The Power of Language: Resisting Western Heteropatriarchal Normative Writing Standards

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Abstract

Language is more than communication; it is a form of power. Whereas science has been scrutinized for privileging Western values and norms, what has been less explored is scientific linguistic performance (e.g. writing). The enforcement of English as the "normative standard" has prioritized hegemonic values and assumptions, thereby shaping the expectations of scientific performance. HCI/CSCW is dominated by heteropatriarchal Western practices, overlooking entangled values and assumptions impacting non-Western colleagues. Our work presents a design fiction (fictitious case study) envisioning a research contribution which embodies non-Western linguistic nuances as an alternative "normative standard" for scientific communication. Through this work, not only are we championing care in developing responsible linguistic practices in HCI/CSCW, but also epistemically challenging readers with intentional confusion. We establish a call to action for acknowledging and embracing different writing practices that are more inclusive of the diverse representation of scholars in HCI/CSCW.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → *Human computer interaction (HCI).*

Keywords

Language, Design Fiction, Coloniality, Human-Computer Interaction, Decolonization, Feminism, People of Color, Power, Justice

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1 Introduction

"चमन में इख़्तिलात-ए-रंग-ओ-बू से बात बनती है,
हम ही हम हैं तो क्या हम हैं, तुम ही तुम हो तो क्या तुम हो"
सरशार सैलानी

Design fiction is an emerging and powerful tool enabling researchers, practitioners and designers to imagine 'alternative' or 'imaginative' futures [107]. Like participatory design (PD) and co-design, design fiction is a research tool that can be used to include voices in the design process that are often excluded [15, 41, 59, 60]. One critical and important distinction being that by engaging with design fiction as a method, researchers, designers and practitioners are actively encouraged to weigh the potential consequences of technology or imagine alternative futures in an effort to challenge existing systems and structures [58, 60, 81]. That is, design fiction encourages those who use the method or read design fictions to focus on the potential moral and ethical implications of future alternative technologies or processes. Can you imagine how different platforms like Facebook might have turned out had a diverse constituency imagined the potential moral and ethical dilemmas of its various features in advance of its implementation? In HCI, scholars have deployed design fictions to explore the consequences of digital technologies, especially in how such fictions work to include voices that are excluded from design processes [58, 60, 81]. For example, Afrofuturism, a term coined by Mark Dery [30], is a cultural aesthetic combined with science fiction that envisions a world that is centered around the imagination and hopes of Black people [108]. Taken together, design fiction is often deployed to allow people who are not typically or not often given the opportunity to imagine our sociotechnical future a voice in shaping our digitally mediated world.

While the prominent focus amongst HCI/CSCW scholars is on understanding and remediating the consequences of digital technologies, one technology which is slowly being examined within HCI/CSCW is the production of science and scholarship. Western[1] Scientific practices and knowledge production have been critiqued across various timelines and fields [99, 103, 108]. These critiques have especially centered around how Western science and scientific practice has been complicit in the sustained practice of cultural hegemony [23, 103, p. 49]. Cultural hegemony refers to the systems (e.g., ideas, practices, beliefs, and relationships) that have structured power and privilege in society [103, p. 49]. Western science has shaped our everyday world across time and space through problematic taxonomies and classifications that define people's subjectivity and thus people's everyday lived experiences [103, p. 49]. This cultural hegemony has especially been

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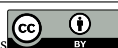
[1]Throughout the paper, we will use the term "Western" and "West" interchangeably, building on Stuart Hall's [108] reference of "West" as the larger colonial project. Hall defined the functionality of the "west" as – working on four principles (as applied to other societies) – a) categorization and classification, b) systems of representation to condense complex histories and culture, c) providing models of comparison, and d) using evaluative criteria to rank [108, p. 49]

Please use nonacm option or ACM Engage class to enable CC licenses 
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complicit in structuring, ordering and perpetuating the Western power and privilege that has created everyday trauma and harm for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) [8].

Scholars in HCI/CSCW have actively documented and challenged these discriminatory heteropatriarchal[2] practices in technology design and within computing spaces at large, including but not limited to explorations of racism [35, 41, 77], casteism [101, 113], and colonialism [27]. One dimension that has not received adequate attention, however, is that of the academic performance of language. **We use the 'academic performance of language' here to refer to the myriad language performances we engage in as academics, including writing norms (e.g., language and organizational structure), presentations, discourses, and classroom pedagogy.** Language is one of the sites/tools which inscribes knowledge production and reproduction, and in turns shapes various power relations [67]. That is, language has a long historical relationship with power and control – the use of language and how it has been forced on others continues to shape power relationships across contexts [67]. One such context is the academy, where scholarly discourse[3] in how it enforce language norms that are continuously re-ified by humans (researchers), also come to establish clear power-relationships in the academy. This warrants critical examination.

In the field of HCI and CSCW, writing is predominantly conducted in English, creating privilege and power for those who are native speakers/writers or people who have been trained in English for a long time[4]. **Beyond the use of English[5] itself, its operationalization by humans (researchers) could perpetuate exclusionary practices. For example, frequent mentions in writing/talks and classroom activities, presents socio-cultural, metaphorical, political, geographical, and other references drawn almost exclusively from Western contexts, as universal knowledge (like 2016 Presidential Election, reference to English TV shows in talks or classroom activities/assignments, etc) while "Othering" non-Western experiences [105] as hyperlocal**. As such, hyperlocal contexts lead to expectations of more explanation, background, clarifications, and context at the myriad stages of knowledge production. This shapes the norms and expectations around how a research should be written, presented and talked about. Yet, what has been less understood are ways in which we can begin to dismantle or understand the impacts of academic language performance on the diverse constituents within and outside the academy.

Our work seeks to thoughtfully engage with this critical issue. Drawing on the concepts of agency and power, coloniality, design fiction and protest, we present an imaginative study (fictitious research paper/case study) that presents an alternative future or form of scientific writing practice centered around the linguistic cultural values of the scholars and the context from which it emerges from. Thereby, setting an alternative "normative standard" that challenges the existing colonial and heteropatriarchal forms of scientific writing (and performance at large) and linguistic practices enforced by scholarly communities, thereby opening new pathways for critical discourses [64]. Our work builds on and connects with emergent and ongoing conversations that challenge how BIPOC and non-Western communities and individuals are either not represented or inadequately represented within computing spaces and conversation [15, 27, 29, 41, 60, 62, 77, 113]. For example, Bray et al. [15] developed a utopian toolkit to assist co-designers and researchers in engaging with Black and Brown communities in participatory design activities. Similarly, Klassen and Fiesler [60] used design fiction to create "Stoop" – a social media platform created by Black community that "centers the experiences and voices of Black people in a digital space built by and for them with the express effort to inspire and bring joy to people striving for these spaces today." While these studies are emerging within HCI, there is a dearth of scholarship within design fiction focusing on stories and ideas about BIPOC [15, 59, 60] and Queer futures [49].

We join these scholars in active solidarity to not only contribute to this call to action, but also to challenge hegemonic practices of "doing science" within HCI via design fiction. In particular, we are building upon, or echoing, Klassen and Fiesler's [60] question to set the stage for this work – "***what if we designed the future?***" Our design fiction is an opportunity for us, as brown scholars, to design and imagine a future where non-western norms mediate and shape scientific practice, particularly writing. Our goal is to develop empathy via practice, and highlight various conflicts that arise in how material is presented or expectations for how material is presented that are often assumed as the norm but in reality serve as a double standard of science wherein the same expectations via to bringing to the fore the double standards of HCI research practice. We believe that this is one of the steps towards a future imagined by hundreds of non-native English speaking and writing scholars, who face such discrimination on an everyday basis.

Our paper is organized as follows. We first provide an overarching reflection on the goals and method of our design fiction. We then present our design fiction (as a case study). We then discuss the implications of our design fiction for moving towards a future where language and linguistic practices are inclusive.

[2]The term Heteropatriarchy is commonly used within Indigenous Feminism, as it serves to call out settler colonial values and practices, but also problematize the monolithic notion of "West", as within it also resides diverse indigenous communities. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson defined Heteropatriarchy as – "[it] is not a discrimination that has come with white supremacy and colonialism; it is a foundational dispossession force because it is a direct attack on Indigenous bodies as political orders, thought, agency, self-determination, and freedom" [99, p.59].

[3]Throughout the paper even though our focus is largely on written communication, but we use it as one example to bring to light the everyday practice that shape our discourse. For example, talks, presentation, after seminar chats, advisor-advisee mentoring spaces, classroom activities, syllabus design, etc.

[4]Authors would like to note that there are many scholars from post-colonial countries (e.g., India) who for decades had excellent access to English language in their training, and hence should be awarded the same level of scrutiny within our paper. But, to engage with that nuance, would also entails engaging in concepts such as Caste. Caste-marginalized communities and individuals often use English as a means to challenge upper-caste hegemony over scholarly discourse. While we could integrate that argument in this paper, but we believe that it warrants a paper and analysis of its own, so that we can do justice to very fine nuance and respect the histories in which they are enmeshed. This is in line with recent calls in HCI to examine the "caste-less" nature of computing and South-Asian society/individuals [101, 113].

[5]We want to acknowledge and clarify that we are not singling out English language as the 'only tool' within Western Epistemologies. There are indeed many other languages, especially in Europe who also exert similar power (e.g., French) in Western research (epistemologies at large). Since author are building this work with their subjective experience with English academic performance, we use it as an example to highlight a critical issue in our communal linguistic performance, which could probably be generalized to other linguistics context too.

2 The Design Fiction Method: A Reflection On Our Deployment

This section brings together literature on agency and power, coloniality, design fiction, and protest, to animate our use and deployment of design fiction in this work. We begin with a higher-level conceptualization on the critical distinction between power and agency and connect power and agency to coloniality. We then draw on design fiction to highlight how they can serve a decolonial function wherein people can protest and push back against existing power structures. We draw on this literature to animate our use of design fictions to reflect on current academic language performances.

"Future is where you and yours will be"
Abdul Mann Bhat [9]

2.1 A Colonial Perspective of Agency and Power: How We Write Science

Agency, broadly construed, refers to the capacity of human or non-human entities to act or intervene of their own will [93]. Power, on the other hand, is how influence and control are embedded in social structures–or, social and institutional arrangements [73]. Agency and power, in turn, are inextricably linked. Our agency is mediated by the power we have to act within the social structures we are a part of. In our work, we focus explicitly on the relationship between agency and power in relation to the social structures shaped by and through coloniality.

Coloniality[6] refers to the social structures that emerged from colonialism (the practice of colonizing other lands) that influenced and continue to influence knowledge production, culture, and labor [36, 55, 67, 68, 105]. From a sociohistorical perspective, colonization involved the enslavement, rape and genocide of indigenous and other local populations across the globe (e.g., the Global South and Middle East). Coloniality is inherently shaped by and through a "colonial impulse"–the impulse to save others from practices that are deemed inferior–that perpetuates universality, reductionist representations, and colonial hierarchies [33]. This colonial impulse continues to produce and reproduce the colonial and racist social structures that mediate people's everyday experiences in society, primarily through the erasure and marginalization of the ways of knowing of other peoples and their societies [67]. Coloniality, for example, has become part of the social structures that mediate the societal logics of Western societies. The United States (US) is built on a foundation of slavery and the systemic erasure of the knowledge production and practices of BIPOC populations [26, 105].

One way in which the colonial impulse manifests is through how colonialism engenders a colonial mentality in its subjects [67]. Colonial mentality refers to the practice wherein people are "Othered" and made to feel or be inferior, or powerless [67, 108]. When people are believed to be inferior or powerless (or come to see themselves as inferior or powerless), they become objects to be "saved". In the context of coloniality, this has led to a broader colonial impulse [33] wherein external belief systems and practices have been or continue to be forced on others (e.g. law and knowledge systems)[108, p. 55], denying people agency in exercising their own practices and ways of knowing.

HCI scholars have drawn attention to how this same colonial impulse is also inherent within technology and technology design. Technology and design practice re-ify this impulse through how technology designed in the West with Western values and logics go "out there" (migrate to other societal contexts) [110] and save the "Other" [46, 50]. Irani and colleagues [46] in their work on Post-colonial Computing critiqued this very culture of HCI, which relies on the binary taxonomy of "here" and "there" [46, p. 3]. This inherently is the colonial praxis [46, 108] of "saving", enshrined in western knowledge production and settler colonial values – "you stay there, we shall, we shall, find you" [21, p. 209]. That is, the colonial impulse inherent within HCI is that we must go to other parts of the globe to enforce our ways of knowing and values through the technology we design for others, leading to universalism and reductionism in how we imagine and design technology.

Moreover, in the context of design practice employed within and by the West, this colonial impulse has led to an increased focus on designing for people *on* the margins – those communities who are pushed to the boundaries of society and denied voice or agency [111]. In this way, people on the margins become opportunities to exercise this same impulse to "save". For more than a decade, HCI and CSCW scholars have engaged with the issues of marginality and power [27, 35, 37, 46, 52, 62, 77, 82, 92, 94, 113, 117, 122]. In HCI/CSCW spaces, technology has been viewed as a perpetrator of marginality in how it shapes and mediates people's experiences in the world in deleterious ways [8]. From how algorithms limit people's opportunities to obtain jobs [89] to how facial recognition software does not see dark skin and misgenders people [18, 92], technology reinforces marginality [8].

While there are indeed practices and scholarship in HCI that might have fallen into the traps of "saving" [46, 50], scholars have also pushed back on this underlying impulse. This has often come through the critical and important question of "who designs?" [46] For example, scholars have actively defied deficit perspectives and approaches. Wong-Villacres and Colleagues [122], argued for understanding and building capacities *with* participants using Asset-Based Design [83]. Similarly, Baumer and Silberman[7] problematized the colonial impulse of design by arguing to "not" design. This work does not argue that we must stop building, but rather serves as a provocation to introspect and not think of other cultures and communities at the margins as "problems to be solved" by and through design practice and technology. Rather, this scholarship forces us to reflect on the colonial impulse inherent within our own practices, such as in encouraging local and indigenous communities to design for themselves.

[6]We refer to Walter Mignolo's definition of Coloniality [67, 68] in this paper, and we would like to highlight that Latin American Decolonial Feminist scholars have argued and urged the Feminist scholars to engage with more wider array of scholars looking beyond scholars like Mignolo. For example, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui in her work – Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization [25], aruged and challenged Mignolo's contribution on the grounds of appropriation of subaltern studies at large (see pg. 98, [25]). We urge our reader to engage with this work as well, and we sincerely thank the annonymous reviewer for bringing this to our attention. Due to the short revision cycle, we did not engage with additional work, as we won't be doing justice to scholars if we do not engage thoroughly with there work

What has been less explored in the HCI domain – and what serves as an opportunity to introspectively reflect on our communities practices – is the colonial impulse inherent within the *technology* of scientific writing. Whereas the practice and production of science has been heavily critiqued across disciplines [99, 103, 108], these critiques have mostly focused on how science continues to re-enforce White and cisgender power and privilege [23, 103]. Here, we draw attention to how scientific writing, in its function and form, and how the practice of writing science is deeply embedded in institutions and other arrangements of colonial power. Like other forms of technology, the agency [4, 99, 108] to write science is shaped by and through the cultural hegemony of science (social structures) as mediated by organizational logics and institutional actors. In scientific communities, people are required to perform writing/discursive practices that conform to existing norms and standards; standards set by the West and Western scholars and forced upon others across the globe. From the use of English as the defacto standard, to standardizing how papers are organized, to enforcing specific ways through which scientists can communicate results, scientific discourse is deeply implicated in a colonial impulse leading to a similar kind of universalism and reductionism that plagues other kinds of technologies [33, 108].

2.2 Design Fiction as Reclamation: Protesting Normative Logics

Yet, people can work to re-imagine existing forms of scientific writing production. In returning to the concepts of agency and power, there is an underlying assumption that because people's agency is being shaped by social structures, that they are "powerless". In our work, we adopt the view that agency and power are mutually constituted and recriprocal. Meaning, while power shapes agency, agency also shapes power [39, 78]. For example, dominant colonial and racist practices discriminate against and threaten the agency of BIPOC communities [27, 77, 112], framing them as "powerless" to act within power-structures. However, we draw attention to how people can and do act against power structures when their agency is threatened [99, p.107]. These acts of resistance, wherein people push back against power structures, highlight how people are indeed "powerful."

In the context of scientific writing, people who are members of the global scientific community are powerful [51, 108]. They are fluent in their native languages, possessing the ability to read, write and speak. But, in the context of scientific performative discourse (e.g., writing), their agency is shaped [4, 99, 108] through the existing social structures and the colonial impulse of scientific writing practice. On a deeper level, for non-native English speakers and writers, even though they have their own power manifest in local and indigenous practices for writing and communicating about the world around them – these practices are "Othered" [51, 108]. That is, their imagination and thoughts are shaped through a colonial mentality wherein their local and indigenous linguistic writing and communication practices are "marginalized" and made to feel inherently "dirty" [51]. This leads to the question of how people at the margins can work to reclaim power in the practice and production of scientific discourse writing and communication?

If colonialism is tied to the set of practices wherein other nations (or design communities) force their ways of lives on others, decolonization is its foil. Decolonization, broadly construed, refers to the undoing of colonization. In the context of design practice, design fiction and futurism can serve as tools for decolonization; they create opportunities for reclamation wherein people who are traditionally "Othered" can express desire and hope, as a mechanism through which people can resist and re-imagine existing logics and structures [68, 99, 108]. In this work, we draw on Design Fiction as an opportunity to imagine alternative scientific writing futures.

Design as a field has a long history of engaging with futurism, fiction, design futures, speculative design, and many very similar yet different ways[7] of engaging with the future or the alternative [11, 34, 107]. Moreover in contrast to science fiction, the outcome of a design fiction are diegetic prototypes which are aimed to "suspend disbelief about change" [14]. Design fiction in itself has myriad interpretations and styles of execution, depending on the intended outcome and context, like, designing and prototyping technology [86, 104, 121], critical design fiction [20, 58], data rights and ethics [81, 88], and GenAI development [44, 72].

The flexibility that is embedded in design fiction as a method has led to the expansion of HCI's praxis. For example, Mark Blythe proposed the idea of Imagined Abstracts [11], to develop artifacts that are non-existent or reporting findings from imaginary studies. Building on the Imagined Abstract, Joseph Lindley and Paul Coulton [65] took this one step further, arguing for HCI to engage in writing fictional papers. In moving beyond a summary through an imagined abstract (e.g. methods and findings), fictional papers take this a step further by intentionally creating disbelief "... by being wilfully deceitful" [65, .p 4]. Though design fiction as a method has some drawbacks, like being far from reality, the merit of it lies in its deception. The fiction, thereby the deception, has the potential to unearth critical nuances, e.g., scientific or conversational [65]. This is important for us to call attention to given long-standing discourses and the ontological and epistemological undercurrents of our field [24]. Specifically, HCI and CSCW have strong roots in solutionist approaches [24] – and there is a place for solutionist approaches – but it is also important to remember that, if we are to take naturalism as "truth", we should recall how what is currently "truth" in Artificial intelligence also emerged from science fiction [12].

We do not ignore the validity of such critique, for example, Keyes and Colleagues [57, p. 13], highlighted the broader shortcoming of speculative design[8] treating urgent critical needs as "hypotheticals, rather than materially-consequential realities." Despite this shortcoming, we argue that while deploying design fiction or speculative design or futuring as a method, it is important to frame and scope the potential outcome and intent of using such a method [11, 65]. That is, what do we hope to achieve from the use of design fiction? In this paper, we use design fiction as a tool to imagine a

[7]For example, Design fiction is the method of engaging in story-telling and narration to create the alternative [65], whereas, Speculative Design is more focused on "imaginative projections of alternate presents and possible futures using design representations and objects" [32].

[8]While Keyes and Colleagues [57] explicitly critiqued speculative design, the same critique is also eligible for design fiction, as Carl DiSalvo argued that fictional design and critical design can be more broadly conceived as "speculative design" [32]

potential alternative scientific writing future while provoking others to do the same through thoughtful engagement with our design fiction. As a reminder, design fiction encourages both those who use the methods as well as those who read them to focus on the potential moral and ethical implications of future altenrative technologies or processes. We draw on them here to work towards re-imagining how we, as an HCI community, write about science. We do so engaging with the lens of protest and hope.

Protest is a form of 'performative activism' [125, p. 68], or resistance. Ather Zia, in her ethnographic work with Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons in Kashmir, argued that protest "acts as a counter-spectacle" [125], especially against hetero-patriarchal violence enacted by the powerful. Similarly, Adriana Marcela Pérez Rodríguez [84] in her work on analyzing the utopia's created by Colombian feminist protest argued that protest becomes a space where "different future" emerges through a spectacle of rage, desire and joy. The communal pain as experienced by the protesters creatively establishes a community and solidarity. Rodríguez labels protest as "feminist lifelines[9]" – journey of creativity and utopia [84].

Taking inspiration from Zia's "counter-spectacle" [125] and Rodgriguez's "feminist lifeline" [84], we frame our design fiction as an act of protest. That is, this design fiction is inspired and shaped by the shared pain and communal struggle of non-native and BIPOC scholars in our field. Hence, we use design fiction to engage in creative a counter-spectacle as a mean to perform a protest against the hegemonic discursive "normative standard". Here, the lens of protest assists us in reclaiming our agency and also our intent to build a communion of shared struggles, in the hope for a radical transformation.

2.3 Reflection On Our Design Fiction: Protesting Western Writing Norms

Feminist inquiry champions the idea of how the "personal is political," which makes the personal analytical [113]. Recent work in HCI/CSCW such Anti-Racist Computing [35, 77, 102], Caste Computing [101, 113], and Decolonial Computing [3, 27, 29] have highlighted different ways in which power-dynamics are at play within our field and research practices, that yield power-imbalances hidden under the pretext of universality. We take inspiration from such scholarship, and echo and practice their calls, as we embrace a reflexive and activist stance via our design fiction, that is emerging from personal experiences as researchers. This is not an auto-ethnography [35, 40], in its true sense, rather an amalgamation of personal story-telling [77] and research through design fiction [11, 65]. It is as Erete and colleagues [35] dub "epistemic resistance." Personal experiences serve as "testimonial authority and data" but also are "valid knowledge situated within a social context" [35]. Similarly, Vaghela and colleagues [113], building on epistemologies from Dalit [5, 79] and Black feminism [23, 42] argued for actively engaging with life-stories and personal storytelling as these counter-stories challenged the entrenched hegemonic narratives.

[9] Rodríguez also argued that these feminist lifelines are a "archipelago of feminist protests: a fragmented collection with multiple passages, breaches, tides and islands, where digna rabia is the shared feeling that nurtures joy and the creativity to imagine new horizons .." [84].

In building on the above (see Section 2.2), we frame our design fiction as a protest. A protest building on our personal narratives and experiences. Moreover, in doing so, we fully embrace the use of design fiction as a political tool; a political tool that can be and has been used to unearth the inherent politics of design [11, 60]. Scientific writing, like other forms of technology, is not value-neutral, embedding the beliefs and values of those who created it [118]. As Mark Blythe argued, "[..] fiction can open scenarios up for the inclusion of social and political conflict in design thinking" [11, .p 4]. This can also be extended beyond design thinking, towards the design of our respective research communities. A significant amount of work in design fiction, has primarily focused on the "technology" in HCI, even though contributing to some critical socio-political nuances that need urgent attention [20, 58, 60]. Methodologically, our presentation of our design fiction sits at the intersection of both Imaginary Abstracts [11] and Fictional Papers [64]. We are proposing ***a fictional paper within a real paper***, that acknowledges this deceit. This acknowledgment of deceit in this work is inspired by Erete and Colleagues [35], as we are "exercising our epistemic agency" via this design fiction.

In section 4, we present to you a fictitious research study, which explores how users in India and Bangladesh, engage with a new social media application called Nazm. We follow the common and "standardized" writing and communication style within HCI and allied venues, which includes the following structure: Introduction, Method, Findings, and Discussion. Perhaps this leads to an initial reaction of why follow a standardized writing style if the goal is to offer a supposed "alternative"? We acknowledge that we (researchers), as part of the community of scholars in HCI/CSCW, and computing at large, are also trying to 'perform' within western academia while engaging in critique of the politics of that performance. Thereby utilizing what Post-Colonial scholar Gayatri Spivak defined as 'strategic essentialism' [105]. Spivak argued – "Since one cannot not be an essentialist, why not look at the ways in which one is an essentialist, carve out a representative essentialist position, and then do politics according to the old rules whilst remembering the dangers in this?" Moreover, our re-imagination is not to challenge the standardized norms in scientific writing/structure, but rather, we are purposefully drawing on existing scientific writing practices and structures while playfully re-imagining specific components as a tactic for highlighting our experiences.

A comparative study would have been an ideal approach for such a work, where we could bring some example paper(s) and compare it with what is written from non-Western universal knowledge. This would have not only made it "empirical" but also substantiated our claim with data. While we agree and acknowledge that we are an empirical discipline, there are two critical reason we considered before developing our design fiction:

- To the best of our knowledge, we are unaware of any papers, especially within our community, that employ various scaffolds and writing styles that have contrasted our community's normalized writing practices/performance (linguistically.) Therefore, we are unable to execute a comparative study with a set of paper(s), to highlight the issue at hand.

- We are mindful of the harmful implications of such a comparison with explicit examples from existing scholarship, especially as the words are misinterpreted or misconstrued, especially against early career scholars. The use of existing scholarship could have led to the authors and articles used in our work to be identified. A simple search for a phrase within ACM Digital Library or Google Scholar, or any other repository, could be used to identify authors. Hence, this was a conscious decision agreed upon by our research team. Design fiction provides us with the appropriate tool for subversion while still conveying our message.

Engaging in a rhetorical (and satirical, if you pay close attention to language play) take on writing a user-study with non-Western norms and metaphors, will place a burden on the reader, and not only on the reader who are native English speakers, but also non-native English speakers and writers. Culture and metaphors are not monoliths. Our justification to engage in the design fiction, and particularly writing fictional user study is motivated by "suspending disbelief". As Lindley and Coulton [65] articulated that "(design fiction) brevity may also burden readers with the task of suspending their own disbelief."

In the next section, we reflect upon our respective position as a researcher, our intention for writing this study. Following our position statement, we will present our fictional case study.

3 Position Statement

"Give name to the nameless so it can be thought."
Audre Lorde

This paper is emerging from a long standing struggle in the academy as experienced by the authors. The authors are non-native English speakers and writers. All three authors are cisgender, male, and people of color. The authors were born and raised in three different countries, and two of them have also experienced displacement due to socio-political conflict. As a collective they have more than two decades of experience working in the HCI/CSCW field, both living in and exploring human-centered computing from and within diverse geographical locations. They have their own set of marginalities within their identities, facing oppression within respective contexts. Due to the potentiality of harm in unpacking these identities and experiences, the authors exercise their agency in choosing not to explicitly engage with this material. One such oppression is on the level language, which is what motivated them to write this paper. The assimilation within any field of science, especially on the cultural and epistemological level, places a huge burden on Black, Indigenous, Queer, and People of Color, primarily because of the "whiteness" embedded in science [108]. As scholars who grew up in households of color, we did not have access to English (at least at an informal level), and even if we did at a later point in our life, it was heavily influenced by our respective surroundings, such as our familial environments and community contexts. Moreover, it is one thing to access a language, and completely another to access the culture around language, such as media and metaphors. For example, we learnt English in our school, but the idioms being used in our household were still in our native languages, our everyday conversation with friends and family was in native language, and our imagination was rooted in our native language. This is the genesis of our larger argument in this paper.

While reading the paper, we acknowledge that our audiences, especially those from western contexts for whom English may be a way of life, may experience denial, anger, confusion and discomfort. When Erete and colleagues [35] addressed the racism within HCI/CSCW, they attributed such typical reactions to White fragility [31]. We echo this, and further add that, the reactions emerging from this work, could also be broadened to a larger *Western heteropatriarchal fragility*. We take the reader on this journey of confusion and discomfort along with us in our design fiction (case study), and then in our Discussion. But we implore and urge readers to step into our shoes for a moment, engage with your feelings and emotions [42], and to especially sit in discomfort [101]. The struggle that you may experience is an opportunity – an opportunity to empathize and transform. This is best elaborated by Ngugi who articulated how "we should embrace struggle in the sense of a struggle to transform" [21, p. 207]. We acknowledge that as men in this field and STEM at large, we are also incredibly privileged. For example, when in a room our voices are heard more, we are paid more attention to, we are not questioned by our families the way our mothers and sisters are, and largely we can interject. Adding to this, we are currently situated at an R1 institution in the United States of America, with access to a knowledge system and resources, which some of our friends and colleagues in different parts of the world cannot, such as libraries, to name a few. As men who are engaging with feminism, we can often be labeled as "good men" [22]. We call out such categorisation, especially the binary of good vs bad, and also urge the reader to take into account and keep our privileges in the back of their mind while engaging with the paper. Moreover, non-native English speakers and writers should not be treated as a monolith. It would be completely contrary to the goals of this paper, as also clarified in the section above. As Kannabiran [51], simplified for us, "Other" is not a monolith, even within a category, some are "pure" and some are "dirty." Our accents could be "dirty," but the very fact we can converse, understand and write the language of the oppressor is a strength [43].

4 Design Fiction(Case Study): Writing Papers in a Non-Western World

The following case study is a design fiction developed by the authors. This is not a real study nor based on a real study.

4.1 Introduction and Literature Review

The proliferation of the internet and communication technologies has led to the emergence of both online and hybrid communities with different modalities of interaction. This is further supported by the idea of movement towards digitisation by various governments worldwide. Studies across HCI and CSCW have explored and highlighted the myriad ways in which the 'user' interacts with technologies around them, such as social media [27, 61, 91, 96], dating apps [53, 126], content-creators [16, 98], healthcare [47, 54, 124], education [116, 117], social robotics [63, 100], political discourse [1, 114], and many more. Social media, in particular, has offered a space for expression and community building amongst

individuals across the world. Election/Political discourse, in particular, has garnered much attention with HCI and CSCW research spaces [2, 106], even before the Cambridge Analytica scandal. For example, Pal's work on understanding the branding of Narendra Modi via social media [80].

India and Bangladesh are two world economies with growing presence in South Asia. The two neighboring states have a long history of diplomatic, strategic and socio-cultural ties. Bangladesh's war of Independence, where both states played critical roles, changed the geo-political landscape affecting both the countries. Both countries, after decades of independence, have nurtured a technological revolution, which is evident by the ever-developing deeper mobile and internet penetration. There was a significant uprise in the internet penetration, post 2010 in both the countries – almost hyperbolic, as per the reports [90]. The internet reached almost 50% of the Indian population, and around 40% for Bangladesh, by the year 2021. With this penetration also emerged newer formats of discourses, such as online political discourse. Both countries have their fair-share of political ups and downs, or in layman terms, very happening politics and have their electoral processes[10]. Political discourse in both nations has very strong imagery, in terms of how it can happen, at any place and at any time [109]. People coming together around a cup of chai has the potential to spark lively political debates in the streets, in the cafeteria, and other places [109], and the difference between the consumption of Chai versus Coffee, can be looked at through identity politics as well [109]. It is important to understand how politically lively and charged the streets of both countries are, to understand the nuances of how this discourse is shaped. Moreover, the relevance of paper based newspapers is still strong, with almost millions copies being sold everyday [10], these copies are disturbed not only in homes, but also in local trains and buses.

The shift to digital news media, such as Youtube and Facebook, has opened new avenues and interactions within the public space of political discourse. Regardless, when it comes to the electoral process and even beyond, individuals and communities engage in production as well as consumption of various forms of media representation, both traditional and digital. For a country like India, with a population of 1.4 billion, the general election is often termed as the biggest democratic event of the world. On the digital front, political parties and their supporters engage in digital campaigns to garner support for their candidates, and at times, these campaigns have been found deliberately developing polarized political rhetoric [28]. Whatsapp and Facebook, in particular, have been the most common political engagement platform. Whatsapp groups are charged with heated exchange in their family groups, and similarly, Facebook and its short form content could easily be accessed by millions in a matter of minutes [28]. Political parties have dedicated IT cells, which are like a digital army working around the clock, to monitor internet activity and engage in generating and analyzing the content being produced.

Despite the reach of platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, and more, these platforms have been accused of meddling with electoral systems in different countries [85]. Meddling with electoral systems has severe consequences. Not only is interference colonially motivated, but also potentially seals the fate of people of a country. These allegations led to a growing frustration against such apps, hence civil society groups in both the countries decided to develop a social media app, called Nazm, to counter the hegemonic presence of such platforms and foster more local, cross-cultural political discourse. Nazm is a social media platform developed by youth artists, poets, lyricists, and composers who are part of the Indo-Bangla Shayari Collective (IBSC). Nazm is designed to cultivate communication amongst their users in a shairana andaaz, thereby promoting literary and poetic sensibilities amongst their users. Moreover, the underlying value that the developers and thinkers of this app wanted to embrace and nurture is that of – Tehzeeb. At the moment, Nazm has around half-million users, with a 20-25% increase in the users every subsequent month since its launch in June 2024. There also exist user-created sub-communities on Nazm, which caters to particular linguistic niches, ethnic groups, or other forms of interests. The posts with the most waah waah, get weekly highlights on the platform's billboard. Top users are invited to a bi-monthly literary event, thereby giving them a platform to showcase their skills and build community. Nazm is quickly gaining popularity across both the country, especially with the presence of humor in the form of political satire that is present on their platform.

In this work, we conducted semi-structured interviews with diverse voters (n = 23) in India and Bangladesh to understand their engagement, experience, and perceptions about social media political discourse, particularly on a locally developed social media platform called Nazm. Our work contributions are twofold, a) we show how HCI and CSCW can engage with developing and designing more nuanced and localized applications, that move away from hegemonic capitalist systems, and b) on a theoretical level how to embrace values such as, bhasha, Tehzeeb, and ঐক্য.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Recruitment and Participants. We used a purposive and snowball sampling method to recruit participants for this study. Both first and second authors are part of this app, and reached out to the creators of this app to hoist the flyers and screening surveys, and develop a strategy to be able to reach participants organically. The creators suggested designing flyers and screening surveys, which have some political satire or poetry to it, so that users don't ignore it. Taking forward their recommendation, the first author recalled a famous political slogan, as the title of their poster/flier —

"Khela Hobe!"

It was first used by Shamim Osman, and later by Anubrata Mondal of Trinamool Congress (TMC), and then eventually being picked up by Mamata Banerjee to challenge Narendar Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2021 election, which TMC won. The phrase is extremely popular amongst voters, especially with the imagery of Mamata Banerjee throwing a football from a rally while yelling it from the mike. Mamta Banerjee, acts as a common and relatable figure for the users of both the nations, and is very popular too, despite geographic boundaries.

The remaining screening surveys, followed some standard questions about nationality, age, duration of their use of the app, etc

[10]Recent political events in Bangladesh, have changed the geo-politics and diplomatics ties between India and Pakistan, largely after Sheikh Hasina's resignation.

Table 1: Demographics of Participants from India and Bangladesh (identifiers prefixed with I and B, respectively)

Participant ID	Gender (self-identified)	Age
I1	Man	24
I2	Woman	22
I3	Prefer not to disclose	21
I4	Woman	25
I5	Khwaja	19
I6	Man	22
I7	Hijra	27
I8	Woman	32
I9	Brihannala	24
I10	Man	35
I11	Woman	21
B1	Woman	18
B2	Woman	23
B3	Kothi	25
B4	Man	27
B5	Woman	19
B6	Prefer Not to Disclose	19
B7	Woman	25
B8	Man	27
B9	Woman	31
B10	Woman	18
B11	Woman	32
B12	Woman	27

and consent form, and was finally shared by the researchers on the platform. The specific inclusion criteria included a) living in India or Bangladesh, despite their status of voting rights or legality of citizenship b) being at least 18 years of age, and c) an active user of Nazm. In total, we found n=23 participants, 11 from India and 12 from Bangladesh. Then, the first and second author, with their respective knowledge and familiarity with the context and the nations, reached out to all participants who filled the survey. Surprisingly all of them agreed to take part in the study, and details of the interview process will be detailed in the next section. Researchers followed the ethical and moral practice of dharma and आदर, in the absence of a formal "institutional review board" at their respective organizations. Table 1 shows the respective demographics of recruited participants from each country.

4.2.2 Data Collection and Analysis. The interview protocol was developed by the researchers in Bangla, Hindi, and English. Each interview lasted for 60-90 minutes, and the questions were designed around four themes – a) adoption and affordances of Nazm, b) engagement on Nazm, c) experience with political feed and transnational conversation, and d) platform level support and governance. The first author designed a protocol in Hindi first, and then converted it to English, then the English protocol was shared with the third author, to get feedback, based on the feedback, some changes such as framing and removal of leading question, etc were incorporated. Then, both Hindi and English protocol was shared with the second author, who is a native Bangla speaker and writer, for translation into Bangla. The Bangla protocol was externally cross-checked with a colleague of ours in the HCI/CSCW community, who is also a Bangla speaker and writer. Finally, considering the context, and the nature of the application, both first and second author underscored the importance of Urdu, which is spoken or at least used amongst literary circles, because of its prevalence. But neither the first nor the second author, have official training or are native speakers of Urdu, they have some experience from listening, especially from within their respective social circles, and online content such as ghazals and songs. But this was not a shortcoming, rather an opportunity to engage and learn more from our participants in the interview.

All interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom and telephone calls. First, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and then asked for consent to let researchers take notes from the conversation. No compensation was provided to the participants for their participation. Two authors conducted the interview based on their level of geographical familiarity with the context or language fluency with the participants.

For the analysis, the first and second author analyzed half of their interviews to come up with an initial set of codes. Later, they compared their codes to compile the initial set of emerging codes. After this, in the second iteration, they thematically code all of their interview recordings. To preserve the linguistic and cultural nuances, no recordings or conversation was translated to English or any other language, rather, the subsequent authors talked through their codes and examples to come up with themes from the data.

4.2.3 Contextual Position of Researchers. The first and second authors were born and brought up in South Asia. All the authors collectively have been working for more than two decades and have significant research experience in the Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Computer Supported Collaborative Work (CSCW) research. All authors are multilingual speakers and writers, with experience particularly in English, Bangla, Arabic, Aramaic, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi. As an avid fan of social media and politics, along with their personal interest in pursuing this research, our analysis is likely skewed by their personal experience and motives, as it always is for any researcher.

4.3 Findings and Discussion

4.3.1 "बाँट दिया इस धरती को क्या चाँद सितारों का होगा": Affordances and Joy of Using Nazm.

4.3.1.2 Poetics of Joy and Tehzeeb. In the first section of our interview protocol, we asked our participants about their experiences and motivations to join Nazm. Most participants highlighted that they wanted to try something "new", as they considered mainstream platforms such as X or Facebook to be too crowded, and lacking Tehzeeb. Moreover, they also expressed happiness in the fact that there is a dedicated platform which values and fosters community with a poetic touch to it. As (I8, Woman, 32) expressed –

> "On other applications it became a mundane task to keep scrolling, feeds with memes and stuff, [.....] on[..] on [..] this app I feel like there is an inherent joy that

> I feel when using it. [मुझे...] .. मुझे बहुत आनंद महसूस हो रही है"

Almost all the participants expressed extreme excitement about the fact how this platform explicitly caters to people in India and Bangladesh. They believe that this platform is bringing together people who enjoy poetry, ghazals, and Nazm together under one roof, where there are no "barbed fenced boundaries." One of the participants, from Bangladesh (B3, Kothi, 23) shared a Hindi poem with us that they learnt via some new friends they made from India, which was originally narrated by Ashutosh Rana –

> "बाँट दिया इस धरती को क्या चाँद सितारों का होगा,
> उन नदियों के कुछ नाम रखे, बहती धारा का क्या होगा,
> शिव की गंगा भी पानी है आबे जम जम भी पानी है,
> पंडित भी पिये, मुल्ला भी पिये,पानी का मज़हब क्या होगा,
> इन फ़िरक़ा परस्तों से पूछो क्या सूरज अलग बनाओगे,
> एक हवा मे साँस है सबकी क्या हवा भी नई चलाओगे।"

Lastly, participants also appreciated the reward system of this platform – waah waah points. The reward of getting a live stage to express their poetry skills after being a top ranked user in their billboard was attracting more and more user base. Compared to likes, or reactions, or retweets, they liked the fact that an online platform incorporated local ideas of appreciation. This sort of point system moves away from the binaries of like and dislike, and even emoji, where often users are categorized into certain reactions. Waah waah, on the other hand, embraces not only new, but a unique experience for the users, which is grounded in the idea of Tehzeeb. The Tehzeeb which reverses the categorisation of good versus bad, and nourishes a human to think with more patience. It goes even beyond what the English language thinks as reward or reaction, the waah waah, is a personal gesture which holds meaning in how it is being conveyed. A technological scale cannot capture the nuance of this gesture, and hence users often leave comments. Therefore, just by juxtaposition of a locally relevant reaction mechanism, Nazm already has influenced and challenged the binaries of existing big tech social media. It is also a provocation for HCI/CSCW research, first, it challenges the notion of categories that drives in our day to day interaction with technology, and second, pushes us to not just engage with local knowledge systems in theory, but the praxis of re-inventing tech design using those very knowledge systems.

4.3.1.2 "Bhaukaal macha diya": Reversing the Power-Structure . The introduction of a platform which catered to shayarana sensibilities of the user base, has not only nurtured more interpersonal belonging for the users, but also the belonging of self in a community. Contemporary social media platforms do support certain languages, but the mere support of language does not automatically translate to belongingness. Nazm on other hand cultivated the belongingness via the means of expression of those languages, which is through political satire and humor. Our participants expressed this as a move which challenged the "English" oriented "highly educated" nature of traditional social media platforms. As our participant B7 (women, 25) described to us –

> "*It feels that, umm...., uh .. I.. I am not only conversing in Bangla, but living in Bangla on this app*"

While not all our participants understand what power means at least in the academic terms, they still expressed that Nazm is challenging the dominant narratives of conversation, especially that of bigger platforms. In our conversation with participant I6 (Man, 22) who has lived in areas close to Banaras in the Eastern Uttar Pradesh region, he emphasized how his language and dialects are shaped by Awadhi and Bhojpuri, and being able to express those feelings on Nazm has found him a community of his own. While referring to Nazm, he expressed – "Bhaukaal macha diya hai." Frankly, there is no translation for this, but for context, he expresses the force with which Nazm has shaken the system of social media.

His expression has led to a lot of curiosity amongst his followers, who often ask him to share more of such a combination of literary phrases. And the same goes for folks who use different dialects of Bangla in the commentaries. The sensibilities of language has also led to unearthing of political structure that exist within these two border states in South Asia. At any global stage, India with its post-colonial and modern infrastructure, policies, diplomacy and power, presents itself as a geo-political force within South Asia. This has led to lack of opportunities and very visible marginalization of people in Bangladesh, as participant B11 (32, Woman) noted – "The general sentiment towards India, be it online or offline, is not great – largely because we are never heard, and people feel India meddles with our politics." The literary conversations and exchanges via the means of Nazm is building a community, where more and more Indian users are also realizing this power-dynamics. As further explained by the same participant –

> "*hmmm ... you know.. being able to talk about it with political satire and humor, has given a space to address these very simple but complex relationship in a constructive way*"

This was also echoed by an Indian participant I9 (Brinhala, 24), who expressed shock towards the lack of awareness of such invisibility of marginality – *"I am about to go for graduate studies in America to study HCI, and I looked at the statistics of demographics of my incoming cohort, and there were so many students from India, but only a few from Bangladesh! Then I recalled such conversations on Nazm where people have highlighted this power-imbalance. I and a lot of my friends had access to design and HCI research opportunities via big tech, particularly Microsoft Research and Google research, and also institutional support to publish and present at international conferences. Whereas, my colleagues and peers from Bangladesh had no power, and a lot of HCI programs and graduate schools don't realize this in their admission."*

4.3.2 "राजनीतिक व्यंग का मज़ा ही अलग है": : Political Content Moderation on Nazm. Users also felt satisfied with the nature of political engagement on the platform, they compared it to other major mainstream platforms, and labeled their experience as more "fruitful" and "open". In particular, they emphasized the given nature of the platform, which is based around poetry; most political rants seem to turn artistic, and thereby sound like political satire. This creates an very unique and creative political satire battles amongst the user, which are not "toxic" as (I6, Man, 22) shared with us – **"राजनीतिक व्यंग का मज़ा ही अलग है"**. Another user (B5, Woman, 19) who also mentioned something similar shared with us a couplet,

that she came across on the platform, originally written by Rahat Indori –

"नए किरदार आते जा रहे हैं, मगर नाटक पुराना चल रहा है"

Though these satire battles can become heated as well, and when questioned about the same, most users expressed appreciation for the community-led content-moderation structure of the platform, which rejects the idea of censoring speech, either pro or against the current regime. Unlike larger corporations owned social media like X (formerly Twitter), who often have been caught following the lines of government, and shutting down the dissenters [97]. Nazm's moderation approach is grounded in nyay, which ensures a systematic decentralized justice model, facilitated by the appeal board. This appeal board runs on जनतंत्र, a value strongly rooted in the fabrication of the society and governance in both the nations, offering all the parties a chance to make their case. The cases are heard not on merit or laws, but rather to uphold samvaad. The method of samvaad has helped users cherish friendships and connection across the political ideology lines, which is greatly appreciated by our participants. This in turn created an atmosphere to mobilize political educational content as well, such as raising awareness, as (B10, Woman, 18) who is a first-time voter, mentioned to us –

> "*With some of my friends, we are trying to raise awareness about prioritizing the local politician's past records over the party which the person is contesting from. We are working with people at different levels–villages, union parishads, upazilas, zilas, and bibhags in Bangladesh*."

This grounded approach of nyay, upholds the justice-value that has been enshrined not only in way-of-life, but also philosophy for centuries. The participants felt heard whenever things escalated to the level of community-moderation. Moreover, unlike western idea of capitalistic 'labor', community members actively took part in moderation regardless of the rewards. HCI/CSCW, for long, has thought through and come up with a plethora of research on governance and content moderation [48, 119] – but does it really cater to the values that are not "western"? We argue that we are beyond the point of asking that question, because that framing centers "western" way-of-life and philosophy as a standard point of comparison. Instead, scholars in HCI/CSCW should rather engage in simply reversing, re-imaging and reintegrating their respective values into such moderation techniques, without worrying about categorisation. For example, nyay upholds the value of samvaad, in a literal English translation it means 'conversation', and a higher thought, it would be 'playful' to have this in a moderation system. But, these very higher abstractions and categorisation often lose their meaning, because samvaad is not just any conversation. It is mutual understanding, emotion, duty, and morality that drives and gives meaning to samvaad, which cannot be captured by mere English categorizations. Hence these concepts should be actively pursued for the betterment of technology and the user, and not simply to be explained and categorized for academic audiences.

4.4 Conclusion

In this exploratory interview study we interviewed (n=23) participants in India and Bangladesh, to understand their experience of using a political satire based local social media – Nazm. We found that our participants enjoyed the nature of the application, and its discourse, which values respect and humor in a cross-national political exchange. Moreover, the content moderation technique designed on the philosophy of samvaad was greatly appreciated for being contextual and uplifting socio-cultural values. The contribution from this work challenged various forms of technology and their embedded values, which continue to shape experiences for users in a context without understanding the socio-cultural nuances and dynamics.

5 Discussion (For Real!)

"Flowers along with a combination of fragrance,
make an ecosystem of the garden, its aura!
If I am only about myself, then what am I,
If you are only about yourself, then what are you."
Sarshar Sailani (सरशार सैलानी)

Our discussion section is broadly themed around practicing post/decolonial perspectives in our research spaces and community. The first section provides a higher-level of meta-analysis where we discuss some of the tactics that we used in our design fiction. Then in the second section, we challenges the current epistemic and linguistic praxis while providing concrete action items, and critical questions for the HCI/CSCW community at large. And, this is followed by a larger conversation around why such western English dominated practices exacerbate colonial mindset, and operate within the larger imperial infrastructure of our research field. We do so through the sections: Rethinking Epistemic and Linguistic Practice, Performative Power and Coloniality, and Decolonizing Writing Practice.

5.1 Rethinking Epistemic and Linguistic Praxis: A Meta-Analysis of Our Design Fiction

You have now finished reading our design fiction – a fictitious case study written as though non-Western norms were shaping writing practice. How do you feel? What do you think about the Case Study? What, if anything, caught your attention? Was there a moment where you thought to yourself, **what is going on here?** If the answer to the above questions is, yes, you are now empathizing with what a lot of non-native English speakers and writers experience on a daily basis when reading, writing, talking, and scholarship.

In this section, we provide a higher-level meta-analysis of our design fiction in an effort to clearly articulate the myriad ways – or writing norms – through which power is exercised and performed through writing in a way that demands different amounts of interpretive resources from readers from different geocultural locations. In this particular case, as non-Western authors, we have created a fiction wherein we can help others who have had different or similar experiences as members of the HCI and CSCW community find empathy or realize they are not alone. This work builds on prior scholarship advocating for practices such as citational justice [62] by broadening to the larger set of norms that shape discursive praxis and experience. We highlight the normative tactics in which we exercised our power in the design fiction above. Specifically, in how we tactfully drew upon contexts, categories, language, and theory, that are native to our language and

knowledge practices. We begin by highlighting these tactics, and then delving into the implications of these tactics as a reflexive strategy to help illustrate our own experiences as members of academic communities.

Contextual Tactics: Our experience as authors has often been shaped by a lack of context provided in Western scholarship, with the expectation that our own work must deeply unpack context and native understandings. As an opportunity to allow people to walk in our shoes, from the outset of the design fiction (particularly in the Introduction and Methods) we employed contextual tactics wherein we deliberately referred to politicians (names) (e.g. Narendar Modi), authors (e.g., Ashutosh Rana), affiliations (e.g., Trinamool Congress) and events (e.g., 2021 election) commonly referred to in our everyday conversation. We also drew upon *contextual*, localized information, such as the slogan ("Khela Hobe[11]") being used by Mamata Banerjee, the current Chief Minister of the Indian state of West Bengal, against her opponent, particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party led by Prime Minister of India, Narendar Modi.

Categorical Tactics: As our field has continued to champion diversity and inclusivity, it has been heartwarming to see how this also started to reshape and re-imagine our use of categories [70, 76]. We see this, amongst other things, in the development of inclusive gender and sex categories to allow for more diverse representations of people's ethnic and other identities. However, there is still more we can do. Referring to the demographics table (see Table 1), we used certain gender identities, which are often not heard of or talked about in the HCI's literature[12], or day-to-day discourse. For example, Hijra(s) or often called the "third gender" [38] are biologically born male but mostly dress in 'feminine' ways [38]. Some of them also go through castration ceremonies, and some are born inter-sex. They are not considered male or female, nor transitioning. While it might be a "new" category for HCI and allied audience, Hijra(s) have been part of both the society for not decades but centuries.

Literary Tactics: Normative linguistic standards have established and reinforced the structure of "scientific" writing and expression, which values either empiricist or naturalistic ways of knowing [71]. Recently, scholars have started to advocate for ways of knowing that move beyond these, and are grounded in their ways of being – such as storytelling, oral histories. The question remains, however, is what else exists that we should embrace as the "normative standard". What about, for example, ethnographic poetry [125]? We did not engage with the core essence of ethnographic poetry, which is to write our experience in the form of poetry or couplets, but instead borrowed literary tools from shayars, poets, lyricists and scholars. This included quotes (e.g., Abdul Mann Bhatt, Audre Lorde), shayari (e.g., Rahat Indori, Sarshar Sailani[13]), local literary metaphors (e.g., "Bhaukaal Macha Diya"), and poems (we beg your patience to read the poem in the Conclusion section.) Literature and metaphors are contextual, but they have the potential to cross the boundaries, as the elders in our family phrased for us – "what is the religion of a pigeon, they fly and sit on the temples, and then on the mosque!" Similarly, literary references are designed to evoke emotions and feelings, which are not bounded by intellectual or geographical borders, and hence requires care and thought when being employed in day-to-day performance in science.

Theorectical Tactics: Knowledge production within HCI/CSCW has been shaped by white and western norms, which have been critiqued over the past decade [46, 77]. Kumar and Karusala [62] in their work on citational justice problematized the myriad forms of epistemic injustice that shape everyday knowledge production. *Whom* we cite, represents *what* our values and traditions are, therefore, a conundrum arises for scholars who are not trained in the west when they encounter what others believe to be "canonical" literature, theories, or methods. For example, in our case study's methods section (see 4.2.1), we referred to upholding the value of dharma and आदर (dub "eastern" philosophy of duty (or moral individual conduct) and respect) as a mechanism to subvert the lack of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) norms in other contexts. Independent scholars or scholars from institutions who do not have access to IRBs when working with human-subject research often face hardship in publishing, or their scholarship is severely scrutinized for lacking "ethics."

Taken together, these tactics pose critical provocations for us as a community. Championing decolonial ways of thinking, we ask the questions of: **Whose knowledge? Whose method(s)? Whose categories? Whose technology?** In colloquial terms, these lead to a more pointed question of who has been 'invisibilized' and 'Other-ed'[108] as a result of existing linguistic practices/performance? Scholars[14] often draw on examples from various domains, be it television, politics, and history. Yet, these examples are often never explicated for audiences who may not be familiar. On the other hand, scholars and scholarship coming out of any Non-Euro-American context are simply asked – "***give us more context***." We ask why? **Why is there an impulse to seek more context? Why is the onus to teach placed on scholars from the 'global south'?** Similar to recent calls (e.g. [120]) to not put more labor on people of color, we ask similarly, why create more labor for our community members from these global contexts? Why are similar expectations not set of our US/European counterparts?

In conclusion, there are various ways through which writing, and the norms of writing, are shaped by and through those in power. In the sections that follow, we first broaden the conversation between power and writing by drawing on postcolonial and decolonial scholarship. Lastly, we articulate ways in which our

[11]This was further contextualized by emphasizing the genesis of this political slogan in Bangladesh by Shamim Osman, who is currently a politician with Awami League (political party.)

[12]First author and second author came up with these categories which they have heard of from their respective contexts, and even they both did not know about terms from each other's context, so they exchanged their understanding.

[13]We used Sarshar's Shyari at the very beginning of the Introduction, and then translated it for the reader at the very beginning of the Discussion section. The primary reason for this is that it conveys the core argument for this poem, in the form of shayari.

[14]To reiterate, we are mindful of implications that are attached with public scrutiny, and how arguments can be perceived in bad light, especially against early career scholars. This is not the purpose of this paper, our main goal is to highlight an existing problem, to embrace our mistakes collectively, and transform our field towards a more just community. Hence, the authors made a categorical decision to not explicitly quote papers or authors to provide examples that we came across of using language, metaphors, and examples without references or explanation.

community can address these systemic issues of power as mediated by and through writing practice.

5.2 Performative Power and Coloniality of Expression

Interacting with scholars across disciplines and geocultural contexts is central to research. Scientific writing plays a significant role in that interaction among writers. To reflect on how the norms in that interaction are shaped by power, we draw on the concept of performativity by Judith Butler. Performativity refers to the idea that one's identity is not inherently possessed but constructed through repeated actions and behavior. Though Butler explains and uses the concept of performativity in the context of gender identities [19], it has been used by prior works for understanding the emergence of norms (e.g., in ethnolinguistic practices[27]), and is broadly about symbolic interactionism – the understanding that identities and social realities are constructed through ongoing interactions and performances within cultural and interpersonal contexts [56].

Let us reflect on performativity in the context of scientific writing. What should an HCI paper look like? Are the publication venues (e.g., conferences and journals) and communities in HCI receptive to new researchers? Take the ACM CHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, for example. It's colloquially said, "To publish a paper at CHI, you need an advisor who has published at CHI." Courses like "How to Write Better Research Papers (for CHI)"[15] anecdotally show the strong norms and gatekeeping that exist around paper writing in this community. However, the existence of such norms is not unique to HCI and adjacent fields, such as CSCW. Over the years, norms developed around what sections a paper should have, what terminologies or acronyms need not be defined, which literature is considered canonical, and what examples are considered relatable. For example, we see papers/talks/assignments use examples from Western popular culture (e.g., TV series "Friends" or "Star Wars") with minimal explanation and with an expectation that the readers would know the context. In contrast, examples from popular culture in the Global South are rarely used. This might be because the Global South authors are convinced the Western popular cultural references are relatable due to their repeated appearances in existing papers. When the Global North political and historical contexts (e.g., the US presidential election, the American civil rights movement) often are not explained in detail in papers. However, will we be okay with the papers that draw on political and historical contexts in the Global South (e.g., national election in India, the history of colonization in South Asia) not to include more details about these topics? We should understand that papers without details about a colloquial Western topic are equally inaccessible to a non-Western reader as the papers focusing on common Global South topics are for a reader outside of that locality.

How writing practice is performed establishes power over who can and cannot produce science. Historically, we know the methods of research and those who have designed and used them – have been complicit in the propagation of knowledge that has systematically promoted a pro-white and pro-Western agenda [71]. For example, as explored by Moses and Knutsen [71], regression analysis, as the primary statistical method developed by and through eugenics – the study of people's physical traits – was complicit in perpetuating white superiority and Black inferiority across multiple physical dimensions. This becomes important when understood historically, as we have to consider that science, especially at that time, was largely driven by white cisgender individuals in the West. That very "science" has since contributed to how people are classified and categorized in their societies. These problematic classifications and categorizations have been deeply integrated into the social structures and systems that shape people's everyday experiences, which have been especially harmful to People of Color [8]. In the context of HCI, Postcolonial Computing scholarship [46] highlights sociotechnical systems' colonial impulses–how, being designed in Western contexts and with Western values, as sociotechnical systems migrate and travel to other, especially non-Western contexts, reanimate colonialism. Similarly, by choosing traditionally Global North and Western localities for conference venues and prioritizing Western holidays in their schedules, research communities can continue perpetuating similar privileging. Returning to the concerns around power hierarchies in writing for research communities, Kumar and Karusala have also highlighted the issues of citational justice in writing practices of HCI works, where scholars from the Global South are often overlooked, othered, tokenized, presented as unrelated to the North, and included in a throwaway manner [62].

The genesis of such norms around using examples and providing contextual details is understandable, given the overwhelming majority of HCI research's focus on Western contexts [66]. However, the disparity in reviewers' expectations about additional context details and the amount of effort the authors put into addressing readers of different sociocultural contexts demonstrate the power dynamics in HCI paper writing. Moreover, the exercise of this power is often systematic. For example, the list of accepted LaTeX packages for ACM Publishing System (TAPS) does not include packages (e.g., polyglossia) for writing non-English texts. While TAPS strives to support authors in processing non-English texts through human intervention, not considering the possibility of non-English text being used in scientific publication in building the pipeline demonstrates a classic example of what Ruha Benjamin calls "default discrimination" [8]. To transform scientific practice away from the status-quo hierarchy that resembles colonial structures and relations, we must prioritize inclusivity and respect for diverse knowledge systems. For example, we, as a research community, should revisit our expectations of "representative" sampling in studies from different cultural contexts. This involves recognizing practices in religious and cultural settings as equal realities and not as other or different, deconstructing biased methodologies, adopting inclusive language, prioritizing ethical considerations, integrating cultural diversity into education, and advocating for policy changes within scientific institutions. By embracing these principles, we can cultivate a more equitable and respectful scientific community that harnesses the richness of diverse perspectives to address pressing global challenges.

In the sections that follow, we highlight two higher-level ways through which the goals of inclusion could be achieved in the context of writing practice.

[15]https://chi2022.acm.org/for-authors/learning/courses/accepted-courses/#C08

5.3 Decolonizing Writing Practice: Justice-centered Approaches

We have thus far highlighted the ways non-Western participants in publishing experience participating in that community. Moreover, we have connected these experiences to a broader colonial impulse, calling our community to re-examine these norms such that we can be more inclusive. This call to action builds on prior advocacy, such as Citational Justice [62], but broadens this call to reflect on the various facets of writing practice and day-to-day linguistic performance that harm many members of our community. This re-examination is not easy, and is layered with multiple nuances. The larger questions that we thought for ourselves was that of where to begin? The simple answer is that we need members of the community to **engage in a process of transformation wherein through introspection and retrospection, we take a look at ourselves and our practices.** Below are two nuances that we believe would work towards addressing the colonial impulse of writing practice (and larger scientific performance) in our community and move us towards more just writing practices inclusive of the various constituents who participate, who wish to participate, and who will participate in the future. These include: (1) HCI's praxis is not just local, it is translative and (2) Complexity and Care in Translation and Abstraction.

5.3.1 HCI's praxis is not just local, it is translative. In recent years, especially after Bardzell [6] offered six qualities of feminist interaction design, where one of them challenged the idea of universal design, the idea of locally situated knowledge gained traction in HCI [45, 95, 100, 117, 123]. Locally situated knowledge practice challenged two key practices, a) bridging important gaps in HCI literature via broadening participation, and b) critiquing the dominance of generalizability of knowledge. This shift brought to light often ignored and normalized practices in HCI and Design, for example, Wani and colleagues [117] in their work on education technology in conflict affected zones argued for developing localized education content using traditional technologies such as television to overcome internet shutdowns. Similarly, Singh and colleagues [100] in their study exploring ethical considerations arising for deployment of social robots argued for building natural language tools that accommodate diversity of accents. Across geographical boundaries, we are witnessing scholarship that contributes to more and more localized nuances for the HCI.

There is no denying the fact that local situatedness in HCI has emerged as a wonderful tool that pushes the boundaries and imagination to build an inclusive future. At the same time there is a need to critically unpack what it means to engage in local situatedness in practice. Irani and colleagues [46] in their seminal work on Post-Colonial Computing argued that technology travels across various boundaries, and it brings its history and meaning along with it. We build on their argument, and argue that as much as our research needs to be contextualized and locally situated, the implications from our work travels across various borders. Hence, **our praxis is not just local, but rather *translative* in nature** – it does not necessarily transfer, but *translates* with its own meaning and interpretation. This implies that as much as it is important to cherish and engage in local knowledge, we need to be mindful of the interpretation when it travels across their local border. For example, when talking about a local election in a country, the researchers cannot assume that everyone from different geographies would understand those events, or the electoral system, or recognize the name of their respective presidents and leaders.

It is easier to take sides or blame each other, instead we call researchers across different borders to own responsibility and build collective solidarity[16] that embraces *radical vulnerability*. Richa Nagar in her book "Muddying the Water: Co-author feminism across scholarship and activism" [74] argued for building ***radical vulnerability*** as feminist praxis in our scholarship. In her ethnographic work with the farmer organization movement in India, she struggled with translating stories that she came across, and hence engaged in co-authoring them with the community she was working with. She defined the term radical vulnerability as "an essential requirement for journeying together as co-authors in a political landscape disfigured by non-stop epistemic violence"[74]. As a call-to-action, we argue that researchers and practitioners within HCI would benefit from understanding the political landscape that we work within, and engaging in constructing co-authoring spaces to resist epistemic injustice and erasures. For example, when giving our talks we should critically introspect what metaphors or examples we engage with? Here, the solidarity space with our peers and colleagues could function as a feedback mechanism, where the expectation is critical and humble introspection – as an individuals' understanding of world is very limited. Hence, the need to build these solidarity spaces. Moreover, the co-authoring space does not simply imply having "token" authors to legitimize our work, but rather an introspective space that helps us all take a step back and empathize with the implication of our respective praxis.

Though we also advise caution while interpreting what it means to build collective solidarity, as the idea is not to hide our differences and fractures within our community to build homogeneous spaces, rather taking an transformative approach and working within. As Nagar [75] further argued that, the praxis of radical vulnerability "opens up the possibility of a togetherness "without guarantees": it does not seek to know prior to the journey where the shared path will lead us but it commits to walking together with the co-travellers over the long haul in the struggles and dreams that we all have chosen to weave, unweave, and reweave together." [75, p. 240] **Working "without guarantees" calls for HCI researchers to embrace mistakes and critiques, not as punitive, but rather as a form of love and care.** This call-to-action to looking beyond punitive and passive aggressive cultures that are routinely practiced, which not only hinders the collective

[16]please note that we are not invoking a sense of "global solidarity" here, and the reason for that is two folds:

- The idea of global solidarity similar to "global sisterhood" has the potential to fall prey to western liberal feminist ideas of emancipation and care, which is not what the authors are rooting for here. As highlight by Mohanty [69], global sisterhood is problematic, largely because it is framed from a dominanat's eyes towards the "third world."
- Moreover, solidarity itself comes with its own baggage as Rodriguez [84] highlighted – "Solidarity as a practice is complex because violence is mediated by the divisive logics of race, class and heteronormativity". She extends this with an example about lack of solidarity for trans men when actively fighting for abortion or reproductive rights for 'women'. In HCI this could also be thought through the work of Keyes and colleagues [57], who challenge the very notion of who and which "woman" is considered in women's health research in HCI.

journey, but also re-establish the colonial injustices of knowledge production. Embracing our inter-subjectivity is the path forward for practicing radical vulnerability, which will ultimately create onto-epistemological shifts in our communities and praxis [75]

5.3.2 Complexity and Care in Translation and Abstraction. Translation embodies a powerful position in today's world, as it has for many decades. Being able to understand and interpret a language that one is not familiar with an act of service. Articles, newspapers, movies, podcasts, music, poems, ghazals, nazms, and many other forms of linguistic presentation are translated for the consumption of a wider audience. While translation acts as an assistive tool, scholars have also highlighted the inherent politics of doing translation [17] and the colonial impulses associated with language [27]. Mainly, how is the translation done and who gets to translate? In the current scope of this paper, we engage with the question of how, and we take the example of বাংলা (Bangla) language.

বাংলা (Bangla) language is spoken by people across the world, and in particular in Bangladesh and parts of India, such as West Bengal, with an estimated population of 250 million বাংলা speakers [27]. It is one of the top 10 most spoken languages in the world. The native speaker of বাংলা language are called বাঙালি (the closest transliteration is Bangali, and mostly used is Bengali.) Now when written and translated in English, বাংলা (the language) and বাঙালি (the people who speak Bangla language) are abstracted into just one word – Bengali. This presents a key dilemma, someone who is native বাংলা speaker working with research space has two options, a) to translate it to Bengali, so that a wider audience could understand it, and the software won't "flag" it anymore, or b) to not translate. Based on different power dynamics, an individual has to make this decision, and similarly every non-native English speaker or writer, would come across 100s of such instances in their day-to-day life. What do they choose? We argue that instead of asking, what – ***we need to introspect our standards and norms, to ask ourselves, why do they have to choose?*** The choice is political.

The liberal feminist argument of letting individuals or communities choose for themselves touches upon often invisible, but critical nuance, i.e. the idea of choice. Choice feminism is not only a binary of choosing something over the other, but rather it 'depoliticizes' the issue, and it is important to understand how choice is being set by the dominant from outside and within the power structure [87]. Hence, a Decolonial Feminist lens would equip us with a better understanding of the issue at hand. A. Marie Ranjbar [87] in her work of examining online anti-Hijab campaign by US based site, 'My Stealthy Freedom' (MSF) argued –

"... the focus on 'freedom of choice' is also legible to Western liberal feminists who center the importance of choice in other social justice movements, such as reproductive justice. Alinejad insists that MSF advocates for freedom of choice; however, in practice, the site focuses almost exclusively on freedom from hijab. Rather than depicting choice, I argue that MSF reproduces Western liberal notions of freedom that, paradoxically, circumscribe women's ability to choose how they want to appear in public space." [87]

We build on this argument, to argue that, if by the 'normative standard' native English speakers and writers do not have to engage with translating their work, or with a choice to translate, why is choice imposed as a 'normative standard' on non-native speakers or writers. Moreover, if we are to get rid of choice, ***are we ready to embrace discomfort while reading un-translated text and also engage in a labor to understand and translate for ourselves?***

To translate or not to translate, should be left on the discretion of the writer, without a fear of punitive consequences either directly or indirectly, especially for early career scholars. Said that, we would also like to highlight that translation is important, and in no way we are discouraging that. It is the bridging tool for our community, which not only assists us in merely communicating, but also in building collective solidarities. Is this one of the fractures in our community? Yes, and we need to embrace it as we argued in the previous section. Hence, we argue that translation should be embedded in the context from where the scholarship emerges from, and not by the standard of one particular language or audience. The idea of having a global or universal language not only discriminates against a particular set of audience, but also perpetuates colonial tropes of language dominance and politics [69].

6 Conclusion

Scholarship in HCI have had different waves [13], and in recent years, even though informally, many scholars have argued about a new-wave in HCI called a 'social justice' wave. Emerging scholarship [27, 35, 62, 77, 101, 114] has shaped our sensibilities towards more inclusive praxis, which has led to more introspection amongst the myriad members of our community. In this work, as we build on such scholarship – we ask for a sincere introspection (e.g., how we approach everyday discourse and knowledge production) and retrospection (e.g., how have we historically ignored our friends, peers, and colleagues). It can be incredibly discomforting [101] to look inside ourselves and to look back on history and our history. This exercise itself is an act of protest. In writing this paper, we are building solidarity around this protest – we are hoping to engage in thoughtful protest in communion with 'others' [84]. As we critique and issue a challenge to push the boundaries of discursive performance in our community's linguistic praxis, we also aim to push the boundaries of what is "traditionally acceptable" in normative research. Unlike, a commonly read "Conclusion" section with details about study and arguments, we invite our reader to engage in a short poem titled Broken English (see Table 2), written by Nayyirah Waheed [115]–

As with this poem, our (the authors) English is broken. We mean this not to suggest we are unable to write and use English. But rather, there are the ways we see ourselves and feel about using a language that is not our own versus how others might see us performing and using that language. As an author group, for example, we often wonder how much more we could say or express if we were able to use our native tongue? Or perhaps a better way to articulate this, is we often wonder the different and unique ways we could imagine if we were allowed to imagine in languages and forms of expression that are not being thrust upon us. It was difficult to write and imagine a fictitious study where we aimed to bring our respective cultures and values together to re-imagine our praxis. Difficult, but why? Because English and performing English has colonized our imagination: our thoughts and ways of knowing are shaped by the "normative standard." It was difficult

my english is broken. on purpose. you have to try harder to understand me. breaking this language you so love is my pleasure. in your arrogance you presume that i want your skinny language. that my mouth is building a room for it in the back of my throat. it is not. — i have seven different words for love. you have only one. that makes a lot of sense.

Table 2: "Broken English" Poem by Nayyirah Waheed[115]

because the taxonomies and rules established by power-structures circumvented our authority, requiring us to draw on and invoke decolonial lenses and perspectives. We are not hoping or arguing to be "saved" or to find a "solution," nor are we asking to abandon English, rather we encourage our community to collectively interrogate our performative praxis (talks, presentation, social hours, writing, etc) and take into account its *translative* nature. In the end (which we hope envisions a new beginning), it is important to remember that – **we are not itching or opening a new wound for the community, but rather we are asking for acknowledgment of the existing wound** [21].

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