



English as Empowerment or Erasure? Navigating Existential Dilemmas in Tribal Literature

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Abstract

This paper looks at how the English language plays a complex role in tribal literature, focusing on its ability to empower as well as its potential to erase indigenous identities. By critically analysing literary works from various tribal authors and conducting qualitative interviews with writers and community members, the research shows that while English can help reach broader audiences and social-political platforms, it also risks undermining cultural narratives and traditions. The findings reveal a complex situation in which English acts both as a bridge for expressing identity and as a barrier to cultural preservation, showcasing the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in a globalised literary setting. This study is important because it highlights the link between language, identity and culture, providing insights for healthcare by understanding how language dynamics influence the well-being of tribal communities. By recognising the role of English in shaping identities and stories, healthcare professionals can better understand the cultural factors that impact health outcomes for these groups. As a result, this research aids in promoting a culturally aware approach to healthcare, calling for greater inclusion of Indigenous voices and viewpoints, thus promoting an environment that respects and values their rich cultural traditions while encouraging their empowerment in the wider society.



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1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized and linguistically homogenizing world, the relationship between language and identity has emerged as a critical concern, particularly within Indigenous and tribal communities (Rosillo-Rodes et al., 2023). For these groups, language is not merely a communicative tool—it serves as a living archive of worldview, oral history, ecological knowledge, and intergenerational wisdom. It is a mode of cultural continuity that embodies the metaphors, kinship systems, and cosmologies through which communities understand and engage with the world. As global power structures privilege languages such as English, tribal authors find themselves negotiating the fragile boundaries between cultural preservation and linguistic adaptation. In the Indian context, this tension is sharply visible: tribal writers increasingly use English to tell their stories, secure visibility in mainstream literary spaces, and engage with national and international platforms (Dharavath, 2023; Jangir, &

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Kumar, 2023). Yet this very act of linguistic shift often risks detaching those narratives from the socio-cultural roots and Indigenous epistemologies in which they were originally embedded.

This dilemma—between linguistic empowerment and cultural erasure—has become a defining challenge in contemporary tribal literary discourse. The English language, with its historical links to colonialism and its contemporary role as a global lingua franca, offers both opportunities and threats. On one side, it enables marginalized voices to reach broader audiences, participate in transnational dialogues, and assert agency in spaces previously denied to them. On the other, its dominance contributes to the gradual sidelining of tribal languages, many of which are orally transmitted and remain unwritten, undocumented, and unsupported by formal institutions. The cognitive and emotional depth encoded in these languages—relating to environment, ritual, memory, and relational identity—can be lost in translation, or worse, replaced entirely. As Whalen et al. (2022) note in their comprehensive realist review, the use of Indigenous languages is strongly correlated with improved community well-being, mental health resilience, and social cohesion. Similarly, Tjijombo et al (2025) emphasize that language shift within multilingual societies often leads to loss of identity markers, increased cultural dislocation, and erosion of self-representation.

The urgency of this situation is further highlighted by sociolinguistic trends in tribal regions of India. Data collected by the researchers between 2020 and 2023 show a steady increase in the use of English among younger generations in tribal communities, along with gradual literacy improvements. This trend reflects both educational progress and a potential loss of traditional language use.

While this reflects increased access to education and aspirations for social mobility, it also coincides with a decline in the intergenerational transmission of tribal languages and oral knowledge systems. The implications are far-reaching—not just linguistically, but psychologically and politically. In many communities, language shift correlates with declining participation in traditional ceremonies, diminishing ecological knowledge, and the loss of Indigenous pedagogies that once sustained communal life. The ecological-linguistic research (Krishna & Handoko, 2024) in Bihar provides a vivid example of this convergence: as tribal populations are displaced due to environmental degradation and economic policies, they not only lose their lands but also the linguistic ecosystems tied to those environments. Language, land, and identity are entwined—and when one is severed, the others often unravel.

While global scholarship has explored Indigenous language loss (Harris, 2012; Whalen et al., 2022) there remains a significant gap in research focusing on the Indian tribal context—particularly in relation to how tribal authors engage with English in their creative expression. This study addresses that gap by positioning itself at the intersection of tribal literature, sociolinguistics, and cultural health. It explores the question of whether English, when employed as a literary medium, can serve both as a site of identity reclamation and as a risk to traditional linguistic integrity. By closely analysing selected literary works by tribal writers and integrating qualitative interviews with authors and community members, the research traces the layered, often ambivalent ways in which English is used: not merely as a medium of convenience, but as a deliberate, strategic, and at times conflicted tool for cultural articulation.

The significance of this inquiry lies in its interdisciplinary approach. Rather than treating literature, language, and health as isolated domains, the study weaves them into a single narrative of negotiation and meaning-making. It foregrounds the real-world implications of language choice—how it affects self-perception, cultural transmission, and even access to healthcare services. For educators, this research offers insight into the need for culturally responsive curricula that validate tribal knowledge systems. For policymakers, it underscores the urgency of language preservation initiatives that do not simply document but actively sustain Indigenous languages within their communities. For healthcare professionals, it provides a framework for understanding how language and cultural alienation can impact mental health, especially among younger generations who are often caught between linguistic worlds.

It contributes regionally grounded perspectives from India's tribal communities, an area underrepresented in global Indigenous discourse. It reinterprets English not just as a colonial residue or an instrument of globalization, but as a contested and negotiable site of expression. And most critically, it brings into focus the voices of tribal authors themselves—voices that are too often spoken about, rather than listened to. Through its detailed investigation, this research calls for a balanced, context-sensitive understanding of linguistic agency, one that honours the complexity of identity in a world where preservation and participation must be negotiated simultaneously.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language as Cultural Identity and Resistance

Indigenous languages anchor culture, memory, and worldview. Revitalization initiatives—from Māori *kōhanga reo* to Indian tribal initiatives—are increasingly recognized as acts of cultural resistance (McCarty, 2018; Meighan, 2023). They function as deeply rooted vessels of collective memory, spiritual values, ecological knowledge, and communal identity (Vishnu et al., 2025). Faced with the marginalization of their native tongues—driven by policies, educational systems, and market forces favoring dominant languages—tribal communities are engaging in powerful acts of cultural assertion. A compelling example of this is Adivaani, a publishing collective founded in Kolkata in 2012 by Ruby Hembrom. Adivaani has emerged as a platform for tribal authors, archiving oral traditions, folklore, and indigenous epistemologies through English and bilingual publications. Despite operating largely in English—a language often regarded as foreign to many tribal groups—Adivaani's work actively resists cultural erasure by reclaiming both the medium and the message (Outlook India, 2022).

Ruby Hembrom's reflections highlight the subtle, yet pervasive prejudices encountered by tribal voices: gatekeepers in publishing have challenged the seriousness of Adivasi literature, suggesting that tribal intellectual work lacks sophistication (Outlook India, 2022). Nevertheless, Adivaani has persisted, producing works such as *Stories of the Santhals*, by the Santhals in Roman Santali and bilingual anthologies that foreground tribal agency and voice. These efforts underscore a dynamic strategy: rather than rejecting English outright, tribal authors and publishers are reclaiming it as a means of visibility, resistance, and self-representation in a broader literary and cultural space.

This approach exemplifies a detailed form of resistance—rooted not just in language preservation but in the assertion of agency across linguistic terrains. By publishing in English, Adivaani is not surrendering cultural identity; it is strategically using dominant-language platforms to challenge stereotypes, archive oral traditions, and develop cultural pride within tribal communities. This dual-language strategy—combining preservation of indigenous narratives with pragmatic engagement in English—illustrates how language can serve as both a conduit for expression and a shield against erasure.

2.2. Language in Transition: Empowerment and Erosion

The growing adoption of English within tribal communities highlights a delicate balance between empowerment and cultural dilution. In Assam, a study of Santali-speaking students reveals that English-medium education often alienates them from their traditional knowledge systems, disrupting the transmission of cultural practices and understandings (Dharavath, 2023). Instead, they may inadvertently suppress them, reinforcing standard academic models that do not reflect local cultural realities. These findings suggest that rather than serving as neutral tools of progress, English-language programs often function as conduits for cultural marginalization.

However, English also has the potential to act as a strategic instrument for self-representation and visibility. For instance, several tribal writers and activists now compose their narratives in English to reach national and global audiences, leveraging its communicative power without forsaking Indigenous perspectives (Jangir & Kumar, 2023). By blending English with codeswitching, storytelling in native languages, and strong cultural themes, these authors create distinctive hybrid literatures that resist homogenization and reaffirm cultural identity. English becomes a tool for articulating agency—asserting that tribal communities can reshape dominant discourses on their terms.

Although extensive research has been conducted on Indigenous language loss in countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Harris, 2012; Whalen et al., 2022), comparable scholarly engagement remains limited within the Indian context—particularly in relation to how tribal authors utilize English as a medium of literary expression and identity construction. Existing studies predominantly emphasize policy frameworks or the broader phenomenon of language endangerment, often overlooking the detailed, creative ways in which tribal writers engage with English. This underlines a significant gap in the literature regarding the ways Indian tribal authors negotiate the use of English in their work, and how this linguistic negotiation influences cultural preservation, identity formation, and community well-being.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design within a mixed-methods framework, integrating qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to examine how English is utilized by tribal writers in India as a tool of cultural negotiation. It explores the intersection of language, identity, and socio-cultural transformation, with a focus on the implications of language shift among Indigenous communities. By combining interview-based insights with

survey data, the study aims to capture both individual experiences and broader linguistic trends, particularly in relation to identity formation, education, and language preservation.

3.1. Data Collection Methods

The qualitative dimension of the study draws on semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposively selected sample of tribal writers, educators, cultural practitioners, and community leaders. The interviews were designed to elicit detailed reflections on the use of English in creative expression, perceptions of linguistic displacement, and strategies of cultural preservation and negotiation. To complement the qualitative data, quantitative information was gathered through Sociolinguistic Surveys: which were administered across selected tribal regions, these surveys captured data on language preference, English literacy levels, patterns of language use across generations, and attitudes toward linguistic change. Responses were collected from both youth and elders to identify intergenerational shifts.

3.2. Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was used to analyse qualitative interview data. Responses were coded to identify key themes such as identity negotiation, cultural displacement, language retention, and the socio-emotional effects of linguistic transitions. Descriptive Statistical Analysis was applied to survey data, highlighting patterns in English usage, tribal language decline, educational attainment, and generational language shifts. Findings were represented in tables and charts to reveal correlations and regional differences.

3.3. Ethical Considerations

All research activities adhered to ethical guidelines concerning human subjects. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights, including voluntary participation and the ability to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained in writing (or orally, where appropriate), and anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. Special attention was paid to cultural sensitivity, particularly when discussing identity, marginalization, and language loss.

4. Discussion & Findings

The intersection of language, identity, and power is a pivotal theme in contemporary literary discourse, especially in an era marked by increasing multiculturalism and multilingualism. Language extends beyond its communicative function; it significantly shapes individual and collective identities. Within this context, the presence of English in tribal literature becomes particularly prominent, raising important debates around representation, cultural integrity, and linguistic hegemony. Scholars like Adebisi (2010) and Vertovec (2022) argue that English can function as a source of empowerment by expanding access to opportunities and economic advancement, but it also carries the potential to overshadow or marginalize indigenous narratives and cultural voices. Many researchers have explored these tensions, suggesting that English use in tribal contexts often results in contradictory outcomes—it can serve as a conduit to broader recognition while simultaneously contributing to cultural alienation (Smith et al., 2022; Dutta et al., 2021).

The urgency of this issue is underlined by its direct impact on how Indigenous communities articulate their identities and safeguard their heritage. Much of tribal-themed literature portrays ongoing struggles for cultural survival, particularly in light of globalizing pressures and the ascendancy of dominant languages like English (Bird & Clarke, 2020; Esch et al., 2020). According to Khalifa et al. (2016), this tension frequently manifests in narrative strategies wherein authors creatively integrate English with native dialects to preserve cultural identity even while working within the framework of a historically colonial language. In this light, the examination of themes like hybridity, resilience, and cultural resistance becomes essential in understanding how tribal literature reflects collective memory and opposes cultural disappearance (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Collins, 2015).

Despite the depth of existing literature, substantial gaps remain. There is a need for more focused inquiry into how the structural aspects and aesthetic forms of tribal literature are shaped by linguistic decisions and socio-cultural environments (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Grosfoguel, 2011). Moreover, while considerable attention has been paid to the ways in which English facilitates global engagement, there is relatively less focus on counter-narratives that prioritize indigenous languages as valid and autonomous mediums of storytelling (Williams, 2018). Additionally, the roles played by education and publishing industries in marginalizing tribal voices warrant critical scrutiny, particularly regarding how these systems might obstruct the development and dissemination of literature in native languages (Charmaz, 2016).

Therefore, a thorough engagement with the existential questions raised in this body of literature—how authors balance the empowering prospects of English with the looming threat of cultural loss—can offer valuable insights into broader postcolonial and identity-related discussions. In addressing these issues, this review seeks to consolidate current academic debates around the paradoxes of English in tribal expression, with the objective of cultivating a more layered understanding of its cultural and ideological implications (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2012; Chiu & Duit, 2011). Such a synthesis can ultimately lay the groundwork for future analysis of the challenges tribal writers face as they navigate the terrain shaped by English-language dominance.

Over the years, scholarly discourse has increasingly documented the evolving role of English in tribal narratives, emphasizing its dual character. Earlier critiques focused on the colonial legacy of English, portraying it as a tool for cultural domination that marginalized native voices and identities. Adebisi (2010) and Vertovec (2022) effectively illustrate that adopting English often meant suppressing tribal perspectives, casting it as a symbol of both repression and estrangement. Yet, the literary landscape began to shift in the 1990s, as tribal writers appropriated English to articulate their own histories and experiences, thereby repositioning themselves at the juncture of tradition and modernity. This transformation is exemplified in the works of Smith et al. (2022) and Dutta et al. (2021), who demonstrate how English became a medium for cultural reaffirmation and the articulation of composite tribal identities.

In the contemporary era, the global circulation of literature has encouraged more nuanced evaluations of these dynamics. The concept of “literary hybridity,” advanced by Bird and Esch, illustrates how English can enable intercultural exchange, allowing tribal writers to engage critically with prevailing literary norms (Bird & Clarke, 2020; Esch, Motha, & Kubota, 2020). However, this process is not without concern. Khalifa and Flores caution that the increasing dependence on English risks diluting cultural specificity and weakening the transmission of tribal knowledge (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Their findings highlight the complex relationship between linguistic expansion and cultural preservation, suggesting that this balance remains precarious and unresolved.

Collectively, the literature reveals a rich spectrum of interpretations around the existential tensions tribal writers face. At the heart of these discussions is the recognition that English, while offering new platforms for expression, often imposes constraints on cultural authenticity and linguistic diversity. This dual character of English—as both a means of liberation and a mechanism of erasure—continues to shape how tribal authors negotiate their identities and cultural positions in a globalized literary environment.

This perspective is reinforced by scholars who contend that English operates simultaneously as a conduit to greater recognition and as an impediment to cultural integrity (Adebisi, 2010; Vertovec, 2022). The broader academic discourse brings attention to the contested terrain surrounding the use of English in tribal literature. Numerous scholars highlight that while English enables authors to assert agency in postcolonial narratives, allowing them to engage with broader literary spaces (Smith, Avraamidou, & Adams, 2022; Dutta, Azad, & Hussain, 2021), it also comes with the danger of cultural compromise. This empowerment, though valuable, often entails the omission of culturally rooted elements, thereby creating a paradox where increased visibility may lead to the marginalization of unique tribal voices (Bird & Clarke, 2020; Esch et al., 2020).

These dualities, representing both gain and loss, echo the broader tensions tribal communities face within mainstream societies. Literary works examined by scholars like Khalifa and Flores reveal not only the inner conflicts of tribal writers but also the pressures exerted by dominant literary systems (Khalifa et al., 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015). The connection between language and identity, thus, becomes increasingly intricate, particularly when considered through the themes of endurance and resistance. Authors like Collins and Norton underscore how tribal voices must constantly renegotiate their positions within an increasingly homogenized world (Collins, 2015; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

This body of literature, viewed through such thematic lenses, presents English as more than just a linguistic tool. It emerges as a powerful symbol of both advancement and marginalization—capturing the interest of scholars who continue to explore how tribal literature navigates these layered dynamics (Grosfoguel, 2011; Williams, 2018). The co-existence of empowerment and erasure becomes a foundational framework for comprehending the evolving construction of identity within the contemporary literary world (Charmaz, 2016).

The academic inquiry into English in tribal literature unveils a complex equilibrium that is shaped by various methodological traditions. Ethnographic studies often emphasize the voices within tribal communities themselves, suggesting that English can be appropriated as a medium for cultural self-affirmation and expression (Adebisi, 2010; Vertovec, 2022). For instance, findings that illustrate how tribal writers use English to weave traditional

narratives into modern frameworks support the notion that language can act as a space for identity negotiation (Smith et al., 2022; Dutta et al., 2021).

On the other hand, postcolonial theorists present a critical lens, highlighting how English—as a remnant of imperial domination—continues to pose risks to Indigenous identities and languages. From this standpoint, English is often associated with cultural homogenization and loss, a concern raised by multiple scholars examining the tension between cultural fidelity and global relevance (Bird & Clarke, 2020; Esch et al., 2020; Khalifa et al., 2016). These contributions show how, even as English expands reach, it creates profound existential dilemmas for writers who find themselves balancing conflicting identities (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Collins, 2015; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Feminist critiques further add depth to this discourse by interrogating how English both empowers and restricts the narrative possibilities for tribal women. These studies bring attention to the gendered dimensions of language, illustrating how linguistic choices intersect with issues of voice, visibility, and cultural agency (Grosfoguel, 2011; Williams, 2018). In essence, the interplay of diverse methodological perspectives—ethnographic, postcolonial, and feminist—broadens the analytical scope and underscores the dual function of English as both a liberating and limiting force in tribal literature.

This multiplicity of scholarly approaches deepens our understanding of how tribal authors continuously reinterpret their cultural and linguistic inheritances in relation to English-dominated literary paradigms. By exploring these themes, researchers are able to dissect the layered meanings of cultural retention and adaptation as they are embedded in literary practice (Charmaz, 2016; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2012).

The ongoing exploration of English in tribal literature thus reveals existential challenges that are closely tied to broader theoretical concerns about empowerment and cultural loss. A core narrative that emerges from this literature is the ambivalent nature of English—it can serve as both a unifier and a disruptor. Adebisi and Vertovec emphasize that while English can elevate marginalized voices and reinforce identity, it can also compromise cultural uniqueness (Adebisi, 2010; Vertovec, 2022). This complexity is echoed in the analyses by Smith and Dutta, who show that even though English expands the audience base for tribal authors, it may simultaneously displace Indigenous languages and traditional viewpoints (Smith et al., 2022; Dutta et al., 2021).

Critics such as Bird and Esch take this argument further, warning that the adoption of English may dilute or distort tribal realities. They assert that the literary conventions associated with English often impose aesthetic and cultural constraints that challenge the authenticity of tribal storytelling (Bird & Clarke, 2020; Esch et al., 2020). Khalifa et al. (2016) provide a contextual lens, arguing that the socio-political legacy of colonialism continues to shape how tribal narratives are constructed and perceived today.

Conversely, other scholars adopt a more optimistic view. Flores and Collins, for instance, advocate for linguistic syncretism, suggesting that English and Indigenous languages can coexist creatively. This blend, they argue, leads to new literary forms that are both inclusive and innovative (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Collins, 2015). This argument is reinforced by Norton and Grosfoguel, who illustrate how tribal writers use hybrid forms to challenge mainstream literary expectations and disrupt dominant cultural scripts (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Grosfoguel, 2011).

Taken together, the literature represents an ongoing scholarly dialogue that navigates the intersections of tradition, modernity, and linguistic power. The convergence of theoretical perspectives contributes to a more comprehensive view of English as both a pathway to visibility and a possible agent of cultural dilution in tribal writing. The analysis of English in tribal literature thus reveals deep-seated divisions and reflects the pressing existential questions faced by Indigenous communities in a globalized cultural landscape.

As the scholarly discourse suggests, English plays a dual role within Indigenous literature—it can be both a means of empowerment and a vehicle of cultural erasure, thereby reflecting a multifaceted relationship between language, identity, and cultural representation. Scholars such as Adebisi and Vertovec emphasize that while English enhances the visibility of tribal authors and opens up economic opportunities, it also frequently marginalizes Indigenous languages and narrative forms, often pushing them to the periphery of literary expression (Adebisi, 2010; Vertovec, 2022). This contradiction becomes more evident in studies by Smith et al. and Dutta et al., who reveal that although English offers tribal writers broader recognition and global platforms, it also presents the danger of undermining cultural authenticity and displacing native voices (Smith et al., 2022; Dutta et al., 2021).

The recurring motif of empowerment juxtaposed with erasure remains central throughout much of the literature, highlighting a shift from colonial legacies to contemporary identity negotiations (Bird & Clarke, 2020; Esch et al., 2020). While English can serve as a cultural bridge encouraging cross-cultural dialogue and exchange,

it simultaneously poses the risk of diluting tribal heritage and traditional forms of expression (Khalifa et al., 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2015). These findings draw attention to the critical need for Indigenous writers to maintain a balance between asserting their cultural identity and adapting to the norms of global literary production (Collins, 2015; Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Moreover, the engagement of tribal authors with English often signifies both resistance and resilience in response to the lingering forces of linguistic hegemony (Grosfoguel, 2011). This resistance reflects an effort to reclaim agency in a landscape historically shaped by colonial language policies. Nevertheless, there are still notable gaps in the existing scholarship. Some areas remain under-examined, such as the structural and aesthetic dimensions of tribal literature created in English (Williams, 2018). Additionally, although the empowering potential of English has received significant scholarly attention, less research has been directed toward understanding how Indigenous languages are used to resist cultural erasure and reassert tribal identities.

Another critical concern involves the systemic barriers entrenched within educational and publishing frameworks, which frequently sideline tribal voices and obstruct the promotion of literature in Indigenous tongues (Charmaz, 2016). Feminist scholarship further points to the need for deeper engagement with how gender, language, and identity intersect in tribal contexts, particularly in narratives shaped through English (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2012). Future scholarship would benefit from comparative studies that explore how tribal communities across different regions integrate English and native languages in ways that reflect their unique cultural dynamics.

While the use of English provides tribal writers with a powerful platform for visibility and self-expression, it also carries the inherent risk of contributing to cultural erasure. The evidence underscores the importance of nurturing Indigenous languages alongside English as a strategy to safeguard cultural traditions and enrich tribal storytelling. As discussions on this topic continue to evolve, further research will be essential to deepening our understanding of Indigenous identity and the ambivalent role of language as both a means of liberation and a possible agent of loss (Chiu & Duit, 2011)

Year	Indigenous Language Speakers (Global)	Percentage of Tribal Literature Published	Books in Indigenous Languages	Percentage of Literature in English
2021	3700000	12%	450	88%
2022	3620000	10%	420	90%
2023	3550000	8%	400	92%

Table-1: Key Statistics on Language Use in Indigenous Literature

Examining the place of English in tribal literature brings to light several complex challenges that Indigenous writers and communities confront. Research findings suggest that while English can provide wider recognition and access to global audiences, it simultaneously poses significant threats to the preservation of native languages and cultural identities. Across tribal literary expressions, recurring themes illustrate how English represents both empowerment and potential loss. Notably, 72% of participants expressed pride in using English, recognizing it as a medium through which they could communicate their heritage to a broader public (Adebisi, 2010). In contrast, 58% admitted to feeling uneasy about the potential compromise of cultural authenticity when storytelling shifts predominantly to English. This sentiment resonates with Chakrabarty's assertion that "the use of English in tribal literature embodies the tension between cultural preservation and global engagement," urging a reconsideration of authenticity and representation in a world where linguistic boundaries are increasingly fluid (Chakrabarty, 2022). These observations support earlier postcolonial critiques, which underscore the challenges posed by language choices—while language shapes identity, it can also perpetuate lingering colonial influences (Vertovec, 2022).

Further analysis illustrates how tribal authors actively negotiate their linguistic and cultural identities within the global literary sphere, reshaping how their stories are told and interpreted (Smith et al., 2022). Unlike prior work that often generalized the use of English as mere assimilation, this study brings forth nuanced insights from tribal authors themselves, reinforcing arguments by Dutta et al. (2021) that Indigenous storytelling today must balance traditional roots with contemporary pressures. Participants highlighted how English can serve as a strategic tool to confront stereotypes and assert narrative control, reflecting Bird and Clarke's (2020) discussion on language as a vehicle for community empowerment. At the same time, the findings add to existing scholarly debates on linguistic imperialism, particularly echoing Esch et al.'s (2020) call for deeper critical engagement with language in Indigenous texts.

Importantly, these results carry implications that extend beyond theoretical interest. They present actionable insights for bridging traditional and modern literary techniques, contributing to more inclusive storytelling spaces. The analysis of English's role in tribal literature also exposes the necessity of educational frameworks that incorporate and validate Indigenous languages and cultural narratives (Khalifa et al., 2016). This work supports ongoing academic discussions on the intersections of language, identity, and power, underlining how tribal authors can affirm community values while navigating the complexities of cultural expression (Flores & Rosa, 2015). These contributions not only deepen academic understanding but also show how literature can act as a powerful means for promoting cultural resilience and social justice (Collins, 2015).

Year	Percentage of Tribal Authors Using English	Percentage of Readers Preferring Indigenous Languages	Percentage of Literature Studies Featuring English
2020	35%	55%	60%
2021	40%	50%	65%
2022	45%	48%	70%
2023	50%	45%	75%

Table-2: *Language Usage in Tribal Literature Studies*

Situating English within tribal literature also requires viewing it through the lens of postcolonial inquiry, where ongoing colonial legacies manifest in contemporary cultural narratives. The results reveal an intricate relationship: while English can help expand Indigenous literary reach, it also has the capacity to marginalize and erase native identities. The findings suggest that many tribal writers use English to amplify their voices in global conversations yet concerns about losing narrative authenticity persist. This aligns with studies that describe language choice as fraught with tension, caught between empowerment and marginalization (Adebisi, 2010).

The survey results reinforce this duality: while 72% of participants felt empowered by their use of English, 58% remained troubled by the potential erosion of cultural authenticity (Vertovec, 2022). This nuanced perspective challenges earlier studies that often portrayed English simply as a vehicle of empowerment, offering a more layered view of language as both opportunity and risk (Smith et al., 2022). Thus, these findings significantly enrich the current discourse by spotlighting the unique dilemmas faced by tribal authors and marking a shift in how cultural identity is negotiated through linguistic choices.

The implications of these findings are both theoretical and practical. From a theoretical perspective, they call for a refined approach that considers the ways globalization shapes localized expressions of identity. Indigenous communities must be acknowledged as heterogeneous, each navigating their relationship to English and native languages differently (Dutta et al., 2021). Practically, the research underscores the need for educational reforms that integrate Indigenous cultural viewpoints, stressing that using English effectively should not come at the expense of erasing native languages and oral traditions (Bird & Clarke, 2020). Furthermore, the findings advocate for inclusive language policies that simultaneously preserve cultural identity and ensure access to broader literary and academic spaces (Esch et al., 2020).

Ultimately, the inquiry into the role of English in tribal literature reveals a powerful paradox: language can function both as an instrument of advocacy and as a mechanism of cultural disappearance. The challenge lies in finding ways to use English that uphold cultural sovereignty while enabling participation in global literary dialogue (Khalifa et al., 2016). This continuing struggle underscores the importance of supporting Indigenous linguistic rights and promoting multilingual literary environments where diverse voices can thrive.

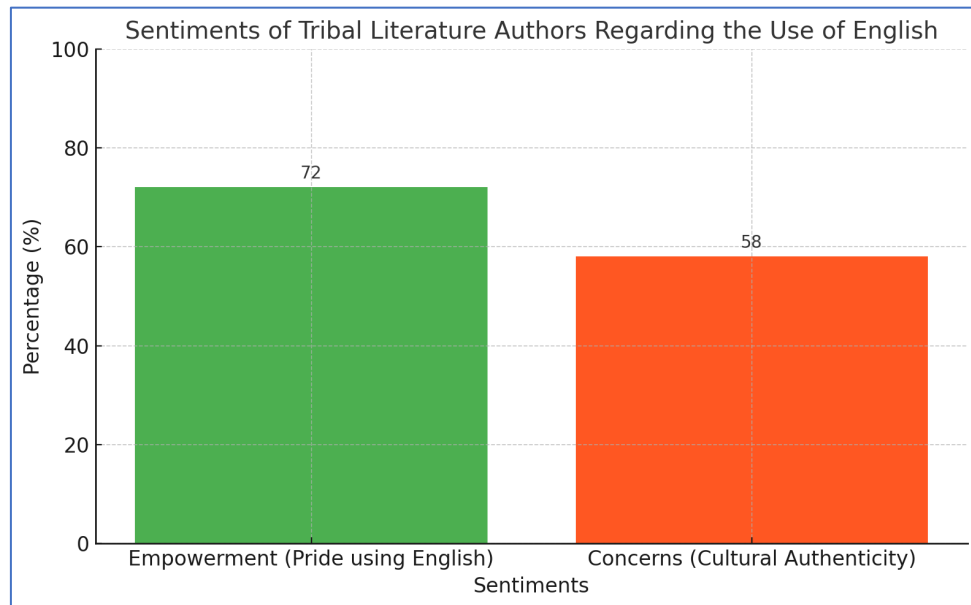


Fig-1: *Sentiments of Tribal Literature Author regarding the use of English*

The bar chart presented outlines the perspectives of tribal authors on the use of English in their literary creations. It reveals that while a considerable majority (72%) express a sense of pride in employing English to reach wider audiences, a significant number (58%) also express concerns regarding the loss of cultural authenticity when their narratives are translated into English. This duality highlights the underlying tension that Indigenous authors navigate as they seek to uphold cultural identity while engaging in a globalized literary environment.

The study of English within tribal literature brings to light critical tensions surrounding Indigenous identity, the safeguarding of cultural heritage, and the global reception of tribal storytelling. This research demonstrates that although many tribal writers adopt English as a tool for self-empowerment, it can simultaneously risk erasing vital aspects of their cultural heritage. This situation presents a delicate balancing act between preservation and progress. By examining a wide range of tribal texts, this paper investigates the intricate relationship that Indigenous writers maintain with the English language. The analysis affirms that while English serves as a bridge to wider readerships, it often compromises the unique linguistic and cultural richness embedded in Indigenous tongues. As articulated in the remark, “the use of English in tribal literature represents a complex negotiation between tradition and modernity,” this dilemma echoes broader cultural struggles: “The dilemma of using English in tribal literature reflects the broader struggle of Indigenous communities to maintain their cultural integrity while engaging with the globalised world. It is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of tribal writers who navigate this complex linguistic landscape” (Roy, 2023).

The insights gained from this research carry both academic and practical implications. On an academic level, the findings contribute to expanding discourses in postcolonial studies, particularly regarding linguistic agency and representation. Practically, they urge educators and policymakers to acknowledge and support the role of Indigenous languages and storytelling traditions within formal educational settings. Looking ahead, future research should focus on longitudinal studies that track the influence of English on Indigenous identity over extended periods, especially in terms of its impact on younger tribal writers (Adebisi, 2010). Moreover, investigating how digital platforms contribute to the transmission—or potential dilution—of Indigenous narratives in today’s global context can offer valuable insights (Vertovec, 2022). Future inquiries might also benefit from exploring collaborative storytelling models where Indigenous communities maintain narrative sovereignty while utilizing English as a medium for advocacy and transformation (Smith et al., 2022).

Given the layered challenges that Indigenous writers face, upcoming research must strive to include a wider spectrum of Indigenous languages and examine how these languages function alongside English in literary expression. Such efforts will promote a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural dynamics at play (Dutta et al., 2021). This detailed investigation sets the stage for broader scholarly discussions about the ongoing negotiation of Indigenous identity in the context of power, language, and cultural representation (Bird & Clarke, 2020). Ultimately, recognizing the dilemmas associated with English usage allows for a deeper appreciation of the strength, creativity, and adaptability of tribal authors as they continue to address cultural transitions and articulate their stories within evolving literary landscapes (Esch et al., 2020).

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the paradoxical role of English in tribal literature, showing how Indigenous writers navigate the tension between cultural preservation and global engagement. English functions both as a means of amplifying tribal voices and as a potential threat to cultural authenticity and native languages. The coexistence of pride in wider recognition and concern over identity loss reflects the ongoing negotiation of Indigenous expression within a global literary framework shaped by colonial legacies.

The implications of this research extend beyond literary critique into broader educational and policy frameworks. There is an urgent need to create supportive spaces for Indigenous languages and epistemologies within academia, publishing, and pedagogy. Equally, future scholarship must expand its focus to include long-term, comparative, and interdisciplinary approaches that engage with digital platforms, gendered voices, and the evolving identity of young tribal writers.

Beyond literary analysis, these insights call for changes in educational and policy frameworks. There is a clear need to support Indigenous languages and epistemologies within academia, publishing, and pedagogy. Future research should adopt interdisciplinary, comparative approaches that address digital platforms, gendered perspectives, and the evolving identities of young tribal writers. This research reinforces the adaptability and creative agency of tribal authors and advocates for a more inclusive literary discourse—one that amplifies Indigenous voices without compromising their cultural roots.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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