



Linguistics

Metaphorical Landscapes: Exploring Metaphors in Hindi, Bhojpuri and English Proverbs

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ABSTRACT

This study, titled “Metaphorical Landscapes: Exploring Metaphors in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English Proverbs,” investigates the intricate and culturally rich use of metaphors in the proverbs of these three languages. Proverbs, known for their brevity and depth, serve as vessels of communal wisdom, encapsulating cultural values, societal norms, and collective experiences. Metaphors within these proverbs enhance their expressive power by enabling the conveyance of abstract ideas through vivid, concrete imagery. This research seeks to uncover the underlying conceptual frameworks that shape the worldviews of Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English-speaking communities. Focusing primarily on Hindi and Bhojpuri due to their geographical and cultural proximity, this study also includes English to explore potential overlaps and borrowings in metaphorical expressions. Employing a qualitative comparative methodology, this study analyses a curated selection of proverbs to identify universal themes and distinct metaphorical constructs. Proverbs, as carriers of cultural wisdom, offer a window into the collective psyche and values of a community. Through this exploration, the present study aims to understand these metaphorical landscapes to foster empathy, cross-cultural dialogue, and a deeper appreciation of the intricate ways in which language shapes our perception of the world.

INTRODUCTION

Language bears witness to human civilization. As we developed into a community, the need for a means of communication deepened its hold to birth the initial forms of languages, evolving towards what we now witness as present-day modern languages. Through the temporal journey of first discoveries to the contemporary technological advancements, experiences and situations shaped the mankind for the knowledge it now garners. It is imperative to recognise the role of language in this process as language is the key to knowledge. Language constantly keeps moving and fluctuating. Hence, it became comprehensive in nature, covering all bases of ethos, traditions, society and the people. We as the curious social being seek the wisdom that accompanies the knowledge and the experiences of generations through ages. One form of the linguistic expression of this wisdom also raptures into the reality through idioms, phrases and proverbs.

Proverbs, characterized by their brevity and profound insights, serve as vessels of truth and moral lessons derived from practical experiences and common sense. They are often seen as the crystallized wisdom of societies, and serve as mirrors reflecting the cultural values, social norms, and collective experiences of communities.

Metaphors, on the other hand, add layers of meaning by describing objects or actions in a non-literal manner, enriching the rhetorical power of language (Kovecses, 2010). In the realm of proverbs, metaphors play a pivotal role in Metaphors are fundamental to human cognition and communication, allowing abstract concepts to be understood and conveyed through more concrete imagery (Conenna & Kleiber, 2002; Jamrozik et al., 2016; Lemghari, 2017). In proverbs, metaphors play a crucial role in conveying deeper meanings and enhancing the expressive quality of these timeless sayings while distilling and transmitting wisdom across generations. Despite their universal function, the specific metaphors chosen and the ways they are expressed are deeply influenced by cultural and linguistic contexts (Gao, 2016; Glucksberg & Keysar, 1993; Grady, 2005; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

The present study bases its research primarily in Bhojpuri and Hindi language owing to their geographical proximity. Further, English is included to find if there are any borrowings or overlapping in the proverbial linguistic expressions of all the three languages owing to the multilingual nature of Bharat. In Hindi and Bhojpuri, proverbs often draw from the rich oral traditions of rural India, characterized by vivid imagery and rhythmic cadences that facilitate memorization and oral transmission (Sharma & Sinha, 2019). These proverbs reveal insights into agrarian lifestyles, spiritual beliefs, and social hierarchies. English proverbs, rooted in a more literate tradition, tend to prioritize brevity and pithiness, reflecting values of efficiency, pragmatism, and wit. Granted that all three languages in consideration overlap in their usage (for the speakers of both Hindi and Bhojpuri engage in English language as well) this study aimed to find if there are any universal metaphors shared across the three languages.

For Example:

Hindi- *Naach na jane aangan tedha*

Meaning: Blaming the surroundings for one's mistake

Bhojpuri- *Ghar phute jawar lute*

Meaning: To take advantage of someone's situation

Both these examples present proverbs that can be related to Human nature or behaviour.

Additionally, in an increasingly globalized world, languages are continually influencing each other, leading to the cross-pollination of metaphorical expressions. English, as a global lingua franca, has introduced many of its metaphors into Hindi and Bhojpuri, enriching their proverbial landscapes while also reflecting broader socio-cultural dynamics. This study aimed to find how these borrowed metaphors are adapted and integrated into local contexts, contributing to the evolving nature of language.

METHOD

The study is qualitative in nature and proposes a comparative approach, analysing a corpus of proverbs collected from various sources in Hindi English and Bhojpuri. By examining the metaphorical language, the study aims to uncover the conceptual frameworks that shape the worldview of their respective communities. Needless to say, it would be unrealistic to examine the entire or even a rather large corpus of data for this study. Thus, this study focuses on finding some common proverbs which will be helpful in gaining an overview of the nature of each language's linguistic wisdom through its proverbs. A selected number of proverbs were analysed to find out universal themes and distinct proverbs in each language. As the study focuses primarily on Bhojpuri and Hindi proverbs, while including English to explore potential adoptions or overlying of figurative expressions, the proverbs under consideration were collected from multiple secondary sources with a few obtained firsthand from native Hindi and Bhojpuri speakers.

Literature Review:

The literature review for the research paper "Metaphorical Landscapes: Exploring Metaphors in Hindi, Bhojpuri and English Proverbs" delves into various sources that provide insights into the linguistic and cultural aspects of proverbs and metaphors in these languages. Metaphors are powerful linguistic tools that shape our understanding of the world around us. They allow us to conceptualize abstract ideas by drawing parallels with concrete, tangible concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In recent years, there has

been a growing interest in the study of proverbs and metaphors across different languages and cultures

Haring (2008) in his research on oral literature, as published in “The Oral Literature Researcher as a Foreign Expert,” offers a foundational framework for analysing proverbs as a form of oral tradition. Haring emphasizes the importance of studying proverbs within their cultural context, highlighting how these linguistic expressions reflect the values, beliefs, and experiences of the communities that use them.

Furthermore Singh, Atreya, and Kumar, (2014) on Politeness in the language of Bihar, focusing on Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili, provides valuable insights into the linguistic characteristics of these languages. Their research explores the use of honorifics, address terms, and other linguistic features that reflect the politeness strategies employed in these languages, shedding light on the cultural nuances embedded in the linguistic expressions of the region.

“The Origin and Development of Bhojpuri,” (Tiwari, 1960) dives into the historical and geographical factors that have shaped the Bhojpuri language, offering a deeper understanding of the linguistic landscape in which Bhojpuri proverbs have evolved. Tiwari’s research provides essential context for analysing the metaphorical patterns in Bhojpuri proverbs and their relationship to the cultural and social norms of the region.

Exploring examples of Hindi/Urdu sayings, phrases, and proverbs that have no direct parallel in English, as discussed on Quora, offers a glimpse into the unique linguistic expressions found in these languages. These examples highlight the richness and diversity of metaphorical language usage in Hindi and Urdu, showcasing the cultural nuances embedded in these linguistic traditions.

Additionally, the study draws on resources such as Grammarly’s definition and examples of metaphors to deepen the understanding of metaphorical language usage across different languages. Understanding the concept of metaphor and its application in linguistic expressions enriches the analysis of metaphors in proverbs from Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English, providing a theoretical framework for the study. Metaphors help us to convey emotions, establish social relationships, and create a sense of shared understanding. Bhojpuri, a language known for its vibrant oral traditions, showcases a plethora of metaphors rooted in rural life and agricultural practices such as farming and animal husbandry. The metaphor “khet ka kuan”, (Hindi) translating to “well in the field” is used metaphorically to describe a source of sustenance or support in times of need. Such metaphors not only highlight the agrarian heritage of Bhojpuri speakers but also reveal their values, beliefs, and social structures. The phrase “*bacchiya ke bachcha*”, (Bhojpuri) meaning “calf of a cow,” is used metaphorically to refer to a person who is young, naive, or inexperienced. Incorporating popular Bhojpuri proverbs and sayings from sources like ‘Ballia Diary’ further enriches the study by showcasing the unique metaphorical expressions found in Bhojpuri language and culture.

In Hindi, a language rich in cultural symbolism, metaphors often draw upon nature, spirituality, and everyday life. For example, the proverbial expression “*Naach na jane aangan tedha*” (Hindi) translates to- “one does not know how to dance, and the porch is tilted” is used to describe a situation where a person blames the surroundings or circumstances for one’s own mistake.

In contrast, English proverbs draw upon a wider range of domains, including technology, sports, and popular culture (Jamrozik et al., 2016). For example, the phrase “it’s a piece of cake” is used to describe a task that is easy or straightforward, drawing a parallel between the simplicity of eating cake and the ease of accomplishing a particular goal (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). These metaphors often reflect the cultural values and experiences of English speakers, which may differ from those of Hindi and Bhojpuri speakers. These examples offer insights into the cultural and traditional characteristics reflected in Bhojpuri proverbs, contributing to the comparative analysis of metaphors across Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English proverbs.

By synthesizing these diverse sources, the literature review establishes a strong foundation for the study of metaphors in proverbs across different languages, highlighting the cultural, linguistic, and social dimensions embedded in these metaphorical expressions.

Moreover, the study of metaphors in proverbs has important implications for fields such as linguistics,

anthropology, and education. By analysing the metaphors used in proverbs, researchers can gain insights into the cultural values, beliefs, and worldviews of the communities that use them. This knowledge can inform language learning, translation, and intercultural communication, as well as contribute to our understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and culture.

Metaphors serve as powerful tools in language, shaping how individuals perceive and communicate their experiences (Gibbs, 2006; Ortony, 1993). This literature review explores the use of metaphors in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English languages, delving into the unique metaphorical landscapes each language offers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The examination of metaphorical proverbs in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English unveils a plethora of shared and unique metaphors that reflect the cultural nuances and linguistic diversity of these languages. This illuminates the sophisticated tapestry of language, culture, and cognition that shape these linguistic expressions. The structural, thematic, and contextual variations observed in proverbs across these languages underscore the richness and complexity of human communication, highlighting the diverse ways in which metaphorical thinking reflects the cultural values, beliefs, and experiences of speakers in different linguistic traditions. It unravels the layers of meaning, symbolism, and cultural significance embedded in these linguistic expressions, enriching our understanding of the multifaceted nature of human expression and the interconnectedness of language and culture in shaping our perceptions and experiences of the world. While some proverbs exhibit similarities across Hindi and Bhojpuri, they may lack direct parallels in English, highlighting the distinctiveness of these languages in their metaphorical expressions. By analysing a dataset of such proverbs and exploring their underlying meanings, this study aimed at gaining deeper insight into the intricate relationship between language, culture, and thought.

English proverbs often exhibit concise and idiomatic structures, characterized by the use of imperative sentences, and poetic devices such as rhyme and alliteration. These structural features contribute to the memorability and impact of English proverbs, emphasizing brevity and cultural resonance.

“Birds of a feather flock together”

“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”

Hindi and Bhojpuri too focus on declarative sentences, but with scores of vivid imageries. For example:

Hindi: “Jiski lathi uski bhais” (“Might is right”- English equivalent)

Bhojpuri: “Chor ke dil sarson barabar hola” (comparing the heart of a thief to a mustard seed)

Thematic Variations and Linguistic Styles

The thematic content of proverbs in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English reflects the unique cultural landscapes and historical influences that shape each language’s proverbial wisdom. English proverbs often centre around themes of individualism, and directness in communication, drawing upon Western cultural references and experiences. For example: *“The best is cheapest”*; *“A stitch in time saves nine”*. These proverbs do not use literary devices to establish themselves in the memory but are rather straightforward in the language and construction.

Hindi and Bhojpuri proverbs emphasize themes related to spirituality, respect for elders, and community values, rooted in the traditions and beliefs. The contextual differences in proverbs highlights the diverse worldviews and societal norms embedded in each language. The linguistic styles of Hindi and Bhojpuri proverbs reflect a balance between poetic elegance and linguistic precision, embodying the cultural richness and linguistic diversity of India. Bhojpuri proverbs especially stand out for their extensive use of poetic devices such as rhyme, alliteration, and metaphor, enhancing the aesthetic appeal and mnemonic quality of these expressions. For example: *Hindi- “Paani mein rahkar magar se bair” (Living in the water yet enmity with the crocodile)* uses vivid imagery and rhythm to convey the folly of unnecessary conflict with powerful adversaries. *Bhojpuri- “Chhakka panja bhulail” (To forget the ploy)* is used to refer to a situation where one is caught up in the fix and loses their wit and ways.

Cultural Influences and Social Context-

The cultural influences and social contexts that shape proverbs in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English play a significant role in determining the themes, structures, and metaphors employed in these linguistic expressions.

English proverbs often draw upon Western cultural values, historical events, and literary traditions. In “*A penny for your thoughts*” the speaker may be inviting to share one’s thoughts or opinions.

Hindi and Bhojpuri proverbs are deeply rooted in the cultural heritage and spiritual beliefs of India, emphasizing communal values, respect for tradition, and interconnectedness with nature and society. In Bhojpuri- “*Khaye ke thekan na nahaye ke tadke*” (*There is nothing to eat, but one takes bath early morning*) the context here is of poverty with the proverb indicating the actions of someone who fails to understand his/her situation. Again, in the proverb “*Karja ke khail aa puara ke tapal barabar hola*” (*Eating out of lent money and warming up from burning hey is equal*). Now, it would be difficult to understand the usefulness of this proverb if one is not acquainted with the culture the thought process and the linguistic workings of a society. The proverb simply refers to ‘*momentary relief*’ implying the things that are short lived cannot help one to sustain in the long run. The social contexts in which these proverbs emerge highlight the importance of community, family, and shared experiences in shaping the linguistic and cultural identity of speakers in each language.

These proverbs provide insights into the collective memory and cultural heritage of Bhojpuri-speaking society, enriching the metaphorical landscapes of these proverbs with diverse narratives and symbolic significance.

If we look at the historical context, the proverb “*Rome wasn’t built in a day*” highlights the extensive time and effort required to build the Roman Empire. Though the statement does hold symbolic aspect, the nature remains rather direct and is therefore easier to interpret in comparison to the proverbs of Bhojpuri and Hindi.

Hindi and Bhojpuri proverbs draw upon ancient texts, folklore, and regional legends that are significant in Indian cultural history, weaving a tapestry of metaphors that reflect the spiritual, philosophical, and mythological traditions of India (Prasad, 2022). The idiomatic expressions in Hindi and Bhojpuri proverbs offer a glimpse into the everyday wisdom and practical insights embedded in the linguistic fabric of these languages, resonating with the lived experiences and cultural values of speakers in these regions. For example: *Panch kavar bhitar, tab devata pitar* (Take care of self-first, later about others); “*Age nath na pachhe pagaha, bina chanh ke kude gadaha*”

(A person without any responsibility is as reckless as an unhindered ass!); “*Supli kahal chalaniya se tehra me sathattar chhed*” (*Sieve is criticizing another utensil for having holes in it*). These proverbs are contextual and their meaning cannot be understood or interpreted at their surface level.

Furthermore, while analysing the data collected, there were remarkably ampler parallels discovered for Hindi and English language than for Bhojpuri and English. As for example:

Hindi	English
<i>Adhjal gagri chalkat jaye</i>	<i>An empty vessel sounds much</i>
<i>Ek hi thali ke chattey-battey</i>	<i>Birds of same feather flock together</i>
<i>Garajne wale badal baraste nahi hain</i>	<i>Barking dogs seldom bite</i>
<i>Char din ki Chandani fir andheri raat</i>	<i>A nine days wonder</i>
<i>Doodh ka jala chhach bhi phook-phook kr pita hai</i>	<i>Once bitten twice shy</i>
<i>Ant bhala to sab bhala</i>	<i>All is well that ends well</i>

Given that Hindi and Bhojpuri are similar in their script, grammar and many more aspects, it was interesting to note that with a handful of parallels in Hindi-English proverbial similarity, Bhojpuri proverbs showed rare number of such resemblance with English language. The context and the construct of these Bhojpuri proverbs remain specific to the Indo-Aryan language.

Examples:

Eke aakhada ke chela bhailey (to remain unphased)

Tili me tel na rahal (to become useless/ loss of impact)

Baap ke gala me ghuiya na beta ke gala rudraksh (ironical proverb: implies boasting nature)

Bar sojh ta hasua nian (implicates the twisted nature of a person)

Aaghail bakula pothiya tit (a satisfied person would seldom find the excitement in things)

Anda se bachcha bhail (to become smart)

Nau ke lakdi, nabbey kharcha (something is not worth the price)

During the data collection and analysis, currently singular proverb in Bhojpuri-English contextual similarity could be discovered-

Bhojpuri: "Jetna gud dalab otna mitha hoyi"

English: "The deeper the well the sweeter the water"

Additionally, while scavenging for these expressive proverbs, an example surfaced with a mix of Hindi and English in its sentential boundary. Quoting a question asked in a state service commission examination, the proverb "*Baap mare andhiyare mein, beta powerhouse*" (meaning: the father dies (symbolic) in pitch dark, while his son shines like a powerhouse). A Bhojpuri proverb which goes like- "*Baap na maare medhki, beta tirandaz*" falls equivalent in to the prior mentioned proverb.

This specific encounter serves to implicate the significance of this study. Bharat has ceaselessly been a multilingual land. English however, claiming the 'lingua franca' of the world seeped deep into the nuances of the Bhartiya landscape. Proverbs are expressions that have been carried through generations and are based on firsthand experiences of people. They are still repeated in their pure forms as they are the signifiers of the undying wisdom and culture of any society. It is therefore a compelling phenomenon that a language with such different making and markings would rapture into the depths of another language's proverbial front. Now, it is imperative to add that though this amalgamation may be compelling, it may not come up as striking, specially owing to the sociolinguistic aspects like code mixing and switching. The multilingual nature of India makes it prone to these kinds of linguistic mixture. These linguistic collab can potentially serve as a research arena to comprehend the stance of a language amidst the substantial intersection with other languages.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Understanding

The comparative analysis of metaphorical landscapes in Hindi, Bhojpuri, and English proverbs provides valuable insights into the intricate ways in which language, culture, and cognition intersect to shape human expression and communication. By exploring the structural, thematic, and contextual differences in proverbs across these languages, this study attempted to deepen the understanding of the diverse cultural perspectives and linguistic traditions that underpin metaphorical thinking. This cross-cultural exploration not only enriches our appreciation of linguistic diversity but also fosters empathy, mutual understanding, and intercultural dialogue, bridging the gaps between different linguistic communities and fostering a sense of shared humanity.

Limitations

Comparing three languages at such nuanced and deep level such as their respective proverbial front presented its limitation. Firstly, the major limitation with the present study is the time constraint as there was extreme time crunch to put together the present analysis. This resulted in another limitation as this research paper could not expand its scope to accommodate a larger data set. While it presents the generalised and common metaphors, there is scope of delving into uniqueness of each language and exploring the integration of languages to borrow metaphorical expressions.

Further and deeper research is imperative to encapsulate the intricate proverbial landscape of all the languages.

CONCLUSION

The metaphors in Hindi proverbs, rooted in the cultural ethos of the Hindi-speaking community, offer insights into the values of generosity, wisdom, and resilience that have sustained generations. Bhojpuri proverbs, on the other hand, paint a vivid picture of rural life and local traditions, using metaphors that resonate with the everyday experiences of the Bhojpuri-speaking population. English proverbs, with their universal appeal, employ metaphors that tap into shared human experiences and emotions, transcending cultural boundaries and offering timeless wisdom.

It is however upsetting to note that with the present generation, the use of proverbial expressions is gradually but surely losing the constant and repetitive practice that they previously enjoyed in day-to-day life. Especially for languages like Bhojpuri which is restricted to a particular area in our country, these proverbs though relevant are not repeated regularly. Such a scenario calls for attempts such as this one to reclass the proverbs and metaphors that illuminate our shared humanity and inspire us to forge new paths of understanding, wisdom, knowledge and empathy.

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