International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar: A Semantic Language Study

V. Rajesham

Department of English, Vidya Vikas College, Samudrapur, dist Wardha, MS 442305
Email: drvrajeshem@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Vijay Tendulkar, one of modern India's most provocative playwrights, transforms language itself into theatre's sharpest weapon. Far from serving as mere dialogue, words in his plays construct, contest, and dismantle power. Drawing on tools from lexical semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, the study examines a representative corpus—*Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Gidhade (The Vultures)*, *Kamala*, and *Kanyadaan*. Particular attention is paid to lexical choice, dysphemism and euphemism, speech acts, implicature, metaphor, and multilingual code-switching.

The findings show how Tendulkar's characters weaponize naming, politeness, irony, and insinuation to negotiate caste, gender, sexuality, and state authority. Semantic choices do not merely mirror existing hierarchies; they actively reproduce, naturalize, and at times rupture them on stage. Tendulkar's dramaturgy thus demonstrates that meaning-making is itself a political act, where every word can wound, seduce, or subvert.

By combining linguistic analysis with theatrical interpretation, this paper complements socio-political readings of Tendulkar and proposes a replicable framework for studying Indian drama across languages. It argues that a semantic-pragmatic lens reveals not just what Tendulkar's plays *say*, but how they *do things*—to characters, audiences, and culture alike.

Keywords: Vijay Tendulkar; semantics; pragmatics; speech acts; metaphor; translation; Marathi theatre etc.

1. Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar (1928–2008) stands as a pivotal figure in modern Indian theatre, both for the thematic boldness of his subject matter and for his subtle yet powerful manipulation of language. His dramatic oeuvre—ranging from *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) and *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1967) to *Sakharam Binder* (1972) and *Kamala* (1981)—demonstrates how theatre can interrogate the social, political, and cultural structures of its time. What distinguish Tendulkar are not only the controversies provoked by his subjects but also his capacity to expose the everyday workings of power through seemingly ordinary conversation. His characters rarely declaim in grand rhetorical flourishes; instead, they speak in the idioms of daily life. Yet, embedded in those idioms are the invisible scripts of cruelty, domination, and complicity.

In this sense, Tendulkar's plays are a linguistic laboratory where social hierarchies are enacted and contested through words. Ordinary speech becomes an instrument through which injustice is normalized and violence is legitimized, often without the speakers' conscious awareness. For instance, in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, the performative utterances of a mock trial gradually blur the line between game and reality, revealing how language itself can criminalize and marginalize. Similarly, in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, ritualized speech fused with folk rhythms illustrates how institutions codify authority through verbal performance. These examples suggest that a close semantic study—focusing on the meanings encoded in word choice, metaphor, and implied meaning—offers fresh insight into Tendulkar's dramaturgy.

While much existing criticism of Tendulkar has concentrated on his politics of gender, class, and power, fewer studies have systematically examined the linguistic textures through which those politics are articulated. A semantic perspective enables us to move beyond treating "language" as dialogue alone, instead interrogating how meaning is generated at multiple levels:

- **Lexical selection**: How Tendulkar's choice of words reflects social positioning and power relations.

- **Speech acts**: How commands, promises, accusations, and silences perform social actions within the plays.

- **Implicature**: How unstated assumptions, hints, or silences shape the audience's understanding.

- **Metaphorical framing**: How figurative language encodes cultural anxieties, moral judgments, and social hierarchies.

This paper therefore offers a semantic reading of Tendulkar's major plays to illuminate how his dramaturgy depends on micro-choices of language that generate macro-effects in character construction, conflict development, and thematic revelation. By analyzing his plays through this lens, the study aims

to demonstrate that Tendulkar's theatre is not only political in subject matter but also deeply political in its very use of words—the smallest linguistic details staging the largest cultural critiques.

2. Literature Review

Scholarship on Vijay Tendulkar has long recognized him as one of the most provocative dramatists in post-independence India. Earlier studies of his work largely concentrated on thematic concerns—his critique of patriarchy, caste oppression, and state-sanctioned violence—without probing deeply into the linguistic textures that carried these critiques (Deshmukh, 2019). While this body of work situated Tendulkar within the broader landscape of Indian political theatre, it often left unexamined the mechanisms by which language itself becomes a stage for the enactment of power.

The field of linguistic criticism offers frameworks that allow us to address this gap. Seminal contributions by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) foregrounded the idea that utterances are not merely descriptive but performative—that is, speech acts such as promising, accusing, or condemning are themselves forms of social action. Grice's (1975) theory of implicature further illuminated how meaning often lies beyond the literal, hinging on shared assumptions and conversational maxims. These foundational perspectives make it possible to treat Tendulkar's dramatic dialogue not simply as text but as a sequence of social actions that structure conflict and power relations on stage.

The turn to metaphor theory with Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) shifted critical attention toward the conceptual structures underlying language. Their insight that metaphors shape thought and action provides a valuable lens for analyzing Tendulkar's use of figurative language, where metaphors of ownership, pollution, and violence naturalize social hierarchies. Similarly, politeness theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) helps explain how Tendulkar's characters navigate face-threatening acts—accusations, insults, or refusals—often using irony, euphemism, or strategic silence to maintain or subvert social order.

From the late twentieth century onward, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Blommaert, 2005) reframed language as a social practice that both reflects and reproduces power relations. These approaches are particularly relevant to Tendulkar, whose plays repeatedly dramatize the entanglement of everyday speech with systemic structures of oppression. For instance, courtroom dialogues in *Silence! The Court is in Session* illustrate how institutional authority is reproduced through ritualized discourse, while the folk idioms of *Ghashiram Kotwal* reveal how collective identities are linguistically constituted.

Another important strand of scholarship is translation studies. As Tendulkar's plays were written in Marathi but widely circulated in English and other Indian languages, the question of how his linguistic subtleties travel across contexts has drawn scholarly attention. Venuti's (2012) concepts of domestication and foreignization, along with Balakrishnan's (2018) work on Indian theatre in translation, underscore the challenges of preserving the semantic force of Tendulkar's dialogue when it crosses linguistic boundaries. Translation, in this sense, becomes not just a medium of accessibility but also a site where semantic and cultural meanings are negotiated.

Contemporary critics have begun applying these linguistic and discourse-analytic frameworks directly to Tendulkar. Kabir (2016) examines how his language dramatizes gendered violence, showing how everyday idioms normalize abuse. Patel (2021) extends this line of inquiry to caste, highlighting how Tendulkar's characters deploy subtle linguistic markers of hierarchy that reinforce social divisions. Most recently, Biswas (2024) situates Tendulkar within broader debates on institutional corruption, demonstrating how bureaucratic and political jargon in his plays serves as a mask for exploitation.

Taken together, these studies suggest that a semantic approach to Tendulkar is not only possible but necessary. By connecting the insights of pragmatics, metaphor theory, politeness studies, and critical discourse analysis to the dramaturgy of Tendulkar, one can uncover how his plays operate at the micro-level of word choice and conversational strategy to stage the macro-politics of Indian society.

3. Theoretical Framework

The semantic analysis of Vijay Tendulkar's plays in this study is grounded in a range of linguistic and discourse-analytic theories that illuminate the complex interplay between language, power, and meaning in drama. Each framework provides distinct analytical tools, but together they create an interdisciplinary lens through which Tendulkar's dramaturgy can be understood not only as narrative but also as a network of linguistic performances.

To begin with, **Speech Act Theory** as developed by Austin (1962) and expanded by Searle (1969) offers a foundation for understanding the performative dimension of dialogue. In Tendulkar's plays, utterances are rarely neutral; they function as actions that establish authority, deliver judgment, or enact violence. Courtroom interactions in *Silence! The Court is in Session* exemplify this phenomenon: when characters "sentence" or "accuse," the speech does not merely describe reality but actively reshapes it by branding individuals guilty or deviant. Similarly, institutional discourse in *Ghashiram Kotwal* demonstrates how official pronouncements can reinforce hierarchy and control. By applying speech act theory, the study highlights how Tendulkar constructs theatre as a space where language itself functions as law, punishment, or resistance.

Complementing this is **Gricean Pragmatics** (Grice, 1975), which provides tools to analyze implicature, irony, and the violation of conversational maxims. Tendulkar often employs indirect communication, where the true meaning of an utterance lies in what is implied rather than what is explicitly stated. For instance, silences, hesitations, and evasions in plays such as *Kamala* are loaded with meaning, exposing complicity or discomfort without overt declaration. The deliberate flouting of maxims of quantity, relevance, or manner creates irony and tension, making audiences acutely aware of what remains unsaid. Pragmatic analysis thus helps reveal the subterranean politics of Tendulkar's language.

Politeness Theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) further enriches the framework by addressing face-saving and face-threatening strategies. Tendulkar's characters often navigate volatile power relations—between men and women, upper and lower castes, authority figures and subordinates—through linguistic politeness, irony, or aggression. For example, the veneer of civility in *Sakharam Binder* is shattered by sudden verbal brutality, reflecting shifts in dominance and vulnerability. Examining politeness strategies sheds light on how characters negotiate power, control, and survival within restrictive social frameworks.

Another critical dimension comes from **Conceptual Metaphor Theory** (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and **Frame Semantics** (Fillmore, 1982). Tendulkar's plays frequently employ metaphors of ownership, pollution, purity, and power, which encode cultural hierarchies and moral judgments. For example, metaphors of women as property or as "polluted" resonate deeply within patriarchal and casteist frameworks. Frame semantics allows us to analyze how certain lexical choices evoke entire cultural scripts or frames—for instance, how the courtroom frame in *Silence!* activates associations of authority, judgment, and public spectacle. This perspective reveals how Tendulkar's language does more than communicate—it shapes how audiences conceptualize reality.

The broader social implications of language are best understood through **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**, pioneered by Fairclough (1989) and further developed by Wodak and Krzyżanowski (2019). CDA situates Tendulkar's dramaturgy within the structures of power that govern everyday discourse. It interrogates how caste, gender, and institutional authority are reproduced through routine speech practices. In Tendulkar's theatre, discourse becomes a vehicle for oppression, but also for resistance, as characters sometimes subvert dominant codes through parody, silence, or counter-speech. CDA thus underscores the political stakes of Tendulkar's linguistic choices.

Finally, the question of **Translation Studies** is indispensable, since Tendulkar wrote primarily in Marathi but his plays circulate in English and other Indian languages. Early theories of equivalence (Nida, 1964) emphasized fidelity of meaning, while Venuti (1995, 2012) introduced the politics of domestication and foreignization, drawing attention to the invisibility of translation in cultural transmission. Balakrishnan (2018) extends these insights to Indian theatre, highlighting how translation mediates between local cultural specificity and global accessibility. Examining Tendulkar's work through this lens reveals how semantic nuances—tone, idioms, metaphors—shift across languages, potentially reshaping the reception of his plays.

Together, these theoretical approaches provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing Tendulkar's language. Speech act theory explains how utterances act; pragmatics uncovers implied meanings; politeness theory illuminates strategies of face management; metaphor theory and frame semantics expose deeper cultural structures; CDA situates language within power dynamics; and translation studies account for cross-linguistic transformations. This multi-layered framework ensures that Tendulkar's plays are studied not merely as texts but as living discourses where every word carries political, social, and cultural weight.

4. Corpus and Methodology

This study draws upon a selected corpus of six of Vijay Tendulkar's most influential plays: *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* (*Silence! The Court is in Session*), *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Gidhade* (*The Vultures*), *Kamala*, and *Kanyadaan*. These texts were chosen not only for their canonical status within modern Indian theatre but also because, taken together, they represent the stylistic breadth and thematic diversity of Tendulkar's dramaturgy. From the mock-trial setting of *Shantata!* to the historical allegory of *Ghashiram Kotwal* and the domestic and political entanglements of *Kamala* and *Kanyadaan*, these plays collectively illustrate how Tendulkar uses language to interrogate social institutions, interpersonal relationships, and cultural hierarchies.

The analysis employs a **multi-layered semantic and pragmatic methodology**, drawing upon frameworks outlined earlier in the theoretical section. The first level of inquiry concerns **lexical choices and registers**, with particular attention to dysphemism and euphemism. Tendulkar's characters often oscillate between crude, violent language and restrained, polite formulations. This contrast is not incidental; it signals shifts in power, reveals social attitudes toward gender and caste, and dramatizes the tension between public decorum and private aggression.

A second area of focus is **address forms and social indexicality**. Terms of address—whether honorifics, kinship terms, or colloquial insults—carry significant weight in Tendulkar's theatre. They encode social positioning, reflect caste and class hierarchies, and provide insight into relational dynamics. For example, in *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the use of deferential titles reinforces institutional authority, while in *Sakharam Binder*, shifts in address terms expose the fragility of male dominance when challenged by women.

The third dimension involves **speech act analysis**, particularly the ways in which accusations, confessions, and threats operate in the plays. Tendulkar's characters frequently use language as a weapon, and speech acts become pivotal turning points in dramatic conflict. An accusation in *Shantata!* transforms a playful mock-trial into a serious indictment, while threats in *The Vultures* embody the raw cruelty of family disputes driven by greed. Such speech acts illustrate how utterances themselves function as performative acts with profound consequences.

Closely tied to this is the study of **pragmatic inferences**, including implicature and presupposition. Tendulkar often leaves meaning unstated, relying on audiences to infer through context, tone, and silence. For instance, in *Kamala*, much of the critique of gender commodification lies in what is implied rather than what is directly said. Presuppositions embedded in casual dialogue reveal deeply ingrained assumptions about women, caste, and morality. Pragmatic analysis thus uncovers layers of meaning that would be missed by surface-level interpretation.

The fifth methodological strand involves identifying **metaphorical frames**. Tendulkar frequently employs metaphorical structures drawn from markets, rituals, and animal imagery. Women are compared to commodities, political authority is cast in ritualistic terms, and human relationships are animalized

to highlight cruelty or predation, as in *The Vultures*. These metaphorical frames are not decorative but structural—they organize how audiences conceptualize conflict and hierarchy within the plays.

A further line of inquiry considers **code-switching**, particularly between Marathi, Hindi, and English. Tendulkar strategically uses multilingualism to mark class differences, signal modernity versus tradition, and dramatize cultural hybridity. English often indexes authority, education, or distance, while Marathi and Hindi resonate with regional identity and social intimacy. The interplay of these languages within dialogue demonstrates how linguistic choice itself becomes a form of social commentary.

Finally, the methodology incorporates an analysis of **translation shifts**, since Tendulkar's plays have been widely translated into English and other Indian languages. The study examines how shifts in translation—such as the loss of politeness distinctions, cultural idioms, or tonal nuances—affect the semantic force of the plays. Nida's (1964) notion of equivalence and Venuti's (1995, 2012) ideas of domestication and foreignization are used to assess whether the political and cultural weight of Tendulkar's language survives across linguistic boundaries. In particular, the translation of insults, ritualistic terms, and culturally specific metaphors often reveals significant transformations in meaning.

In sum, the methodology adopts an integrated approach that combines lexical, pragmatic, metaphorical, and sociolinguistic analysis. By examining Tendulkar's plays through these overlapping lenses, the study aims to capture the subtle but powerful ways in which language functions as both an artistic device and a social force.

5. Analysis of Selected Plays

1. *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* (*Silence! The Court is in Session*)

Tendulkar's *Shantata!* is perhaps his most linguistically charged play, dramatizing the violence of language through a mock trial that spirals into psychological assault. From a semantic standpoint, the play foregrounds the performative power of speech acts. Accusations against Miss Benare, though initially part of a theatrical exercise, acquire illocutionary force in Austin's (1962) sense: they do not simply describe her alleged immorality but actively constitute her guilt in the eyes of others. Language here functions as social action—branding, shaming, and isolating.

Gricean pragmatics (Grice, 1975) also illuminates the texture of dialogue. Characters often flout maxims of relevance and quantity to insinuate rather than declare. For instance, Benare's personal life is targeted through sly implications rather than outright statements, forcing audiences to infer the depth of hostility. Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) is relevant as well, since the mock-trial setting creates a paradoxical mixture of civility and cruelty: even as the characters couch their accusations in courtroom decorum, they perform face-threatening acts that strip Benare of dignity. Translation studies further complicate this play, as the Marathi dialogue carries a cultural immediacy that English versions sometimes flatten, particularly in courtroom jargon and idiomatic exchanges.

2. *Sakharam Binder*

In *Sakharam Binder*, lexical semantics plays a central role in exposing patriarchal exploitation. Sakharam reduces relationships with women to contractual exchanges, referring to their dismissal in crude dysphemisms such as "throwing out." These blunt lexical choices dehumanize women, stripping intimacy from companionship and rendering it disposable. His language illustrates what Fairclough (1989) would describe as discourse naturalizing dominance: the brutality of patriarchy becomes normalized through everyday speech.

Speech acts dominate the power dynamics of the play. Commands, threats, and accusations form Sakharam's linguistic arsenal, establishing his authority while also exposing its fragility when women resist. Implicature also emerges in conversations where silences, hesitations, and evasions signal defiance beneath apparent compliance. Conceptual metaphor is equally significant: women are treated as objects or burdens, with metaphors of property and utility structuring Sakharam's worldview. In translation, these lexical nuances are particularly vulnerable, as euphemisms in English often soften the harshness of Sakharam's Marathi dysphemisms, dulling the impact of his cruelty.

3. *Ghashiram Kotwal*

A unique blend of historical allegory and folk performance, *Ghashiram Kotwal* demonstrates Tendulkar's mastery of institutional language. The speech of Nana Phadnavis and the bureaucratic apparatus exemplifies ritualized discourse, where authority is consolidated through performative utterances. Austin's framework clarifies how decrees and pronouncements within the play are not descriptive but constitutive—they create roles, laws, and punishments.

Metaphorical frames are central here. The play draws heavily on ritual and animal metaphors, portraying political figures as predators, the populace as submissive subjects, and governance as a sacred drama enacted through language. Code-switching also plays a role: the insertion of folk idioms, songs, and chants alongside formal speech underscores the contrast between the language of power and the language of the people. In English translation, much of this rhythm and linguistic layering is lost, reducing the socio-political resonance of the original Marathi.

4. *Gidhade* (*The Vultures*)

In *Gidhade*, Tendulkar intensifies his exploration of language as a weapon of cruelty. The family's dialogue is saturated with insults, but what makes them especially corrosive is their reliance on presupposition and conversational flouting. Grice's theory (1975) helps explain how insults work implicitly:

a statement like "You've always lived off others" presupposes parasitism without the need for explicit accusation. By violating maxims of manner and relevance, characters create ambiguity and exaggeration, forcing audiences to supply the venom.

The central metaphor of vultures frames the family as scavengers, feeding on each other's failures. This metaphor extends beyond imagery into the very language of the play, where lexical choices echo predation and decay. The speech acts in this play are almost exclusively destructive—threats, insults, and accusations dominate, leaving little room for reconciliation. Translation here again highlights semantic challenges: the rawness of Marathi dysphemisms often exceeds the expressive range of English equivalents, muting the visceral cruelty of the dialogue.

5. *Kamala*

In *Kamala*, Tendulkar shifts focus from domestic cruelty to institutional exploitation. Here, lexical semantics operates through euphemism. Bureaucratic and journalistic language—"procedure," "arrangements," "evidence"—sanitizes the act of purchasing and displaying a tribal woman. The vocabulary of legality and professionalism cloaks exploitation, illustrating how institutions use euphemism to mask violence.

Speech acts also underscore complicity. The journalist Sarita's husband frames the presentation of Kamala not as an ethical violation but as an act of reportage, thereby transforming exploitation into a supposedly legitimate performance. Implicature surfaces in Sarita's silences and hesitant questions, where what remains unsaid conveys her unease and suppressed resistance. Code-switching enriches the play's dynamics: English represents authority and intellectualism, while Marathi underscores emotional intimacy. In translation, however, this layering is often erased, flattening the critique of elite linguistic privilege.

6. *Kanyadaan*

Kanyadaan centers on the semantic and cultural implications of "gift." The title itself problematizes the metaphor of marriage as the gifting of a daughter, a ritual that encodes patriarchal ownership. By interrogating this metaphor, Tendulkar destabilizes the legitimacy of a deeply entrenched cultural institution. The metaphor extends into the play's dialogue, where references to sacrifice, purity, and ownership highlight how language naturalizes gendered hierarchies.

Politeness theory is also relevant: characters engage in face-threatening acts that reveal caste and class tensions within an ostensibly liberal family. The play demonstrates how linguistic politeness often masks aggression, with surface civility giving way to brutal confrontation. Translation presents unique challenges here, since the word *kanyadaan* itself carries cultural meanings that English equivalents like "marriage" or "gift of a bride" cannot fully capture. Venuti's (2012) notion of foreignization would suggest retaining the original term to preserve its cultural resonance.

Synthesis

Across these plays, Tendulkar demonstrates that language is never neutral. Whether through dysphemism, euphemism, presupposition, metaphor, or code-switching, his characters enact social hierarchies and expose the violence hidden in ordinary speech. The semantic analysis shows that micro-level linguistic choices—single words, silences, idioms—generate macro-level effects in character, conflict, and theme. Moreover, translation studies reveal how the political weight of Tendulkar's language often shifts or diminishes across linguistic borders, underscoring the importance of reading him in his original Marathi whenever possible.

6. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of Vijay Tendulkar's plays confirms that semantics is not a marginal aspect of his dramaturgy but its very backbone. His characters' words do more than represent thought; they actively construct and enforce systems of power. Four major findings emerge from this semantic study.

1. **Semantic choices as instruments of oppression**

Across *Sakharam Binder*, *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*, and *Gidhade*, lexical choices define social relationships in starkly unequal terms. Tendulkar demonstrates how dysphemism—terms like "throwing out" or "worthless scavenger"—can strip human bonds of intimacy and render them disposable. Conversely, bureaucratic euphemisms in *Kamala*—"procedure," "arrangements," "evidence"—sanitize acts of violence by cloaking them in professional respectability. These choices illustrate what Fairclough (1989) terms the "naturalization" of dominance: oppressive relations are maintained not through overt violence alone but through everyday speech that normalizes inequality. The finding underscores that language in Tendulkar is never ornamental; it is a form of ideological work.

2. **Institutional registers as shields and weapons**

Tendulkar frequently stages institutions—the court in *Shantata!*, the bureaucracy in *Kamala*, the political state in *Ghashiram Kotwal*—to show how specialized registers both shield perpetrators and attack victims. In *Shantata!*, courtroom language provides a veneer of legitimacy to what is essentially a public humiliation of Benare. Similarly, in *Kamala*, journalistic discourse transforms exploitation into reportage, making cruelty appear as professional duty. These registers are doubly effective: they deflect responsibility from individuals while simultaneously legitimizing harm. Austin's (1962) insight that utterances can "do things" is vividly illustrated here, as institutional speech acts create realities—branding a woman immoral, making exploitation legal, or declaring authority absolute.

3. **Multilingual code-switching and social hierarchies**

Tendulkar's plays often move fluidly between Marathi, Hindi, and English, with each language encoding particular social meanings. English typically signifies authority, education, and institutional power, as seen in *Kamala* where journalists and bureaucrats rely on English to project legitimacy. Marathi, by contrast, is the language of intimacy, domesticity, and emotional expression, while Hindi emerges as a marker of solidarity in mixed settings. This multilingual layering dramatizes the lived experience of caste, class, and gender in urban India, where linguistic choice itself functions as a social index. However, as Nandakumar (2020) and Biswas (2024) note, translations into English flatten these contrasts, erasing much of the stratification that Tendulkar carefully embeds into his dialogue.

4. Translation shifts and weakened social meanings

A recurring finding is the difficulty of preserving Tendulkar's semantic force in translation. Dysphemisms often become softened, losing their rawness; euphemisms sometimes appear more neutral than exploitative; and culturally embedded terms such as *kanyadaan* resist equivalence. These shifts can dilute the plays' political critique, making Tendulkar seem more universal but less incisively local. Venuti's (1995, 2012) critique of "domestication" in translation is particularly relevant: translations often domesticate Tendulkar's Marathi into smoother English, thereby stripping away its social sting. This finding suggests that the politics of Tendulkar's language can only be fully appreciated when the original Marathi semantic textures are preserved, or when translations deliberately foreground their foreignness.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that Tendulkar's semantic strategies are central to his critique of patriarchy, caste, and institutional violence. By weaponizing ordinary words, institutional registers, multilingual code-switching, and culture-specific metaphors, he reveals how oppression is not only enacted by institutions but also inscribed in the smallest linguistic details.

7. Conclusion

A semantic–pragmatic perspective makes it clear that Vijay Tendulkar's theatre is not merely political in content but linguistic in form. His dramaturgy demonstrates how meaning itself becomes an arena of struggle: every lexical choice, euphemism, insult, or metaphor carries the weight of ideology. By analyzing the plays through frameworks of speech act theory, implicature, politeness, and conceptual metaphor, it becomes evident that Tendulkar dramatizes oppression not only through action but through the very texture of language. Words in his plays are never neutral—they accuse, legitimize, humiliate, conceal, and resist.

Such an approach deepens our understanding of how Tendulkar stages systemic violence. In *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*, courtroom language enacts social judgment; in *Sakharam Binder*, dysphemism reduces relationships to disposability; in *Kamala*, euphemisms sanitize exploitation; and in *Kanyadaan*, a single culturally loaded metaphor exposes entrenched patriarchy. These examples illustrate that oppression is not simply represented on stage but linguistically constructed within it.

More broadly, this study suggests a methodological model for Indian theatre studies. Semantic and pragmatic tools enable critics to trace the micro–linguistic mechanisms through which macro–social hierarchies are performed. Extending this framework to other playwrights can enrich our understanding of Indian drama as a site where power, language, and culture intersect.

References

- Tendulkar, V. *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* (1967).

- Tendulkar, V. *Sakharam Binder*(1972).

- Tendulkar, V. *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972).

- Tendulkar, V. *Gidhade (The Vultures)* (1971).

- Tendulkar, V. *Kamala* (1981).

- Tendulkar, V. *Kanyadaan* (1983).

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press.

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press.

- Cruse, D. A. (1986). *Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge University Press.

- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. Longman.

- Fillmore, C. J. (1982). "Frame semantics." In *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*. Hanshin.

- Grice, H. P. (1975). "Logic and Conversation." In *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 3. Academic Press.

- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.

- Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics*. Cambridge University Press.

- Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating*. Brill.

- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts*. Cambridge University Press.

- Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility*. Routledge.

- Balakrishnan, K. (2018). *Translating Indian Drama: Issues and Practices*. Routledge.

- Biswas, A. (2024). "Subtitling Tendulkar: Challenges of Humor and Taboo." *Media, Culture & Society*, 46(2).

- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse*. Cambridge University Press.

- Datar, M. M. (Ed.). (2012). *Approaches to Vijay Tendulkar*. Popular Prakashan.

- Deshmukh, G. (2019). "Linguistic Violence and Social Critique in Tendulkar's *Sakharam Binder*." *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 54(3).

- Geeraerts, D. (2010). *Theories of Lexical Semantics* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

- Kabir, A. (2016). "Contemporary Marathi Theatre: Rewriting Power." *Asian Theatre Journal*, 33(1).

- Nandakumar, H. (2020). *Marathi Theatre Today: Translation and Reception*. Oxford India.

- Patel, S. (2021). "Translating Caste: Language and Power in Marathi Dramatic Texts." *Translation Studies Today*, 9(1).

- Venuti, L. (2012). *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice*. Routledge.

- Wodak, R., & Krzyżanowski, M. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics*. Routledge.