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Morphological Analysis of Gender Allocation through Pronouns in Pakistani English and Haryanvi Languages

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Abstract

The gender system shows variation in gender assignments. It is an essential part of Indo-European and Dravidian languages, whereas it is absent in Uralic languages. This study aims to evaluate the allocation of gender through pronouns in Pakistani English and Haryanvi languages. The study is theoretical and descriptive in nature. Corbett's Gender Assignment System (2006) has been used as a theoretical framework. The gender assignment system consists of two types of information: its meanings (semantic assignment system) and its form (formal assignment system), as well as agreement. The data has been gathered through purposive sampling from Pakistani speakers of English and Haryanvi through semi-structured interviews. Later on, the data were analyzed using Corbett's Gender Assignment System. In English, gender mainly shows up in third-person singular pronouns like he, she, his, or her. Haryanvi, on the other hand, uses gender much more widely. It's not only present in pronouns for people, but also in possessive pronouns for both singular and plural. This means that everyday speech in Haryanvi naturally reflects gender in a way English does not. So, while English keeps gender markings limited, Haryanvi weaves them deeply into its grammar.

Keywords: English, Haryanvi, Gender Assignment System, Semantic Assignment System, Formal Assignment System, Natural Gender, Grammatical Gender.



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Introduction

Gender has different meanings in different fields of study, such as referring to sex in biology and denoting a grammatical category in linguistics and grammar. The gender system exhibits variations in gender assignments across the world's languages. It exists in Indo-European and Dravidian languages, whereas it is absent in Uralic languages. However, genderless languages are natural and have a simple gender allocation system. These languages do not have morphological agreement among nouns, verbs, articles, pronouns, as well as adjectives, whereas grammatical gender is a particular form of the noun that integrates with other aspects of language (verbs, pronouns, articles, or adjectives) and forms a gender agreement system.

Gender orientation varies across the world's languages, as some languages are based on only two types of gender: masculine and feminine (animate, inanimate/common, neuter). Some languages have three categories of gender: masculine, feminine, and neuter, while others have more than four, such as masculine, feminine, animate/countable, inanimate/uncountable, and abstract/fluid. In various languages, the gender allocation system is guided by a set of rules that govern the allocation of gender. Most languages have two criteria for gender allocation to the noun: the semantic system and the formal system. In the semantic system, gender is defined through meanings, while in the formal system, the form of nouns allocates gender.

The word 'gender' is derived from the Latin word 'genus', meaning 'main 'sort', or 'kind'. The languages that have a gender system may be central, forming an essential part of the lexical, syntactic, and morphological structure, as in German, or they may be more peripheral, as in the English language (Corbett, 2006, P.479). According to surveys regarding the gender system from 256 languages all over the world, 144 (56%) languages are genderless, while 112 (44%) languages have grammatical gender (Stolz & Levkovych, 2022). Genderless languages are natural or constructed languages that lack specific distinctions regarding grammatical gender, resulting in no morphological agreement between nouns and related verbs, adjectives, pronouns, and articles. Various languages are genderless, for instance, Indo-European languages, Uralic languages, all Modern Turkic languages, Austronesian languages, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese (Levkovich & Stolz, 2023; Corbett, 2013; Suleiman, 2013).

Grammatical gender orientation is a particular form of noun class system that integrates and forms an agreement system with other aspects of language, such as verbs, pronouns, articles, and adjectives. This system is utilized in roughly one-fourth of the world's languages, and nouns primarily convey a value of the grammatical category based on characteristics known as gender. Grammatical gender is found in numerous Indo-European languages, including Spanish, German, Latin, Russian, French, and Portuguese. Most Niger-Congo languages also have a system of noun classes, which can be assembled into many grammatical genders (Corbett, 1991).

English is a West Germanic language, spoken in medieval England, and gradually developed over more than 1,400 years (Suman Devi & Mishra, 2024). Grammatical gender loss is the most difficult aspect of English philology. Modern English has a natural gender system (masculine, feminine, and neuter). On the other hand, some languages have only two criteria of gender: masculine and feminine. Haryanvi language is one of those that has two kinds of gender criteria (Curzan, 2003).

Haryanvi is an Indo-Aryan language, spoken by the various communities that migrated from the Haryana State of India at the time of the Indo-Pak Partition in 1947. Most of the Haryanvi speakers settled in different villages of Punjab, Sindh, and throughout Pakistan. A large community of Arain, Rajput, and Jat speaks the Haryanvi language as their 'mother tongue'. In Pakistan, the

Haryanvi language is also known as Rangari in Rajput communities (Nawaz, Rehman, Khan, & Rao, 2024).

The Haryanvi language has a wide geographical distribution because, at the time of India's partition and the creation of Pakistan in 1947, a large number of Haryanvi speakers migrated from various districts of India to Pakistan and settled in different districts across Pakistan. Most of the Haryanvi Speakers settled down all across Punjab and Sindh. However, a large community of Haryanvi speakers mainly lives in Lahore, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Hafizabad, Okara, Sahiwal, Khanewal, Lodhran, Vehari, Multan, Bhakar, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, Layha, and Sargodha districts of Punjab as well as in Mirpur Khas, Nawabshah, Sanghar, Ghotki, and Hyderabad Districts of Sindh (Sohdarvi, 2024).

At the time of partition, the migrants insisted on settling in the areas from which they migrated; therefore, Haryanvi speakers who migrated from a specific location could not stay in the same place. However, the Haryanvi speakers who migrated from Ambala and Patiala were settled in the central districts of Punjab, such as Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Sialkot, and Hafizabad. The Haryanvi speakers, who came from Districts Hisar and Rohtak, were settled in the southern districts of Punjab, namely Khanewal, Multan, and Muzaffargarh. Those who migrated from Karnal were settled in different parts of Sindh (Aslam, 2015).

The first linguist who presented an account of the spoken language of the Haryana region was Grierson in 1916. He describes these languages as part of Western Hindi, which falls under the Central Group of Indo-Aryan and the sub-family of Indo-European languages, and is further classified into Bangaru, Kanauji, Brajbhaka, and Bundeli. Moreover, he divides Haryana languages into Bangaru and Jatu. However, subclasses the Haryanvi language into the Ambala dialect, Jatu of Rohtak, and Bangaru of Karnal. Bangaru is the old name for Haryanvi (Suman Devi & Mishra, 2021). The Haryanvi dialect, spoken in Rohtak, is considered the standard form of Haryanvi (SIL International, 2024).

According to Glottolog, the Haryanvi language belongs to the group of Indo-Aryan languages and its sub-family, Indo-Aryan Central Zoon and Subcontinental Central Indo-Aryan language family, and is further classified into Western Hindi languages (Hammarström, Forkel, & Haspelmath, 2025). On the other hand, in the Ethnologue, the Haryanvi language falls under the Indo-European language family, specifically the sub-family of Indo-Iranian and Indo-Aryan, and is further classified into Western Hindi and Unclassified languages of India (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2025).

Although a large number of Haryanvi speakers live in Pakistan and use this language as their 'Mother tongue', there is no official recognition of the Haryanvi language in the list of Pakistani languages. More than one hundred thousand Haryanvi speakers live in Pakistan (Aslam, 2015), whereas the actual number of Rangri (Haryanvi) speakers may be well beyond half a million in Pakistan (Mustafa, 2020). Unfortunately, its name is not mentioned in the languages of Pakistan. However, the Arain community is playing its part in promoting the Haryanvi language in Pakistan. An organization was established under the name of 'Ambal Arain Family ' by Mehmood Hassan, which is based on those Haryanvi speakers who migrated from Ambala district, State Haryana, India, and now live all over Pakistan and still speak the Haryanvi language as L1 and L2. It has organized an annual family reunion in November since 2007, and the function is conducted in the Ambalvi dialect of Hrayanvi. Ambala Arain's family tree was created to preserve our heritage and manage the data of five generations, comprising more than 60,000 family members.

As a native speaker of the Ambalvi dialect of Haryanvi, the researcher has taken a personal interest in exploring how gender is expressed through pronouns in both English and Haryanvi. Although many studies discuss gender representation in English and in major South Asian languages, Haryanvi, especially its dialects like Ambalvi, has largely been overlooked. This gap in research makes the study important. By placing English, a global language with limited gender marking, alongside Haryanvi, a regional language where gender distinctions are far more visible, the study offers fresh insight into how different languages shape and reflect gender in everyday use.

1.1. Problem Statement

The various societies around the world speak different languages, and each language applies gender in different ways. Some languages have two criteria for gender, while others have three kinds of gender criteria, and some have four or five criteria for gender. The languages that have two types of gender criterion (masculine and feminine) have the most complicated gender assignment system as compared to the three types of gender criterion because in that system inanimate things are also divided into masculine and feminine which creates trouble for non-native pronouns, relative pronouns, demonstratives, definite and indefinite articles, participles, possessives, adverbs, numerals, complementizers, ad positions, etc.

This study aims to investigate how gender is expressed through pronouns by examining the morphological patterns of English and Haryanvi (Ambalvi dialect). While English has been widely studied for its limited gender distinctions, Haryanvi, particularly its Ambalvi variety, has received little scholarly attention. By focusing on this gap, the research aims to bring forward a clearer understanding of how two very different languages encode gender, one as a global language and the other as a regional dialect deeply tied to cultural identity.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to both linguistic theory and cultural understanding. By comparing English and Haryanvi (Ambalvi dialect), it highlights how two languages from very different backgrounds treat gender in pronouns. For English, the findings reinforce its limited gender system, while for Haryanvi, the study documents a richer and less explored pattern of gender assignment. This comparison not only fills a gap in the existing literature but also preserves valuable insights about Haryanvi, a regional language often overlooked in academic discourse. Moreover, the research offers practical value for students, teachers, and linguists by providing a clearer understanding of gendered structures, which may also support cross-linguistic studies, translation, and language learning. Ultimately, the study affirms the importance of regional languages, such as Haryanvi, in shaping identity and broadening the scope of linguistic research. This study may serve as a stimulus for research interest in other areas of these languages. It also attracts the attention of future researchers to work on the various languages spoken in Pakistan, such as Saraiki, Pashto, and Sindhi.

This study not only enhances the canon of indigenous languages but also provides a thought-provoking example for other researchers. Moreover, it documents the linguistic aspects of English and Haryanvi. The rigorous method may be suited to other indigenous language researchers in Pakistan. In this respect, the research is augmenting the few efforts made in the field of research in the field of local languages.

1.3. Research Objectives

To orient the current study process, the researcher has selected the following objective.

1. To find out the morphological pattern of the gender assignment system in the Pronouns of Pakistani speakers of English and Haryanvi languages.

1.4. Research Questions

This study specifically addresses the following question:

1. What are the morphological criteria for assigning gender in the pronouns of Pakistani speakers of English and Haryanvi languages?

2. Review of Literature

Gender allocation through pronouns has long been a defining feature in the morphological systems of the world's languages. In grammatical gender languages such as Haryanvi, gender marking is morphologically entrenched, whereas in natural gender languages like English, gender is primarily restricted to third-person singular pronouns. The distinction becomes especially relevant in bilingual settings such as Pakistan, where native Haryanvi speakers often navigate both systems. This creates fertile ground for cross-linguistic influence, morphological hybridization, and variation related to pronouns.

Gender is a complex term and a fundamental component of language. Its presence varies in the world's languages. It exists in many languages while being absent in others. In a typological sample of 257 languages, 145 (56%) are genderless, while 112 (44%) of languages have grammatical gender (Corbett, 2013). Scholars define genderless languages as those without any grammatical gender, meaning there is no gender-based agreement between nouns, pronouns, adjectives, or articles. Examples include Finnish and Turkish. Additionally, languages such as Estonian, Japanese, Tamil, and Thai have also been classified as genderless, indicating that a significant portion of the globe speaks languages with no morphological marking of gender (Sato & Athanasopoulos, 2024).

Back in 1958, Hockett proposed that grammatical gender functions as a noun-class system that spreads agreement to articles, verbs, adjectives, and pronouns—and he estimated it was present in around 25% of the world's languages. That number may have changed, but the concept remains strong. A current overview published in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics reveals that roughly half of languages exhibit grammatical gender, underscoring that this agreement-driven system continues to play a significant role in language structures today. The grammatical gender system is found in numerous Indo-European languages, including Latin, Spanish, French, Russian, German, and Portuguese. Most Niger-Congo languages also feature a noun class system, which can be categorized into multiple grammatical genders (Corbett, 2013).

Building on Franceschina's insight from 2005, modern linguists reaffirm that the inherent qualities of a noun are gender, which affects the form of the related word; this whole process is called agreement. Nouns are triggers of that process, whereas the other related words are the targets of that change. The associated words depend on verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, articles, determiners, quantifiers, numerals, possessives, past and passive participles, adpositions, and Complementizers. A noun may be assigned gender by itself as well as by other agreements in noun phrases or sentences. Gender systems vary in their application across the world's languages. Gender orientation in some languages has only two types: masculine and feminine, animate and inanimate, and common and neuter, some languages have three categories of gender such as

masculine, feminine, and neuter and some languages have more than four such as masculine, feminine, animate/countable nouns, inanimate/uncountable nouns and abstracts/fluids (Fuchs & Sekerina, 2025).

In the Tamil language, the gender assignment system is divided into rational nouns and non-rational nouns. The rational nouns are further divided into two groups, which are masculine and feminine, and the non-rational nouns are neuter. The nouns that allocate gender to a male are masculine, the nouns that allocate gender to a female are feminine, and the nouns that are used for anything else are neuter. In some languages, gender is divided into animate and inanimate categories. The nouns, which denote animate things, usually belong to one gender, and the nouns which denote inanimate things belong to the other gender. Proto-Indo-European, Anatolian languages, and Basque languages have this type of gender orientation (Sarveswaran, 2024).

2.1 Gender system in English and Pakistani English

English is a West Germanic language, spoken in early medieval England, and has now become the lingua franca. It has gradually developed over more than 1,400 years (Aarts, López-Couso, & Méndez-Naya, 2024). In later English, the loss of grammatical gender is one of the most significant problems in English philology. However, the history of the gender system can be divided into three periods; this division may be somewhat arbitrary. Fernández (2007: 47) has distinguished these periods: Old English (5th to 12th century), Middle English (12th to 16th century), and Modern English (16th to onwards). The English gender system transformed from morphological to semantic assignment in the past millennium. In the history of the English language, the shift from Old English to Middle English is the most defining period in the evolution of modern English. There are two important factors behind the sweeping nature of the linguistic changes from Old to Middle English. She has mentioned the discontinuity of the written record, which telescopes a series of changes undoubtedly occurring over several centuries into approximately 200 years, and the shift from a fairly consistent and fairly conservative literary version of the surviving West Saxon dialect in Old English to a wider variety of recorded Middle English dialects. In addition, the linguistic transition from Old to Middle English occurred during the first two centuries of Norman rule and is characterized by three basic developments: less conspicuous morphological and syntactic changes, as well as significant phonological changes (Curzan, 2003).

In standard English, gender is semantically driven. It primarily appears in third-person pronouns (he, she, it), with the emerging use of the singular "they" as a gender-neutral option (Williams et al., 2020; Lauscher et al., 2022). However, in Pakistani English, L1 interference often results in the misassignment of gender or the overgeneralization of masculine forms (Kokab, 2024; Imran, 2023). These deviations are rooted in the morphological richness of native languages like Haryanvi and Urdu, which impose strict rules of gender agreement (Qasim, 2020; Dar & Masroor, 2020).

Recent corpus-based analyses have shown that Pakistani English speakers struggle with gendered pronouns, particularly in academic and political discourse, where pronoun usage reveals deeper sociolinguistic patterns (Mah-e-Rab & Tahir, 2025; Dar & Masroor, 2020). The identity implications of such pronoun choices, noting the sociopolitical weight they carry in multilingual contexts like Pakistan. These observations are crucial when analyzing how Pakistani English handles pronominal gender morphology in a setting where the first language (L1) employs rich grammatical gender (Rahman, 2024).

2.2 Haryanvi Language

Haryanvi is an Indo-Aryan language and is spoken in Pakistan by the communities that migrated from the Haryana State of India at the time of the Indo-Pak Partition in 1947. At the time of Partition, a large number of Haryanvi speakers migrated from Haryana and Delhi in India to Pakistan in 1947. Most of the Haryanvi speakers settled in different villages of Punjab, Sindh, and throughout Pakistan. A large community of Arain, Rajput, Teli, and Jutt speaks the Haryanvi language as their ‘Mother Tongue’, who have migrated from Haryana state. In Pakistan, the Haryanvi language is also known as Rangari in Rajput communities.

After the independence of Pakistan, most of the Haryanvi Speakers settled down mainly in Lahore, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Hafizabad, Okara, Sahiwal, Khanewal, Lodhran, Vehari, Multan, Bhakar, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, Layha, and Sargodha districts of Punjab, as well as in Mirpur Khas, Nawabshah, Sanghar, Ghotki, and Hyderabad Districts of Sindh. Currently, three major dialects of Haryanvi are spoken by the Arain, Rajput, and Jat communities in Pakistan, who migrated from the Haryana State. The names of the Haryanvi language are still based on the names of the geographical regions of Haryana State from where those speakers have migrated, such as Ambalvi, Rohtaki, and Karnalvi dialects. The Ambalvi dialect is spoken in the central districts of Pakistani Punjab, which include Gujranwala, Sheikhpura, Hafizabad, Sialkot, and Sarghuhdha. The Rohtaki dialect is mainly spoken in the Southern districts of Pakistani Punjab, which include Mianwali, Muzaffargarh, Khanewal, and Multan. Whereas, the Karnalvi dialect is spoken mainly in the rural region of Sindh, mainly in Sanghar, Nawabshah, and Mirpur Khas (Mustafa, 2020).

Various studies have been conducted in Pakistan. Mustafa (2020) has investigated that Rangari is the second name of Haryanvi in Pakistan, which is typically associated with the Rajput community and locally known as Rangar migrated from the Haryana state, speak the Haryanvi language known as Rangari. This research aims to describe the morphological patterns of Rangari (Haryanvi). The word and paradigm model has been used to analyze the inflectional and derivational patterns of the Rangari (Haryanvi) language. He has the notion that Rangari (Haryanvi) is a language rather than a dialect; furthermore, Rangari (Haryani) is the mother of Urdu.

Rajput (2021) has done his research on the Haryanvi language and analyzed the impact of the Haryanvi language in the Urdu novel ‘Majal-ul-Nisa’ by Altaf Husain Hali. He has identified various implications of the Haryanvi language on the Urdu language and claimed that Haryanvi is a form of old Urdu, which is why a large number of Haryanvi words have been analyzed in this novel. The Haryanvi language existed before the birth of Urdu.

2.3 Gender Morphology in Haryanvi and Related Indo-Aryan Languages

In contrast to English, Haryanvi features a complex gender system where pronouns are morphologically marked and must agree with the gender of the noun (Sangeeta, 2020; Hussain, 2023). Demonstrative pronouns like *yo* (masculine ‘this’) and *ye* (feminine ‘this’) are a prime example of gendered deictic expressions, a category absent in English (Bhatt & Malla, 2021; Verma, 2022). These systems reflect what Chandra (2023) refers to as “gender micro-variation”—the small but significant differences across dialects of Indo-Aryan languages that influence morphology and agreement structures.

Raza-e-Mustafa et al. (2022), in a study on the Rangri dialect (closely related to Haryanvi), demonstrated how derivational morphology is employed to mark feminine forms through affixation, thus reinforcing binary gender roles at the lexical level. Similarly, Gohar and Mangrio

(2022) used Distributed Morphology to explain how gender distinctions are embedded at multiple grammatical levels in Indo-Aryan languages. This contrasts sharply with the English system, where morphological gender marking is nearly absent in pronouns and verbs.

Despite extensive research on gender systems in world languages, studies specifically comparing the morphological allocation of gender through pronouns in Pakistani English and Haryanvi remain scarce. Most existing research focuses either on Indo-European languages in general or on Haryanvi dialects in isolation, with little attention to the intersection of these two languages. Furthermore, prior studies largely emphasize nouns and adjectives, while the role of pronouns in gender assignment has been underexplored. This highlights a clear gap in understanding how morphological gender operates across these languages, particularly in the context of pronouns, their agreement patterns, and the influence of sociocultural factors on their usage. Addressing this gap will provide valuable insights into the comparative structure and function of gender in Pakistani English and Haryanvi.

2.3 Comparative Perspectives and Cross-Linguistic Interference

The interface between Hindi and English is particularly relevant when analyzing the allocation of gender by bilingual speakers. Learners often carry over gendered expectations from their native language, leading to pragmatic mismatches and syntactic errors in English pronoun usage. These tendencies are observable in Pakistani classrooms and public discourse, where Haryanvi or Urdu-speaking students may incorrectly assign gender to inanimate nouns or animals in the English language (Tiwari, 2024; Sharma, 2021). Moreover, Jahanzeb et al. (2022) analyzed text messaging among Pakistani students and found persistent gender biases in lexical and pronominal choices, even in digital informal communication. This aligns with Sabbaghi & Caliskan's (2022) work, which used AI to track gendered signals in grammatically gendered languages, suggesting that language systems inherently encode and perpetuate gender roles. Batsuren et al. (2022) have now mapped gender morphology across more than 100 languages, highlighting Indo-Aryan languages as among the most morphologically gender-marked. Such large-scale studies support your article's core claim that Haryanvi maintains a deep morphological structure for gender. At the same time, Pakistani English, under its influence, exhibits fluid, adaptive, and sometimes erroneous gendered pronoun use.

While prior research has examined gender assignment across various languages, a morphological comparison of pronoun-based gender allocation between Haryanvi and Pakistani English has remained largely absent from scholarly discourse. This study fills that gap by employing Corbett's (2006) Gender Assignment System as a theoretical framework to explore how bilingual speakers of Haryanvi and Pakistani English assign and use gendered pronouns. Corbett's model, which categorizes gender assignment into semantic, morphological, phonological, and pragmatic principles, is particularly relevant in this context, as it enables a systematic analysis of how both structural and social factors influence gendered forms. By applying this framework, the current study identifies how semantic gender assignment predominates in Haryanvi. At the same time, pragmatic and contact-induced variations influence Pakistani English, resulting in instances of interference, convergence, and divergence. Thus, the literature reviewed not only underscores the theoretical importance of gender morphology but also positions this study as a necessary contribution to bilingual morphological modeling and gender theory in postcolonial, multilingual contexts, such as Pakistan.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a theoretical and descriptive research design, focusing on a comparative analysis of gender assignment systems in Haryanvi and Pakistani English. The work is framed within Corbett's Gender Assignment System (2006), which provides a comprehensive framework for investigating how gender is allocated through semantic, morphological, and phonological features. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how bilingual speakers navigate gender distinctions across typologically distinct languages in a postcolonial and multilingual setting.

3.2 Data Collection

For this study, a semi-structured interview was especially designed to examine how bilingual speakers of Haryanvi and Pakistani English use gendered pronouns and morphological markers. While developing it, the researcher consulted existing discussions on gender in language, particularly Corbett's Gender Assignment framework (2006), as well as studies on bilingualism in South Asian contexts.

The first draft of the questionnaire was shared with two senior faculty members in linguistics, who reviewed it for clarity and relevance. They recommended rewording certain items to make them more direct and suggested rearranging a few questions to improve the flow. Their input was incorporated before moving to the pilot stage.

A pilot study was then conducted with five bilingual Haryanvi speakers. The responses highlighted small issues such as overlapping options and slightly confusing wording. These were corrected to improve readability and accuracy. After these revisions, the final version of the questionnaire was distributed among 60 Haryanvi speakers (30 men and 30 women) from Sargodha, Pakistan. Since participants were recruited primarily based on accessibility and willingness, the sampling technique employed was convenience sampling.

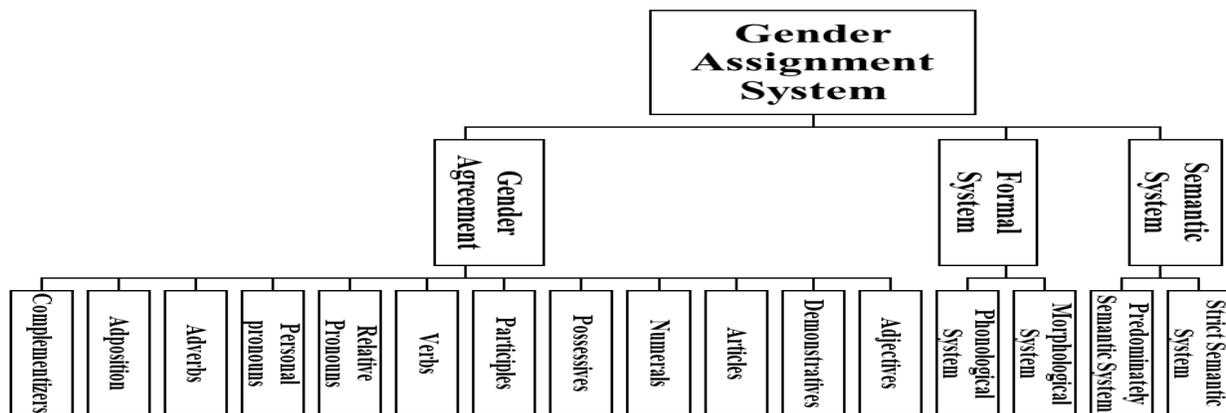
The responses were analyzed using Corbett's Gender Assignment framework, with a focus on how gender is marked in morphology and the strategies bilinguals employ when transitioning between the two linguistic systems.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in the Gender Assignment System proposed by Greville G. Corbett (2006). Corbett categorizes gender assignment through two main lenses:

1. Semantic Assignment – based on meaning
2. Formal Assignment – based on form, including morphological and phonological cues
3. Gender Agreement – consistency across syntactic components

Figure 5: *The model of Corbett's (2006) Gender Assignment System*



According to Corbett (2006), the gender assignment system to nouns consists of two types of information: its meanings (semantics assignment system) and its form (formal assignment system), as well as gender agreement.

3.3.1 Semantic Assignment System

In this gender assignment system, semantic aspects are enough to assign gender to a noun. This system is further divided into two types: a strict semantic system and a predominantly semantic system.

3.3.1.1 Strict Semantic Assignment System

In this system, gender is assigned to nouns based on their meaning, and these meanings are sufficient for determining gender allocation. The meaning of the noun is enough to assign gender. Such a system exists in Bagvala, where the nouns that assign gender to male humans are masculine, and those that denote gender to female humans are feminine, while all the residue is neuter. For instance, the word *waša* ‘boy’ is masculine, *jaš* ‘gir’ is feminine, whereas *ɕama* ‘donkey’ is neuter.

3.3.1.2 Predominantly Semantic Systems

In a predominantly semantic system, gender is defined through the meaning of nouns. Compared to the strict semantic system, the gender assignment rules in the predominantly semantic system are less transparent and have some exceptions, which may be rational due to cultural contexts. A predominantly semantic system is found in Taskhur, which has a four-gender system as the gender I is based on male humans (including gods and angels), gender II includes female humans (female mythical beings too), and gender III includes the remaining animates. A few of them go into gender IV, which creates a problem in the gender pattern.

3.3.2 Formal Assignment Systems

In many languages, the semantic rules are used to assign an appropriate gender to nouns, but they also fail to allocate gender to many others. However, in various languages, a formal assignment system is used to assign gender to nouns, where the gender is determined by the form of the noun rather than its meaning. Any language may have only semantic rules for gender allocation or both semantic and formal rules, but there is no such system that is based solely on a purely formal

system. The formal system is further divided into two subsystems: the phonological system and the morphological system.

3.3.2.1 Phonological

In formal assignment systems, the phonological system plays a vital role, being based on the sound system. In phonology, the basic form of the noun is involved. In different languages, the phonological system is used in different ways. For instance, in Qafar, nouns that assign gender to males are masculine, and those assigned to females are feminine. Still, there is some residue, and for those residues, phonological rules are used to assign gender, such as the nouns that end in an accented vowel are taken as feminine, such as *catò* ‘help’, but all the remaining are taken as masculine, like *gilàl* ‘winter’ because it ends in an unaccented vowel.

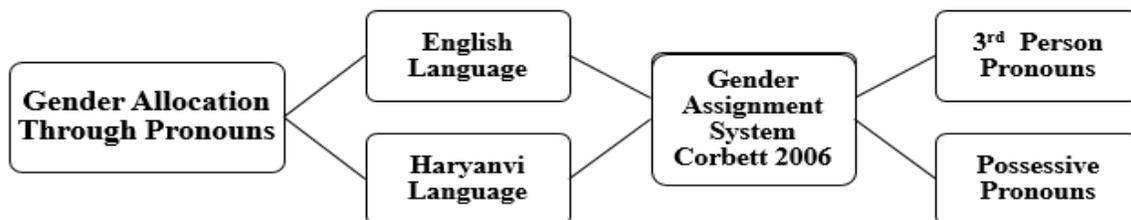
3.3.2.2 Morphological

The morphological assignment system is likely found in different languages, and the structure of words determines the gender of the noun. In Russian and many other Indo-European languages, nouns that denote sex-differentiable genders are categorized as masculine, while those that assign gender to females are considered feminine. However, in Bagvalal, these rules are insufficient for all nouns because there is no neuter gender. However, the inflectional morpheme is used. In Russian, four inflectional classes are used to define gender, and each class comprises several thousand nouns, so speakers need to be familiar with the inflectional system of nouns.

3.3.3 Gender agreement

Gender agreement may occur in a wide range of different languages. It may occur in various forms, such as verbs, adjectives, demonstratives, articles, numerals, possessives, participles, relative pronouns, personal pronouns, adverbs, ad positions, Complementizers, etc.

Figure 6: *Conceptual Framework*



Corbett’s (2006) model offers a comprehensive framework for examining how gender is both assigned and perceived in various languages. Applying this framework to the current study enables a systematic morphological comparison of pronoun-based gender allocation in Haryanvi (a morphologically rich, gender-marked language) and Pakistani English (a less gender-marked system).

The investigation of how bilingual Haryanvi-English speakers select and adapt pronouns based on both semantic and formal features provides insight into potential interference, convergence, or divergence in gender usage. This aligns with Corbett’s emphasis on the interplay between form, meaning, and syntactic behavior—making his Gender Assignment System particularly apt for examining gender in a postcolonial, multilingual context like Pakistan.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Gender Agreement

Gender agreement may occur in a wide range of different languages. Corbett has defined the importance of gender agreements for two reasons: firstly, gender agreement is a way in which gender is realized in language use, and secondly, gender agreement helps to provide the basis for defining gender and for establishing the number of genders in a given language.

4.2 Gender Agreement through Pronouns in English

English has a straightforward system of gender called natural gender (masculine, feminine, and neuter) as opposed to the seemingly less motivated system called grammatical gender. Gender is expressed by inflection only in personal pronouns, which prevail only in the third person singular (he, she, it), while the 3rd person plural form (they) is either common gender or neuter gender.

Table 1: *3rd Person Singular*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Subject pronouns	he	she	it
Object pronouns	him	her	it
Possessive adjectives	his	her	its
Possessive pronouns	his	hers
Reflexive pronouns	himself	herself	itself

In English, gender is generally a covert category shown by the co-occurrence of relevant pronouns, such as Third-person subject pronouns singular are used to show gender agreement, like

Table 2: *Agreement through Subject Pronouns in English*

Criterion	Gender	Example
male human	masculine (=male rational)	he
female human	feminine (=female rational)	she
inanimate	neuter (= non-rational)	it

For instance

- (1) He is a boy.
He-M is a boy.
- (2) She is a girl.
she-FEM is a girl.
- (3) It is a bat.
It-N is a bat.

However, ‘he’ is used to define masculine, ‘she’ is used for feminine and ‘it’ is for neuter gender. In the English language, gender is also defined through object pronouns such as

Table 3: Gender Agreement through Object Pronouns in English

Criterion	Gender	Example
male human	masculine (=male rational)	him
female human	feminine (=female rational)	her
inanimate	neuter (= non-rational)	it

For instance

- (4) Grandfather gave him a book.
Grandfather-M gave Him-M a Book-M
- (5) Mary was studying her book.
Mary-FEM was studying her-FEM book.
- (6) The plate shattered when John dropped it on the floor.
The Plate-N shattered when John dropped It-N on the floor.

In the above-quoted examples, the object pronoun ‘him’ shows that the grandfather gave a book to a male person because ‘him’ is a gender-specific marker, which is only used for masculine, whereas ‘Mary’ is a feminine noun, so the object pronoun ‘her’ is defined as feminine gender. Similarly, ‘plate’ is neuter gender, therefore object pronoun ‘it’ is used to show a neuter gender marker.

In the English language, gender is also defined through possessive adjectives such as

Table 4: Gender Agreement through Possessive Adjectives in English

Criterion	Gender	Example
male human	masculine (=male rational)	his
female human	feminine (=female rational)	her
inanimate	neuter (= non-rational)	its

For instance

- (7) His balloon is green.
his-M balloon is green.
- (8) Her balloon is blue.
her-FEM balloon is blue.
- (9) Its color is red.
its-N color is red.

The possessive adjective ‘his’ is a gender-specific word, which is used to show the masculine gender, whereas ‘her’ shows the feminine and ‘its’ defines the neuter gender.

In the English language, gender is also defined through possessive pronouns such as

Table 5: *Gender Agreement through Possessive Pronouns in English*

Criterion	Gender	Example
male human	masculine (=male rational)	his
female human	feminine (=female rational)	hers
inanimate	neuter (= non rational)

For instance

- (10) Simon thought he grabbed his lunch, but he didn't.
Simon thought he grabbed his-M lunch, but he didn't.
- (11) Robin wanted the role to be hers.
Robin wanted the role to be hers-FEM

In the above-given examples, the possessive pronoun 'his' is used to allocate masculine gender, and 'hers' shows feminine gender.

In the English language, gender is also defined through reflexive pronouns such as

able 6: *Gender Agreement through Reflexive Pronouns in English*

Criterion	Gender	Example
male human	masculine (=male rational)	himself
female human	feminine (=female rational)	herself
inanimate	neuter (= non rational)	itself

For instance

- (12) Arion dressed himself in his finest clothing.
Arion dressed Himself-M in his finest clothing.
- (13) She finished her oatmeal and poured herself a cup of coffee.
She finished her oatmeal and poured herself-FEM a cup of coffee.
- (14) The problem will work itself out.
The problem will work Itself-N out.

The reflexive pronoun 'himself' shows the gender of 'Arion', who is male, so that a masculine gender pronoun is used, whereas 'herself' is used as gender agreement in response to 'she', which is feminine, and 'itself' is used according to the neuter gender.

4.3 Gender Agreement through Pronouns in Haryanvi

In contrast to the English language, the third person pronoun is 'wa:' in the Haryanvi language, which does not define gender. 'wa:' is used for masculine, feminine, as well as for inanimate things.

Table 7: Gender Agreement through Possessive Subjective in Haryanvi

Criterion	Gender	Example	Gloss
male human	masculine (=male rational)	va:	'he'
female human	feminine (=female rational)	va:	'she'

For instance

- (15) va: tʰukra: ja:
He Boy-M is
'He is a boy'
- (16) va: tʰukri: ja:
She girl-MEF is
'She is a girl'
- (17) va: mez ja:
It Table-M is
'It is a table'
- (18) va: kursi: ja:
It chair-FEM is
'It is a chair'

The third-person pronoun of the Haryanvi language 'va:' is not used to allocate gender. In the above-mentioned examples, gender is defined through nouns rather than pronoun. The same system exists with objective pronouns in Haryanvi.

In the Haryanvi Language, gender assignment through pronouns is very complex because two gender systems exist: one is masculine and the other is feminine. There is no neuter gender in Haryanvi. The complex part is that all inanimate things are also divided into masculine and feminine. In the Haryanvi language, gender is only assigned through possessive pronouns such as

Table 8: Possessive Pronoun

	Feminine	Masculine	Gloss
Singular			
1 st Person	me:ra:	me:ri:	'my'
2 nd person	t̪e:ra: / t̪ha:ra:	t̪e:ri: / t̪ha:ri:	'your'
3 rd person	ae:ka: / aʊka:	ae:ki: / aʊka:	'his'
Plural			
1 st Person	ma:ra:	ma:ri:	'our'
2 nd person	t̪ə:ra: / t̪hə:ra:	t̪e:ri: / t̪ha:ri:	'your'
3 rd person	aənka: / aʊnka:	aənki: / aʊnki:	'their'

The above-mentioned possessive pronouns are used to define masculine and feminine gender.

Table 9: Gender Agreement through 1st Person Singular Possessive Pronouns in Haryanvi

Criterion	Gender	Example	Gloss
male human	masculine (=male rational)	me:ra:	‘my’
female human	feminine (=female rational)	me:ri:	‘my’

(19) va: me:ra: basta: ja:
 that my Bag-M is
 ‘that is my bag’

(20) va: me:ri: ki:ta:b ja:
 that my book is
 ‘that is my book’

In the above-mentioned examples, gender is assigned through first-person singular possessive adjectives me:ra: ‘my’ to define masculine gender and me:ri: ‘my’ to show feminine gender, but the notable point is that here the gender of objects is defined rather than the subject because in the Haryanvi language, basta: ‘bag’ is masculine and ki:ta:b is feminine.

Table 10: Gender Agreement through 2nd Person Singular Possessive Pronouns in Haryanvi

Criterion	Gender	Example	Gloss
male human	masculine (=male rational)	ṭe:ra: / ṭha:ra:	‘your’
female human	feminine (=female rational)	ṭe:ri: / ṭha:ri:	‘ypur’

For instance

(21) va: ṭe:ra: / ṭha:ra: basta: ja:
 that your Bag-M is
 ‘that is my bag’

(22) va: ṭe:ri: / ṭha:ri: ki:ta:b ja:
 that your book is
 ‘that is my book’

The above-quoted examples show that 2nd person singular possessive adjectives are used to define gender. ṭe:ra: / ṭha:ra: of masculine and ṭe:ri: / ṭha:ri: to define feminine gender.

Table 11: Gender Agreement through 3rd Person Singular Possessive Pronouns in Haryanvi

Criterion	Gender	Example	Gloss
male human	masculine (=male rational)	ae:ka: / aoka:	‘his’
female human	feminine (=female rational)	ae:ki: / aoka:	‘her’

For instance

(23) va: ae:ka: basta: ja:
 that his Bag-M is
 ‘that is his bag’

- (24) va: ae:ki: ki:ta:b ja:
 that her book is
 ‘that is her book’

In these examples, 3rd person singular possessive pronouns ae:ka: and ae:ki: are used to define the gender of objects rather than the subject. ae:ka: is used for masculine and ae:ki: for feminine gender.

Table 12: *Gender Agreement through 1st Person Plural Possessive Pronouns in Haryanvi*

Criterion	Gender	Example	Gloss
male human	masculine (=male rational)	ma:ra:	‘our’
female human	feminine (=female rational)	ma:ri:	‘our’

For examples

- (25) va: ma:ra: tʃʰukra: ja:
 He our Boy-M is
 ‘He is our boy’
- (26) va: ma:ri: tʃʰukri: ja:
 She girl-MEF is
 ‘She is our girl’

The pronoun ma:ra: shows the masculine gender of tʃʰukra: and ma:ri: shows the feminine gender of tʃʰukri:. Similarly, 2nd person pronouns also assign gender, like:

Table 13: *Gender Agreement through 2nd Person Plural Possessive Pronouns in Haryanvi*

Criterion	Gender	Example	Gloss
male human	masculine (=male rational)	ʈe:ra: / ʈha:ra:	‘your’
female human	feminine (=female rational)	ʈe:ri: / ʈha:ri:	‘your’

For examples

- (27) va: ʈe:ra: / ʈha:ra: tʃʰukra: ja:
 He your Boy-M is
 ‘He is your boy’
- (28) va: ʈe:ri: / ʈha:ri: tʃʰukri: ja:
 She your girl-MEF is
 ‘She is your girl’

The 2nd person possessive pronouns plural ʈe:ra: / ʈha:ra: used to show masculine and ʈe:ri: / ʈha:ri: for feminine gender. 3rd person pronouns also define gender, such as

Table 14: *Gender Agreement through 2nd Person Plural Possessive Pronouns in Haryanvi*

Criterion	Gender	Example	Gloss
male human	masculine (=male rational)	αənka: / αənka:	‘your’
female human	feminine (=female rational)	αənki: / αənki:	‘your’

For examples

(29) va: αənka: / αənka: tʃ^hukra: ja:
He their Boy-M is
‘He is their boy’

(30) va: αənki: / αənki: tʃhukri: ja:
She your girl-MEF is
‘She is their girl’

In these examples, αənka: / αənka: is used to show masculine and αənki: / αənki: defines feminine gender.

4.4 Discussion

This study explores gender assignment and agreement through pronouns in Pakistani English and Haryanvi, guided by Corbett’s (2006) Gender Assignment System, which classifies gender assignment based on semantic, morphological, and formal criteria. The findings reveal fundamental differences in how gender is represented, both structurally and functionally, in these two language systems.

In Pakistani English, gender is semantically driven and primarily evident through third-person singular pronouns ‘he, she, and it’ that reflect natural gender. This aligns with Corbett’s notion of semantic assignment, where gender is attributed based on biological sex (rationality) and animacy. English pronouns such as his, hers, him, her, it, and itself demonstrate consistent gender agreement. However, this system is relatively simple and applies only to animate nouns in the third person singular, with no morphological marking on nouns themselves, reflecting English’s weak grammatical gender system.

In contrast, the Haryanvi language presents a robust morphological gender assignment system, exhibiting features of both semantic and formal criteria. The third-person pronoun va: functions as a gender-neutral placeholder across all genders (masculine, feminine, and inanimate), and gender agreement is instead reflected through possessive pronouns and modifiers. Pronouns such as me:ra: (my-M), me:ri: (my-F), ae:ka: (his), and ae:ki: (her) serve to assign gender not to the subject, but to the noun it modifies—be it animate or inanimate. This strongly supports Corbett’s formal assignment, where inflectional morphology (i.e., the suffixes -α: vs. -i:) is a key indicator of gender, particularly for inanimate nouns.

The bilingual speakers in this study exhibit convergence and interference between systems. For example, while Pakistani English lacks gendered pronouns for inanimate objects, Haryanvi categorizes them as either masculine or feminine, leading to possible overextension of gendered reference when speakers use English influenced by Haryanvi structure (e.g., assigning gender to objects where English would use “it”). This reflects how bilinguals transfer morphological

expectations from one language to another, a phenomenon consistent with Corbett's theory when applied to contact languages and bilingual settings.

Additionally, the complexity in Haryanvi's treatment of inanimate objects as either masculine or feminine with no neuter category contrasts sharply with the neutral *it* in English. This indicates a more elaborate morphological system in Haryanvi, requiring gender agreement not only based on semantic cues but also linguistic convention, demonstrating how language structure influences cognitive categorization and grammaticalization of gender.

Overall, these observations support the applicability of Corbett's Gender Assignment System to multilingual contexts, where assignment rules vary significantly across languages. The comparative morphological analysis presented here contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gender systems in South Asian bilingual environments and highlights the importance of structural awareness in language teaching and translation, particularly for languages that differ in the visibility and distribution of gender agreement markers.

5. Conclusion

The study has been done to investigate the phenomenon of gender allocation systems in languages. It has started with looking comparatively into the gender system in English and Haryanvi. The investigation has revealed that the gender allocation system is an essential part of several languages, while it is absent in various languages. The languages vary with regard to the gender allocation system. Some languages have a simple gender allocation system, meaning gender distinction is based on natural rules and divided into three categories of masculine, feminine, and neuter, while some other languages have a very complex gender allocation system, such as which gender into two categories, masculine and feminine.

The current study has specifically focused on revealing the gender allocation through pronouns in Pakistani speakers of English and Haryanvi. As per the data, the English language is based on a simple gender allocation system. The gender system is divided into three categories: masculine, feminine, and neutral. This distinction is based on natural grounds. The gender system of the Haryanvi languages is based on a very complex system. They have only two categories of gender: one is masculine and the other is feminine. Inanimate things are also divided into masculine and feminine, which is hard to understand.

In the English language, gender agreement pronouns are used to assign gender. The 1st person (*I, me, my, mine, myself, we, us, our, ours, ourselves*) and 2nd person pronouns (*you, your, yours, yourself, yourselves*) do not show gender. These pronouns are used for common gender (male/female). However, 3rd person pronouns, singular and plural, both define gender distinction. The 3rd person singular like *he, him, his, and himself* shows masculine gender, while *she, her, hers, and herself* define feminine gender, and *it, its, itself* denote neuter gender. The third-person pronoun plural also shows gender; *they, them, their, theirs, and themselves* are used as common (male/female) and neuter gender.

In the Haryanvi language, gender is also assigned through pronouns, but only through possessive pronouns, and agrees with the nouns they qualify. The possessive pronouns that show masculine gender, like 1st person possessive pronouns singular *me:ra: 'my'*, show masculine gender while *me:ri: 'my'* is used for feminine gender. The 2nd person possessive pronouns singular *ṭe:ra:/ṭha:ra: 'your'* defines masculine gender and *ṭe:ri: / ṭha:ri: 'your'* shoes feminine gender. In 3rd person singular *ae:ka:/aoka: 'his'* is used to define a person who is further away and which is close at

hand, respectively, and both illustrate masculine gender. Similarly, æ:ki:/aɔki: ‘her’ shows feminine gender in the same way.

The possessive pronouns plural show gender like 1st person ma:ra: ‘our’ and ma:ri: ‘our’ define masculine and feminine gender respectively. The 2nd person t̪əra:/t̪həra: ‘your’ is used to show masculine gender while t̪əri:/t̪həri: ‘your’ defines feminine gender. The 3rd person pronoun aənka:/aənka: ‘theirs’ is used to define a person who is further away and who is close at hand, respectively, and both illustrate masculine gender. Similarly, aənki:/aənki: ‘theirs’ shows feminine gender.

In sum, this study set out to explore how gender allocation systems function across languages, with a particular focus on English and Haryanvi. The findings highlight that while English follows a relatively simple pattern with three categories—masculine, feminine, and neutral—Haryanvi employs a more intricate system where even inanimate objects are classified as either masculine or feminine. English mainly reflects gender distinctions through third-person pronouns, whereas Haryanvi relies heavily on possessive pronouns that vary according to the gender of the nouns they accompany. This comparison shows that languages differ greatly in how they structure and express gender, which not only shapes grammatical rules but also influences how speakers perceive and represent the world around them.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Every study has its boundaries, and this one is no exception. The research focuses only on pronouns, which means other areas of grammar where gender might also appear—such as verbs or nouns—were not explored. Another limitation is that the participants all belong to families originally from Ambala who migrated to Pakistan in 1947, so the findings reflect a very specific community of Haryanvi speakers. Because of this, the results cannot be taken as a full picture of the entire Haryanvi-speaking population.

There is still much to be discovered about Haryanvi and its dialects. Future studies could include other varieties of Haryanvi to show how gender is marked across the language as a whole. It would also be valuable to look beyond pronouns and study how gender appears in verbs, nouns, and adjectives. Comparing Haryanvi with other regional languages of South Asia could open new perspectives on how cultures influence the way gender is expressed in language. In addition, involving a larger and more diverse group of speakers would make future findings richer and more representative.

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