

LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

INDIVIDUAL REPORT

FINAL

Social Hierarchy (Cinema)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim

The aim of our project was to understand the ways in which social hierarchy affects how the people interact with others in Hindi and summarising the various related factors that come into play.

1.2 Objective

In the current pandemic situation, it was not possible to go outside in the real world and collect data by having and observing conversations among people. So,

we had to resort mainly to virtual world by watching and observing advertisements, movies, web series.

But we also tried to inculcate the real world by conducting a comprehensive survey asking people on internet questions regarding the effect on their language if one of the factors(from the factors that we assumed in the beginning) changed and seeing if their language changes. We also studied some interviews of famous celebrities and collected data.

So, we divided the project into the following parts:

1. **SURVEY** - We devised some questions in which we asked people how will be their language before and after changing some factor. These factors were those which we came up and thought might be relevant to the topic.
2. **ADVERTISEMENTS** - We see a lot of ads daily and they are specially made to affect our thinking. So, they research about which things affect the people most. Hence, studying the world depicted in them was considered by us relevant.
3. **CINEMA** - The cinema was our best alternative for the real world. We needed to be careful to not take movies which were very fictional like those inspired from Marvel - DC comics because they do not resemble the real world much.
4. **PRINT MEDIA** - Under this, we decided to study interviews of famous personalities from newspapers.

2 My Contribution

My task was to analyse the Hindi Cinema and Television Series.

2.1 What to watch ?

For this I had to select which Movies/TV Series to watch.

- For the first phase I watched the TV Series **Paatal Lok (2020)**. I chose this because it was the last thing that I had watched in the summer holidays and I remembered some instances from it which were relevant to the topic of our project.

- Then, after analysing the data collected from Paatal Lok, I had to find a movie as I had already done a TV Series. I posted questions in sub-reddit of sociolinguists. But this did not bore any fruit and no one replied. I could not post in that because it was against the rules of their forum. Instead they posted a post weekly on which people were supposed to comment their questions. I think this might have been the reason for no reply.

I also consulted my parents if they knew any movie after 2000 (to keep it as close to present world as possible) but they also could not think of any at that moment.

Then I started randomly remembering the movies that I had watched in the past. I had a strong feeling that the movie **Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year (2009)** because I remembered that the way with which people (who later on joined on his company) talked to Rocket Singh changed after they joined his company.

But sadly, the data collected was very short and not enough for analysing. I had uploaded the data on github but later on deleted it because I could not give any observations.

- For the third movie, I again consulted my parents and my father suggested that **Gangaajal (2003)** had some instances where the way of talking changed among the same people. I watched the movie and it indeed gave me a lot of data from which I concluded a completely new factor.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology was simple. I watched each of the movies/TV series twice. In the first watch, I did not try to make any conclusion or collect any data. I just looked closely at the people's way of speaking with others. Then in the second time, while watching, I again closely watched the way of speaking and whenever I remembered that the way of talking between these two people changed later on, I noted the instance down. And of course, I also noted down the instance where the way changed.

Then for Paatal Lok, I tried to divide the data into different groups:

- Under normal circumstances
 - Employee talking to his boss

- * At a higher level
 - * At a lower level
- Boss talking to his employee
 - * At a higher level
 - * At a lower level
- In some emotional state
 - Employee talking to his boss
 - * At a higher level
 - * At a lower level
 - Boss talking to his employee
 - * At a higher level
 - * At a lower level

I did not have to do this for Gangaajal as almost all the data was suggesting one major factor.

3 Observations

Here I will summarize the various factors that play a role in deciding the way of talking as analysed from the data.

3.1 Paatal Lok

- **GENERAL NORMS** - The subordinates addressed their bosses as Sahab/Sir and bosses addressed the subordinates by their last name.
- **RESPECT** - Ansari had respect for Haathi Ram and it was reflected in his tone, but on the other hand, Haathi Ram had no such respect for his superior and did not like him as a person. Thus he talked formally with his boss.
- **EMOTIONS** - When Haathi Ram felt that Ansari did not consider him as good friend as Haathi Ram considered him, he talked to Ansari with lack of enthusiasm and even rudely started using his phone during the talk.

- **SOCIAL SETTINGS** - Son disrespected Haathi Ram in house as he did not consider his father to be worth of anything. But in front of principal, he did no such thing.

3.2 Gangaajal

- **GREED** - The main factor that we see in this movie is the greed for money. This overpowers the factor of social hierarchy. If someone sees some benefit in some other person, then he will be very polite, jolly and friendly. But if the same person becomes a hurdle in the path and is of no benefit, then the way of speaking changes and even led to death in this film.
- **GENERAL NORM** - Even if motivated by greed or not, the subordinates usually tend to call their bosses Sir/Sahab.

4 Conclusion

Both, Paatal Lok and Gangaajal were set in a police station. Though there were some differences in them. One depicted completely corrupt station where one honest police man arrives and changes everything while the other is about solving a case. Gangaajal is an extreme condition whereas Paatal Lok is comparatively normal.

Under normal conditions, the way of talking can be predicted by various factors such as respect, social setting, general norms, purpose of conversation etc. But when emotions come into play, they overpower all the other factors.

5 Challenges

The main challenge for me was to find a suitable movie/TV series to watch which could give me good amount of data because I did not want to waste my time watching something which does not give me data as time is precious and especially in the current scenario where one has to take out time with family also. Another challenge is that it is difficult to extract all the relevant data from a movie/TV series and some of the data is bound to be missed.

6 Readings and References

I did not take the scripts from anywhere. I myself watched the movie/series and typed out the relevant data. If I had instead tried to get data just from reading scripts, then I would miss the body languages and tone of the speaker as it is difficult to convert them into text. I did consult the course books and class lectures for understanding the concept of social hierarchy.

References

- [1] Ronald Wardhaugh, Janet M. Fuller. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. WILEY Blackwell, 2015
- [2] Peter Trudgill. *Sociolinguistics - An Introduction to Language and Society*. Penguin Books, 2000