

RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Analysis of Onomatopoeia and Sound Symbolism in Punjabi Folklore and Children's Songs

Lubna Khalil ^a Iram Sagheer ^b Tahir Ghafoor Malik ^c

Abstract: This study explores the intersection of sound, language, and culture through the acoustic and linguistic examination of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism in Punjabi folklore and children's songs. These oral expressions of folk culture serve as more than mere entertainment; they function as pedagogic and mnemonic aids and instruments of cultural transmission. The research is rooted in cultural phonetics and sociolinguistics, investigating how pitch, rhythm, repetition, and prosodic enhancement enrich narrative phonology and support intergenerational transmission of values. Employing qualitative techniques, two folktales and children's songs are analysed for phonological motifs, symbolic connotations, and social significance. The results reveal the strategic use of sound-symbolic elements, particularly within plosives, nasals, intonation patterns, and repeated phrases, which convey emotion, clarify intent, and reinforce moral and social norms. The study highlights how stories told through sound enhance children's linguistic, symbolic, and emotional development. This research contributes to the underexplored domain of South Asian acoustic-linguistic traditions and offers valuable insights for sociolinguists, educationalists, and anthropologists. It posits that the phonetic beauty of Punjabi oral tales is purposefully shaped as a mnemonic device, enhancing emotional intelligence and sustaining cultural memory.

Keywords: Acoustic Analysis, Onomatopoeia, Sound Symbolism, Punjabi Folklore, Multimodal Discourse, Ethnolinguistic Identity

Introduction and Review of Literature

Acoustics in Punjabi folklore and children's songs are characterised as the physical property of sound, which is related to frequency, amplitude, duration, and other characteristics. In Punjabi, it can be considered that onomatopoeic words mimic real-life sounds. Folk stories and children's songs use onomatopoeia to make narratives livelier and emotionally resonant. They imitate natural and social sounds to enhance emotional engagement. Onomatopoeia is closely related to phonetics and semantics, e.g., words like “bang” and “pop” imitate the sounds they represent (Crystal, 2011).

Furthermore, combining acoustic analysis with onomatopoeia, researchers can also explore the sound's contribution in shaping meaning and emotional effects. It not only enhances the analysis of the song but also sheds light on cultural practices and language development. Language learning can also be affected due to onomatopoeia. A phonological study on the acquisition of onomatopoeia in Indonesian children's songs through a descriptive analysis was conducted by Laili and Putri (2021). Their qualitative investigation reveals that due to phonological similarities between English and Indonesian, it is easier for children to acquire onomatopoeic words. The study highlights the pedagogical value of music and onomatopoeia in SLA due to the effectiveness of auditory repetition at early ages, and how sound-symbolic words play their role in language learning (Laili & Putri, 2021). In comparison, acoustic tools and auditory analysis are implemented

^a PhD Scholar, Riphah Institute of Language & Literature, Riphah International University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

^b PhD Scholar, Riphah Institute of Language & Literature, Riphah International University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

^c Assistant Professor, Riphah Institute of Language & Literature, Riphah International University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

in this study to examine how sound symbolism and onomatopoeia are embedded with cultural values in Punjabi folklore.

Tales are often regarded as a primary and easy way to educate the newly born among the Punjabi multinational communities. Unlike in other communities, oral tales are preferred in Punjabi culture over written documents. According to Ammar et al. 2021, these folklores help to retain their identity and preserve their cultural heritage and moral values through different eras because they make them relatable and engaging. They also help in maintaining a sense of shared identity across generations. Sound and language carry the traces of the past, revealing how culture shifts and reshapes itself over time (Ammar et al., 2021). This study investigates the role of emotional expressions in Punjabi folklore and children's songs, which leads to emotional bonding and cultural persistence.

Within these broader oral traditions, folk songs play a central role in expressing collective values through rhetorical and acoustic patterns. The study investigates how Punjabi folk songs' rhetorical devices convey cultural identity. Through a textual analysis of "Jugni," "Chitta Kukkar," and "Paar Chanaa De," it draws attention to symbolic implications. It connects rhetorical strategies to Punjabi oral traditions and communal principles with the use of symbolic interactionism. Themes like spirituality, love, and resilience within Punjabi culture identity were found due to their purposive selection based on cultural relevance. The results show that these songs are efficient tools for maintaining shared identity and cultural memory (Attique et al., 2024). Phonetic and acoustic features of Punjabi folk performance were overlooked due to the study's focus on textual analysis in their research.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the use of expressive and sound symbolic language in Punjabi folk narratives and children's songs, focusing on spoken and sung performances.
2. To categorise types of sound symbolism, e.g., onomatopoeia, and examine their role in conveying emotion, representing natural phenomena, and transmitting cultural knowledge, traditional values, and structured narratives within Punjabi oral literature across generations.
3. To investigate the strategic use of sound words in Punjabi folklore and children's songs to aid in language acquisition, memory retention, and emotional connection among children.

Statement of the Problem

The precise role of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism in folk narratives and children's songs remains underexplored, regardless of the rich oral tradition incorporated in Punjabi culture. Punjabi folklore embedded in a century-old civilisation is lavished with sound imagery. According to researchers, these sound imageries or sayings play an important role in passing on language, culture, and moral values to the younger generation. Through this research, an attempt has been made to investigate the semantic features and acoustic properties like pitch, rhythm, and tone of these sound imageries. The investigation is an insight into the complex way in which emotions, mnemonics, and communicative effects are created through them. In this study, a lacuna in the existing literature is addressed. It provides a fresh perspective on how sound expressions help to shape cultural identity, create emotional bonds, and facilitate linguistic transmission across generations in Punjabi oral traditions. It conducts a well-explained acoustic and linguistic analysis.

Significance of the Study

This research explores how onomatopoeia and sound symbolism are used in Punjabi folklore with a strong focus on sound's deeper role in both language and culture. It reveals the meaningful ways in which auditory experiences are embedded not only in linguistic structure but also in linguistics. It also draws attention to how these sound elements are woven into narratives, not only to represent actions or objects, but to enhance storytelling, create mood, and connect with listeners on a sensory level. This investigation is guided by an

in-depth phonetic and acoustic examination of sound-related words that shows how these elements can ignite imagination and preserve cultural memory.

This research is interdisciplinary, drawing from linguistics, anthropology, ethnomusicology, and cognitive science to show how language, sound, and culture are deeply intertwined. It raises important questions about how cultural context shapes the way we assign meaning to sound and how oral traditions pass down these meanings across generations. Ultimately, this study reinforces the essential role that oral traditions play in preserving the cultural heritage and fostering a sense of identity within the Punjabi community. The study ensures that it is practical and analytical, with much more emphasis on it, and should be open for future research in a broader or comparative direction. The study's findings and insights will enhance the understanding of Punjabi oral literature and its role in the cultural identity, linguistic heritage, and social values of the Pakistani Punjab.

Additionally, the fact that oral literature is the focus of this study shows the need to preserve cultures. In today's time, when the world is increasingly becoming alike and culture is demeaned, the study brings home the point that heritage remains intact in the local communities. The need to document such culture to be passed on. The study's findings can also have implications for education, cultural policy, and community development. By highlighting the significance of oral literature in shaping cultural values and social norms, the study can inform educational programs and cultural initiatives that aim to promote cultural awareness, linguistic diversity, and community engagement.

Delimitations

This study is restricted to the Punjabi oral literature of Pakistan Punjab, with a limited study of the orally transmitted children's songs and folktales. The analysis has its focus area as Pakistani Punjab, thus does not consider the Punjabi variants in Indian Punjab or diasporic spheres despite possible similarities and dissimilarities. By excluding the regional variants, this study may create the impression that the Pakistani Punjab varieties are isolated in their attributes. Moreover, the study does not compare the linguistic trends with any other South Asian languages like Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto, etc. The data was selected for its cultural worth, linguistic richness, and acoustic-linguistic compatibility. Even though the texts do not fully represent the oral literary traditions of the Punjabi folk culture, they help one understand the oral literature of the Pakistani Punjab.

Literature Review

Onomatopoeia refers to the formation of words whose sound mimics or implies the natural sounds associated with objects or actions. For instance, word like "buzz," "splash," or "clang" represents a direct sound-meaning connection while being used in a context. Such a phenomenon shows the role of iconicity in language, where sound patterns convey sensory or emotional information (Nuckolls, 1999). Sound symbolism signifies the systematic connection between the phonetic qualities of speech sounds and specific meanings. It also studies particular sounds that are connected with particular ideas, emotions, shapes, or sizes across languages (Ohala et al., 1997). In acoustic analysis, physical properties of speech sounds are studied, including their frequency, amplitude, and temporal characteristics, by using tools like spectrograms and formant measurements. This analysis facilitates our understanding of how speech sounds are produced and perceived (Kent & Read, 2002). Punjabi folklore comprises the traditional oral narratives, songs, proverbs, and rituals of the Punjabi-speaking community. These indicate the cultural values, history, societal standards, and cumulative memory passed down over generations.

A study titled was conducted by Amin et al. (2024), in which they employed quantitative acoustic analysis through PRAAT software. In this investigation, they selected 50 elementary students through purposive sampling across Kasur, Punjab, to examine their pitch and intensity. Substantial deviations in pitch and intensity from the RP (Received Pronunciation) model were observed in their findings. Their findings also

reflected a significant obstacle in the adaptation of English fricative sounds from Punjabi. However, their study mainly focuses on English fricatives and young students while ignoring the main elements of storytelling. These elements, such as pitch, rhythm, and emotional expression that are central to Punjabi oral storytelling, are directly considered in the current research (Amin et al., 2024). In addition, cross-generational and cultural variables were overlooked by Amin et al. (2024) in Punjabi speech patterns. These areas are central to this investigation of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism within Punjabi folklores and children's songs.

Onomatopoeia was studied by Zein and Sitio (2024) through implementing Bredin's (1996) framework and descriptive analysis techniques (Miles & Huberman, 1994). They divided onomatopoeia into three distinctive types: Direct, Associative, and Exemplary, which made it easier for them to notice the frequent reoccurrence of Direct onomatopoeia. The scope of their study is limited to a single webcomic, while it efficiently explains the sensory and cognitive engagement provided by onomatopoeia words in a visual medium. As compared to this, the functions of onomatopoeia in Punjabi folklores and children's songs are explored in this research (Zein et al., 2024).

Malik and Khan (2023) investigated the coexistence of tone and phonation in Punjabi through experimental acoustic analysis. They found out that lower tones are associated with breathier phonation using tools such as PRAAT, ProsodyPro, and SPSS. Their study mainly focuses on the production of monosyllabic tones while making a notable contribution to Punjabi phonetic research. However, unlike their study, the current research emphasises naturalistic speech context, including folklore, and children's songs. It also captures a wide range of acoustic and emotional expression (Malik & Khan, 2023).

Kumar and Malik (2023) study nonverbal communication indicators, including kinesics, proxemics, oculosics, chronemics, and physical representation in Punjabi pop music videos. They emphasised how nonverbal elements magnified emotional storytelling through the utilisation of discourse analysis. Their study is essential for understanding multimodal components of Punjabi performance. The major focus of their study is on visual rather than acoustic modes of communication, meanwhile, this study investigates sound symbolism and onomatopoeia in oral traditions. (Kumar & Malik, 2023).

Sound symbolism as a theoretical phenomenon was explored through inferential and comparative analysis of English-language media by Popova and Magsumov (2021). Their study is limited to the textual and theoretical context. However, it introduces essential concepts such as aesthetic sound patterns and integrative connections between sounds and meanings. This research is based on these foundations (Popova & Magsumov, 2021). The search comprises empirical acoustic analysis, which mainly focuses on the neglected cultural heritage of Punjabi children's songs.

Punjabi folklore genres in Pakistan Perspectives are examined by Kazmi (2020). These genres mainly include Jugni, Dhola, and Mahiya, which highlight their emotional significance and deep cultural roots. Kazmi examined how simple, repetitive structures in these songs, frequently used sound patterns, and naturalistic imitations stimulate powerful sensory responses. Their study chiefly appeals to written and secondary sources. It has a shortage of fieldwork or contemporary performance analysis (Hasnain Kazmi, 2020). This difference is reconciled in this study by the implementation of acoustic analysis of contemporary and traditional performances to inspect the lasting influence of sound symbolism and onomatopoeia in Punjabi oral culture.

Theoretical Framework

This investigation is based on a multilayered theoretical framework, implementing different perspectives from several theories. It includes the perspectives of sound symbolism, acoustic phonetics, ethnolinguistic identity theory, narrative theory, and multimodal discourse theory, while maintaining their true essence.

Sound Symbolism Theory

According to the concept of sound symbolism, certain sounds inherently carry semantic and emotional meanings, which is the foundation of this study. Hinton, Nichols, and Ohala argue that across languages, phonemes are used to imitate or provoke real-world sounds and sensory experiences. These sound-symbolic expressions are particularly used to attract and engage children's attention, as the variation of sounds in representing an expression seems interesting to them. In this way, it becomes an effective way of conveying cultural meanings without requiring an elaborate explanation (Ohala et al., 1997).

Acoustic Phonetics Framework

This framework also engages the acoustic phonetics, particularly providing an insight related to the working of pitch, frequency, duration, and amplitude, which shape the linguistic perceptions. Kent and Read (2002) explain that features such as intonation, stress, and rhythm provide interpretation and memorability of speech without complicating the whole scenario. Rhythmic repetition and tonal variation play an important role as mnemonic devices and emotional triggers. It results in enhancing the engagement of listeners and providing help for intergenerational transmission (Kent & Read, 2002).

Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory

This study illustrates Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory (Giles & Johnson, 1987) to understand the sociocultural dimension of sound-based expression affecting the whole situation. Language use including dialect, pronunciation, and oral traditions sustains group identity according to this theory. Especially in minority or heritage communities, this theory provides the language use including various important aspects such as dialect and pronunciation etc. Community norms and emotional anthologies are assimilated in children through the repetition of sounds in songs and stories. They are conveyed to them repetitively through their caregivers or elders (Giles & Johnson, 1987).

Narrative Theory

Narrative theory provides an important dimension to this framework as explained in the storytelling structure of kisse and lok kahaniyaan, leaving a huge effect on the spectator's mind. A series of models of narrative structure, including elements such as orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution, is exposed by Labov (1972). These elements were marked by sound cues and vocal shifts in oral performance.

Multimodal Discourse Theory

This framework also includes the multimodal discourse theory to examine how meaning is constructed through a combination of semiotic modes such as sound, gesture, rhythm, intonation, and spatial interaction, apart from simple words. Communication is inherently multimodal, and oral storytelling, certainly for children, depends on vocal modulation, gesture, and repetition as tools for providing understanding related to the literal meaning in the given context. This whole process was explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) in their respective studies (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001).

This framework provides a comprehensive foundation for analysing the phonetic, symbolic, narrative, and cultural dimensions of sound-based expressions in Punjabi oral traditions by implementing these five theoretical studies. It facilitates a thorough understanding related to how sound operates as a carrier of collective memory, cultural identity, and intergenerational continuity, while also working as a linguistic device. Gaps in earlier research have also been addressed through this multidimensional approach, while explaining written textuality along with surveying the embodied, auditory, and performative richness of oral language.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis design, incorporating elements of phonological and narrative analysis to examine how sound symbolism and onomatopoeia function in Punjabi oral traditions.

Sampling Technique

The researchers have used the purposive sampling technique, especially criterion-based purposive sampling, in which the researchers have selected children's Punjabi songs and folklores. The criteria are set based on the following:

1. The use of sound symbolism and onomatopoeic expressions;
2. The use of repeated phrases, patterns, and imitative sounds; and
3. Vocal or musical performance tradition in the Punjabi-speaking culture.

This sampling technique is designed to ensure that the selection of especially those Punjabi songs and folklores that particularly contain acoustic and linguistic features, i.e., onomatopoeic expressions, sound symbolism, and repeated patterns.

Data Collection

For data collection, the researchers have selected two folklores and two children's songs from the YouTube platform. A total of four texts (two songs and two folklores) were selected to maintain analytical depth while ensuring thematic diversity. The limited number allows for a detailed phonetic, emotional, and symbolic analysis of each piece. The researchers especially looked for songs and folklore that illustrate rich use of onomatopoeic and echoic expressions such as "ku ku ru", "swish swish", and tedious rhythmic clauses such as "ballay ballay". Within stories, sound elements reflect emotions (fear, happiness, cunning) and intrinsic situation (animal calls, surrounding reactions), contributing to narrative construction and intended to assist the memory. The songs, frequently noticeable by pitch difference and repetitive expressions, catch children emotionally and support the ability to remember information over time. Expressions such as "ku ku ru" emulate real-life sounds, making them accessible and educational for young attendees. These characteristics provide insight into how acoustic tools hold up virtuous messaging, language learning, and ethnic transference, which line up with the research objectives of inspecting how such symbolic sounds carry emotions, tonic events, and promote intergenerational comprehension of Punjabi ethics and traditions. These verbal narratives provide the essential substance for examining pitch, tone, and rhythm in increasing arrangement and learning for linguistic acquisition.

The data is analysed using manual thematic analysis, focusing on identifying recurring sound patterns, emotional tones, and cultural symbols. Elements such as repetition, pitch variation, consonant/vowel use, and rhythm were coded and interpreted to understand their educational and emotional impact.

Ethical Consideration

The data was sourced from publicly available YouTube content. Proper citation is mentioned to maintain ethical integrity.

Data Analysis

Acoustic and Linguistic Analysis of the Folklore "*Ghadha te Lombrii di Dosti*"

A. Acoustic Analysis

1. Pitch

The story features dialogic variations with natural pitch modulation during exchanges, such as the ghadha's laughter ("hahaha") and lombrii's warnings. Emotional peaks are evident in high pitch during the ghadha's singing scene ("ochi ochi ganaa gaa riha sii"), conveying uncontrolled excitement and happiness, and rising pitch in Lombrii's pleas ("naa paraa enj naa kari"), showing fear and urgency. The pitch mimicry naturally reflects the emotional states of characters, including fear, excitement, and warning, adding depth to the narrative.

2. Rhythm

The story features a steady narrative rhythm, marked by repeated action sequences like "Roz roz kheta wal janday..." and "Sabziyaa khaanday, ted pranday, baary vich wapaa aanday..." However, rhythmic acceleration occurs when the ghadha and lombrii raid the fields, with short, quick narrative beats mirroring their sneaky actions. This rhythm is intentionally broken by the ghadha's singing, inserting a chaotic and disruptive moment that contrasts with the stealthy tone, adding dynamic variation to the narrative.

3. Repetition & Prosody

The narrative employs repetitive action phrasing, such as "Roz roz kheta wal janday" and "Sabziyaa daa khoob anand marday," to reinforce the cyclic nature of the characters' mischief and enhance oral memorability. Prosodic features like rising intonation in warnings, evident in Lombrii's dialogues, and falling intonation in scenes of regret, such as the ghadha's lament ("Kaash m apni dost dii changii gal mn lendhaa"), add emotional depth and authenticity to the story, engaging the audience more effectively.

4. Phonetic Patterns

The phonemic structure of narrative enhances its storytelling quality. A jolt of energy is generated by plosives like /k/, /g/, and /b/ sounds in words such as "kheta," "gaana," and "baary" and stresses key action points. Nasal-like /m/ and /n/ sounds in wordings like "mn buht khush hoyaa" and "paj naa" gently stir the soul-stirring moments. Liquids like /l/ and /r/ sounds in words such as "lombrii" and "gal" add to the narrative flow. Fricatives like /s/ and /ʃ/ sounds in emotional dialogue add texture to speech, particularly during moments of humour and tension.

B. Linguistic Analysis

1. Lexical Choices & Sound Symbolism

Sonic effects and meaningful sounds have been used to make the story more interesting and fuller of emotions. When people laugh, they make the sound hahahaha, conveying that the character is happy. The phrase chor farya gaya conveys a pressing need, like its moment of crisis. Sound conveys emotions. We feel calm when people speak softly, but when we hear ghadha's (donkeys') singing, we can feel more chaos and distress. In Punjabi folklore, the name lombri symbolises a character who is clever and smart, so by hearing the name lombri, one understands that it refers to a person who is tricky and smart.

2. Semantic & Cultural Symbolism

In the story, the gadha symbolises innocence, naivety, and stubbornness, while Lombrii conveys cleverness and someone who knows how to survive. This story is about moral lessons, including its importance to listen to others because they might know better, also warns against acting on excitement or emotion without thinking, and teaches the value of balance. The story teaches that we should be aware of how our actions impact others, and it warns against trusting someone blindly, especially if they have a history of trickery or mischief.

3. Narrative & Thematic Structure

The narrative initiates with the introduction of gadha and lombrii, the ghadha and lombrii raid fields, and enjoy the fruits. The ghadha's loud singing causes trouble, the farmers attack, and the lombrii escape. The ghadha regrets his actions. This story reveals several key themes including contrast between the ghadha's naivety and the lombrii's cleverness, overconfident behaviour results in unfavourable outcomes, the importance of respecting others' belongings and working together, warns against trusting blindly, especially in relationships built on mischief, lessons about listening, practicing self-control, and being accountable for actions.

5. Linguistic Devices

a. Colloquialism

The story uses informal, casual Punjabi language that shows natural speech patterns, such as “Roz roz kheta wal janday” and “mn buuht khush hoyaa.” These sentences mirror how people talk in real life and give the story a relatable tone. The flow of the conversation makes the dialogue feel spontaneous and lively, typical of Punjabi people.

b. Consonance

There is repetition of similar consonant sounds within the story, like the /n/ and /m/ in “mn buuht khush hoyaa” or the /r/ and /d/ in “barri vich wapaa aaday.” These create a nice rhythm that supports the storytelling tradition and helps those listeners stay engaged through sound harmony.

c. Alliteration

The repeated use of initial consonant sounds, especially /k/, /g/, and /b/, in expressions like “kheta wal,” “gaana gaa riha,” and “baary vich” adds a musical texture to the narrative. These patterns emphasise actions and emotions, enhancing both memorability and the dramatics of the story.

Acoustic and Linguistic Analysis of the Song “Dada Jee Dy Naal Roz Sair Kroo Gi”

A. Acoustic Analysis

1. Pitch

The song’s pitch has changed, which makes it interesting, for example, in parts like “Chiri di awaaz suno chii chii chii” and “Kukr di awaaz suno kuk-ruk-roo.” The high pitch is used in playful, high-energy segments to capture attention, such as the repeated “chii chii chii” and “kuk-ruk-roo,” (as observed in PRAAT software analysis), which imitate animal sounds and show a sense of playfulness.

2. Rhythm

The song has a continuous, steady, and bouncy rhythm due to the repetitive nature of the phrases. Having a rhythmic structure helps in memorability and enjoyment. The recurrence of lines like “Dada g dy naal roz sair kroo g:” the tempo is just right in keeping the song engaging, providing clarity of the sound patterns, and encouraging children to follow along.

3. Repetition & Prosody

There is repetition of key phrases such as “dada g dy naal roz sair kroo g” in the song, which helps make it more memorable and brings an emotional connection. The structure helps children anticipate and remember the words more easily, inspiring them to sing along as they can memorise them rapidly. Prosodic features are prominent in phrases like “Kukr di awaaz suno kuk-ruk-roo” and “Kaan di awaaz suno kain kain kain,” showcasing the playful side using animal sounds and adding elements of surprise.

4. Phonetic Patterns

The song uses different phonetic patterns, including /k/ and /t/, which show strong feelings and urgency in the song. Nasals, including /m/ and /n/, add to the softness and nurturing feel of the song; meanwhile, liquids like /l/ and /r/ add to the flowiness and rhythm.

B. Linguistic Analysis

1. Lexical Choices & Onomatopoeia

The use of sound symbolic language and onomatopoeia through sounds of animals that represent nature, such as “Chiri di awaaz suno chii chii chii” and “Tidday di awaz suno tien tien tien”, helps to create sensory

experiences, helping the children connect the sounds to the animal. This keeps children more engaged by using sound symbolism.

2. Semantic & Cultural Symbolism

The song promotes cultural connections to nature and family bonds, focusing on the relationship between the grandfather and children. The reference to "Dada g dy naal sair kroo g" closely shows the generational bond in Punjabi culture, emphasising the importance of cultural respect and emotional connection. The animal sounds help symbolise different parts of the environment, like nurture, alertness, and forewarning. It also teaches children to participate in both outdoor activities and family bonding.

3. Narrative & Thematic Structure

The song depicts an action-based structure, including animal sounds and using sensory-based scenes, building up to the idea of comfort by walking with the grandfather. It also includes respecting nature and family bonds, promoting playful behaviour, and teaching responsibility. The song mirrors traditional oral storytelling through a light-hearted song instead of direct instruction.

4. Linguistic Devices

a. Colloquialism

The song uses familiar and informal speech that is common in Punjabi children, such as "dada g dy naal" and "roz sair kroo g". These phrases make it easier to understand the language and are relatable, encouraging verbal engagement by the younger audience.

b. Consonance

The repetition of consonantal sounds is used to add texture to the hearing experience. Consonants like /k/, /r/, and /m/ sounds as heard in "kuk-ruk-roo" and "Kaa di awaaz suno kee kee kee" add to the emotional intensity and rhythm of the song.

c. Alliteration

The song has used repeated consonant sounds like "ch" in "Chiri dii awaaz suno chii chii chii" to make it catchy and memorable. This helps kids remember and repeat the lines more easily.

Acoustic and Linguistic Analysis of Folklore (Chalak Kukur)

A. Acoustic Analysis

Acoustic analysis is not only based on oral traditional children's folklore but also plays an important role in memory retention.

1. Pitch

The skilful use of pitch during storytelling emphasises emotions and dramatic changes. Especially in situations of excitement or urgency, such as when the fox calls out Oh Kukur Veery! or Hen announces the arrival of the shikari Kutty, and the high pitch is noticeably audible. Pitch analysis showed a change in pitch during the utterance of words such as /ku/, /ru/, and /veery/, which further enhances the emotional impact of the performance and the attention of the audience.

2. Rhythm

A consistent and lively rhythm is maintained throughout the story, formed by short, simple sentences and a lively style of narration. The consistency of this rhythm invites active participation from the audience, especially children, who may respond to the exciting moments of the story by imitating sounds or physical movements, such as a rooster crowing. This rhythmic pace promotes a predictable pattern, which makes the story more interesting and easier to understand.

3. Repetition and Prosody

Repetition is used as a prominent technique in narrative. The repeated repetition of phrases such as Kukur Veeri and Sneha Aa Gaya reinforces important emotional themes and aids in memorisation. Features of prosody, such as the rising pitch during dramatic scenes and the falling pitch at the end of the story, effectively regulate the audience's expectations and emotional rhythm.

4. Phonetic patterns

The action, tension and quick moments in a story can be expressed by using sounds like /k/, /p/, /b/. These sounds help to show cleverness and chasing. Some sounds involved in persuasion are called Nasal sounds, i.e. /m/, /n/. Furthermore, there are some sounds called onomatopoeia, i.e. Ku Ku Ru, that exhibit the sound of chalak kukur.

A. Linguistic analysis

It is very difficult to portray the Punjabi story with a brief explanation, and Chalak Kukur is one of them. According to linguistic analysis, it reflects the best Punjabi storytelling with emotions.

1. Lexical Choices and Onomatopoeia

The story mainly focuses on simple words that reflect emotions and some physical activities like running, hiding, cheating, etc. Sounds like Ku Ku Ru shows children's imaginations, while words like puki and phutkadi show hunger, which is an emotion that connects linguistic structure to sensory actions directly.

2. Semantic and Cultural Symbolism

The story "Chalak Kukur" shows so much cultural symbolism, for example, when we think about a fox, so first thought in our mind is cleverness; on the other hand, a hen shows innocence. The moral of this story focuses on not trusting strangers who simply pass a huge message to the young generation.

3. Narrative and Thematic Structure

The best story is the one that has a clear start, middle and end. The thematic structure in Chalak Kukur includes cleverness, truth versus lie and survival skills. Using direct dialogues and suspenseful vocabulary, the best story can be narrated.

4. Linguistic Devices

The story Chalak Kukur uses different linguistic devices such as Alliteration, Consonance, and Colloquialism. The details are as below:

Alliteration

Alliteration can be defined as the repetition of initial sounds or phrases. In Chalak Kukur, Alliteration is an important linguistic device. There are different alliterations in this story, Kbhi Kukur or Sneha San ke shows the repeated sounds of /k/, /s/ that reflect a harmonic and rhythmic story.

Consonance

Consonance can be defined as the repetition of consonant sounds at the end of sentences or words. For example, in Chalak Kukur, the sounds of /k/, /r/, and /n/ are repeated, which shows a harmonic pattern in the story. Similarly, the repetition of /k/ in Kabhi Kukur and /r/ in Ru Ru also shows a harmonic pattern. This type of consonance makes a better central theme of a story.

Colloquialism

Colloquialisms are some informal words that are used in daily life. For example, Tuci ki krray O or Hun Manu Kuj Karna Pena Ea is a simple, informal word in Punjabi folklore. This type of word and phrase, when used

in a story, can diminish the barriers between formal language and informal language and connect the audience with the story.

Acoustic and Linguistic Analysis of the Song "Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down"

A. Acoustic analysis

Acoustic analysis can be defined by studying the physical properties of sound. Acoustic analysis is based on traditional children's oral songs and plays an important role in emotional and memory retention.

1. Pitch

Pitch plays a very important role in showing emotions and connecting with the listeners. Like Ballay Ballay shows a high pitch and reflects excitement or joy. On the other hand, Vich Saday Down shows a lower pitch. Whereas a high pitch makes for more engagement with the song.

2. Rhythm

Rhythm can be explained as very simple and repetitive of the song for children to follow. I.e. Up and Down, Swish Swish shows physical movement and follows the consistent beat to make it easy and happy for children. Every stanza maintains a consistent beat, with short and simple sentences. Repetitive or rhythmic flow helps children to learn.

3. Repetition and prosody

Repetition is used as a prominent feature in this song. Both Memory and emotional impact are increased in this song. Such words as up and down, Ballay Ballay, and Swish Swish words are used many times. This repetition improves and strengthens children's minds. Prosody maintains the way of speaking or singing and the rhythmic flow of the song. In this song, both repetition and prosody make the joy, fun and emotional.

4. Phonetic patterns

Phonetic patterns are clear in this song. Like /b/, /s/ which shows that /b/ is joy and fun or /s/ shows slow, smooth. These repeated words create musical patterns and appeal to children. Phonetic patterns support sound symbolism, where sound imitates the feeling and action.

B. Linguistic Analysis

It is very difficult to portray a Punjabi song with a brief explanation, and Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down is one of them. According to linguistic analysis, it reflects the best Punjabi song with emotions and excitement.

1. Lexical Choices and Onomatopoeia

Lexical choices are too simple and easy for children in this song. Onomatopoeia expressions are used like Swish Swish, or Ballay Ballay. Now, Swish Swish is an onomatopoeia expression which represents the wiper sound, and Ballay Ballay shows joy or excitement. All these words create a direct link between sound and action. Therefore, these words are understandable and engaging for children.

2. Semantic and Cultural Symbolism

Words of Punjabi culture have been used in this song. Like Papa Di Gaddi, not only a show car but also represents joy or excitement, means showing symbols of emotional or cultural identity. It shows family unity and love. Ballay Ballay is a symbol of joy in the Punjabi culture. Cultural values and traditions are transferred to children through Punjabi songs.

3. Narrative and Thematic Structure

The narrative structure of the song is repetitive. Every stanza explains a peak of a daily life scene, such as car music, wipers, or ice cream khana, etc. Thematic structure based on family songs and childhood joy. Every action is like a story that can be easily understood and remembered by the young generation.

4. Linguistic Devices

The song of Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down uses different linguistic devices like Alliteration, Consonance, and Colloquialism. The details are as below.

Alliteration

Repetition of initial consonant sounds like /p/, /b/ and /s/. These repetition sounds like rising musicality. Then it is easy to understand and memorable for children. And they easily to pronounce repetition words like Meray Papa di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down and Ballay Ballay etc.

Consonance

Repetition of consonant sounds at the end of words. For example, in a song, the sound of /p/, /g/ maintains the rhythm and makes the smooth patterns flow. This repetition is rising harmony and rhythm. The use of consonance does reinforce movement and action. Like wipe ki sound swish.

Colloquialism

The language of this song is informal, just like daily Punjabi conversation. Expressions, for instance, Main Laina Baray Majay and Vich Saday Town shown colloquialism and reflect cultural or linguistics to children. These expressions help the child with language development.

Table 1

Types of Onomatopoeic Words& Sound Symbolism in Dada Jee Dy Naal Roz Sair Kroo Gi

Type	Example	Function / Symbolism
Animal Sound Onomatopoeia	“chii chii chii”	Mimics birds chirping, brings joy, playfulness, nature, and morning sounds.
	“kuk-ruk-roo”	The rooster crowing signals dawn, the start of routine, and a playful connection to farm life.
Human Sound Onomatopoeia	“hasna”, “gana gaa”	Laughter and singing both represent joyful and innocent bonding moments with Dada.
Expressive/Situational	“achii baat” / “roz sair”	Repeated phrases enforce values of daily walks, intergenerational bonding between the grandchildren and Dada.
Phonetic Sound Symbolism	/d/, /r/, /s/ (“Dada”, “roz”, “sair”)	Plosives and fricatives add clarity, rhythm, and familiarity to a repeated phrase.
	/k/, /g/ (“khoo”, “gaan”)	Harsh sounds mimic the nature sounds and activity, used during play and learning time.
Symbolic Lexical Names	“Dada”	Symbols of wisdom and love are used as an emotional figure in the song.
Repetitive Sound Patterns	“Dada g dy naal roz sair kroo gi”	Anchors the song’s rhythm, repetition helps memory and emotional security.
	“chii chii chii”, “kuk-ruk-roo”	Mimics real-world sounds to help imagination and learning.
Alliterative Phrases	“roz sair”, “saanu pyaar”	Musical repetition of consonants helps maintain the rhythm and charm in speech.

Colloquial Phrases with Sound	“Dada g di gal”	Informal Punjabi makes the song feel warm and familiar, making it more accessible to children.
-------------------------------	-----------------	--

Table 2

Types of Onomatopoeic Words & Sound Symbolism in Ghadha te Lombrii di Dosti

Type	Example	Function / Symbolism
Animal Onomatopoeia	Sound “hahaha”	Mimics laughter, which signals the joyful and carefree personality of the ghadha.
	“ganaa gaa” (high-pitched)	Represents a donkey’s singing, humorous chaos, and lack of self-awareness.
Expressive/Situational	“chor farya gaya”	Urgent call, expresses panic, alarm, and crisis.
Phonetic Symbolism	Sound /k/, /g/, /b/ (e.g., “kheta”, “gaana”, “baary”)	Plosives emphasise the physical action and dramatic tension in the story.
	/m/, /n/ (“mn buuht khush hoyaa”)	Nasals convey softness, emotional expression, and inner reflection.
	/l/, /r/ (“lombrii”, “gal”)	Liquids enhance story fluidity and ease of listening in the oral tradition.
	/s/, /ʃ/ (e.g., “khas khas”, “ghass”)	Fricatives add texture to speech, used in tense or comedic moments.
Symbolic Lexical Names	“Lombrii”	Symbol of cleverness and survival instincts in Punjabi folklore.
	“Ghadha”	Symbol of innocence, emotional spontaneity, and naive stubbornness.
Repetitive Sound Patterns	“Roz roz kheta wal jandy”	Emphasises repetition in behaviour and enforces storytelling rhythm.
	“sabziyaa daa khoob anand mardyy”	Reinforces enjoyment and childlike indulgence, verbal memorability.
Alliterative Phrases	“kheta wal”, “gaana gaa”, “par pait bojung”	Adds musicality and emphasises repetitive actions.
Colloquial Phrases with Sound	“mn buuht khush hoyaa”	Everyday expressions add realism, emotional connection, and phonetic rhythm.

Table 3

Types of Onomatopoeic Words& Sound Symbolism in Chalak Kukur & Mery Papa de Gaddi Chaly Up &Down

Type	Example	Source Text	Function/symbolism
Animal sounds and onomatopoeia	“Ku Ku Ru”	Chalak Kukur	Mimics a rooster crowing sound; connect children with animals and create humour and identity in the story.
Expressive/situational	“Puki / Phutkdi”	Chalak Kukur	Represent hunger, restlessness; adds emotional realism and body-related sound effects.
	“Swish Swish”	Meray Pap Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	The sound represents wiper motion and creates a fun, relatable soundscape of daily car rides.
Phonetic sound symbolism	/k/, /b/, /g/	Chalak Kukur, Meray Pap Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Plosive sounds like Kukur, Ballay, and Gaddi represent excitement.
	/m/, /n/,/s/	Chalak Kukur, Meray Pap Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Nasal sounds show that softness, smoothness and familiarity (Mn Buuht Khush Hoya)

	/p/, /d/, /ʃ/	Chalak Kukur, Meray Pap Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Strong, pouncy sounds emphasise excitement and emotional intensity. Fricatives that convey tension or humour.
Symbolic Lexical Names	"Hen / Fox"	Chalak Kukur	Symbolises cunning and intelligence in Punjabi folklore.
Repetitive sound patterns	"Up and Down"	Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Builds rhythm, and fun reinforces the oral storytelling tradition.
	"Vich Saday Down"	Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Repetition creates familiarity and bonding.
	"Kukur Veery"/ "Sneha Aa Gaya"	Chalak Kukur	Repetition of Sounds reinforces important emotional themes and aids in memorisation.
Alliteration phrases	"Ballay Ballay / Papa di Gaddi"	Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Alliteration adds musicality, joy and memory aid.
	"Kabhu Kukur / Sneha San Ke"	Chalak Kukur	Alliteration adds rhythm and playfulness to storytelling.
Colloquial Phrases with Sound	"Main Lainda Baray Majay"	Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Every day, joy expressed with rhythm enhances relatability.
	"Vich Saday Down"	Meray Papa Di Gaddi Chaly Up and Down	Colloquial reflects cultural or linguistic aspects to children and helps the child with language development.

Discussion

The main focus of this study is how Punjabi oral traditions, specifically Punjabi folklore and children’s songs, use sound and language to protect the cultural heritage and assist language learning. The sounds used in the Punjabi language are not random or accidental; instead, they are chosen deliberately and arranged to convey a specific meaning. They convey emotions and pass educational messages. In Punjabi oral traditions, the sounds of animals like “Kukr ruk roo” (rooster call) or “Chii chii chii” (bird chirping) are not merely sounds but signal important moments, emotions, or changes in the story. For example, in the story of Chalak Kukur, the rising tones show fear and convey the emotional context to the children. Repetition, rhythm, and sound patterns are key in oral traditions because they help make stories easy to remember and support language learning. The repetition of sounds and rhythm in the phrase “Dada G Dy Naal Roz Sair Kroo G” makes it easier for kids to remember and learn grammar.

This study reveals that these rhythmic patterns are simple and very balanced, which makes it easier for children to remember them by singing, clapping, and repeating the sounds. This interaction strengthens the bond between generations and upholds the idea that social interaction helps learning, where knowledge is shared and enhanced. This study focuses on how sounds like hard consonants (/k/, /b/, /t/), soft sounds (/s/, /ʃ/), nasal sounds (/m/, /n/), and fluid sounds (/l/, /r/) are used in certain ways that communicate emotions in the story, for example hard consonants are used in exciting scenes like battles while softer sounds (nasal) in more and thoughtful moments where someone is apologizing. These sequences show how the selection of sounds helps in communicating the right emotion in the story.

Conclusion

According to this study, onomatopoeia and sound symbolism constitute vital elements of children’s songs and Punjabi folklore. These unusual word forms mimic actual noises, like dhub-dhub for a heartbeat or chak-chak for a clicking or clattering sound. In addition to being fun to produce, these noises help tell stories,

convey feelings, and help kids comprehend and appreciate the songs and stories. Music and storytelling are vital in Punjabi culture, especially for young children. These songs' tones help them with speaking, listening intently, and remembering information. Children are more inclined to relate words to what they see and hear in the actual world when the sounds they make match their meanings. Their mental and emotional growth is fostered by this. The manner in which these songs are performed—using tone, rhythm, pitch, and repetition—also affects the emotions they evoke. While slower and softer sounds are usual in lullabies, which give children a sense of security and serenity, fast and high-pitched vibrations are often used in playful songs to convey a sense of joy and fun. Our study concludes that the melodies in traditional songs are purposeful, useful, and firmly embedded in our culture; they are neither arbitrary nor frivolous.

References

- Adeel Mehmood. (2023, February 18). *Chalak kukar* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ngexiwwJrA>
- Amin, M., Davis, C. J., Amjad, A. I., Parveen, S., & Naqvi, S. A. A. (2024). Identifying Acoustic Variability Patterns in Spoken English of Fricative Consonants Among Pakistani Native Punjabi Speakers. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(3), 1036-1046. <https://poverty.com.pk/index.php/Journal/article/view/789>
- Ammar, A., Tahir, T. B., & Channa, A. R. (2021). Identity construction through cultural heritage of folklore. *Progressive Research Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(1), 36-48. <https://nja.pastic.gov.pk/PRJAH/index.php/PRJAH/article/view/144>
- Attique, F., Abbas, S., & Saleem, S. M. S. (2024). Rhetorical and Metaphorical Devices in Punjabi Folk Songs: A Cultural and Linguistic Analysis. *Journal of Social & Organizational Matters*, 3(4), 307-330. <https://doi.org/10.56976/jsom.v3i4.144>
- Attique, F., Abbas, S., & Saleem, S. M. S. (2024). Rhetorical and metaphorical devices in Punjabi folk songs: A cultural and linguistic analysis. *Journal of Social & Organizational Matters*, 3(4), 307-330. <https://doi.org/10.56976/jsom.v3i4.144>
- Crystal, D. (2011). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Giles, H., & Johnson, P. (1987). Ethnolinguistic identity theory: a social psychological approach to language maintenance. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 1987(68), 69-100. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1987.68.69>
- Hasnain Kazmi, S. S. (2020). Jugni, dhola and mahiya: Comparing three genres of punjabi folklore. *Pakistan Perspectives*, 25(2). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3793499
- Kent, R. D., & Read, C. (2002). *The acoustic analysis of speech: singular*. Thompson Learning.
- Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication. (No Title).
- Kumar, M., & Malik, P. S. (2023). Non verbal communication in Punjabi Pop Music Videos: A study of selected award winning songs. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.626>
- Laili, N. M. R., & Putri, F. (2021). Phonological Study of Onomatopoeia in Children's Song. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 6(1), 211-224. <https://dx.doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v6i1.519>
- Lally Records. (2023, July 3). *Mere papa di gaddi* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVlxZTFMD6Q>
- Li, Y., & Jiang, X. (2024). Sound symbolic associations: evidence from visual, tactile, and interpersonal iconic perception of Mandarin rimes. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03502-7>
- Mahi Kids. (2023, June 5). *Ghadha te lombrii di dosti* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsliG6qH7yk>
- Malik, T. G., & Khan, A. Q. (2023). Co-existence of Tone and Phonation in Punjabi: An Acoustic Study. *Critical Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(2), 38-55. <https://journals.gctownship.edu.pk/index.php/crssh/article/view/84>
- Nuckolls, J. B. (1999). The case for sound symbolism. *Annual review of anthropology*, 28(1), 225-252. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.28.1.225>
- Ohala, J. J., Hinton, L., & Nichols, J. (1997). Sound symbolism. Proc. 4th Seoul International Conference on Linguistics [SICOL].
- Popova, S. N., & Magsumov, A. R. (2021). Sound symbolism as a phonetic phenomenon and a means of artistic expression. *Вопросы прикладной лингвистики*, (41), 8-26. <https://doi.org/10.25076/vpl.41.01>

- VJ Production. (2022, December 25). *Dada Jee dy naal roz sair kroo gi* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4mBAINJIEk>
- Zein, T. T., Sitio, I. T., & Maharani, P. (2024). Exploring a Figure of Speech: The Realisation of Onomatopoeia in "Aquaman: Through Fire and Water" Webcomic. *Linguistik Terjemahan Sastra (LINGTERSA)*, 5(1), 58-68. <https://doi.org/10.32734/lingtersa.v5i1.15791>