

Climate Change Discourse: A Comparative Study of English and Hindi Newspapers in India

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the differing emphases on heatwave-specific environmental reporting in the two most widely circulated newspapers in India: The Times of India in English and Dainik Bhaskar in Hindi. It deploys a framework developed by ecolinguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse 498 articles from The Times of India and 279 articles from Dainik Bhaskar, from 1st May 2025 to 30th June 2025, according to the following criteria: climate mention explicitness, the severity of the crisis, news source attribution, the framing of responsibility and accountability, and the presence or absence of systemic critique. The results suggest that the newspapers frame climate risk in particular but internally congruent ways. The Times of India generally uses a more policy-driven writing style, with institutional attribution and a moderate crisis discourse. Dainik Bhaskar, on the other hand, highlights day-to-day experience, emotional language and impacts on local communities. Interestingly, Dainik Bhaskar mentions climate change more often, at 85.66% (compared to 58.63% for The Times of India), and exhibits a slightly stronger structural critique, at 45.52% versus 42.77%, although both papers are largely similar in their framing of accountability. The paper contends that these differences are not random. They are informed by audience expectations, editorial practices, and, in particular, by the different roles the English- and Hindi-language mass media play in shaping how elite and mass publics perceive climate risk. On the whole, the study makes a language- and evidence-based contribution to investigations into climate communication, environmental journalism, and media plurality in multilingual India.

Keywords: Climate Change, English Vs Hindi Journalism, Eco-linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Media and Environment, Heatwave Reporting

1. Introduction

On 29 May 2025, India's Meteorological Department issued a red alert for 10 states, as temperatures in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi soared well above 47°C. In the same week, two major national newspapers inundated millions of newsreaders on breakfast tables and on phone screens, each newspaper influencing the way its readers thought about the heat, who was held accountable for it, and whether it was a seasonal trend or something much worse. One version of the story, meanwhile, was told by The Times of India. Dainik Bhaskar told another. This paper details the gap between them.

Climate change is not only a physical or environmental problem but also a language and public discourse issue. The media presentation of catastrophic weather shapes what people believe our risk is, who bears responsibility, and who is called on to respond. In a linguistically diverse country such as India, where English-language media has attracted a limited but powerful readership and hundreds of millions read Hindi newspapers spread across the breadth and depth of the Hindi-speaking area, providing multiple languages to represent climate reality is critically important. It also affects public awareness, political pressure, and the diffusion of ecological concern across different social groups.

Research on climate journalism has also exploded since the early 2000s (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Schäfer & Painter, 2021), but in practice, most comparative work focuses on variations among countries, emphasising the geopolitical aspects of dealing with climate change rather than across a multilingual nation. India is an especially striking example because, firstly, it's a democracy; secondly, it has two dominant newspaper

ecosystems and two extremely different publics, constituted by separate editorial traditions, reporting techniques, and connections to state power. Rao (2009) calls Indian journalism “glocal” because the differences in coverage between English and vernacular newspapers are not just stylistic but also stem from their embedding in distinct systems of power and community. Sonwalkar (2004), however, makes another similar observation: English-language media play a more central role in steering elite and policy-making discourse, while vernacular newspapers are more explicit about their place in mass political consciousness.

This paper investigates these ideas through original empirical data. Informed by eco-linguistics (Stibbe, 2015) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995), it builds on 777 articles covering the environment from *The Times of India* and *Dainik Bhaskar* collected around India’s peak heatwave season in 2025 using a structured coding framework. The core question is: how differently do these two newspapers frame heatwaves, and what do those discrepancies tell us about how climate risk gets mediated in India’s multilingual public sphere?

The organisation of the paper is as follows. Section 2 surveys the literature on climate journalism, eco-linguistics and Indian media. The methodology is described in Section 3. The results for the five coded variables are reported in Section 4. Discursive patterns are presented in Section 5 through the CDA perspective. Section 6 discusses implications for climate communication, media policy, and subsequent studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Climate Journalism and Framing Theory

The foundational insight that the media do not report climate change but actively construct the public perception of it was first articulated by Boykoff and Boykoff (2004) in their pioneering study of US prestige print media, in which they detected a systematic ‘false balance’ between scientific consensus and contrarian positions. Their work drew on Entman’s (1993) framing theory, the idea that to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient, promoting particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations. Subsequent studies have mapped the types of framing in climate journalism across Europe, the Global South, and Asia, discovering a consistent pattern in which the prevailing frames emanate more from institutional position, readership profile, and editorial culture of the outlet than a dispassionate transmission of scientific fact (Painter, 2013; Schäfer & Painter, 2021).

Particularly relevant to the Indian context is Boykoff’s (2011) observation that the political economy of news production plays a crucial role in climate framing. India’s print media is dominated by a small group of vertically integrated conglomerates whose commercial interests, infrastructure, energy and real estate, feed directly into climate policy. The framing choices here are dictated by structural dynamics that individual editors do not confront directly (Narisetti, 2021). The economic dependence of vernacular newspapers on government advertising (Sonwalkar, 2004) adds pressure that may discourage critical coverage of government inaction on climate.

Schmidt, Ivanova, and Schäfer (2013) examined climate stories in 27 countries and demonstrated significant variation concerning media system features, national politics, and cultural values. Boykoff (2007) identified ‘cultural resonance’ as a significant factor – the extent to which media frames tend to align with locally important values. For *Dainik Bhaskar*’s readers, climate change is not an abstract policy issue but a daily agricultural, occupational, and physical matter. Thus, cultural resonance in Hindi climate journalism often prioritises community vulnerability and life circumstances over the systemic global framing prevalent in English-language media outlets.

2.2 Eco-linguistics and the production of ecological truth

The second theoretical cornerstone of the research approach is Arran Stibbe’s eco-linguistics (2015). Stibbe argues that language does not represent the world in an unbiased manner, but that it ‘articulates’ living ecological realities through what he calls ‘stories we live by’ – cognitive frames that promote or discourage certain types of relationships between human beings and the environment. Translated to journalism, eco-

linguistic analysis inquires not what a news item tells us about climate change but what sort of ecological subject it creates for the reader: a helpless victim, an informed citizen, a policy target, or a structural critic

Stibbe distinguishes among three types of ecological text: salience (what can become visible and what is removed), framing (what conceptual structures events might possess), and identity (what kinds of subjects and things can be constructed in such a text). In light of our coding schema, these categories relate to climate mention level (salience), crisis tone & attribution (framing), and structural critique (identity of agency and systemic causality).

Steffensen and Fill (2014) applied the framework to cross-cultural contexts, demonstrating how different linguistic communities generate eco frames that highlight diverse aspects of environmental reality. This point applies to Hindi/English as well: these two newspapers' diverging representational practices are not stylistic variations but rather products of divergent Eco framing traditions influenced by the language communities they write about.

2.3 Indian Media Studies: English, Hindi, and the Differentiated Public Sphere

The division along language lines in the Indian media is well documented. Jeffrey (2000) described how the explosion of Hindi-language print post-Emergency created a vernacular public sphere embedded with standards, norms, expectations, and power relationships unique to the vernacular. Ninan (2007) demonstrated how district-level vernacular journalism embedded itself in non-elite communities in ways that metropolitan English journalism seldom attempted to mimic. Neyazi (2018) showed how the integration of Hindi journalism with local political mobilisation manifested a style of political journalism centred on communally relevant news content rather than procedural objectivity.

Rao (2009) conceptualised this from the perspective of 'glocalisation': Indian journalism operates under two distinct logics at once, a globalised English-language logic oriented towards cosmopolitan professional norms, and a localised vernacular logic oriented towards community representation and moral economy. This duality of logic is apparent in our data: the institutional framing of the Times of India reflects its globalised editorialism, whilst the affective, community-centred framing of Dainik Bhaskar showcases its embedding in the vernacular public fabric

Specific climate journalism scholarship on India is particularly thin. Dang (2019) also noted various differences in climate coverage of English and regional newspapers in India, but focused on volume rather than the quality of their discourse. Singh et al. (2020) studied climate framing in five Indian newspapers without language disaggregation. This study does so by coding discursive patterns across volume and quality in an analytical framework applied to a large, contemporaneous dataset.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Analytical Framework

The present study employs mixed-method comparative content analysis, bridging quantitative frequency data patterns with qualitative discourse analysis. Taken as a whole, eco-linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998) together enable the analysis to move beyond word-frequency counts to explore how news language constructs agency, causality, and moral responsibility. CDA is particularly appropriate for this study through the explicit acknowledgement of the relationship between discourse and power, an essential consideration in exploring why different language publics receive different constructions of climate reality.

The study is structured around four research questions: (1) How are heatwaves framed in English and Hindi newspapers in India? (2) To what extent do newspapers explicitly link heatwaves to climate change? (3) What variances can be discerned in crisis tone, responsibility attribution, accountability framing, and structural critique? (4) How do linguistic choices help to shape how climate risk and public understanding are constructed in the two language contexts?

3.2 Newspaper Selection and Justification

The Times of India in English and Dainik Bhaskar in Hindi were the two newspapers. The selection was based on three factors: dominance in circulation within their own language segments, geographic coverage, and power in public life in each language. Both newspapers consistently rank among the top three most read dailies in their language (Registrar of Newspapers for India; Indian Readership Survey). The Times of India is one of the largest English-language dailies in print circulation worldwide; Dainik Bhaskar is India's highest-circulating Hindi newspaper, with editions across 14 states.

The theoretical framework for this pairing is derived from Rao's (2009) concept of glocalisation and Sonwalkar's (2004) reading of agenda-setting differentiation: The Times of India is a policy-discourse setter within elite English-language networks, while Dainik Bhaskar creates mass political consciousness across the Hindi-speaking region. Both newspapers are poles of the linguistic bifurcation of India's print media system. Data were initially also collected from The Hindu and Dainik Jagran. The final analysis focused only on the two papers with the highest circulation dominance and largest data volume, with an emphasis on the depth of analysis.

3.3 Data Collection

Publications were collected for 1 May to 30 June 2025, the key heatwave season in India and the peak of heat in the northern and central parts of the country. We included all environment-related articles in a dataset (not directly referring to heatwaves); this was necessary to capture the full ecology of environmental reporting, including coverage of heatwaves, and to enable comparative analysis of density and framing patterns. Sub-category heatwave articles were then coded as a subgroup.

This resulted in 777 articles: 498 from The Times of India and 279 from Dainik Bhaskar. Of these, 46 TOI (9.24%) and 20 DB (7.17%) articles discussed heatwave events only.

3.4 Coding Schema

Coding covered five variables for each article (1) Climate Mention Level – a three-point scale (0=None; 1=Short or incidental; 2=Substantive – meaning climate change is foregrounded as an explanatory frame); (2) Crisis Tone – a three-point scale (low, moderate and high) measuring the degree to which the article represents the event as an emergency; (3) Attribution Type – categorised as government/institutional, scientific, field report/community, mixed or not explicitly attributed; (4) Accountability Tone – measured as absent, present, or strong; (5) Structural Critique – a binary variable (0/1) indicating whether the article questions underlying systems, policies or political economies rather than just reporting the event.

Coding was performed separately in the present study, and inter-coder reliability was assessed. Ambiguous cases were settled by discussion and general reference to the theory. Figures are presented as percentages for direct comparison between the two datasets of different sizes.

4. Findings

4.1 Dataset Size and Heatwave Coverage

Figure 1 displays the total number of articles on the environment and heatwaves for each newspaper. The Times of India published 498 environment-related articles in the two-month period, almost double Dainik Bhaskar's 279. This variation in volume reflects changes in newsroom capacity and resource allocation, as well as the general practice of the English-language press to staff larger desks dedicated to the environment with English-language correspondents.

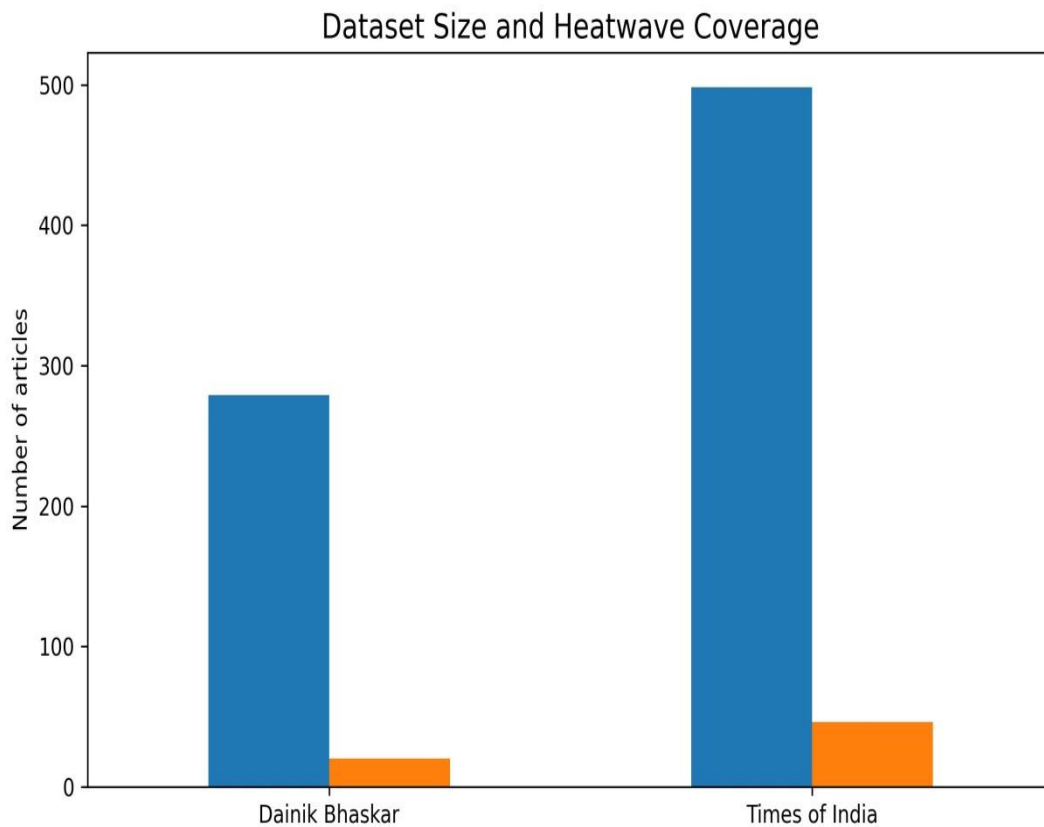


Figure 1: Dataset Size and Heatwave Coverage: Total Environment Articles vs. Heatwave-Specific Articles (May–June 2025)

Despite the volume gap, heatwave coverage as a share of total environment articles was similar: 9.24% for the Times of India and 7.17% for Dainik Bhaskar. This convergence matters analytically. Despite very different total outputs, both papers gave heatwave reporting a similar relative priority. This disconfirms a basic volume-based explanation for discursive differences: the issue isn't whether each paper covered heatwaves, but how.

Comparative density statistics (Figure 7, presented in Section 4.5 below) provide temporal granularity for Figure 1. The comparative density contradicts a well-worn premise - in quotidian comments, and part of the academy that English newspapers are more 'climate literate' or in some way more uniformly scientific in the framing of their subjects. The Times of India reported on approximately 10.8 articles per day, compared with around 4.8 per day for Dainik Bhaskar. By June, the gap had narrowed dramatically (5.2/d vs 4.9/d), not least the result of the monsoon transforming the character of weather events and diminishing the importance of heatwave-specific coverage.

4.2 ClimateMention Levels

Climate mention distributions are illustrated in Figure 2. And the results here stand in stark contrast to widely held assumptions in both popular commentary and parts of the academic literature that English-language newspapers are more 'climate literate' or more consistently scientific in their framing. The data suggest the opposite: in terms of climate mention frequency, Dainik Bhaskar's reporting is more consistently climate-linked than the Times of India's. 85.66% of Dainik Bhaskar's articles contain at least a brief reference to climate change, against 58.63% for the Times of India. Almost 4 in 10 Times of India environment articles don't even discuss climate change; the Dainik Bhaskar number is less than two in 10.

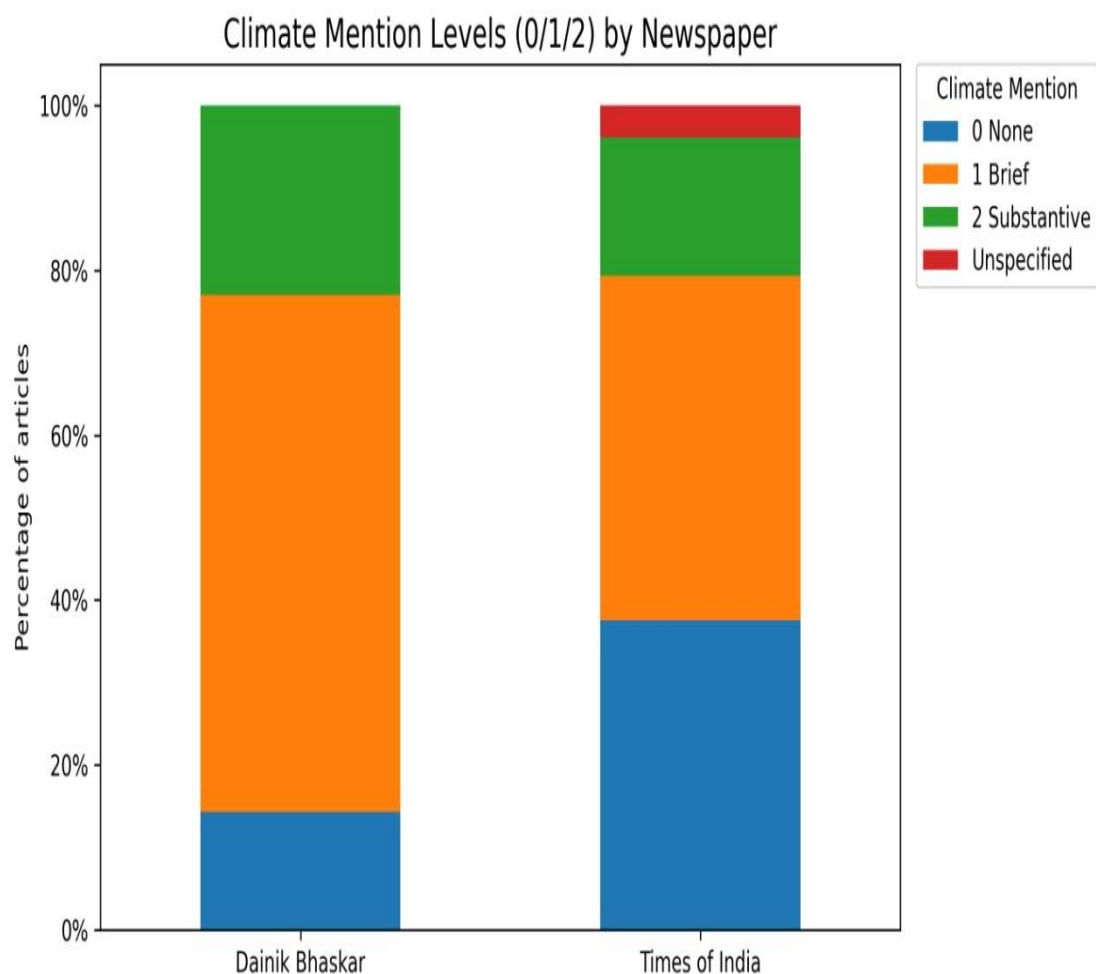


Figure 2: Climate Mention Levels (0/1/2) by Newspaper: Distribution of No Mention, Brief Mention, and Substantive Mention

It contradicts a well-worn premise in quotidian commentary and parts of the academy that English-language newspapers are more ‘climate literate’ or, in some way, more uniformly scientific in the framing of their subjects. The data point to the other: Dainik Bhaskar’s reporting, in terms of climate-mention frequency, is more consistently climate-linked than The Times of India’s.

However, the pattern for substantive climate mention - the more climate change is highlighted as the primary explanatory frame rather than as incidental mention - shows both papers very similarly and very little: 22.94% for Dainik Bhaskar and 16.87% for the Times of India. Dainik Bhaskar offers a more reliable discussion of climate change, but neither paper consistently identifies the climate crisis as the dominant explanatory lens for extreme heat. Both papers depict climate change as the background more than a central thesis.

This would be perceived under Stibbe’s (2015) framework as ‘nominal salience without explanatory centrality’: climate change is named, but not truly told.: It’s mentioned, but not treated as the main character. For public understanding, that is important. For readers who come across climate change as a peripheral reference, they’re less inclined to introduce climate causality about what is going on around them.

4.3 Crisis Tone

Figure 3 talks about the distribution of crisis tone. There is a clear directional gap in how Dainik Bhaskar uses a high-crisis tone: only about 18% of its articles show it, compared with approximately 26% in The Times of India. Dainik Bhaskar also has a lower percentage of low-crisis-tone articles (13% vs. 21%), and both outlets share a similar moderate crisis tone (approx. 69% for TOI, 70% for DB).

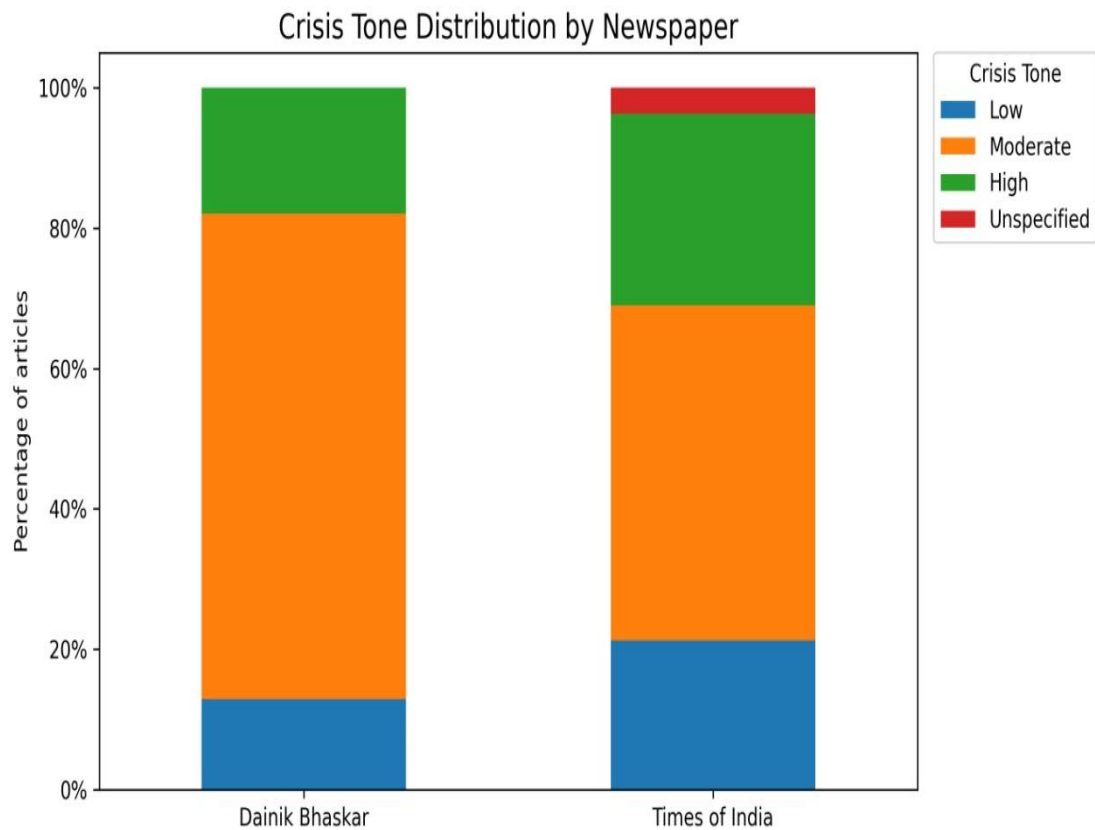


Figure 3: Crisis Tone Distribution by Newspaper: Low, Moderate, and High Crisis Tone Proportions

The Times of India’s higher prevalence of a high-crisis tone sits alongside and is not contradicted by its lower frequency of climate mentions. The combination defines a novel mode: an intense, alarming language about the acute emergency heat deaths, government warnings, hospital overloads that does not properly ground the emergency within a climate-change causal framework. The crisis is narrated as a governance issue of insufficient cooling centres, prolonged disaster management, and administrative unpreparedness rather than as a symptom of structural ecological disruption.

Dainik Bhaskar’s crisis style aligns with its regular affective, community-oriented register. Weather events become the lived disasters of life for affected groups: farmers watching their crops rot, daily-wage earners unable to leave their homes, and children suspended from school. It is a crisis written in human suffering rather than institutional alarm, provoking a less striking visceral sense of crisis. In CDA terms (Fairclough, 1995), TOI: The crisis language of TOI moulds the reader as a citizen who must be accountable to an institution, while Dainik Bhaskar fashions itself as a member of a community that shares a common experience of subjection.

4.4 Attribution Type and Reporting Tone

Attribution-type distributions of these cases and papers are shown in Figure 4, which illustrates how the two differ; in fact, the biggest difference is between the two newspapers. The Times of India draws on the government/institutional allocation of credit and about 41% of articles go to government and institutional sources; the scientific element is significant, circa 20%; but we also receive slight, moderate field report credit (12%). In contrast, Dainik Bhaskar displays low government attribution (about 24%), very little scientific attribution, and high field-report attribution (about 48% - the primary mode by which the Hindi paper obtains its attribution).

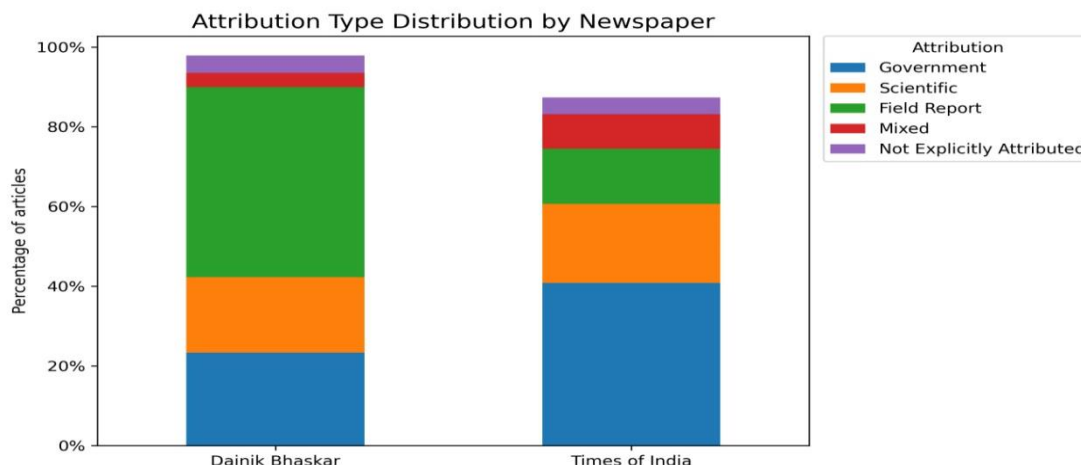


Figure 4: Attribution Type Distribution by Newspaper: Government, Scientific, Field Report, Mixed, and Unattributed Sources

This has direct implications for theories of India’s distinctive public sphere. The use of IMD, NDMA, and ministerial sources in the papers of the Times of India evidences the latter’s position as a watchdog on institutional performances and a participant in elite policy debate. Its climate journalism is institutional journalism: it compares the adequacy of the government response to the standard of administrative competence. The reliance on field reports - from field-based correspondents, affected members of the community, local figures, and first-person observation- represents another standard of journalistic authority: not the institutional record but the experiential account.

Notably, the accountability findings (Figure 5) intersect. High accountability, or its presence, was reported in 37.55% of articles in The Times of India and 36.20% in Dainik Bhaskar articles - a difference of less than two percentage points. This near-parity persists despite their fundamentally different attributional architectures. Both papers seem to scrutinise climate-related governance to equally high standards, though in vastly divergent discursive directions: The Times of India through institutional accountability (critique of policy, ministerial performance, etc.), Dainik Bhaskar through community accountability (the impact of the most vulnerable and the failure of local administration).

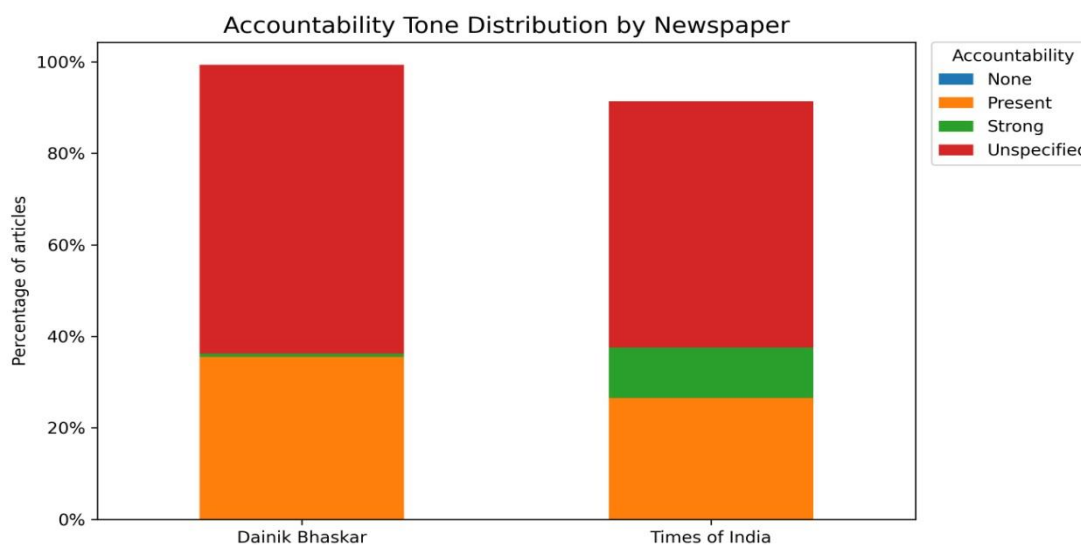


Figure 5: Accountability Tone Distribution by Newspaper: Absent, Present, Strong, and Unspecified

4.5 Structural Critique and Comparative Density

Figure 6 depicts a structural critique. Again, the results undermine widely accepted beliefs: Dainik Bhaskar records a slightly higher level of structural critique (45.52%); the Times of India, 42.77%. Both figures are significantly above zero, indicating that in nearly half of all environment reports, both newspapers go beyond event reporting to examine the deeper policy, economic, or political systems that generate or exacerbate climate risk.

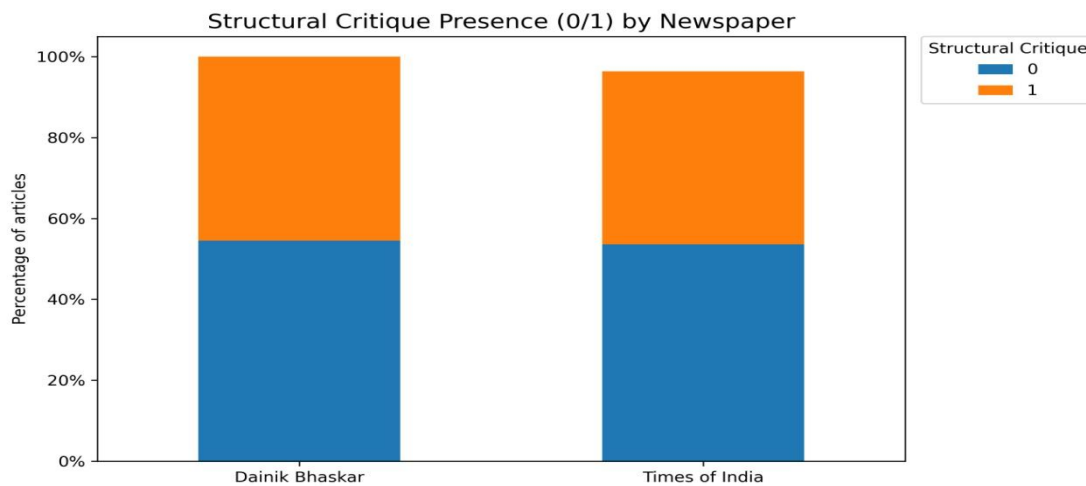


Figure 6: Structural Critique Presence by Newspaper: Articles with Structural Critique (1) vs Without (0)

The format of structural critique differs between the papers. The Times of India’s structural critique refer to the international climate frameworks (Paris Agreement obligations, IPCC projections, India’s NDC commitments) and compares government policy with these criteria. The structural critique by Dainik Bhaskar has tended to focus more on the vulnerability of agricultural and informal-sector communities to heat events, and on the importance of linking economic marginalisation and climate exposure (sometimes indirectly and sometimes explicitly). Both are true structural criticisms; they are at different scales and within separate accountability frameworks.

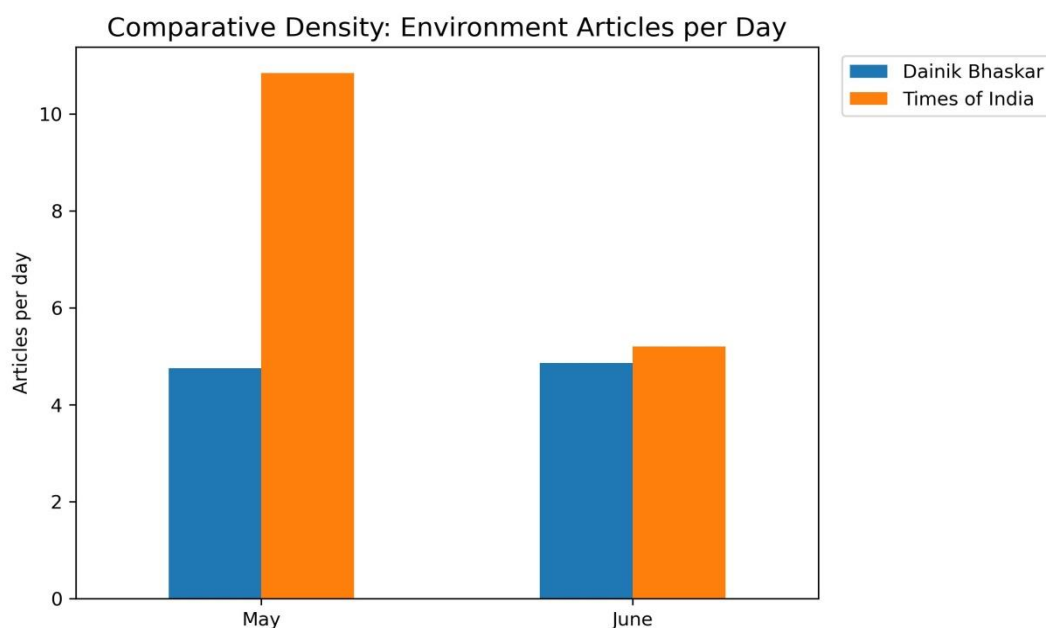


Figure 7: Relative density of environment reporting (May vs June 2025)

Figure 7 illustrates the relative density of environment reporting between the two months. A sharp fall in The Times of India's number from May (10.8 articles a day) to June (5.2), suggesting the monsoon usurped the heatwave as the most prevailing weather story; output in May was supported by heavy heatwave reporting, advisory tracking and institutional accountability pieces. The production of Dainik Bhaskar was far more stable (4.8 in May and 4.9 in June), hinting at an environmental beat less determined by single events and, more continuously rooted in community life.

5. Discussion: Two Languages, Two Climate Realities

5.1 Structural Conditions of Discursive Difference

The results need more than description. The discursive differences between the Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar are not simply variations or editorial idiosyncrasies; they're structurally constituted by the disparate social and institutional places each paper occupies in India's media ecosystem.

The Times of India's institutional framing its penchant for government attribution, its policy-rooted crisis language, its synchronicity with global climate frameworks evokes what Bourdieu (1998) termed its place in the field of journalistic production, a publishing body whose symbolic capital is anchored in its location in proximity to elite institutions, its power to shape the minds of policymakers and business leaders, and its demand for cosmopolitan professional practices. Climate change in the Times of India is characterised as an institutional failure, which, in essence, calls for institutional solutions. The implied reader is a citizen-consumer who expects competent government and registers disappointment when it fails.

Dainik Bhaskar's community-centred, affective, field-report-driven framing reflects a different position: a paper whose symbolic capital rests on embeddedness in regional life, identification with non-metropolitan communities, and a claim to ground-level authenticity. Climate change in Dainik Bhaskar is framed as communal suffering. The implied reader is a community member who lives the consequences of climate change in the body, on the farm, and in the home.

Both framings, in Stibbe's (2015) terms, produce ecological subjects with different understandings of their agency and vulnerability. The TOI reader is a political actor demanding institutional accountability; the DB reader is a community member seeking solidarity and practical guidance. Neither construction is entirely true, but they are both partial. Taken together, these points indicate that India's climate public sphere is not unified but fragmented, in which multiple language publics are systematically subjected to distinct versions of the same physical crisis.

5.2 The Hindi Climate Paradox

Among the study's most salient findings is that, despite being a vernacular newspaper often claimed to lag English-language media in scientific and environmental sophistication, Dainik Bhaskar has comparatively high rates of climate mention, comparable structural critique, and comparable accountability, all of which deserved discussion.

A useful point from which to start is Chadha's (2010) notion of 'vernacular modernity'. Hindi journalism adopted not the modes of Western print journalism; instead, it developed a hybrid practice that weaves together modern print technology with indigenous epistemologies of community, the land, and the weather. Where livelihoods depend on agricultural calendars, monsoon patterns and temperature extremes, climate is not a mystical global concern. The embeddedness of the vernacular newspaper in this community experience may enable more consistent climate linkage - though that linkage may be made through the language of lived suffering rather than scientific terms

This is relevant to wider discussions in the climate communication literature about the relative merits of local and global climate frames. Leiserowitz et al. (2006) and O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) suggested that abstract global frames seldom provide any impetus to concern, whereas localised, experiential frames typically offer higher levels of cognitive accessibility and emotional engagement. Dainik Bhaskar's climate framing,

based on the suffering of identifiable communities, the collapse of local infrastructure, and the disruption of familiar seasonal patterns, might be more successfully communicated to its target readership than TOI's institutional framing, despite the absence of the direct scientific attribution that characterises technically sophisticated climate journalism.

5.3 The Absence of Substantive Climate Linkage

The saddest finding isn't the gap between the papers; there is actually a common limitation common to both: the level of substantive climate linkage articles that place climate change in the main explanatory frame remains uncomfortably low. The figures are 16.87% (Times of India) and 22.94% (Dainik Bhaskar). For record-breaking heat events to be attributed with high confidence to human-caused climate change, this constitutes a serious lack of climate communication.

It is also consistent with Painter's (2013) claim that attribution of climate change in weather journalism remains underdeveloped, even in societies with widely advanced media systems, and Neyazi's (2018) documentation of political imperatives that undermine structural critique in Indian journalism. In both language ecosystems, the incentive structures of news production, the inclination to prioritise proximate causes of climate change over systemic causes, government sources over scientific sources, and to emphasise dramatic, immediate events over slowly unfolding structural processes systematically erase the in-depth explanatory framework that climate change calls for.

Thussu's (2012) take on the integration of Indian media into global information flow applies here: as Indian newspapers increasingly face global commercial pressures that favour engagement, virality and speed over analytical depth, the structural conditions for substantive climate journalism, long-form investigation, sustained consultation with experts, and editorial commitment to explanatory, not episodic coverage degrade progressively in both linguistic contexts.

5.4 Towards a More Integrative Climate Journalism

The discursive strengths of both newspapers complement each other, suggesting what more credible Indian climate journalism could look like. The Times of India's institutional attribution provides readers with a government and scientific context in which to assess institutional reaction. Dainik Bhaskar's community-based, lived-experience narrative grounds climate change in the human costs that give the issue urgency. A climate journalism that brings these strengths together, one that enlists scientific authority alongside community expertise in a sustained conversation, that holds governments accountable not only for the performance of their policies but also for the structural vulnerability they allow to survive, would be far more potent than either paper manages to do.

This matches Schäfer and Painter's (2021) recommendation for 'integrative' climate journalism that combines scientific literacy with social justice framing, and with the eco-linguistic ideal of journalism that constructs readers as both knowledgeable agents and morally engaged community members. The institutional conditions needed are clear enough: editorially independent newsrooms, well-resourced environment desks, science literacy training for journalists, and a media policy environment that protects investigative journalism from commercial and political interference.

6. Conclusion

This paper set out to compare how two of India's most widely circulated newspapers, the Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar, construct heatwave events and climate risk through different discursive strategies. The empirical findings from 777 articles collected during India's peak heatwave season of 2025 confirm that the two newspapers do indeed tell different climate stories, but in ways that resist the simple hierarchy of English as more sophisticated, Hindi as more limited, which often structures assumptions about Indian media.

Dainik Bhaskar is more reliably climate-relevant, marginally more structurally critical, and just as responsible. What sets the papers apart is not quality but orientation: institutional versus community; policy versus experience; expert attribution versus authority of the field report. These differences are structurally shaped by

the distinct social orientations of newspapers in India's divided media ecology and produce distinct ecological subjects among readerspeople who view climate change differently because they hear it through different discursive frames

The common shortcoming of both newspapersthe low level of substantive discussion of climate even in the heatwave seasonpoints to systemic pressures that reverberate across the media spheres: the bias towards the proximate rather than the systemic cause, with commercial and political imperatives not leading to deep reporting in both languages and the lack of institutional support for the kind of sustained, expert-informed, community-based climate journalism so much needed to meet the demands of the current emergency.

The research contributes to three lines of scholarship, which include research on climate communication, through using data to demonstrate inter-language variation in climate framing; Indian media studies, by empirically assessing the claims of Rao (2009), Sonwalkar (2004), and Neyazi (2018) against original information; and eco-linguistics, by using Stibbe's framework (2015) in a non-Western comparative context.

Future research should extend beyond a single heatwave season, incorporate television and digital media, and examine audience reception to determine whether the discursive differences documented here yield measurable shifts in climate understanding across language publics.

How the media speaks about heat shapes how society thinks about climate. In a country where the next heatwave season is already certain to be worse than the last, that is not a scholarly luxury. It is a civic necessity.

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