The Reflection of Language Linked to Gender Inequality in Discourse Behavior

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Abstract—*The relevance of gender to linguistic analysis was first noted in the early 20th century when descriptive linguists observed the differences in female and male vocabularies and patterns of speech in non-European languages. Since the 1960 sociolinguists [1, 9, 10-11, and 17] have been exploring gender dimension of language that catapulted work on language and gender. Countries where citizens speak gendered languages display a higher rate of gender inequality than countries with languages that do not ascribe gender to nouns [6]. Language shapes our cognition and perception of society [14]. Countries that speak predominantly gendered language evidence less gender equality in relation to countries with natural gender and genderless languages. The primary aim of this research is to highlight such instances of gender based language biasness in Hindi highlighting situations of conflict between genders. The research methodology used for the present paper includes the development of conceptual framework through secondary sources and applying the native speaker's competence in subsequent analysis. This paper is an attempt to point out the gender differences in language use and perception; investigating the ways in which Hindi speakers express as to how such linguistic differences affect their self- identity. Such situations often lead to a state of conflict within an individual that gets manifested in his/her interaction with the outside world.*

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND GENDER:

1.1. Introduction: Language is the most important communication tool for human beings. It not only reflects the reality of society but also has various functions like strengthening and maintaining social existence. Language mirrors the gender perspective and can also impact and contribute to changing society's perception of gender over time that varies from an individual to the whole. Many scholars from different areas have shown interest in describing the differences of language use between men and women with different perspectives and also indicate the culture

roles ascribed to genders. The difference between two sexes has a very long tradition. Many of the major Indian languages like Hindi and Punjabi which belong to the Indo- Aryan language family identify two grammatical genders: masculine and feminine, while some languages like Sanskrit, Gujarati and Marathi have a third neuter gender too. This research is an attempt to discuss such biasness as reflected in India's most spoken language- Hindi. The attempt here is to highlight the relationship between language and gender and to investigate as to how language supports, enforces, and maintains attitudes about gender in general and women in particular in Hindi speaking society. The following analytical section would highlight language based gender- biasness with respect to some generic terms used widely by Hindi speakers and their origin; language used in certain rituals and customs; social taboos and certain idioms and phrases of the language.

1.2. Literature Review: Since the 1960s, sociolinguists [1,5,8-11,16-17 and 20] have been exploring the gendered dimension of language. These early works have assisted in distinguishing different aspects of languageand gender.

According to [19], gender is a fact that cannot be avoided; it is the way in which societies are formed around us. Therefore, [2-5, 8 and 16] and other scholars have considered gender as a social construct in the study of language and gender and social sciences. Gender division is a fundamental aspect of society as it is deeply embedded in social organization and taught to individuals from early childhood to adulthood stages implicitly. Several scholars [3, 13, 15 and 20] highlighted the power and dominance approach. They claimed that women in a patriarchal system have low social status and position; therefore, the employment of standard language use aims to raise their self-esteem. However, the interaction approach assumes that interactions between males and females are attempts toward male domination, or reinforcing social inequalities between men and women. The various interpretations of communication problems between men and women are based on the unequal hierarchical statuses and gender roles held in society. The social constructionist approach has been a particularly influential model in recent studies on language and gender [3 and 8].

Society's distinction between men and women is reflected in its language. It is realized that there are distinct "languages" that are used by men and women separately. Consequently, the society's perceptions and stereotypes are reflected through the language associated with men and women and in the varied ways the two genders use language.

The language of men and women are perceived as being very different from each other. According to [11] the style is marked by the use of certain linguistic features

such as hedging devices, tag questions, intensifiers and qualifiers, so-called trivial lexis, empty adjectives and rising intonation on declaratives. Vocabulary difference too manifests on the language of male and female. Women's speech has been said to be more polite, more redundant, more formal, more clearly pronounced and more elaborated or complex, while men's speech is less polite, more elliptical, more informal, less clearly pronounced and simpler.

The following table describes the difference between male and female discourse on the level of verbal and non-verbal communication:

Table.1 Contrast: Men –Women Verbal and Non Verbal Behavior

Communication	Men	Women
Verbal Communication	Talk loudly	Talk softly
	Slow rate	Fast rate
	Relaxed tone	Strident tone
	Powerful style	Powerless style
Non-verbal Communication		
	More physical space	Yield physical space
	Stare eye contact	Moderate eye contact
	commanding gestures	acquiescent gestures
	Keep poker face	More facial expression

According to the above description there are a number of specific features between language of male and female that shown inequality of gender in their discourse behavior.

1.3. Objectives: The objective of the research is to highlight gender inequality in the discourse behaviors of men and women which is reflected through language primarily in Hindi speaking society. In fact the basic aim is to point out the specific discriminative policy that is based on the level of gender and the way language is used in relation to Hindi where such situations often lead to a state of conflict within an individual that often gets manifested in his/her interaction with the outside world.This paper attempts to point out the gender differences in language use and perception; investigating the ways in which Hindi speakers express as to how such linguistic differences affect their self- identity.The primary goal of the research is to establish the role of Hindi in creating and sustaining a gendered society leading to situations of power polarity among the genders.

1.4. Research Methodology: Linguists, cultural historians, anthropologists and other feminist thinkers have for some time shifted the focus on the [+/- gender]

attribute of languages and how such languages determine and limit their roles in society. The primary problem is not with the dichotomy of the attribute but with the complete denial of it in the first place. The investigation of the current study has been processed through both primary and secondary sources, where primary observation comprised of interactions with native speakers between the age group of (20- 60) years for both males and femalesvarious text books, internet and movies have been used as secondary sources.

1.5. Analysis and Discussion: Although one needs to think, often words keep us from thinking. For instance, whenever one comes across English words like 'farmer, author, nurse, secretary' most of the people attach a gender to each occupation without it being stated. Many of the major Indian languages like Hindi and Punjabi which belong to the Indo- Aryan language family identify two grammatical genders: masculine and feminine, while some languages like Sanskrit, Gujarati and Marathi have a third neuter gender too. In Hindi, *aaya* (governess) and *vaishya* (prostitute) do not have any implicit masculine reference at all. The President of the nation is referred to as *raashtrapati* which is a compound word (*raashtra-* nation and *pati-* lord/ master). *Pati* is essentially masculine because individually the word stands for 'husband'. The following paragraphs would highlight language based gender- biasness with respect to some generic terms used widely by Hindi speakers and their origin; language used in certain rituals and customs; social taboos and certain idioms and phrases of the language.

The use of the generic terms in Hindi has a specific value from the sociolinguistic perspective, and it reflects gender inequality in the discourse behavior of men and women. It is recommended that women are made more visible in language by avoiding theuse of 'male-specific' and 'male-identified' words in the generic sense.

Gender is an inherently communicative process that is constructed and enacted largely through language. If one hears talking about people with names Ram, Kamal, Pranjal, Janak, we assume that they are male. Hindi names for females are often derived from or their diminutive forms like Ramaa, Kamalaa, Praanjali, Jaanaki etc. Hindi forces women to choose titles between *sushri/shrimati* in conventional terms of address marking their marital status. It is not so with men as *shri* is used for both married and unmarried men. Such usages reflect the social assumptions and the roles that society assigns to gender.

The identification of female is always known by their generic names that are derived from the root word of the profession of their male counterpart, and get a new identification with addition of affixes to the root words of the male specific generic terms, as in the following table.

Table.2

Root Word	Male Specific	Male specific+ suffix
bhikh (begging)	bhikhaari (beggar)	bhikharin (female beggar)
dhobi (washerman)	dhobi (washerman)	dhobin (washerwoman)
nai (barber)	nai (barber)	nain(barber's wife)
adhyaapan (to teach)	adhyaapak (teacher)	adhyaapika (female teacher)

But in Fig.1 one can see that there are some professions which have maleness endowed implicitly in the usage.
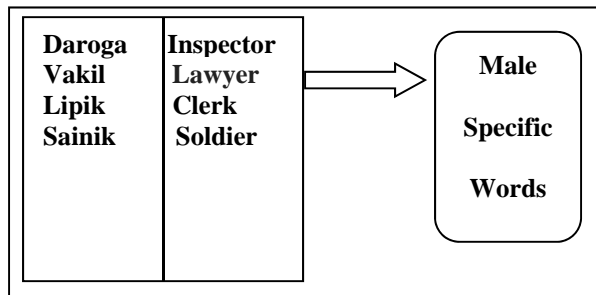
The Hindi word *maanavta* means 'humanity' in English but the term is a derivative of *maanav* which means man. It does not end here. The human race is Hindi is referred to as *maanav jaati.* Similarly, the Hindi word *purushaarth* means 'efforts' but it is derived from the root word *purush* which again means human male. This entails that it is the 'man' and not 'woman' who is ascribed the role of significant efforts for the society.

Even the rituals discriminate between genders. During Hindu marriage ceremony the ritual of *kanyaadaan* is performed in which the bride's parents give her away to the bridegroom. The word *Kanyaadaan* is a compound word in Hindi made up of two words *Kanyaa*and *daan. Kanyaa* means daughter/ girl and *daan* means offering. Offerings can only be made of inanimate objects. But in this case, the status of a girl is diminished to that of an object. Unmarried girls are widely referred to as *paraayaa dhan* (other's wealth) as one day they would have to leave their parental home and go to her in- law's place. Marriage seems nothing but a ritual of transference of ownership rights from father to husband. The concepts of

ardhaangani (the wife being half of the husband's soul and existence) and *pati-parmeshwar* (husband is God) are also very popular in Hindi.

In baby shower rituals called *godbharaai* in Hindi, only *putravati* (women having sons) women are preferred to bless the mother to be and the most popular blessing is *dudho nahaao aur puto phalo* (may you have a prosperous life and numerous sons). The existence of *putrid* (daughter) is totally ignored. Remarkable, the origin of *putri* is a derivative of *putra* meaning son. The blessing of being *akhand saubhagyawati* (perpetual marital bliss) is betowed upon married women. But the interpretation is far- fetched. It actually means that the woman's husband should be immortal. On the contrary, the men are blessed with terms like *dirghayu (*long life), *yashaswi* (famous and prosperous) and so on. Another significant ritual is that if *pitritarpan* (offerings to dead ancestors). The term *pitri* means 'father' in Sanskrit. There is no such ritual as *matritarpan* (here *matri* means mother). Either the rituals are meant only for the dead male ancestors or the female ancestors are not considered separate from their male counterparts.

If a woman fails to conceive she is referred to as *baanjh* but Hindi does not have any such usage for a man who is infertile. Probably because the society never considers infertility to be a male attribute. Polygamy was another rampant practice in ancient India therefore a word like *sautan* can be found in frequent use. This term depicts the relationship between wives of the same husband but since polyandry was rare and only scarcity driven, there is no such term which can describe the relationship between two husbands of the same wife. Witch craft is another social evil in primitive Indian tribes and many a times women are ill-treated for their alleged witch- kind bevaiour and they are proclaimed as *daayan* and banished for life from the civil society or in extreme cases even raped and murdered.

Similarly, there is a Hindu ritual performed after the death of a man known as *pitritarpan* (offerings to dead ancestors). The term *pitri* means 'father' in Sanskrit.**,**but there is no such ritual of *maatritarpan* (*maatri* meaning mother) the death of a woman.

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Stereotypes are often associated with and not easily separated from the salient variables such as race, class, culture, age, context etc. Matrimonial advertisements for brides list a number of desired attributes like *sundar* (beautiful), *gori*(fair), *gharelu* (domestic), *sushikshit* (well educated), *paarivaarik* (homely) and *sanskaari* (cultured) because every household wants to get a bride who is *sarva guna sampanna* (possessing all possible qualities). This is because after marriage the *ghar ki izzat* (honour of the household) lies on the brides as they are *ghar ki lakshami* (the goddess of household prosperity). This is a very effective technique by which the Indian society lists Dos and Don'ts for the women that are so effectively manifested in Hindi.

Idioms like *pet mein baat nahi pachna* (unable to hold a secret) have become synonymous with women. Men often use expressions like *ladkiyon jaise nakhre* (throwing tantrums like girls), *auraton ki tarah rona* (crying like women), *biwi ka ghulaam* (hen- pecked husband) and *biwi ka kamaai khaane waalaa (*one who survives on wife's earnings) and *garib ki biwi sab ki bhabhi* (poor man's wife is everyone's sister-in-law) as derogatory terms while talking to other men.

1.6. Conclusion: Language is one of the most powerful tools that can influence human mind and culture. Gender based dominance and subjugation has crystallized in the Hindu society to such an extent that it has become a way of life. And language plays an efficient tool in maintaining this type of power polarity among the genders. Every language reflects the prejudices of the society in which it evolved and as the patriarchal control over the society prevailed for a long time, the language has been organized with male- centric views. Gender neutral language has gained support from most major textbook publisher and from professional and academic groups like American Psychological Association and the Associated Press. At present, many law journals, psychology journals and literature journals do not print articles that use gendered language. India has still not fully awakened to this issue. All efforts of constructing a society based on gender equality would be futile unless the language undergoes a transformation. We speak what we see, we see what we know, we know what we understand and we understand what we comprehend. Language of speech and language of comprehension are but the same. Primarily, a lack of gender discrimination consciousness and awareness plays a sinister role in this case.

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