

SPEECH, SILENCE, AND THE SYNAPTIC SELF: NEUROLINGUISTICS OF TRAUMA IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S "IMMIGRANT WOMEN"

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ABSTRACT

Immigrant women traveling postcolonial diasporas experience linguistic marginalization and identity trauma with profound cognitive, social, and policy implications. The work *Immigrant Women* by Bharati Mukherjee depicts its main characters in a situation in which speech, silence, and memory are not mere literary devices but embodied, neurolinguistically mediated reactions to trauma. Recent studies (2023 - 2025) have not paid much attention to such intersections, and silence has been treated symbolically rather than encoded synaptically. Using a qualitative textual-neurolinguistic discourse analysis, six major immigrant testimonies were explored to reveal the signs of speech trauma, defense mechanisms of silence, and synaptic rewrite events. The neural correlates, such as inhibition of the Broca region, freeze reactions (mediated by the polyvagal), and dual-network identity schemata, were transferred to the narrative strategies, and it was shown that both silence and code-switching are dynamically activated neurocognitive survival strategies. The contemporary trauma linguistics research provided excellent methodological validation through the analytic triangulation. This paper presents a new conceptual framework, the *Synaptic Self Framework*, that connects literary representation and trauma-oriented neural processes and integrates postcolonial feminine critique, cognitive neuroscience, and studies of diaspora. This study extends the body of Mukherjee's analyses by considering silence as a synaptic trauma reaction and anticipating actual-world testifying in mapping PTSD-informed speech breakage, thereby offering an empirically and theoretically rigorous account. The results indicate that language is both protective and reconstructive, offering actionable insights into trauma-informed pedagogy, feminist mental health advocacy, and immigration policy, and providing a basis for further neuroliterary research.

KEYWORDS: Immigrant Women, Synaptic Self, Neurolinguistic Trauma, Postcolonial Feminist, Speech Suppression, Memory Rewiring

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