly modern resonance. Finally, Tughlaq does not advocate the dominance of religion over politics or the complete elimination of religion from public life. It warns against the harsh reality of political authority and the instrumentalisation of religion and using political power to impose moral or ideological visions on society without regard for human consequences. The failures of Tughlaq lie in his inability to balance vision with pragmatism, authority with responsibility and personal conviction with the realities of governance. The play begins dreaming of a just and unified kingdom but ends as an isolated ruler surrounded by death, suspicion and betrayal. Tughlaq's tragedy lies not simply in the failure of his policies but in the corruption of the very ideals that inspired them. Through this paradox, Karnad transforms a fourteenth-century ruler and his ideologies into a timeless dramatic figure and Tughlaq into a powerful meditation on the fragile relationship between faith, political legitimacy and the ethical use of power in the independent India and its rulers.

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Existential Dimensions of Apocalypse: An Existentialist Analysis of Jack Hunt's *Agora Virus Tetralogy*

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Abstract

Literary criticism has been slow to take popular pandemic fiction seriously as a vehicle for existentialist thought. This article addresses that gap through a close reading of Jack Hunt's four-book Agora Virus series: Phobia (2017), Anxiety (2017), Strain (2017), and Unstable (2018). The study draws on Sartre's account of freedom and bad faith, Camus's notion of the absurd, and Heidegger's being-toward-death for the analysis to trace ex-Marine Frank Talbot's movement from a life narrowed by agoraphobia toward something closer to authentic engagement with the people around him. At the centre of the argument is a dark ironic reversal. Talbot's fear of germs, which has already cost him his marriage and strained his bond with his daughter Ella, proves justified when the H9N3 virus makes the world as dangerous as he always feared. Such vindication brings him no comfort and the survival instead forces him into precisely the relationships his condition was meant to keep him from. The three main interpretive ideals structure the argument of the paper. Talbot's move out of isolation follows Heidegger's claim that confronting one's finitude loosens the anonymous crowd's grip. The impossible decision forced on the survivors - whom to save, whether to kill, and how far an obligation can be stretched to stage Sartrean responsibility under the harshest conditions imaginable. The community that forms around Talbot enacts something close to Camus's revolt on the meaning without any guarantee it will be rewarded. Nevertheless, Hunt's tetralogy belongs within the wider post-COVID reassessment of pandemic writing as a serious philosophical resource and the case extends further still as a genre fiction of this kind can deliver existentialist thought to readers who would never pick up Sartre or Heidegger directly.

Keywords: Existentialism, Literary Criticism, Pandemic Fiction, Popular Fiction, Philosophy.

Introduction

In the modern scenario, stories of social catastrophe are everywhere today on television and streaming platforms, on bestseller lists and are found in the genre of climate fiction. However, the theme itself is far from new. Three centuries ago, Daniel Defoe wrote about plague in the year 1722, Two centuries ago, Mary Shelley imagined the last human in the year 1826 and in the last century, Camus turned an epidemic into a philosophical allegory in the year 1947. What has changed is the reluctance of criticism to treat pandemic fiction with the same seriousness once it becomes genuinely popular. Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (Mandel, 2014) and Ling Ma's *Severance* (Ma, 2018) have found a comfortable home in scholarly discussion, while the commercial survival novel has not as



though strong sales were themselves. Jack Hunt's Agora Virus novels, *Phobia* (2017), *Anxiety* (2017), *Strain* (2017), and *Unstable* (2018), belong to that category (Hunt, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c and 2018). The central figure of the series *Phobia* (2017), *Anxiety* (2017), *Strain* (2017) is the ex-Marine named Frank Talbot. He has allowed excessive agoraphobia to reduce his world to a handful of rooms and an excellent smaller set of rituals across the four novels. The H9N3 virus dismantles the broader society around him. The series offers what the genre guarantees such as pace, chance and a mounting body count. However, under that surface runs a sustained inquiry into freedom, responsibility, mortality and meaning which collapses. The novels sharpen the stakes into possible points of success in the novels.

Hunt published the tetralogy much less than two years before COVID-19 arrived and devastated everyone. The tale was written as a speculation for the reason that has been examined as one of the examples of the wider post-pandemic reassessment via which critics have started asking what pre-2020 fiction expected approximately the disaster that was observed (Constantinesco, 2022; Peters, 2020). Existentialism fits this theme due to the fact that subculture turned into a constructed one for precisely those pandemic situations. What occurs to a life as soon as the systems that gave it meaning fall apart. It takes away the authorities, gets rid of the day-to-day habits that organise a lifestyle, and reduces the best life state to survival, and the existential predicament stops being in a study room. A catastrophe like this strips away what Heidegger referred to as *das Man*, the nameless “they” whose conventions in most cases steer behaviour (Heidegger, 1962). It forces a reckoning with finitude due to the fact that death has moved closer, and a virulent disease detached to benefit confronts its survivors with the absurd life, as Camus felt in *The Plague* (Camus, 2000a). Talbot's precise phobia makes him an unusual character to look at this case. His worry operates in Sartrean terms as terrible religion and works as a difficult refusal of freedom and obligation portrayed as a severe warning (Sartre, 2003). The outbreak plays a cruel reversal. The globe turns into an unstable one as he usually insisted it was. That vindication turns out to be nugatory due to the fact surviving and calls for the things his life he had spent years teaching him to keep away from going outside, performing without reality and relying on other people.

Despite this, Hunt's tetralogy has drawn almost no scholarly attention. That silence says more about the long-standing preference for “literary genre” fiction than it does about the books themselves. This article works to close such gaps in the study of Hunt's tetralogy. It posits a central question; how can the *Agora Virus Tetralogy* be delineated through existentialism having pandemic as its plot? Indeed, several questions may evolve from it. How do the characters confront absurdity, freedom and death? or It may be; does the disintegration of civil order function as a testing ground for actual lifestyles? Or where does bad faith display itself and how does the way come apart? or What weight do relationships among survivors carry as soon as the regular helps networks are gone? To answer these questions, two things are important. It shows that Hunt's novels are doing genuine philosophical work and it shows that existentialist criticism still has its influence on fiction being written and being read today.

Methodology

The primary methodology for the study is the four Agora Virus novels *Phobia* (2017), *Anxiety* (2017), *Strain* (2017), and *Unstable* (2018). They are read as a single continuous narrative instead of separate works. Hunt's wonder accumulates throughout the series. Talbot's arc creates a constrained feel in all scenes because germophobia delivered in *Phobia*



gives a philosophical idea that arrives as soon as the community scenes of strain and unstable situations arrive. Hunt's apocalyptic fiction falls outside the present scope. The figures from the existentialist lifestyle deliver the interpretive vocabulary to the fiction and every work is delivered within the text and it requires uniformity throughout the entire collection. Sartre contributes the concepts of freedom, fact, horrific faith and duty advanced in 'Being' and 'Nothingness' and 'Existentialism'. It is humanism and these terms do most of the work of reading the characters of the novel and weighing the choices forced on the other characters. The ideologies of Sartre confirm it. (Sartre, 2003, 2007) Camus works confirm that the absurd and its answering posture of riot are explored in the works *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel* and dramatised at once in *The Plague*. It is useful for expertise how humans maintain meaning as soon as disaster has made the attempt appear futile in every part of life (Camus, 2000a, 2000b, 2001). Heidegger's *Being and Time* introduces *Dasein*, *das Man*, and *being-toward-death*, which offers a way to read time and authenticity across the select Agoro virus novels. (Heidegger, 1962)

Kierkegaard's account of anxiety and of the unmarried self has been set in opposition to the organization (Kierkegaard, 1980a, 1980b) and Simon de Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity has its interest in a lifestyle lived amongst others (de Beauvoir, 1976, 2011; Holveck, 1999) is spherical out the framework. So, Beauvoir guards towards a place of freedom so solitary that it forgets special people exist. Hence, the study is methodologically combined with close reading and phenomenological interpretation rather than the usual operating method of inner existentialist grievance. The close study tracks the small topics as a choice of everyday life and the shape of a scene that has the rhythm of a continued line of dialogue. The phenomenological interpretation of the study asks what type of existential pressure it delivers on treating a person whose passages are enactments of philosophical mind in choice to the illustrations tacked onto a plot. A keen attention makes a special situation of the moments even as the characters face lack of lifestyles, live under pressure, or talk to themselves to have personal freedom. The unmarried concept did not govern the tetralogy uniformly. The text deploys it wherever it fits. Sartrean terrible religion surfaces within the setting out of the movement of Phobia. Camus' absurdity emerges as soon as the catastrophe's sheer arbitrariness becomes seen in the novels. Heideggerian being-toward-dying takes hold as quickly as mortality settles in as a consistent presence in the novels. Beauvoir's ethics of shared existence seems to evolve as quickly as the network starts off to take shape in the novels *Strain* and *Unstable*. (Table 1) The purpose at some stage in is interpretation as opposed to assessment. It is no longer whether or not Hunt writes properly but what a sustained existentialist study uncovers in the novels and in preserving the ideology of existentialism with the claim on the existing state.

Absurdist Inversion and the Collapse of Terrible Religion

An absurdist inversion places its influence on the structural centre of the tetralogy. In the novel *Phobia*, Talbot's agoraphobia capabilities are an entire equipment of bad religion. It fosters the compulsive cleaning, the avoidance and the self-imposed confinement and a refusal to work proceeds with the ache that includes no responsibility for a lifestyle (Sartre, 2003). His marriage to Kate has already collapsed and his relationship along with his daughter Ella has long gone with it. The outbreak then turns the means of his contamination. The germophobia that cost him his own family seems to be justified. The world genuinely is contaminated and it is genuinely attempting to kill him and having been proper changes nothing in his favour. Whatever the disaster, it vindicates his fear and makes hiding not



possible due to the fact that surviving requires him to go outdoors. It acts without any guarantee of the final results and relies on people he has spent years averting.

The vindication and duty arrive together within the same breath and what follows is not a mere conversion. However, it is an uneven, two-step procedure for every gain in the direction of authenticity that has been shadowed with the aid of a slide again into antique habits. Hence, Talbot's motion out of isolation and a closer look at the self can certainly call his very own and it follows the course of Heidegger ideas such as to confront one's private finitude which is gripped by the anonymous crowd (Heidegger, 1962). Before the virus, his inflexible day-by-day rituals marked time without opening onto any real destiny of the character. An inauthentic existence becomes an impact and a going nowhere. The pandemic dissolves false safety. Every day becomes really unsure and forces the characters to commit to opportunities whose outcomes no one can assure.

Hunt registers this shift in addition to the theme. The cramped and repetitive rhythm of Talbot's early confinement offers a faster and more contingent narrative movement once the outbreak takes hold. When it arrives, the loss of life does so and at random by sparing no one primarily based mostly on likes and dislikes, good or bad, hard or innocent and not even the protagonists. By refusing to shield the reader from this randomness, Hunt develops Heidegger's imperative ideas in the novels and death is the only possibility that no person can take over and it isolates absolutely everyone within a life in the end. The novels again and again confront their characters with alternatives that admit no applicable answer to whom to save, whom to kill, and the way a protracted responsibility can be stretched as quickly as civilisation has ended. In doing so, they use Sartrean obligation under the most unforgiving situations plausible (Sartre, 2003) in the novels. With no authorities left to defer to, the characters cannot hide behind necessity or convention. The choice belongs completely to them and so does its consequence. Hunt returns repeatedly to survivors haunted by the aid of their own moves by turning over whether or not a killing was really vital or whether it revealed something about them they could instead no longer have observed a self-thinking that fits exactly to the unconventional obligation Sartre describes. The unfolding nature of responses throughout the survivor centred is itself an instructive one. The frank predation practised through the antagonists and the numerous tries at authoritarian stage produces greater awkward negotiated cooperation within Talbot's personal corporation to affirm the existentialist factor that freedom includes the liberty to select badly to dominate other humans or to give up one's personal autonomy. Instead of understanding that others are precisely as free as one, it dominates for survival.

Solidarity and Revolt against the Absurd

Where death isolates, the survivor community works in the opposite direction and enacts something close to Camus's account of solidarity as the answer to absurdity (Camus, 2000a, 2000b). The H9N3 virus kills indiscriminately all. It is a vaccine in no way materialises and rebuilding seems impossible given its damage. The old ethical and religious certainties bend and in places they spoil outright. Even so, the characters do no longer surrender to despair. They form attachments and defend the inclined and convey together a makeshift structure of meaning out of nothing greater than their commitments to each one of a kind, persistence without phantasm that captures Camus's sense of rebellion. The stubborn creation of a universe gives no praise and ensures no rescue. The smaller scenes deliver this argument in nice moments whilst a survivor marks a minor victory, along with Talbot deciding to guard people who can offer him nothing in return. Meaning is made here in



complete view of the absurd. As a result, relationships grow to be the area wherein existential disaster is concurrently sharpened and in part repaired and depend on others. However, it also opens onto the sort of shared existence that Beauvoir defined in which one wills the freedom of others along with one's own (de Beauvoir, 1976; Holveck, 1999).

Table – 1: Mapping of Existentialist Concepts across the Agora Virus Tetralogy

Concept (thinker)	Primary novel(s)	Textual manifestation
Bad faith (Sartre)	<i>Phobia</i>	Talbot's agoraphobic rituals as flight from freedom and responsibility
The Absurd / Revolt (Camus)	<i>Anxiety, Strain</i>	Arbitrary contagion; persistence and solidarity without hope
Being-toward-death (Heidegger)	<i>Strain, Unstable</i>	Constant proximity of death; shift from inauthentic to authentic temporality
Responsibility in extremis (Sartre)	<i>Strain, Unstable</i>	Impossible choices about violence, killing, and rescue
Intersubjectivity (Beauvoir)	<i>Unstable</i>	Community formation: wishing the freedom of others

This study offers three key lessons. The first concerns popular fiction on its own terms. These stories show that being easy to read does not mean being simple. It weaves complex ideas into a fast-paced, well-structured narrative may require even greater skill. Hunt's clear writing style, his use of free indirect discourse and his commitment to the conventions of survival fiction do not push philosophy into the background instead, they bring it to life. The genre's predominant subject matter and the decisions made below strain join evidently with existentialist thoughts by developing a strong link among form and meaning, instead of a struggle. The readers who might generally avoid works like *Being and Nothingness* (Sartre, 2003) or *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962) can explore these ideas through Talbot's struggles.

This reflects a much broader sample in style fiction, where a character's inner battle can give a detailed Sartrean argument to existence, even when the unconventional makes no explicit philosophical claims (Guerra, 2017). In this manner, popular fiction can now and again speak philosophical insights more successfully than philosophy itself by showing someone seeking to stay authentically in place of genuinely explaining what authenticity is. A second lesson concerns existentialist criticism itself. Although this tradition has lost some of its academic prominence with the rise of structuralism, poststructuralism, and new materialisms, its central questions about freedom, authenticity, mortality, and meaning remain important. By showing how these ideas continue to resonate in contemporary texts reinforces the view that existentialism remains a useful critical tool rather than a relic of the past. The genre itself makes this case particularly well. At the narrative level, apocalyptic fiction displays the very conditions that helped for the rise to existentialism. It portrays profound uncertainty, the collapse of familiar realities and an unavoidable consciousness of demise. Existentialist ideology developed in the shadow of 20th-century catastrophes, whilst



existential fiction continues to return to catastrophe as a critical theme. The connection between the two is a consequence more than a coincidence. A third lesson relates directly to the moment in which this article is being read. In the aftermath of COVID-19, the readers approach pandemic fiction differently than they once did. Those who saw lockdowns, witnessed institutional disasters spread in real time, and have ended up more aware of their non-public mortality bring an angle to those texts that readers earlier than 2020 could not have shared in the same way (Constantinesco, 2022; Giovanelli, 2023; Peters, 2020, 2022). The dilemmas going through Hunt's characters decide to consider authorities by balancing man or woman freedom with public protection and recognizing their duties in the direction of strangers. The tetralogy seems less like an imagined scenario and more like a global unsettling end to our own kind and has realism taking the readers to the way of wonder.

The existential ideas developed for confronting Hunt's fictional plague also offer many ways to understand the experience of the real pandemic and create a connection with other critics who have drawn in discussions of Camus's writings during COVID-19 (Estok, 2021). It has been read along with Camus's *The Plague* (Camus, 2001), Mandel's *Station Eleven* (Mandel, 2014), and Ma's *Severance* (Ma, 2018), as well as the recent scholarship on the post-apocalyptic novel (De Cristofaro, 2019), the outbreak narrative (Wald, 2008), and the broader philosophy of pandemics (Žižek, 2020). This sort of interpretation opens up a wider conversation for which the genre is now particularly well suited to Hunt's Tetralogy. There are several obstacles that deserve acknowledgement in the study. By treating the existentialist culture as a beneficial interpretive framework, the critique leaves many of its assumptions in an unexamined mode. Feminist, postcolonial, and poststructuralist perspectives should project this framework in approaches that fall beyond the scope of this text. Furthermore, the study does not examine Hunt's existence, authorial intentions, or real readers' responses to the novels by making it difficult to determine whether or not the tetralogy's existential topics deliberately emerged from the author's style. These obstacles do not undermine the critical argument. Rather, they clarify the questions left open and point closer to the promising guidelines for future studies.

Conclusion

Jack Hunt's *Agora Virus Tetralogy* creates true philosophical ideals rather than simply borrowing philosophical surroundings for the environment. This article has done a close analysis and phenomenological interpretation of the work presented. The study investigates Talbot's movement from agoraphobic bad faith toward a self he can finally call his own, as in Heidegger's account of being-toward-death. It also works like the sequence of impossible choices forced on the survivors, like the stages of Sartrean responsibility and the community that eventually forms lives out of something close to Camus's solidarity and revolt against the absurd. The absurdist inversion at the centre of the narrative holds all three dimensions together in the study. A protagonist proves right to discover that being right changes nothing and he must still walk out into a world as dangerous as his worst imaginations. The division between "genre" and "serious" fiction stops looking like a true line once a book thinks this hard about how to live. It looks more like a habit people picked up, and not one you can really defend. Hunt's novels show that existentialism still has something to say. It speaks to literature and it speaks to the lives people live while reading. Everyone must die. The universe promises no meaning. Freedom stays with us whether we want it or not. So, the *Agora Virus* series ask the oldest existentialist question in the plainest way: How should a person live? It is easy to see where this question goes next. It can go outward, into the wider



field of pandemic and apocalyptic writing. It can go sideways, into feminist, postcolonial, and trauma-centred readings that this study has left out on purpose. Or it can go back to Hunt's other works to see how these four novels fit into the longer arc of what he has written.

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From Terminology to Terminocriticism: Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives on Arabic Linguistic Discourse

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Abstract

This article examines the shift from traditional terminology to terminocriticism, an epistemological approach that investigates how language constructs scientific knowledge. It argues that terminology is not merely a neutral labelling system but a dynamic process that shapes and transforms concepts in specialised discourse. Focusing on Arabic linguistics, the study highlights how inherited traditions, translated theories, and terminological proliferation have contributed to conceptual instability. Drawing on socioterminology, discourse analysis, and computational linguistics, it emphasises variation, context, and the cultural dimensions of terminology. The article concludes that critically analysing terminological practices is essential to strengthening conceptual clarity, scientific rigour, and effective knowledge transfer.

Keywords: Terminocriticism, Terminology Studies, Arabic Linguistics, Metalanguage, Socioterminology.

Introduction

A review of linguistics' history shows that its development has been driven not only by new terms but also by the continual reorganisation of conceptual systems. Terminological innovation has often accompanied the emergence of new theoretical paradigms, as stable terminologies are repeatedly reshaped to accommodate new concepts. Arabic linguistic studies, however, have followed a different path. Rather than developing a coherent linguistics of Arabic grounded in empirical research on the language and its social uses, they have largely produced a discourse that adopts modern linguistic terminology while remaining closely tied to the classical grammatical tradition. As a result, contemporary approaches have often reinterpreted inherited grammatical concepts instead of fundamentally renewing the study of Arabic as a living language in actual communicative practice. The epistemological challenges of Arabic linguistic studies stem from a dual tension: continued reliance on the classical grammatical tradition and the translation-based adoption of modern linguistic theories. This has made terminology increasingly central, often shaping the field rather than simply supporting it. While terminology is essential to all linguistic inquiry, its prominence in Arabic linguistics raises important questions about the relationship between terminology and linguistics, and about the role of terminology studies in critically assessing conceptual and terminological practices. Because linguistic analysis necessarily relies on an evolving metalanguage, terminology cannot be treated as neutral. Without critical reflection, terminological practices risk becoming an autonomous framework that constrains, rather than



advances, linguistic inquiry. This article argues for a second-order critical approach that systematically evaluates the conceptual and terminological foundations of linguistic research.

1. Epistemological foundations of Terminocriticism

This section addresses the study's central questions: What is terminocriticism, particularly in linguistics, and how can linguistic terminology be critically evaluated in practice? It also asks who assesses terminological usage, what criteria should guide that evaluation, and who should anticipate and shape future terminological developments.

1.1. The Serendipitous Emergence of Terminocriticism

In 1998, François Gaudin introduced terminocriticism in response to the fragmentation of terminological practices and the uncontrolled proliferation of terms in specialised fields. He argued that terminology should not be limited to description and standardisation but should also examine the conceptual, social, institutional, and cultural conditions governing the creation and circulation of terms. Thus, terminocriticism views terminology not as a neutral system of labels, but as a critical field concerned with the relationships between language, knowledge, and scientific authority. Gaudin highlighted the lack of systematic documentation of neologisms and terminological innovations emerging from research activities (Gaudin 54–55). Along with Holzem, he emphasised terminological monitoring as a continuous process for identifying, evaluating, and integrating new terms into language planning (Perron, 1996, pp. 32–47). In the Arab context, such monitoring is crucial to understanding how Arabic terminology evolves amid social diversity, regional variation, and linguistic interaction. Managing the growing production of specialised terms requires stronger scientific, institutional, and technological support (Mokrane, 2020, p.146–174).

Goffin proposed integrating the theoretical and applied study of specialised terms into university research to support both disciplinary knowledge and terminological development (Goffin, 1978, p.303–304). Similarly, Widad Mustafa Hadi advocated creating a platform to publish and critically evaluate new terms before adoption, making terminocritical assessment a continuous practice (Hadi, 2000, p.65–70). Hadj-Salah promoted the creation of an Arab Internet as a strategic project to strengthen Arabic in digital communication and scientific research (Hadj-Salah, 2006, p.26–27). Saadia Aït Taleb's work on the Lexar database reinforced this vision by highlighting the role of computerised terminology, corpora, and digital tools in organising and disseminating Arabic scientific knowledge (Aït-Taleb, 1991, 1996). A central aspect of Hadj-Salah's thought was his criticism of uncritically adopting Western linguistic models without developing Arabic linguistic corpora (Hadj-Salah, 2008, p. 25). For him, corpus-based research provides the empirical foundation necessary for dictionaries, terminology, and linguistic analysis. It allows the study of terms in authentic contexts, improving their evaluation, standardisation, and integration into scientific discourse.

1.2. Terminology between Conceptual Analysis and Interpretation

The main risk is reducing terminology to a discipline of conceptual interpretation rather than one concerned with organising and analysing concepts. Labels such as Conceptology reflect this tendency by implying an autonomous field of conceptual study. Terminology should instead be seen as a mediating framework that links concepts, terms, and specialised communication. Concepts are examined only insofar as they clarify naming processes and the structures underlying them. Unlike philology, which interprets the content and meaning of texts, terminology focuses on the relationship between concepts and their linguistic representations in specialised domains (Malmberg, 1972). Although this perspective may seem straightforward, it entails profound epistemological transformations in



the foundations of terminology (Gallo, 2001, pp. 78-98). Experts' concepts are not always expressed through fixed or standardised terms; they vary, revealing a gap between terminological forms and conceptual representations (Rastier, 1995, p.35-65). Therefore, terminological analysis should not be limited to identifying neologisms but should also examine how new meanings emerge and are structured. While ISO defines terminology as the scientific study of concepts and terms in specialised fields (ISO 1087, 1990), Lerat (1995, p.23) emphasises that specialised discourse is not merely a matter of content: concepts are language-independent, whereas terms are their linguistic designations within specific communicative contexts.

Terminology encompasses all aspects related to terms, including their designation, concepts, and characteristics derived from studying their referents. It rests on a triadic relationship among the term, the concept, and the object it refers to, whether real or imagined. The term thus links reality to its linguistic representation. Unlike the semasiological view of the signified, the concept in terminology is a mental construct that precedes its designation and is not naturally bound to it. However, this conceptual dimension should not be extended beyond terminology's scope, as other disciplines, such as epistemology, also examine the nature and formation of concepts. Concepts, designations, and disciplinary specialisation have developed across sciences to the point that any scholarly study must consider their various dimensions. While all fields of knowledge describe concepts, modern terminology specifically examines how linguistic systems designate these concepts (Lerat, Op. Cit., p. 17). It does not define scientific concepts, which specialists do, but focuses on the relationship between concepts and their linguistic expressions. This distinction requires balancing the conceptual and terminological levels and avoiding excessive prioritisation of abstract theoretical approaches.

1.3. Rethinking the Alleged Absence of Terminological Critique

The second risk is assuming that terminological criticism did not exist before this modern orientation emerged. However, previous studies reveal valuable critical contributions that, although limited in scope, provide an important foundation that should not be overlooked. Because these studies were rooted in the tradition of *riwāya* and focused mainly on commentaries and transmission rather than new texts, linguistic terminology expanded through repetition rather than innovation. This issue grew more complex as transmitted sources multiplied and diverged (Mokrane, 2023, pp. 78-140). This approach persists because it prioritises preserving and transmitting knowledge over critically examining it, reinforcing continuity through repetition and authority.

2. The Critical Turn in Contemporary Terminology Studies

2.1. The Institutionalisation of Critical Terminologies

Terminocriticism represents an advanced stage in terminological studies, moving beyond term creation and standardisation to analyse the conditions that govern the production, circulation, and acceptance of terms. It considers terms as dynamic cognitive and cultural constructs shaped by disciplinary, social, and historical contexts, rather than as fixed labels for concepts. This approach examines semantic change, variation, competition, and how terms integrate within linguistic and cultural systems. Influenced by the linguistic turn, it views terminology as an active component in knowledge construction, reflecting epistemological and institutional contexts. Consequently, terminocriticism has become an interdisciplinary field combining linguistics, sociology, philosophy, and corpus analysis. Since the late 1990s, terminological criticism has expanded from technical standardisation to



evaluation, reflection, and anticipation (Humbley, 2009, p. 5–8). While linguists analyse terminological developments within their fields, terminologists adopt a broader perspective by evaluating concepts, planning terminology, and anticipating future needs in accordance with principles such as those outlined in ISO 1087:2019.

2.2. The Socioterminological Shift

2.2.1. Socioterminology and the Social Turn in Terminology

Socioterminology emerged at the intersection of theoretical and applied sociolinguistics, redefining the scope of terminological studies. It examines the circulation of terms in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, while analysing meanings, conceptual structures, and the social conditions that shape terminology. Rather than treating terms as mere labels, it views them as linguistic signs embedded in social practices, whose diffusion, appropriation, and use those practices shape. The field developed along two main traditions. In France, Louis Guilbert and the Rouen research laboratory influenced it, with major contributions from Yves Gambier, Louis Guespin, and François Gaudin. In Québec, Pierre Auger, Jean-Claude Boulanger, and Jean-Claude Corbeil advanced it through their involvement in language planning and policy. In both contexts, socioterminology maintained a strong sociolinguistic orientation and later spread across Romance-language countries (Gaudin, 2005, p.81).

Sociolinguistics' influence became evident in the 1980s through pioneering studies by Monica Heller and colleagues, who examined workplace communication and the social factors driving lexical change (Heller et al., 1982). Denise Daoust and Jacques Maurais later introduced a diachronic perspective, highlighting that terminological systems are dynamic rather than fixed (Daoust & Maurais, 1987, p.05–46). This perspective brought Québec terminology research closer to socioterminology, as both view terminology as a socially situated, historically evolving phenomenon. By emphasising variation and social practice, socioterminology departs from the Wüsterian tradition, which largely rejects terminological variation. As a branch of applied linguistics, it has also been closely linked to language planning and policy, moving terminology beyond technical standardisation into the broader public and democratic sphere (Gaudin, 2003, p. 173). Although standardisation experts play an essential technical role, their work differs from terminology's broader public dimension. Since the 1960s, governments have increasingly incorporated terminology into language planning, particularly in science and technology, to regulate usage and shape linguistic practices. However, terminology extends beyond institutional language policy. Terminological criticism, together with socioterminology, offers a reflective and evaluative approach to specialised vocabularies. Rather than merely describing or standardising terms, it examines how they emerge, acquire meaning, circulate, and evolve within scholarly communities. It bridges linguistic and conceptual analysis by viewing the term not simply as a lexical unit, but as a cognitive tool that supports the construction, organisation, and transmission of knowledge.

2.2.2. A Critical Approach to Terminology

A critical approach to terminology rests on the principle that conceptual clarity is essential to scientific communication and knowledge development. A term is considered adequate only if it accurately represents a well-defined concept and functions coherently within a system of knowledge. Its value therefore depends on its capacity to distinguish concepts precisely, avoid ambiguity, and facilitate scholarly exchange. At the same time, this approach recognises that concepts are inseparable from their linguistic expression. A term's



effectiveness also depends on its morphological, syntactic, and semantic coherence, as well as its usability in academic discourse. Accordingly, terminological analysis considers both conceptual structures and the textual contexts in which terms are created, used, and interpreted. Socioterminology reinforces this perspective by emphasising terminology's social and cultural dimensions. Specialised vocabularies emerge within communities of practice and are shaped by institutional, historical, and cultural contexts. Consequently, terms often reflect the intellectual traditions of the communities that use them. This is especially true in the humanities and social sciences, where concepts often evolve from ordinary language into specialised terminology, making critical terminological analysis essential to understanding shifts in meaning and disciplinary use. Conceptual transformation is particularly evident in literary studies, philosophy, cultural studies, and the social sciences, where new terminology often emerges through metaphorical extension, semantic change, or the reinterpretation of existing words. As it moves across disciplines, everyday vocabulary may acquire specialised theoretical meanings or be reshaped. This analytical perspective examines these processes to explain how concepts evolve and how shifts in terminology reflect broader changes in intellectual frameworks.

A critical approach to terminology is especially valuable in disciplines with limited terminological standardisation. Unlike the natural sciences, the humanities are marked by conceptual diversity, where the same term may carry different meanings or new terms may express distinct theoretical perspectives. While this flexibility encourages innovation, it can also create ambiguity and hinder communication. This approach addresses these challenges by comparing usages, clarifying distinctions, and identifying areas of convergence and divergence. Its objective is not rigid standardisation or unrestricted variation, but a balance between conceptual stability, which supports clear communication and cumulative knowledge, and the flexibility needed for theoretical innovation. A critical approach to terminology also promotes interdisciplinary communication by clarifying how key terms differ across disciplines. As research increasingly crosses disciplinary boundaries, it helps identify conceptual overlaps and misunderstandings rooted in divergent terminological traditions, fostering clearer scholarly dialogue. More broadly, this critical perspective on terminology is not merely a technique for managing specialised vocabulary but an epistemological approach that examines how language shapes knowledge, supports intellectual exchange, and influences the development of disciplines. By analysing relationships among terms, concepts, discourse, and social context, it explains how specialised knowledge is created, negotiated, and transformed over time.

3. The Mechanism of Criticism in Linguistics

3.1. Metalanguage, Linguistic Discourse, and Terminological Inquiry

The relationship between terminology and criticism is best understood through the concept of metalanguage. Originally developed in literary criticism, this concept extends to linguistics, where language itself is the object of study. Linguists describe and analyse linguistic phenomena, while external scholars may also evaluate their theoretical frameworks. In this sense, language exists independently of linguistic inquiry, and linguistics constitutes the primary level of analysis. However, the object of critical terminological analysis is different. Rather than examining language directly, it investigates the metalanguage and linguistic discourse through which scholars describe and conceptualise language. It therefore evaluates the coherence, adequacy, and conceptual consistency of linguistic descriptions. From this perspective, linguistic discourse differs from linguistics as a discipline, an approach



notably developed by Abdelkader Fassi Fehri (1993, p.43–63) and complemented by studies of the descriptive language of the Arabic linguistic tradition (Maslouh, 1989).

Linguistics is embedded in multiple, interconnected discourses that circulate through conferences, journals, and academic institutions, shaping how linguistic knowledge is produced. Rather than studying linguistics in isolation, the terminologist examines these discursive formations, which structure, transmit, and mediate linguistic activity and provide access to the discipline itself. Roland Barthes's distinction between the language of the writer and that of the critic provides a useful framework for understanding terminological analysis. In *Critical Essays*, he argues that writers use language to represent reality, whereas critics employ a second-order language for analysis and interpretation (Barthes, 1964, p.255–256). Similarly, linguists treat language not as a means of expression but as an object of scientific inquiry. The terminologist extends this analytical process by examining not language itself, but the language of linguistics—the metalanguage through which linguistic knowledge is constructed. This layered perspective shows that knowledge is shaped by multiple levels of discourse and theoretical frameworks, each offering a distinct view of the same object (Baylan & Fabre, 1990, p. 36). Michel Foucault likewise argues that discursive formations—such as grammar, medicine, and economics—shape the concepts, objects, and forms of knowledge produced within a discipline. As these discourses gain coherence, they develop into influential theoretical systems. He illustrates this with early grammatical theories on the origin of languages and the emergence of Indo-European linguistics, showing how philological discourse framed and transmitted such ideas (Foucault, 1969, p.64, 142–145). This perspective highlights the gap between scientific reality and the discourses that represent it. Albert Einstein similarly observed that concepts are mental constructions rather than direct products of sensory experience (Einstein, 1979, p.49–50). Although concepts often reflect reality, abstraction and theoretical interpretation shape them.

3.2. Beyond Standardisation: A Critical Perspective

Although classical terminology viewed standardisation as essential to organising scientific knowledge, this position has been widely challenged. Socioterminology, in particular, rejects the assumption that concepts can be universally standardised and instead emphasises their social, linguistic, and cultural variability. From this perspective, terminological unification must be treated with caution, since concepts are shaped by the intellectual contexts in which they emerge and evolve. This debate highlights the importance of a critical approach to terminology, which has become a key methodological perspective in terminological studies. Rather than accepting terminology uncritically, it evaluates the relevance and adequacy of specialised terms. While it discourages the unnecessary multiplication of competing designations, it also recognises that terminological innovation is justified when new concepts or evolving theories require new forms of expression. The relationship between terminology and critique has also been examined through translation. Just as Madame de Staël linked translation to critical activity (Wilhelm, 2004, p.692–705), terminology can likewise be viewed as part of a broader critical process. If theory provides the conceptual framework of scientific knowledge, terminology gives it operational form. Because theories evolve through revision and debate, their associated terms must also remain open to critical evaluation. Their validity depends on their conceptual adequacy within changing intellectual and cultural contexts (Gad, 2002, p.85–86). Thus, theory, terminology, and critique form a dynamic relationship that promotes conceptual rigour while avoiding both excessive subjectivism and rigid standardisation.



The influence of critical terminological analysis extends beyond the sciences into literary criticism, where scholars increasingly examine the language of criticism itself. By analysing the terminology critics use to formulate judgments and theoretical positions, they seek to improve the clarity and coherence of critical discourse rather than merely comment on literary texts. This concern is reflected in numerous scholarly initiatives. The Egyptian journal *Fusul* devoted a special issue to “Issues of Literary Terminology”, while the Lebanese journal *Contemporary Arab Thought* published a double issue on “Criticism and Critical Terminology” (Benhaddou, 1988, p.13–24). Similar attention appears in works on literary terminology and in the growing practice of introducing critical studies with terminological discussions, underscoring the central role of terminological reflection in contemporary scholarship.

4. The Role of the Terminologist in Linguistics

4.1. The Status of the Terminologist

Not all scholars engaged in terminology accept the title terminologist. Some prefer labels such as terminology expert or subject-field terminology specialist, arguing that terminological work depends on expertise in a specific domain. Others even question whether terminology constitutes an autonomous discipline (Jongen, 2000, p.209). Similar debates have long existed in criticism, where critics' identities and roles have also been contested. Despite these reservations, contemporary scholarship recognises both terminology as a distinct discipline and the legitimacy of the term terminologist. As in criticism, methodological diversity does not undermine the field's disciplinary status (Gouadec, 1997, p.13–14). Jean-Jacques Perrot highlights the terminologist's importance through the notion of terminological issues, referring to the challenges and responsibilities of terminological work (Perrot, 1991, p. 116). Unlike the lexicographer, who records established usage, the terminologist identifies, monitors, and sometimes anticipates new terms emerging in specialised fields. This forward-looking role may even encourage terminological innovation as new concepts develop. From this perspective, the terminologist occupies a strategic position in organising knowledge. Just as morphology structures linguistic systems, terminology structures specialised knowledge by analysing concepts, refining designations, and promoting coherence within scientific conceptual systems (Hamlawi, 2001, p. 7).

4.2. Analysis of Linguistic Concepts

Linguists were the first to analyse and evaluate linguistic concepts. As Hadj-Salah notes, this task involves explaining and clarifying concepts, despite the difficulties posed by the abstract nature of linguistic knowledge, technical language, and persistent misconceptions about science (Hadj-Salah, 1971, p. 11–12). Terminological inquiry supports this process by organising and refining conceptual systems, not only in linguistics but also in all fields that require precision (Mokrane, 2018). A similar perspective appears in translation studies. For Mathieu Guidère, conceptual analysis is a fundamental step in translation, as meaning emerges from the interaction between source-text concepts and the translator's knowledge. Because terms rarely have exact equivalents across languages, translation requires interpretation, analogy, and conceptual reconstruction (Guidère, 2009, p. 428). This process also involves analysing mental representations, forming communicative intentions, and selecting the most appropriate target expression (Gile, 1995, p.101–102). Thus, translation is a dynamic analytical activity grounded in an accurate understanding of the concepts conveyed. Conceptual analysis accompanies the entire translation process, operating at the cognitive level of perception, interpretation, and intention. Terminological research therefore



relies on conceptual systems to limit linguistic interference, especially in interpretation (Pavel, 1993, pp. 66–82; Gile, Op. Cit., p. 166). The terminologist is not merely a compiler of glossaries but a critical mediator who evaluates concepts, validates terminological choices, and ensures coherence between meaning and designation.

Unlike the lexicographer, who records established usage; the terminologist takes an evaluative, prospective approach, assessing terms for conceptual adequacy and their place within knowledge systems (Duval, 1991, p.79–80). Terminology thus combines descriptive and normative functions by promoting precision, consistency, and effective scientific communication (Mazière, 2005, p.60). By analysing translation practices and terminological choices, the terminologist identifies patterns that corpus-based research can systematise (Altomonte, 2020, p.76). This perspective, developed in discourse analysis and emphasised by Cabré (1998), links terminology to the organisation of specialised knowledge. Positioned between description and standardisation, terminological work remains dynamic, adapting to conceptual change while balancing linguistic usage with the need for terminological coherence (Auger, 1980, p. 146).

4.3. Reviewing Linguistic Terminology

From this perspective, the terminologist works at two complementary levels: evaluating the term and analysing the concept it designates to ensure their coherence. The objective is not to question the specialist's authority but to assess how well the relationship between concept and designation works within its theoretical and cognitive context. This task requires close collaboration with domain experts to integrate conceptual knowledge and terminological analysis. We then review, validate, and, where appropriate, incorporate proposed terms into terminological databases and other specialised resources. In this regard, we have proposed a method for identifying and classifying terminological treatments to establish Arabic equivalents based on their source languages. The term *hypertext* illustrates this approach: we collect, document, and systematically organise its proposed Arabic equivalents before terminologists, subject specialists, and language academy committees evaluate them. This process supports critical assessment and informed decisions on term standardisation and adoption.

5. Linguistic Discourse and Its Characteristics

5.1. Examining the Hypothesis

In the introduction, we argued that the Arab context is characterised less by linguistics as a fully established scientific discipline than by linguistic discourse. Rather than being driven by a stable community of specialists, the field is often shaped by influential commentators whose contributions do not necessarily strengthen its scientific foundations. As a result, many participants engage in discourse about linguistics without clearly distinguishing it from linguistic research itself. A terminological analysis of this discourse can help explain this situation. Such an analysis requires identifying the defining features of linguistic discourse and the methodological tools for studying it, which the following section examines. The present section thus provides the conceptual framework for that analysis. The term *linguistic discourse* has also been used to describe regional differences in how the Arab world receives and develops linguistic thought, particularly in its treatment of concepts and terminology. Fatima Hashimi Bakouch argues that studying Maghrebi linguistic discourse highlights its distinctive contributions while recognising the foundational role of Mashriqi scholarship, especially the Egyptian linguistic tradition (Bakouch, 2004, p.12). Similarly, Abdessalem Mseddi notes that Arab scholars devoted considerable attention to semantic



overlap within linguistic discourse (Mseddi, 1986, p.317). As linguistic research increasingly incorporated critical reflection, attention shifted from linguistic works to the discourse through which they are interpreted. Josette Rey-Debove provides a parallel example by applying linguistic analysis to metalanguage itself (Rey-Debove, 1986). This reciprocal relationship illustrates how linguistics and terminology enrich one another through the analysis and refinement of scholarly discourse.

5.2. The Discourse of Definition and Classification

Linguistic discourse builds definitions of linguistic terms on other related terms, creating an interconnected network of concepts and definitions. By linking terminology to specific theoretical issues and contexts, it organises and classifies linguistic knowledge. Consequently, linguistic discourse develops as a structured body of specialised terms and definitional systems within different branches of linguistics. Its coherence depends on the relationships among concepts, reflecting terminological practices shared by researchers and scholars who analyse and formalise linguistic knowledge. Because definitional practices concern both terms and concepts, they lie at the core of terminological inquiry and help standardise specialised discourse. Terminologists must therefore examine the classificatory mechanisms underlying linguistic discourse (Bouacha, 1984). As Danielle Candel (1993, p.34) argues, definitional discourse reflects an ongoing activity of defining and a broader reflection on lexical meaning. This prominence of definitional activity in linguistic discourse raises an epistemological question: why does linguistic discourse rely so heavily on definitions?

This proliferation reflects the uncertainties involved in constructing linguistic knowledge. This explains the abundance of encyclopedic works, such as *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language Sciences* (Ducrot & Todorov, 1972), whose dense network of definitions synthesises numerous linguists' contributions. These reference works have themselves become subjects of terminological, linguistic, and lexicographic critique. Ben Taleb Othman (1989, p. 93) defines definitional discourse as the semantic construction of specialised concepts that clarifies referential features and situates terms within a terminological system. Accordingly, definitional discourse should identify the concept's defining semantic features, describe its referent, and establish its relationships with other terms within the conceptual system.

5.3. Linguistic Discourse and Its Pedagogical Orientation

While linguistics generally adopts a descriptive approach to language and distances itself from pedagogy except in applied linguistics, linguistic discourse is strongly pedagogical. It seeks to make linguistic knowledge accessible to non-specialists through various forms of mediation. As a result, the dissemination of linguistic knowledge has become a major outcome of terminological reflection, leading to the widespread production of introductory books and manuals, sometimes at the expense of linguistics as a strictly scientific discipline. Introductory works may therefore rely heavily on pedagogical simplification to explain linguistic concepts. Although this approach is valuable, it has not always fully realised its educational potential. More systematic instructional design and specialised research on linguistics pedagogy could have yielded greater benefits, comparable to the well-established field of language pedagogy (Hornsby, 2014).

5.4. Linguistic Discourse as a System of Representation and Communication

As a scientific discipline, linguistics is expected to provide a structured system for organising and representing its concepts (Certeau, 1998, p.79). However, it has developed a



distinctive status because its object of study has itself become a form of discourse, making linguistics both a science of language and an object of critical reflection. Its metalanguage functions as a second-order representational system rather than a purely communicative one (Laporte, 2000, p.43). Nevertheless, linguistics also pursues communicative aims, and many of its terminological challenges stem from the effort to develop effective conceptual and mediating tools. These dimensions converge in what we call linguistic discourse: a representational system that identifies, organises, and stabilises linguistic facts through language itself. Although it may appear communicative, its primary function is representational, remaining open to continual revision and conceptual refinement until provisional standardisation is reached. This reflects the Paradox of the Object's Non-Finitude (Mokrane, 2016) and also characterises linguistic discourse as an object of terminological construction. Consequently, terminological work within linguistics is an ongoing process of regulating and restructuring concepts, inevitably generating conceptual shifts, instability, and reformulation. From this perspective, metalanguage remains fundamentally a system of representation rather than communication.

The same principle applies to other representational systems. Mathematics, for example, organises data before communicating it through formal notations. Language engineering faces similar challenges with syntactic representation. Abeillé and Blanche (2000, p.56) note that, unlike relatively standardised lexical representation, grammars vary widely in their modes of representation, lack consistent links with the lexicon, and remain only partially standardised. This perspective aligns with Sylvain Auroux's concept of grammatisation, the historical process through which language becomes an object of systematic knowledge. Through grammars, dictionaries, and other forms of metalanguage, language is described, classified, and analysed, reflecting a community's capacity to view its own language as an object of scientific inquiry rather than merely a means of communication. Writing systems, grammars, and dictionaries do more than transmit language; they create metalinguistic tools that promote linguistic awareness. As Auroux (1994) argues, grammatisation is the historical process through which language becomes an object of knowledge, while linguistic awareness emerges as one of its main cognitive outcomes. Grammars and dictionaries are therefore not only descriptive resources but also cognitive tools that shape knowledge and cultural understanding. This distinction between grammar as an internal system and its metalinguistic description justifies efforts to simplify grammar, placing them primarily within language education and educational linguistics rather than theoretical grammar. The distinction between school grammar and scientific linguistics has become a defining feature of modern grammatical thought. As Chevalier (1994) notes, school grammar primarily transmits linguistic norms, whereas linguistic research seeks to explain language through evolving theories. During the nineteenth century, historical and comparative linguistics challenged traditional grammar by presenting language as a dynamic system. The institutional rise of linguistic research after 1875, along with the influence of the New Sorbonne, further integrated scientific advances into grammar teaching. By the twentieth century, communicative approaches and modern linguistics had transformed grammar from a mainly prescriptive discipline into one that also accounts for language use, variation, and change.

5.5. The Recurrence of the Relational Term (Hypertext)

A relational term remains linked to its source-language equivalent until it becomes fully established in the target language. It is most visible in texts that repeatedly present the



Arabic term alongside the foreign original, indicating that readers still rely on the source form to grasp the concept. The term remains relational until it functions as an autonomous conventional sign in Arabic. It also appears frequently in definitions, references to the original coiner, and terminological commentary. These textual features support a textual-linguistic analysis of linguistic discourse and reflect A. Hadj Salah's criticism of approaches that translate Western terms mechanically without examining their actual use in authentic texts. Terminological planning has addressed the recurrence of relational terms through what may be called the traditional model: the early effort to transfer Western linguistic terminology into Arabic by creating Arabic equivalents. It is called traditional because it reflects the initial stage of Arabic terminological development while still influencing later coinages. In this model, translators often retain the Western term alongside the Arabic equivalent, revealing the latter's continued dependence on the source language. As Ducrot (2001, p.86–87) shows, foreign terms may make up a significant portion of the text, underscoring this reliance. Consequently, the Arabic term remains conceptually tied to its Western counterpart, requiring researchers to trace the source term's meanings, usage, and historical development.

The Arabic equivalent is thus introduced together with the conceptual framework of the source tradition, including its structure, usage, defining features, and examples. At this stage, it mainly extends the original concept, while terminological analysis also helps trace its historical development. As Khaoula Taleb Ibrahim (2000, p. 35) notes, the strict distinction between synchronic and diachronic linguistics has weakened, since languages simultaneously preserve elements of the past, the present, and emerging change. This raises the question of whether to abandon outdated terms or retain them as historical traces of earlier theories. Like expressions such as "the sun rises" and "the sun sets," they often persist as linguistic remnants even after the scientific concepts that inspired them have evolved.

5.6. Linguistic Discourse as Interpretive and Referential

Linguistics has gradually evolved into linguistic discourse, shifting from a purely descriptive science toward a more interpretive enterprise. As a result, description often becomes inseparable from theoretical interpretation. Scientific explanation increasingly depends on identifying and organising the conditions of understanding rather than merely describing linguistic facts. Influenced in part by jurisprudential modes of reasoning, linguistic discourse remains open to multiple interpretations. It evolves through new readings of foundational texts and the evaluative perspectives scholars bring to them. These judgments concern both content and form, both of which are relevant to terminological inquiry, although terminologists often focus on form. Consequently, linguistic discourse increasingly relies on references to leading scholars and established authorities.

Conclusion

This discussion shows that the relationship between terminology and linguistics goes beyond naming and standardisation. It is an epistemological process that conceptualises, organises, and continually revises scientific knowledge. Terminology demonstrates that scientific concepts are dynamic, evolving through discourse, usage, and theoretical change. In the Arabic linguistic tradition, the dominance of linguistic discourse has often encouraged extensive terminological production without equivalent conceptual development, reflecting tensions between inherited grammatical traditions and imported theories. In response, Abderrahmane Hadj-Salah's advocacy of corpus-based research promoted greater empirical rigour. At the same time, Saadia Aït Taleb's work in computational terminology has



advanced the integration of Arabic terminology into modern digital environments. These developments confirm that terminology is not merely a tool of designation but a key factor in producing, transmitting, and renewing knowledge. They call for stronger links between conceptual analysis, empirical research, and technological innovation to improve the coherence of Arabic linguistic scholarship. In this context, terminological criticism becomes essential, as it examines not only how terms are regulated but also the epistemological, social, and cultural conditions that shape their emergence and evolution. Terms are therefore viewed not as neutral labels, but as cognitive and institutional constructions reflecting the practices of scholarly communities and the contexts of knowledge production. Terminological activity occupies a dual position between description and prescription, observation and conceptual organisation. Unlike the lexicographer, who records usage, the terminologist works with specialists, translators, and language planners to ensure the coherence of conceptual systems. Terminology thus extends beyond naming to support scientific communication, knowledge transfer, and specialised information management. Linguistic discourse, both object and medium of inquiry continuously produces and revises definitions and classifications. The emergence of terminological criticism reflects the understanding that scientific language does not merely transmit knowledge but also shapes its construction and transformation. It therefore shifts terminology from a technical practice of designation to a reflexive field examining how concepts are created, circulated, and renewed across languages and disciplines.

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