

Language and Society: Phase-2 Individual Project Report

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1 Aim

To analyse the social hierarchies in place in the real and virtual worlds and the impact it has on how people communicate with each other.

2 Approach

Since the rest of the team had already taken care of social hierarchies in virtual settings and those settings which have a mixture of both virtual and real world setting, I had to take care of social hierarchies in purely real world setting. Thus, for this reason I decided to go with a survey. The best data I can collect is when I get people in real life, who are working in the real world social hierarchies on a daily basis, to answer the survey questions. These survey questions would later help me to reach important conclusions about the different social factors and traits that people consider when communicating within a real world social hierarchy setting.

3 Progress so far

I have got 389 responses in total and I intend to look at them both collectively and individually. I have analysed around 235 responses out of the available 389. There are some important hypothesis and conclusions that can be based, derived, or contradicted within these 235 responses themselves. Therefore, this report will tell you how I went about analyzing the given responses and the exact details of how an educated conclusion is made.

Below I have listed all the questions that I have asked the audience in the survey. Some of them are focused on the social hierarchy disturbances, some on social hierarchy within family and friends, while some questions (like the last one) have been included to throw the audience off and stop them from recognizing a trend in these questions and adulterating their responses manually, giving us

unreliable data. The last question is not just to throw people off but also to reveal a certain aspect of their personality which might help us in reaching a strong yet firm and resolute conclusion.

3.1 Questions asked in the Survey

The following questions have been listed in the exact same order as they appeared in the questionnaire.

1. How do you address your seniors or supervisors in your workplace or educational institute?
2. How do you address the same seniors or supervisors in a social setting outside of the workplace or institution? For example: at a wedding or at their child's birthday party.
3. How do you address your juniors in your workplace or educational institute?
4. How do you address the same juniors in a social setting outside of the workplace or institution? For example: at a wedding or at their child's birthday party.
5. Suppose you just got a big promotion and are now in a senior position compared to your previous boss/supervisor. How would you address them now?
6. Suppose your junior just got a big promotion and is now in a senior position compared to you. How would you address them now?
7. How do you address your close friends?
8. How do you address your office colleagues or classmates?
9. How do you address your close elderly family members?
10. How do you address your siblings?
11. Are you more comfortable in holding important discussions on online electronic media or face to face meetings?

3.2 Collective Analysis

In collective analysis stage, my main aim is to conclude as many social factors or traits that I can from the most common answers, trend in responses, or those responses that have the exact same set of answers for all the questions.

In this type of analysis we need not bother about the remaining responses (R-236 to R-389) as I will be looking at the general trends or interrupts in those trends to form strong conclusions.

3.2.1 Time/Energy spent in Social Hierarchy OR Disturbance of Social Hierarchy above them?

Let us take the most common answer for Questions: 1 through to 5.

How do you address your seniors or supervisors in your workplace or educational institute?

389 responses

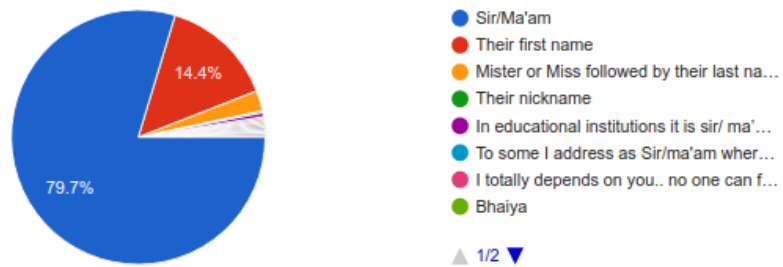


Figure 1: Responses to Q-1

How do you address the same seniors or supervisors in a social setting outside of the workplace or institution? For example: at a wedding or at their child's birthday party.



389 responses

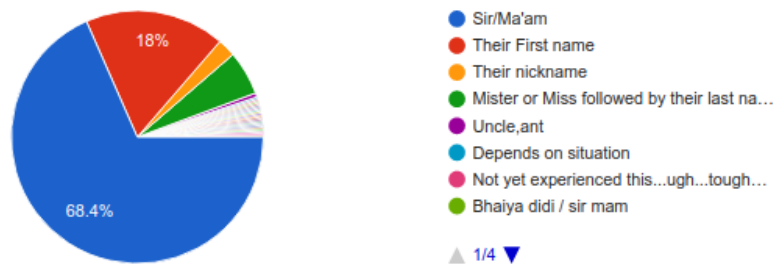


Figure 2: Responses to Q-2

How do you address your juniors in your workplace or educational institute?

389 responses

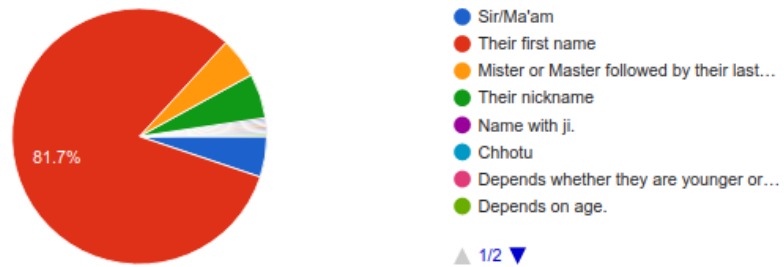


Figure 3: Responses to Q-3

How do you address the same juniors in a social setting outside of the workplace or institution? For example: at a wedding or at their child's birthday party.

389 responses

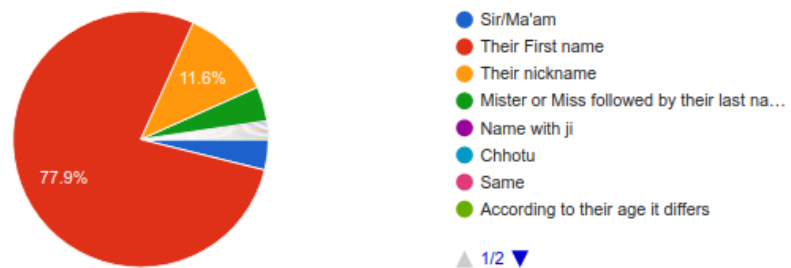


Figure 4: Responses to Q-4

Suppose you just got a big promotion and are now in a senior position compared to your previous boss/supervisor. How would you address them now?

389 responses

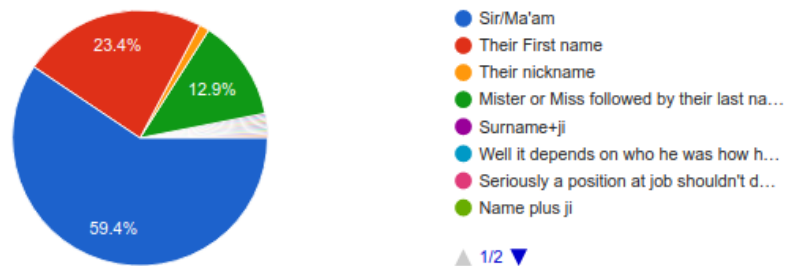


Figure 5: Responses to Q-5

As we saw in the previous 5 figures, the people called their work peers by the same term, as they call them in the place where their social hierarchy is at play the most, irrespective of the location or occasion. Not just locations, even when they are promoted to a more senior post as compared to their earlier supervisors, they still went on to call them by the same term as earlier, i.e., "Sir/Ma'am".

Therefore, we may hypothesize that **the time or energy one spends in their social hierarchy, conditions them to maintain and sustain it irrespective of the locations or their changed position in the hierarchy.**

Suppose your junior just got a big promotion and is now in a senior position compared to you. How would you address them now?

389 responses

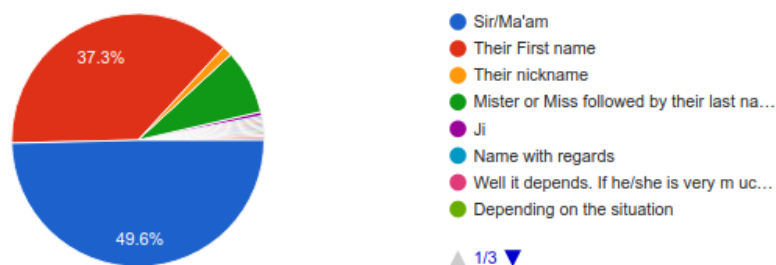


Figure 6: Responses to Q-6

Here comes the problem, the interruption in our trend that we were building

on and relying on to turn our hypothesis into a conclusion. Even though the percentage of people going with the most common and the second-most common (here, the direct opposite of the most common) differ by only 12% approx. in Q-6, compared to the difference of 36% in the previous answer, still about half of the audience went with the new term.

When approximately half of the audience goes with one answer, one needs to take it in account as well even if contradicts our hypothesis or the trend we were building on. This question outright rejects our hypothesis that the time and energy one spends in their social hierarchy conditions them to maintain and sustain it irrespective of the location or changed hierarchical positions.

However, if we take a second to reflect and reconstruct a new hypothesis which says: **the disturbance one causes to the social hierarchy above them limits them to the use of their preferred term when addressing or communicating with the people in the social hierarchy setting. However, the disturbances caused to the social hierarchy below them are not of their interest or caution.**

There is no doubt that this hypothesis is well backed by all the six questions we just considered. The people only changed their addressing term when a person, who was earlier below them in the hierarchy, was promoted to a position above them in the hierarchy.

This proves that people consider disturbing the social hierarchy above them a major factor when communicating with the stakeholders of that hierarchy. They may still use the same term as earlier for the people that are now below them in the hierarchy but not for them that are above them.

3.2.2 Relationship Intimacy/Proximity

This factor is not much difficult to understand and for that let us have a look at questions 7 and 8:

How do you address your close friends?

389 responses



Figure 7: Responses to Q-7

As you can see above, people tend to address their close friends with intimate terms such as Bhai, Dost, Yaar, etc. The majority of the other half was split between their first name or their nickname.

How do you address your office colleagues or classmates?

389 responses

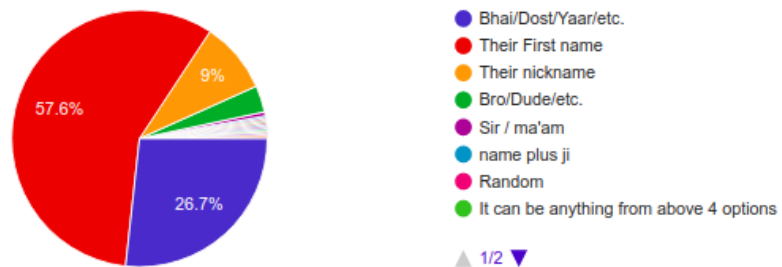


Figure 8: Responses to Q-8

In this figure, you can clearly see that more than half of the people address their colleagues or classmates with their first name and this time only a quarter of the audience chose to call their colleagues with terms like Bhai, Dost, Yaar, etc.

The reason I have picked these two questions is that the age factor totally cancels out here. People generally make close friends with those that are about their age or who were earlier just their classmate or colleague. Therefore, **more or less colleagues and close friends occupy the same position the real world social hierarchy.**

But then why such difference in the terms people like to address them with? The reason here is clearly the **intimacy or the proximity the people have in their relationships with their colleagues or friends**. They were in the same age group and the same social hierarchical position, but what mattered was the fact that how close the two people were in their relationship.

Therefore, **the communication between the stakeholders of the hierarchy is determined by the relationship between them.**

3.3 Individual Analysis

Even though Collective analysis has a lot of data to backup its conclusions, we must not overlook the important factors that can be derived from Individual analysis as well. Since the questionnaire was Multiple Choice Questions, important factors may be overlooked due to limitation of the answers provided even though I had provided an empty answer field in the last if people wanted to write their own response.

Thus, it becomes necessary to carefully consider certain factors that are very important but are easily overlooked in the collective analysis stage.

3.3.1 Cultural background

I believe that the culture and society one is brought up in plays a major role in how people communicate or address each other in social hierarchies. Sometimes, people may prefer a certain term over the most common term because of their cultural upbringing or the culture in which the social hierarchy resides.

This claim can be backed up by the following response I received to Question-1:

How do you address your seniors or supervisors in your workplace or educational institute? *

☐ Sir/Ma'am

☐ Their first name

☐ Mister or Miss followed by their last name

☐ Their nickname

☒ Other: In Ukraine we call them teacher

How do you address the same seniors or supervisors in a social setting outside of the workplace or institution? For example: at a wedding or at their child's birthday party. *

☐ Sir/Ma'am

☐ Their First name

☐ Their nickname

☐ Mister or Miss followed by their last name

☒ Other: Teacher

Figure 9: Unique Response to Q-1

One can take an educated guess that the person who responded is a resident of Ukraine or must have been at some point in their lives. Let us assume for the time being that they reside in Ukraine. We do not know whether their origin country is also the same but we can conclude that the current social hierarchies are Ukrainian since they are a resident of Ukraine. As the person resides in Ukraine, it is obvious that their personal life will also be affected by the Ukrainian culture and the social hierarchies they are a part of are no exception to this. Due to globalization one still might expect the stakeholders in Ukrainian social hierarchies to go with Sir/Ma'am or first name for addressing their seniors, but they uphold their culture so much that they call their seniors as "Teachers".

Even if we consider the case where the person responding is not an Ukrainian national, the response won't change as being the member of a Ukrainian social hierarchy, they are expected to act and behave in a certain manner. If the person

in question is forced to move to another country like India or USA, they would probably end up using Sir/Ma'am or first name for addressing their seniors as addressing your seniors in workplace as "Teachers" is, though respectful, very uncommon in such cultural environments.

Therefore, **it is not just the cultural background of the person, but also the cultural environment of the social hierarchy the person is a part of, which decides or impacts how that person would communicate in that respective social hierarchy.**

I have got another response to back up this claim in which the person claims that they address their seniors according to culture they hail from:

How do you address your seniors or supervisors in your workplace or educational institute? *

☐ Sir/Ma'am

☐ Their first name

☐ Mister or Miss followed by their last name

☐ Their nickname

☒ Other:
Mix of all above . Depending upon local culture my seniors or supervises belong to. E.g If Indian , I call them Saheb, also Mr. to few and Europeans, I call them by name etc.

How do you address the same seniors or supervisors in a social setting outside of the workplace or institution? For example: at a wedding or at their child's birthday party. *

☐ Sir/Ma'am

☐ Their First name

☐ Their nickname

☐ Mister or Miss followed by their last name

☒ Other: Generally same as above

Figure 10: Another Unique yet important Response to Q-1

Therefore, culture indeed plays an important role in determining communication between individuals in social hierarchies. But from the above response, we can note that sometimes the culture of the people above in the social hierarchy is more important than the cultural environment of the social hierarchy as a whole.

Thus, we can rephrase our conclusion as follows: **it is not just the cultural background of the person, but also the cultural environment of the social hierarchy the person is a part of or/and the culture the person's superiors hail from, which decides or impacts how that person would communicate in that respective social hierarchy.**

3.3.2 Respect

Respect is such a prestigious trait that everyone wants to have in today's society. Social hierarchies generally do play a big role in amount of respect given. For example, the people at the top of the hierarchy would obviously be treated with more respect than the people in the lower levels of the hierarchy. Since the level of respect differs, there is no doubt that the way of communication would differ too. But sometimes, according to individuals and their different characters, some value respect over the position of their work peers in the social hierarchy.

Now, by respect as a factor I mean whether the people are being treated in a correct way in their social hierarchical environments. To display how much it matters to certain individuals I will show you two different responses to the same question:

Suppose you just got a big promotion and are now in a senior position compared to your previous boss/supervisor. How would you address them now? *

☐ Sir/Ma'am

☐ Their First name

☐ Their nickname

☐ Mister or Miss followed by their last name

☒ Other:

Seriously a position at job shouldn't define your bond/relationship with your seniors/juniors. You should treat your colleagues with utter respect without there post coming in your mind

Figure 11: Treat everyone with Respect

In the above figure, it does not take a genius to figure out that the person responding intends to communicate with other people in the hierarchy model according to their relationship with them and treat all with respect (in turn hoping themselves to be respected as well).

Suppose you just got a big promotion and are now in a senior position compared to your previous boss/supervisor. How would you address them now? *

☐ Sir/Ma'am

☐ Their First name

☐ Their nickname

☐ Mister or Miss followed by their last name

☒ Other:
Well it depends on who he was how he treated me/others. If he is very much respected/older than me, I would go with Sir/ma'am, else I would let the workplace ethics take over

Figure 12: How I was treated with respect or How others treat them

This figure is concerned more about how the person responding was treated in the past by that same senior or how others treat the senior in general.

Thus, whether it is them being treated or others being treated, some people value treatment with appropriate amount of respect a lot. Some might even value the way the other people in the hierarchical model treat a certain senior and then decide whether they want to do it the same way. Also, the kind of treatment one experiences or nourishes in the hierarchical model will affect the communication process in the same way. If there is hate going around, then it will show in the way people speak to each other or if the peers have a lot of mutual respect for each other, it will be visible by their communication methods.

In conclusion, **the way a person is treated in the hierarchical model by their counterpart, the respect the person has for that counterpart, and how much respect other peers have for that counterpart determine the way a person will choose to communicate with that specific counterpart.**

4 Future Direction

The foremost work is to finish analyzing the responses to the survey individually, so I can work more on analyzing them both collectively and individually.

We have obviously seen how Individual analysis stage can just be as important as Collective analysis and how it brings to light certain factors that may get overlooked due to certain features of the questionnaire. Therefore, the next important task would be to finish both the Individual and Collective Analysis stages.

If time permits, I would also try to build a personality model on the basis of the last question and maybe combine it with specific responses. This might help us to claim that certain people would value a certain factor or trait more than others when communicating in a social hierarchical model.

All in all, I aim to conclude the maximum number of social or personal factors, which will be a super-set of the considerations that go into the decision process of an individual regarding how to communicate in the social hierarchies they are a stakeholder of. Obviously, this will be done with a similar analysis process as shown and conclusions will not be made by going out of the scope of the survey.