

VARIATIONS BETWEEN WRITTEN AND SPOKEN HINDI

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Abstract

There is a growing rift developing among Hindi speaking people about what is proper written Hindi and spoken Hindi. This problem arises, because Hindi has several spoken and written varieties. We see these language variations in popular media as well as in everyday Hindi. What we are seeing nowadays is the breakdown and mixing of the formal and informal structures. There are numerous examples of this difference in everyday use – an example of this is the ways in which patterns of address levels in Hindi are evolving and the development of a new spoken ‘semiformal level’ in addition to the normal standard, intimate, informal and formal levels of address. I argue instead of just teaching grammar rules, the learners should be taught to learn the ways in which address level usages are actually used in authentic speech and use them correctly according to the appropriate context. The main objective of this paper is to showcase contextual use of Hindi structures with an experience-based approach to the teaching of Hindi. From this I draw the conclusion that the implication of this for teaching practice is that we need to both allow the students to understand the dynamic range of spoken Hindi usages while also encouraging them as far as possible to actualize in their own written and spoken Hindi the normative Hindi grammar rules found in written Hindi.

1 Introduction

With this paper I will make an attempt to highlight some of the ways in which spoken and written Hindi usage varies. I shall investigate what factors may account for the variations which can be observed between the written and spoken forms of the language. I will analyze the distinctive characteristics how address level usages in Hindi reflect complex and changing sets of ideas for instance concerning forms of honorific address. This study will allow us to better understand how learners of Hindi as a foreign language (HFL learners) need to understand how and when to use the proper terms of address when speaking to mother tongue Hindi speaking persons. In addition to discussing the description of the language in prescriptive Hindi grammatical texts. I will also investigate the changes, or rather the evolution of the language itself and the ways in which it is still evolving due to variations in the use of the language by its practitioners. I will touch on the development of colloquial Hindi and how learners of Hindi as a foreign language will learn to identify them and to become aware of their pragmatic everyday use. This paper aims to make it easier for a learner of Hindi to navigate through the quirks of the language and to highlight some of the approaches that I employ in teaching Hindi.

2 Understanding address level usage in Hindi language

Address levels in Hindi are determined by a complex set of flexible, as well as predefined, rules that are based on a host of cultural and social markers which take into account, but is not limited to, relationships, age, occupation, and community standing. For mother tongue speakers, having been brought up living and breathing the language, applying the correct form of the address level usage comes naturally.

However for the student of a HFL student, it is like navigating through a quagmire of apparently interchangeable pronouns and verb forms. A HFL student has to be mindful of the situation she or he is in, the person she or he is talking to and a host of other cultural and social factors so as to make the correct choice. Using the correct honorific allows the HFL student to experience and live the richness of Indian culture as well as to allow them to gain more meaningful understanding and deeper assimilation of the language as well as gaining insights into the culture and lives of the people of the target language. Use the wrong address level and you can have doors slamming in your face or worse be assaulted by a verbal.

Why is learning Hindi hard for HFL students? One factor is that Hindi has an elaborate and complex set of ways in which appropriate address levels must be used. The Hindi address level system is an unfamiliar and alien system to most HFL students because the significance attached to the address levels changes dependent on the context and what it means different contexts when used in a different manner. It has meanings and nuances beyond what's written on paper in the written form of the language.

Address levels in Hindi are expressed by using combinations of pronouns and substantive verb forms. In Hindi there are three levels of second person pronouns आप āp, तुम tum and तू tū used with appropriate substantive verbs.

आप हैं āp haĩ (formal)

तुम हो tum ho (informal)

तू है tū hai (intimate)

However, a striking feature of current spoken Hindi is a new and unofficial 'semiformal' fourth level of respect, in between formal and informal, created by the combination of आप āp with informal level substantive verb form हो ho.

As an anecdotal evidence of this a straw poll of usages amongst Hindi speaking students in Singapore conducted in 2016 noted the following variations in usage.

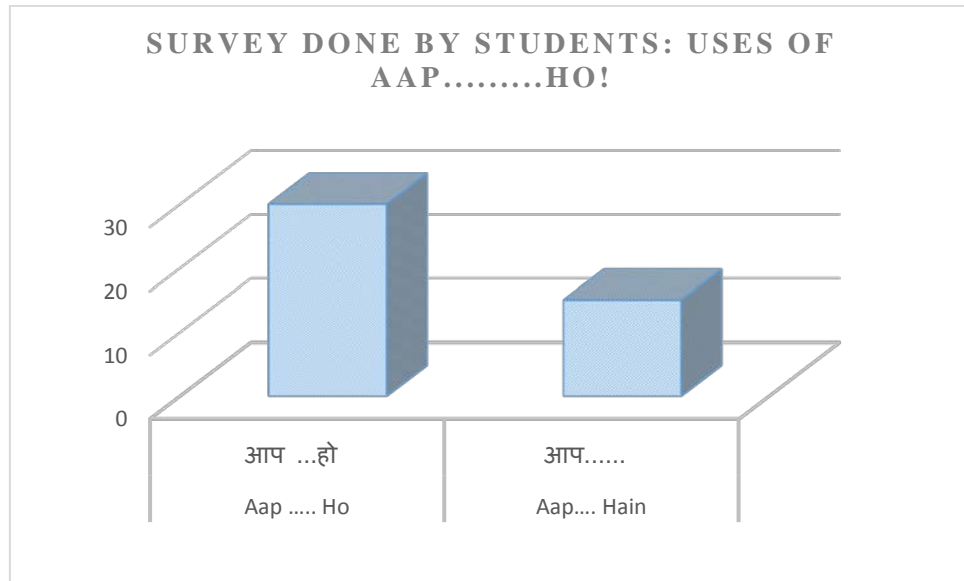


Fig. 1 Hindi speaking people using *āp ho*

This raises the question of why this is occurring. Factors which may explain this could include: regional language influence, popularization through mass media and ongoing linguistic and cultural change in Hindi speaking communities. It is also possible that these changes are taking place due to a combination of these factors. The dynamics of media penetration by cinema, TV and radio into rural culture creates a mixing of urban elite language usages with rural language usages. In this instance the pragmatics of the language comes into play because the use of the language on the street is different from the standard forms as prescribed by the textbooks. The previous three standard address levels in Hindi due to the interpenetration of urban and rural cultures have led to the evolution of a fourth ‘semiformal’ address.

In first and third person usages address levels follow a mostly predefined set of rules depending on formality, politeness, respect and age and allows for third person distinctions by using singular or plural sets of references. One such example of a predefined role would be where the greetings for mother when addressed using the informal word for mother (माँ mā ‘mummy’) is तू tu the intimate form of greeting while that for father (पिता pitā, ‘father’ note there is no ordinary informal form like ‘daddy’ in Hindi) is always the formal आप āp. This predefined situation conforms to a definite set of cultural expectations between individuals within Indian families and society. The cases where “tu” is used to denote closeness are when a child/person calls their mother “tu” to reinforce intimacy or emotional mother/child bond. Please note that fathers are always referred to as “āp” in the family and never as anything else. This could be due to a father’s disciplinary role in the family.

3 First person pronoun usage variations in contemporary spoken Hindi

Normative Hindi grammars prescribe that individuals should use the first person singular pronoun मैं maī when referring to individuals. However, observations of spoke usage also

indicated that many Hindi speakers speak of themselves in the plural and say हम हैं ham hai 'we are' when speaking about themselves as individuals. Despite this not being an accepted form in standard Hindi its use is widespread in Eastern India, especially in the state of Bihar and in Uttar Pradesh. There are various possible explanations for this practice. These include, the influence of the Bhojpuri dialect of Hindi in हम ham is the first person singular. It may also possibly reflection speech patterns amongst poorer communities where speaking of yourself as an individual is deprecated or possible influence from Urdu speaking communities where again notions of speaking for the community may come into play.

Everyday examples of this can be found in political speeches where हम ham is routinely used to express oneness with the people, which may also be a feature found in other languages. Another powerful force which may be popularizing the use हम ham instead of मैं maĩ amongst Hindi speaking communities is the influence Bollywood with its numerous movies and songs in which there are uses of हम ham instead of मैं maĩ in order to convey what is seen as a more poetic form of expression in Hindi than standard grammar Hindi. For instance note the variations in usage in these popular film titles:

मैं हूँ ना maĩ hūnā (I am there for you aren't I?)
हम दिल दे चुके सनम ham dil de chuke sanam (I have given my heart)
हम तुम ham tum (me and you)
अकेले हम अकेले तुम akele ham akele tum (I am alone/you are alone)

With such movies titles and catchy popular songs to go with it, it is can be very confusing for some HFL students who may start confusing the usage of start believing that they should use हम ham instead of मैं maĩ when referring to themselves. So knowing that Hindi is structured in such a manner, it becomes a real challenge not only for the learner of Hindi but also for those who teach Hindi as a foreign language.

4 Variations in second person address levels person honorifics

4.1 तू Tu with the verb है hai (you are)

Delhi's triple standards of pronouns (Hindi speaking belt of India) is in sharp contrast to Maharashtra's Mumbai slang, where everyone is equally called an indifferent तू 'tu'. Perhaps that explains why for all their underworld connection, the city is far more civil and well behaved than Delhi when it comes to classify people. (For everyone is a तू 'tu'). We use 'tu' to denote contempt or our sense of superiority, or closeness.

It is used in communication among siblings, very close friends, small children and pets. Going back to the above example where a new acquaintance is a 'āp', where 'āp' denotes distance and unfamiliarity. Gradually, depending on the circumstances and familiarity, he/she may become a tum and on rare occasions where the relationship may deepen enough to address him/her as 'tu', where 'tu' becomes a symbol of closeness and comfort. One example of this would be where husbands prefer to be address as 'āp' but call their wives 'tu'. Gender

suppression at play but in a way that's how āp, tum and 'tu' have been socially engineered to maintain the socio cultural balance of Indian society.

On the basis of my observations of contemporary Hindi usage in towns and villages in Uttar Pradesh and in Delhi I can describe current practice in this way. The little tea boy in the teashop is a 'tu' as are most workers working in low class jobs, like sweepers and peons. However, I have also observed that most Hindi teaching textbooks advise the learner to avoid use this pronoun when interacting with native speakers. And most modern Hindi textbooks now advocate substituting tum for tu (Bhatt, Friedlander).

Another instance, where 'tu' is used when addressing God. This use of 'tu' expresses spiritual closeness with the lord and the intimacy of the bond between man and God. We can see the use of 'tu' from the Hindi movie title

तू ही दुर्गा, तू ही काली.

Tu hi Durga tu hi Kali- where Durga/Kali is the name of the goddess and the pronoun used is tu. Hindi songs about mother too have the pronoun 'Tu' associated with mother.

माँ तू कितनी अच्छी है.

mātu kitnī acchī hai. Mother you are so good...

4.2 तुम tum with the verb हो ho (you are)

Sanskrit is often regarded the mother of all Indian languages. Despite being a highly formalized grammar and being a relatively difficult language to learn, Sanskrit is egalitarian when it comes to pronouns, addressing everybody as 'Tvam'. 'Tum', is derived from Tvam.

'Tum' is the normal pronoun of choice for people familiar with the person he/she is speaking with. Tum is the polite form to use when one is familiar with the other party. It is used among people of same age, friends, addressing young people and now generally it also includes people of trades (lower social standings) like "chaiwalla, rickshaw-wallas, dhobis" etc. Going back to the above example where a new acquaintance is an 'āp', where 'āp' is referring to social distance and unfamiliarity. Eventually over time depending on the circumstances and familiarity, he/she may become a 'tum'.

5 Variations in आप āp usage with हाँ haī form of the verb होना

The current formal second person Hindi pronoun आप āp has a complex history by which it has assumed its present status in the language. From early Hindi/Hindustani Grammar's such as that of Gilchrist of 1796, we can see that आप āp was regarded as an honorific usage which carried a sense like that of his/your worship. In the 18th and 19th century we can see the use of āp is limited to people who might also be addressed as हुज़ूर Huzur (master). These are the sort of contexts in which we can first see uses of āp. In Hindi literature it is notable that in the first Hindi novel Pariksha Guru by Lala Shree Niwasdas (1882), has uses of Aap but only in very formal circumstances. Likewise in early modern Hindi literary works such as Harishchandra's Bharat Durdasha (1870-72), āp is also being used only in vary formal situations.

The origin of āp is derived from the Sanskrit word ātman, which means ‘self’ but we cannot see the uses of āp as pronoun in Hindi literature from 300 years ago. One possibility is that in the language spoken at Sultanate and Moguls courts the use of āp as a pronoun was introduced into Urdu in India. One theory is that this practice brought back with a polite usage of āp in people’s life. The language of the courts was courtly indeed, and probably that’s how āp came to be used to denote respect. Interestingly, in Urdu, there are only two second-person pronouns āp and Tu. āp is the formal and polite form of pronoun which HFL learners are encouraged to use in daily conversation or in written form. In fact most writers on Hindi recommend that āp be used to avoid creating a misunderstanding or stereotyping people while speaking to native practitioner of the Hindi language.

6 Third person pronouns वह vah वे ve and their spelling and pronunciation

There is considerable variation in the pronunciation of third person singular and plural pronouns in spoken and written Hindi. In formal Hindi 3rd person singular pronoun is pronounced ‘vah’ but in informal spoken Hindi it is pronounced ‘vo’. However, a complication is that in standard written Hindi it is always spelled ‘vah’ even though it is normally pronounced ‘vo’, and that while it can be spelled ‘vo’ in popular newspapers and magazines this is regarded as incorrect Hindi by Hindi teachers. So in this case Hindi teachers have to teach students how to understand that the spelling of this word does not correspond with its most common pronunciation. In addition in both the written Hindi of some of Hindi’s most famous authors, such as Premchand, and in spoken Hindi today the plural third person pronoun is normally identical in spelling and pronunciation with the first person form ‘vah’. This again means that the teacher has to make students aware of the range of usages found in authentic texts rather than simply trying to teach the normative grammar which is given in Hindi textbooks.

7 Dropped pronouns

We are also seeing pronouns being dropped in spoken Hindi by native speakers in a way to shortcut the spoken language. For instance in the question कहाँ जा रही हो? Kahāñ jā rahī ho? Where despite the pronoun being dropped the listener can still comprehend what’s being said because the verbs in Hindi are conjugated showing the gender and address level of what is being said.

But the question is when teaching HFL Hindi students should they be allowed to follow this practice in their written Hindi? Or should we teach them to be aware of this practice in spoken Hindi but not to follow it themselves in their written Hindi.

8 Imperative usages mixing āp and tum levels of address

Another feature of how contemporary spoken Hindi varies from formal written standard Hindi is related to the mixing of levels of address in combinations of the use of pronouns and imperative verb forms. For instance, I have observed the following variations in usage amongst the Hindi speaking communities in which I live:

Standard Hindi

āp padhiye (formal for read. The iye implies please.)

Tum padho (you read)

Spoken variant form adding

āp padho (āp pronoun with tum level verb form)

Standard form

āp suniye (please listen)

tum suno (you listen)

Spoken variant form

āp Suno

9 Variations between spoken and written Hindi in imperative form of verb करना karnā

The verb to do is a common verb in most languages, and this is the same in Hindi. A native Hindi speaker and HFL student will use it almost all of the time. One type of everyday usage being use in command forms and the correct polite imperative form is 'kijie' but younger Hindi speakers from Delhi and Western area of Hindi speakers often say 'karie'. The verb 'karna' is irregular in standard Hindi in its imperative forms at the āp level even though its tum level form takes a regular form, this is probably one of the reasons why people use the wrong form of 'karna' to address the polite imperative.

'आप काम कीजिए āp kām kijie' (standard form) but we hear 'आप काम करिए āp kām karie'. (Spoken variant form)

This we can see similar variations between standard and spoken Hindi in past tense as well- 'मैंने करा Maine karā' (standard form) instead of 'मैंने किया Maine kiyā'. (Spoken variant form)

10 Variations between spoken and written forms of oblique pronouns

Spoken Hindi form can be show a range of variations which are not found as often in written Hindi. This means Hindi speakers are mostly careful and adhere to written Hindi protocols while writing but when it comes to spoken forms they go with the swing. Delhi Hindi speakers are really influencing the spoken forms of Hindi. In spoken Hindi they can say 'मैंने करा है maine kara hai' or 'मेरे को मालूम है mere ko maalum hai' but when comes to writing mostly we see 'maine kiya hai' or 'mujhe maloom hai'.

A prominent instance of variation between written and spoken Hindi relates to the usage 'Mere ko' is which is non-standard Hindi where you can use compound post position मुझ + को but you cannot use 're' and 'ko' together. This is different from the way that standard Hindi allows Two simple post positions to be put one after another as can be seen in 'डिब्बे में से सामान निकालो dibbe me se sāmān nikālo'. Here both 're' and 'ko' are being use for same pronoun 'मैं mai' (I) so in this case only one can go with 'mai', 'mere' or 'mujhe', both cannot be used.

The historical roots of this practice can be seen by its usage in classical Hindi literature such as in works by Sur, Tulsi, Kabir, Meera etc. where we may see 'mere ko' in few places. One explanation for this longstanding practice may be that it an influence from other Indian languages or Hindi dialects.

Currently "mere ko" can be seen to be an influence which comes mostly from Hariyanvi Hindi dialect, Mumbaiya Hindi dialect and from the Punjabi language. This raises a question is this an old Hindi practice which has been preserved to a greater extent in some dialects or an influence upon Hindi from other languages, this question needs further investigation.

An important aspect of usages such as these is that they are seen as being social status markers, and employing them in your speech is seen as indicative of not belonging to an educated strata of society. In other words it is important to consider whether a factor in variations between spoken and written Hindi relates to how 'slang' usages reflect social class.

11 Teaching students about Hindi spelling in relation to pronunciation

An issue which is often of concern when teaching Hindi is that it is sometimes said that Hindi is spoken the exact way it is written, however, in reality written Hindi does not always indicated aspects of how words are pronounce. Issues include, the dropping of inherent 'a' sounds between consonants, as in words like सस्ता *sastā*, cheap, or कमरा *kamrā* room, for which there is no standard rule in Hindi grammar which explains the ways in which the omission of 'a' sounds is represented in Hindi script. A second set of inconsistencies relates to words such as बादाम *bādām*, almond, and बाज़ार *bāzār*, market in which the first long vowel is pronounced shorter than the second long vowel but there is no symbol in standard Hindi script to represent this. The third issue is the sounds which correspond to the written character ह *ha*, in some final contexts this sounds like a kind of 'a' sound as in बारह *bārah*, twelve. However in medial contexts it sounds like a form of 'e' vowel or 'he' in some speakers pronunciation, as in पहले *pahale*, first, and बहन *bahan*, sister. The fourth consonant with multiple pronunciations is व *va* which can sound like a sort of soft 'au' as in चावल *cāval*, rice, or largely disappear as in गाँव *gāmva*, village. In such instances students have to learn that the spelling quite distinctly from the pronunciation. An fifth kind of variation between spelling and pronunciation is an increasing tendency to not distinguish between the unaspirated and aspirated retroflex sounds ङ *ṅa* and ञ *ṅha* in phrases like पढ़ना पढ़ता है *paṛnā paṛtā hai* 'you have to study/read'. The implication of this for teaching practice is that HFL Hindi speakers may need to be taught some sorts of rules or guidelines in relation to understanding the difference between the pronunciation and spelling.

12 Teaching styles in relation to spoken and written Hindi

For a HFL student to gain the most out of the study they undertake, it is imperative for the teaching approach to be student centric and activity based. This approach is necessary in foreign language teaching as experiential learning is highly effective in teaching concepts. In teaching Hindi, there has been a decreased emphasis on the traditional way to teach grammar where there was little involvement of the students. Practical engagement with the language can be enhanced by using ideas from grammar at times as scaffolding but not as the main focus of the teaching.

One resource which can be utilized is multimedia. This can be used to a large extent in teaching concepts related to grammar which are traditionally taught through only lectures. Appropriate content from Bollywood, Indian advertisements is selected for its catchiness as well as sentence structure used. These videos or clips are then shown to complement the knowledge learnt. The ultimate aim of using multimedia to complement teaching is increased information retention as well as proper application of learned concepts by HFL students. For example, the example is shown on how a popular Bollywood song can be used to teach the component of grammar on Honorifics this serves to reinforce the learnt knowledge on the content.

Tu kitni acchi hai
Tu kitni bholi hai
Oh ma

For the second person pronoun where the honorific used when referencing one's mother or "ma" in the song is actually tu due to the closeness of the relation between mother and child reminds HFL students of the nuances that one must take note of when using the honorific tu. Likewise when teaching the usage of āp to tum to tu, where the person become closer over time the song by Kumar Sanu <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLvNsW7qQ14> is played in class and the learners are made to listen and discuss the song.

This method not only conveys the required knowledge in an engaging manner which increases information retention. It shows the HFL student a glimpse of the culture of the language they are studying. A sometimes ignored merit of this method is the glimpse of culture that it gives the HFL learner, for a HFL learner, knowing the context in which grammar rules are meant to be used in and their particular application is as important as knowing the rule itself. Through the use of Indian content, the students learns more about India's culture as well as the specific rules governing everyday conversations that a slideshow would simply be ineffective in giving.

13 The importance of Roleplay in understanding spoken Hindi

Roleplay can be a useful way to help students understand and practice using address levels in Hindi and learn about the relationship between standard Hindi address level usages and the new developing ways in which people are using semiformal address forms such as आप हो āp ho.

Role-playing is proposed as an ideal technique to teach language because it prepares learners for the unpredictable nature of real-life communication, teaches appropriate language use, and boost self-confidence. Role-playing prepares learners for realistic communication, adding emotion, inventiveness, and listener awareness to language teaching. It contextualizes language use and exposes the student to conversational routines and cultural discussion. Role-playing gives students' instant evidence of the success of their language usage, fosters retention, and stimulates involvement in a relatively risk-free environment.

All students are asked to take part in roleplay activities during my class where they assume different roles and speak and act out with each other according to their assigned roles. We do normal everyday activities like buying things at the market, dinner at friends, in order to learn

the language. I also get the learners to re-enact movie scenes to liven up the learning process as well inject humor so that lessons are fun and engaging. An important scene is related to greetings customs that means they take up role of different family members and greet each other every day. This gets them to learn Hindi address level usages and honorific usages in their social contexts.

14 Conclusion

I have explored in this paper the relationship between spoken and written Hindi and the implications of this for HFL teaching practice. The main context for this analysis has been the address level system in Hindi and an emerging practice in spoken Hindi of using a new 'semiformal' address level. This raised the question of the relationship between making students passively aware of language variation in Hindi and encouraging them to actively produce Hindi which follows standard Hindi usages as found in written Hindi. I also questioned the ways in which imperative usages in Hindi are reflecting informal spoken patterns but argued that limits need to be set on what are currently acceptable standards in written Hindi. In addition I demonstrated that there are a wide range of ways in which written Hindi spelling does not correspond to actual pronunciation and suggested for HFL students explicit teaching of guidelines on spelling may be necessary. Finally, I proposed that the most effective ways to teach students about the differences between spoken and written Hindi was through a range of student centred learning activities, including exposure to multimedia sources and role play activities. The implication of this for teaching practice is that we need to both allow the students to understand the dynamic range of spoken Hindi usages while also encouraging them as far as possible to actualize in their own written and spoken Hindi the normative Hindi grammar rules found in written Hindi.

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