

## **Linguistic Features of Horoscopes in Marathi and English Newspapers in India: A Comparative Study**

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### **Abstract**

Horoscopes in newspapers are one of the most read sections by readers. Regular appearance of horoscopes in regional and English language newspapers is a well-established feature of newspapers in India. Nevertheless, the distinctive linguistic features of this genre remain under-researched. This article is a modest attempt to investigate linguistic features of horoscopes with particular reference to daily and weekly horoscopes in select Marathi dailies published in Maharashtra State in January 2012. It also attempts to compare the language of horoscopes in Marathi newspapers with that of select English newspapers in India published in January 2012. Despite studies in Marathi grammar; the register of horoscope in newspapers is a bit neglected. In Indian newspapers in English as well the genre of horoscopes has not been fully explored. The lexical and syntactic features of daily and weekly horoscopes in Marathi and English newspapers in India have been discussed in this article. Brevity, the defining feature of horoscopes, is noticed relatively more in Marathi newspapers than in English newspapers in India. Omission of subject and ellipsis of end verb is a commonly noticed feature of horoscopes in Marathi newspapers. In contrast, horoscopes in English newspapers in India prefer complete sentences. Use of gendered language is the distinguishing feature of horoscopes in Marathi newspapers.

**Keywords:** Horoscopes, Indian Newspapers, Lexis, Syntax, Marathi.

### **Introduction**

The sources of horoscopes range from palmistry, tarot cards, newspapers, TV programmes, websites, e-mails, to jokes in newspapers. Horoscopes in newspapers are one of the most read sections by readers. The popularity of horoscopes is indicated through their regular occurrence in daily newspapers. There may or may not be any relation between the movement of celestial bodies and day-

to-day decision making, but there is no difference in the popularity of horoscopes in the developed and developing countries of the west and the east. All readers equally love and believe in horoscopes. It is interesting to note that daily horoscopes are not published on Sundays. On weekend holiday readers may not be interested in advice. Sunday newspapers publish weekly horoscopes.

People read horoscopes for different purposes. Many readers read horoscopes in newspapers only for fun (Beall, 1976) while some people make decisions based on their horoscopes (Synder, 1974). The astrology columns in newspapers began in August 1930 in the *London Sunday Express* (Dean and Mather, 1996). Soon, horoscopes became staples of newspapers (Evans, 1996 and Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2014). They became so popular that the editors of American newspapers rather reluctantly carried a disclaimer alongside horoscope columns to claim they were unscientific (Blackmore & Seebold, 2001). This popularity continued in the twenty first with the ever-widening digital space (see Kuo, 2009).

In India too, horoscopes are popular. There is an astrology mall in Bengaluru, Karnataka State of India [*Bhavishyache Vartman* (Present of the Future), *Maharashtra Times*, 04/02/2012)]. Regular appearance of horoscopes in regional languages and English newspapers is a well-established feature of newspapers in India. There are also instances of popularity of the horoscope genre in Indian newspapers. The newspaper offices are closed on 26<sup>th</sup> January on account of the Republic Day. Hence, the newspapers are not published on the following day, i.e. 27<sup>th</sup> January. However, the horoscope section of 27<sup>th</sup> January is published in the issue of 26<sup>th</sup> January (see *Sakal* and *Loksatta* 2012). In contrast to the short space earlier, these days *The Indian Express* allocates more space to horoscopes. The newspapers in Marathi, the official language of Maharashtra State in Western India, and English language also publish feature articles on various developments in horoscopes. For example, *Loksatta*, a Marathi daily newspaper, published an article *Rashirang* (colours of stars) on February 19, 2012 showing the relation between the colours used in houses and stars. Similarly, the *Sunday Times of India* (STOI, October 14, 2012) included an article entitled ‘Astro Bouquet’ elaborating on the link between stars and flowers liked by the persons.

### **Studies on Horoscopes in Newspapers**

Adorno (1994) analysed three months of horoscopes in *The Los Angeles Times*. Svensen & White (1995) and Evans (1996) replicated Adorno’s study. Svensen and White (1995) dealt with the

Australian newspaper *The Brisbane Sun*. They found that horoscopes catered to readers' narcissism by referring to positive qualities, among others. The common topics covered in horoscopes are money and love (Adorno, 1974; Svensen & White, 1995). The previous studies by Evans (1996) and Tandoc & Ferrucci (2014) mainly dealt with horoscopes in women's magazines. In women's magazines race and age, love and money are the common themes. Gupta, et al. (2008) discovered that the theme of "women needing to change for their men" repeatedly occurred in *Cosmopolitan* over a period of one year.

### **Psychological, Sociological, Anthropological and Culture Studies**













The horoscopes are mainly studied from psychological, sociological, anthropological and culture studies point of view. Horoscope has been developed as a media genre. It now comes under the ambit of media studies. Horoscopes have become one of the defining features of contemporary popular culture (Evans, 1996 and Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2014). Horoscopes are studied as part of culture studies, for instance, see Blackmore & Seebold (2001). Though inferences in all these studies are derived with the help of language, very few studies focus on the use of language in horoscopes (see He, 2011). In one of the studies, focusing on the cross linguistic and cross-cultural analysis of horoscope registers, He (2011) examines the semantic functions of horoscope registers by applying Halliday's systemic functional grammar. The study deals with the analysis and comparison of the grammatical choices made in the imperative and relational clauses of online horoscope texts across four languages: English, Chinese, Japanese and German.

### **Objective of the Present Study and Corpus**

The present article is a preliminary study to explore the register of horoscopes in regional language and English language newspapers in India. In the literature on Marathi media studies, there is neither passing reference to the horoscopes in newspapers nor to the register of horoscopes (see Sangwai, 2002 and Shelke, 2012). There is dearth of literature on language of horoscopes in Marathi. Since the distinctive linguistic features of this genre in Marathi remain under-researched, this article is a modest attempt to investigate genre-specific features of horoscopes with particular reference to daily and weekly horoscopes in select Marathi dailies, viz. *Agrowon*, *Lokmat*, *Loksatta*, *Maharashtra Times* and *Sakal* published in January 2012 in Maharashtra State of India. For daily horoscopes, texts from five Marathi newspapers were selected for all 12 zodiac signs and 26 days. For weekly

horoscopes 360 samples were referred to. Before we go to the features of horoscope register, for the convenience of references it is better to know Marathi and English names for the zodiac signs.

**Table 1 Marathi and English Names for Zodiac Signs**

Sr. No.	<i>Rashis</i> (Marathi)		Zodiac signs	English
1	मेष	<i>mesh</i>		Aries
2	वृषभ	<i>vrishabha</i>		Taurus
3	मिथुन	<i>mithun</i>		Gemini
4	कर्क	<i>kark</i>		Cancer
5	सिंह	<i>sinha</i>		Leo
6	कन्या	<i>kanya</i>		Virgo
7	तूळ	<i>tul</i>		Libra
8	वृश्चिक	<i>vrishchik</i>		Scorpio
9	धनु	<i>dhanu</i>		Sagittarius
10	मकर	<i>makar</i>		Capricorn
11	कुंभ	<i>kumbha</i>		Aquarius
12	मीन	<i>meen</i>		Piscis

To know newspaper-specific features, daily and weekly horoscopes were analysed newspaper-wise for writers, headings and topics with focus on lexical and syntactic features of the genre. The English gloss (translation) of Marathi horoscopes in this article is provided by the researcher. This article doesn't focus on frequency count of lexis and syntactic patterns.

Among the hundred plus daily newspapers published in Maharashtra, horoscopes in five Marathi language newspapers have been considered for this study. *Maharashtra Times*, owned by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. mainly tries to cater to the young readers with the blend of English and Marathi. Its focus is on civic issues rather than politics. *Loksatta*, owned by The Indian Express Group, is considered one of the best newspapers in Marathi. These two dailies enjoy a status among the elite readers in urban as well as rural Maharashtra. However, now *Lokmat* and *Sakal*, owned by Lokmat Media Group and Sakal Media Group respectively, also have more readers cutting across classes and masses in urban and rural areas. *Lokmat* is one of the largest selling Indian dailies and the daily circulation of *Sakal* is 15,00,000. *Agrowon*, agriculture daily, is one more publication of Sakal Media Group. It is devoted to farmers and tries to update them with the latest global trends in agriculture (for more about Marathi dailies see Jeffrey, 1997 and Thakur, 2008).

### **Main Observations**

In these newspapers the sections under which horoscopes appear have different names.

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Ravindra B. Tasildar, M.A., Ph.D.

Linguistic Features of Horoscopes in Marathi and English Newspapers in India:

A Comparative Study

367

**Table 2 Horoscopes in Marathi Newspapers: Names of the section and writers**

Newspaper	<i>Sakal</i>	<i>Loksatta</i>	<i>Maharashtra Times</i>	<i>Lokmat</i>	<i>Agrowon</i>
Name of the section (daily)	<i>Dinman</i>	<i>Dindarshika</i>	<i>Rashibhavishya</i>	<i>Ganesha Uvachya</i>	<i>Bhavishya</i>
Gloss	Length of the day	Calendar	Horoscope	Ganesha says	Forecast
Writer	Prof. Ramanlal Shah	Not mentioned.	Not mentioned.	Laxmikant Thosar	Vidyadhar-shastri Karandikar
Name of the section (weekly)	<i>Bhavishya</i>	<i>Rashibhavishya</i>	<i>Rashibhavishya</i>	<i>Rashibhavishya</i>	<i>Saptahik Bhavishya</i>
Gloss	Forecast	Horoscope	Horoscope	Horoscope	Weekly Forecast
Writer	Shriram Bhat	Arvind Panchakshari	Purushotam Shukla	Vidyadhar-shastri Karandikar	Vidyadhar-shastri Karandikar

The names of the sections of weekly horoscopes are similar. Writers of daily columns are mentioned by *Lokmat*, *Sakal* and *Agrowon* whereas *Loksatta* and *Maharashtra Times* do not mention writers. For weekly horoscope columns all the newspapers mention writers.

## Lexical Features

### a) Commonly used nouns and pronouns

#### *Use of kinship terms*

*kutumba* (family) is the common word used in all the newspapers. In addition, words indicating relations are used, e.g. *pṛī-pṛīni* (husband-wife), *bhavāṇḍā* (siblings), *jeṣṭhā* (elders), etc. These words are addressed to both masculine and feminine genders.

#### *Use of reflexive pronouns*

In the horoscope columns almost all Marathi dailies prefer to use reflexive pronouns like *apṛṇ / apṛya* (you(r) - inclusive) wherever necessary. However, *ṭumhi / tumchya* (you(r) – exclusive) is used by *Sakal*.

## b) Words used to indicate future

### *Use of verbs*

Some commonly used verbs to indicate future are as follows.

*shasakiya kamat yash mi|el* (sinha, Sakal, 31/01/2012)

[(You) will get success in government work.]

*mi|el –fut-3s-neut respective* (will get)

*dyal –fut-3s-neut respective* (will give)

*vatel –fut-3s-neut respective* (will feel)

*ja|il –fut-3s-neut respective* (will go)

*yei:l –fut-3s-neut respective* (will come)

### *Use of negative words*

Different forms of negative words like *nahi* (no/not - present), *nako* (don't give - present), *nase* / *nasel* (not - future), *naka* (not – pres imperative) are used. An example is given below.

*kamacha mood nasel* (fut-negative) (tul, Maharashtra Times, 05/01/2012)

(There will be no mood to work.)

### *Use of adverbs of time*

In *Lokmat* high frequency of repetition is noticed in the use of *aaj* (today) while other newspapers use words indicating parts of a day like *sakal* (morning), *duparpasun* (from afternoon), *duparnantar* (post-noon) and *sayankal* (evening). The higher frequency of repetition of *duparnantar* (post-noon) is noticed in *Sakal*, 18/01/2012 and 27/1/2012 (in 26/01/2012) and *Maharashtra Times*, 02/01/2012 and 20/01/2012.

## c) Code-mixing

*Maharashtra Times*, one of the leading Marathi dailies is known for ample use of English in headings, news reports, editorials and middles. However, examples of code-mixing were hardly found in horoscopes in this and other dailies.

*kamacha mood nasel* (dhanu, Maharashtra Times, 10/01/2012)

(There will be no mood to work.)

*propertychikame margi lagtil* (tul, Sakal, 04/01/2012)

(Property issues will be on the track.)

The word 'property' is frequently used in *Sakal*, (02, 04,06,14,18,19,20,24 and 31/01/2012.)

In addition, words like 'shares' (*meen, Loksatta*, 13/01/2012), 'sharesmadhye' [in shares (market)] (*meen, Sakal*, 06/01/2012) and 'ordersmadhye' (in orders) (*vrishchik, Agrowon*, 13/01/2012) were found.

## Syntactic Features

The syntactic patterns in horoscopes were also studied. Analysis of daily and weekly horoscopes in newspapers is quite interesting. Some of the observations are given below.

### Short expressions

The words, phrases and short sentences are used in horoscopes. The sentences are often short and are restricted to two and three words. Such imperative expressions are frequent in *Maharashtra Times* and *Loksatta*. The following are some examples.

*prākṛuti jāpa* health care take-imp-2pl (*tul, Maharashtra Times*, 22/01/2012)  
(Take care of health.)

*prāvas taḷavet* travel avoid-imp-2pl (*kark, Sakal*, 27/01/2012)  
(Avoid travel.)

*shānt rāha* silent remain-imp 2pl (*sinha, Maharashtra Times*, 15/01/2012)  
(Remain silent.) (*vrishchik, Maharashtra Times*, 09/01/2012)

*tājḍnyancha sēlla ghya* expert-gen advice take-imp-2pl  
(Seek advice of experts.)  
(*makar, Loksatta*, 11/01/2012 and *kark, Loksatta*, 24/01/2012 )

The following expressions are not imperatives.

*chārchya phāḷdayi thāravyaṭ* discussion fruitful fut-obligatory  
(Discussions should be fruitful.)  
(*makar, Loksatta*, 5/01/2012)

*chārchya phāḷdayi thāraṭil* discussion fruitful fut-possibility  
(Discussions will be fruitful.)  
(*mithun, Loksatta*, 17/01/2012)



*prākriṭichya kirkoḷ tākṛari*

health-gen minor complain-pl

(Minor complaints of health)

(*dhanu, Maharashtra Times, 5/01/2012*)

With regard to length of constructions *Maharashtra Times* and *Loksatta* prefer three-word expressions while *Sakal* goes for two or three simple sentences of three words each. For instance,

*kamacha mood naseḷ (full stop) prākṛuti jāpa (full stop)*

(*vrishchik, Maharashtra Times, 03/01/2012*)

(There will be no mood to work. Take care of health.)

*sayyamane vage (full stop) shāṅṭ rāha (full stop)*

(*vrishchik, Maharashtra Times, 09/01/2012*)

(Behave with control / patience. Remain silent.)

### Use of Reduplicative Words

In Marathi horoscopes compound words are also used. The nature of reduplicative words is a bit different. Sometimes there is alliterative effect and sometimes similarity in end syllables.

*nokarit badali-badhatiche yoga sambhavatat (vrishabha, Maharashtra Times, 23/01/2012)*

(There are chances of transfer –promotion in job.)

*nokarit varisthanshi milate-julate ghya (mithun, Maharashtra Times, 23/01/2012)*

(Adjust with seniors in job.)

### Repetition of Similar Constructions

Repetition of similar syntax is not unusual in daily and weekly horoscopes. Examples from *Maharashtra Times* and *Agrowon* have been considered here.

*mishtanna bhojanache yoga yetil (mithun, Maharashtra Times, 11/01/2012)*

(There will be chances of a meal with sweets.)

In the next example we find clipping of the end verb.

*mishtanna bhojanache yoga (kark, Agrowon, 17/01/2012)*

[(There are) chances of a meal with sweets.]

Examples of short expressions from *Maharashtra Times* are considered first.

- prākṛuti jāpa* (Take care of health.)  
(*vrishabh and kanya, Maharashtra Times, 01/01/2012*)  
(*makar, Maharashtra Times, 13/01/2012*)  
(*vrishabha, vrishchik and kanya, Maharashtra Times, 15/01/2012*)  
(*mithun, tul and kumbha, Maharashtra Times, 22/01/2012*)  
(*mithun, Maharashtra Times, 29/01/2012*)  
(*vrishchik, Maharashtra Times, 30/01/2012*)

The following examples present continuation of similar pattern with little difference in the meaning.

- prākṛuti sambhala* (Maintain health.) (*kark, Maharashtra Times, 15/01/2012*)  
(*makar, Maharashtra Times, 29/01/2012*)

Sometimes same pattern with opposite meaning is also repeated. See the following examples.

- pravas taḷavet* (Avoid travel.) (*kark, Sakal, 27/01/2012*)  
*pravas kəral* [(You) will travel.] (*vrishabha, Maharashtra Times, 08/01/2012*)  
(*dhanu, Maharashtra Times, 15/01/2012*)

Same patterns are also found in other newspapers.

- pravas kəral* [(You) will travel.] (*vrishchik, Loksatta, 15/01/2012*)

Some other examples of lengthy pattern from *Agrowon* are given below.

- svatahache kaam svatahach karave* (*vrishchik, 20/01/2012*)  
(Do your work yourself only.)  
*svatahache prayatna svatahach karavet* (You should take self efforts.)  
(*tul, 17/01/2012, mithun 20/01/2012, maker, 24/01/2012*)  
*pəṭnichā səlla mahatvacha tharel* (*mithun, 21/01/2012 and sinha, 28/01/2012*)  
(Wife's advice will be important.)  
*tumchya karyakshetrat prasiddhi labhel* (*tul, Agrowon, 13/01/2012*)  
(You will get fame in your field.)  
*tumchya karyakshetrat prasiddhi (miḷel)* (*vrishabha, Sakal, 24/01/2012*)

[(You will get) fame in your field.]

### Omission of Verbs

Like many other Asian languages, Marathi is a verb final language with SOV pattern. Omission of verbs can be seen as one of the dominant features of Marathi horoscope syntax. In daily horoscopes verbs are to be assumed. These are mainly incomplete sentences where main or helping verbs are dropped. Here omission of verbs invite reader-specific multiple interpretations.

*pragaticha divas* (tul, Loksatta, 16/01/2012 and meen, Loksatta, 20/01/2012)

(Day of progress)

*bhetigathita safhalta (mi|el)* (sinha, Loksatta, 21/01/2012)

[(You will get) success in meetings.]

*tumchya karyakshetrat prasiddhi (mi|el)* (vrishabha, Sakal, 24/01/2012)

[(You will get) fame in your field.]

*aarthik labha* (meen, Sakal, 09/01/2012 and 27/01/2012 in 26/01/2012)

[(You may get) monetary benefit.]

### Horoscopes in English Newspapers in India

To know the characteristic features of horoscopes in Marathi newspapers comparison with horoscopes in English newspapers in India is imperative.

Indian Newspaper English (INE), one of the over explored varieties of Indian English [see Labru (1984) and Parhi (2008)], mainly revolves around matrimonial advertisements (see Mehrotra 1975), newspaper headlines and editorial headings [see Prabhakar Babu (1970-71) and Dubey (1989)]. With the corpus from Indian English newspapers Labru (1984) attempted to find out the deviations in Indian English from English English. In his study of news story headlines, editorial headings, letters to the editors and matrimonial advertisements, Dubey (1989) found SVO as the dominant syntactic pattern in INE. Examples of SVA, SVC and SV were also found in INE. According to him, absence or near absence of SVOC/SVOO and SVOA is an important feature of INE in general (Dubey, 1989: 17).

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Linguistic Features of Horoscopes in Marathi and English Newspapers in India:

A Comparative Study

373

Just like newspapers in Indian languages, daily and weekly horoscopes appear in national and regional English language newspapers in India. In their books Mehrotra (1998) and Crystal (1995) consider text samples from different sections of Indian newspapers, except horoscopes. According to Labru (1984) INE is the most representative specimen of Indian English; however, horoscope remains a neglected section of INE. Although horoscope is considered an authentic teaching material in English Language Teaching in India (see Saraswathi 2004:117), yet it remains a less explored variety of INE.

In the present study an attempt has been made to examine features of horoscope register with particular reference to daily horoscopes in *Deccan Herald*, *The Hitvada* and *The Indian Express* and weekly horoscopes in *Deccan Herald*, *The Asian Age*, *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, *Sunday Times of India* and *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, published in January 2012. For daily horoscopes three dailies were selected for all 12 zodiac signs and 26 days and for weekly horoscopes 360 samples were referred to.

Among the two hundred plus dailies in English published in India, *The Times of India*, owned and managed by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd, is one of the largest selling English language newspapers with 7.590 million readers [Indian Readership Survey (IRS), 2014]. *The Indian Express*, published by the Indian Express Group, is one of the popular English language dailies of Northern India. *The Tribune*, published from Chandigarh, is one of the leading English language dailies in northern states, especially Punjab and Haryana. *The Telegraph*, published by media group Ananda Publishers from Kolkata, West Bengal, is the largest circulated English daily in the east India. *The Telegraph* still uses "Calcutta" rather than "Kolkata" in its mastheads. The weekly horoscope finds a place in the *Graphiti*, of the Sunday edition. Launched in 1994, *The Asian Age*, is the only English-language Indian newspaper with an international edition (London). *Deccan Herald*, popular mainly in South India, with its head office in Bengaluru, is among the top ten most widely read English language newspapers in India, with an average daily readership of 458,000 (IRS, 2013). The *Hitvada* is the largest selling English broadsheet daily of Central India. It has a daily circulation of over 200000 copies across the Central India with maximum 130000 in Nagpur city alone.

**Table 3 Horoscopes in English Newspapers in India: Names of the sections and writers**

Newspaper	<i>The Indian Express</i>	<i>The Hitvada</i>	<i>Deccan Herald</i>	<i>The Asian Age</i> (weekly)
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Name of the section (daily)	Day Today	Today's Forecast	Astrospeak	Name of the section not mentioned.
Writer	Peter Vidal	Dr Prem Kumar Sharma	Amara Bhavani Dev	Writer not mentioned.
Newspaper	<i>Sunday Times</i>	<i>The Telegraph</i>	<i>Deccan Herald</i>	<i>The Tribune</i>
Name of the section (weekly)	Ganesh Says	STAR TRACK	STARSPEAK	STAR POWER
Writer	Bejan Daruwala	Kusum Bhandari	Guruji Shrii Arnav	Aparshakti

Generally, the writers who write daily horoscopes also provide weekly horoscopes. However, the writers of daily and weekly horoscopes of *Deccan Herald* are different. The name of the writer of the section of horoscope is not mentioned in weekly issues of *The Asian Age*.

### Lexical and Syntactic Features

Here are some introductory examples of lexical and syntactic features of the genre of horoscope in INE.

#### Use of Modal Auxiliaries

The modal auxiliaries - will, would, should, could, may, might - find a place in horoscopes in English newspapers in India.

Attending lectures **will** enable to learn new things. (Cancer, *The Hitvada*, 06/01/2012)

Keeping a positive outlook towards love life **would** help in cementing the bond. (Leo, *The Hitvada*, 06/01/2012)

Singles **should** let any new relationship progress slowly and at its own pace instead of trying to push the other person in making a premature commitment. (Aries, *The Asian Age*, Weekly, 08/01/2012)

Be especially careful with financial matters, because you **could** be overconfident of your success. (Cancer, *Deccan Herald*, 13/01/2012)

In some expressions one also finds use of more than one modal auxiliary.

You **may** safely make business investments today, for you **will** be capable of making inspired choice. (Taurus, *Deccan Herald*, 13/01/2012)

You **might** need to spend some time in negotiation, but it **will** be well worth your while. (Aries, *The Asian Age*, Weekly, 08/01/2012)

The following are some examples of syntax from daily and weekly English newspapers in India.

### Short Sentences

Beware of strangers. (Gemini, *The Tribune*, 15/01/2012)

A Taurean is supportive. (Aries, *The Tribune*, 15/01/2012)

Expect professional changes. (Leo, *The Tribune*, 15/01/2012)

Give Priority to travel. (Libra, *The Tribune*, 15/01/2012)

Give priority to family life. (Gemini, *The Hitvada*, 06/01/2012)

Make no commitments on Monday. (Leo, *The Tribune*, 15/01/2012)

Check your waistline. (Taurus, *The Tribune*, 15/01/2012)

Do what is right and ethical. (Sagittarius, *Deccan Herald*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

### Lengthy Compound and Complex Sentences

Whether the horoscope is daily or weekly, English newspapers in India prefer lengthy sentences. See the following instances.

There is no telling exactly what will happen now that other people have decided to go their own way, but if you have made your pace with authority you should be on a fairly safe path. (Libra, *The Indian Express*, Daily, 06/01/2012)

Look at any troubling situation from your spouse or partner's perspective and be willing to let her/him have the last word if it means keeping peace. (Libra, *The Asian Age*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

There is nothing wrong with being ambitious, but too much of aggressiveness might create a bad reputation for you and create disharmony in people around you. (Cancer, *The Telegraph*, 15/01/2012)

If you are preparing for an interview or examination, you'll do well.

(Virgo, *The Telegraph*, 15/01/2012)

### **Imperative Constructions**

Pay attention to your health. (Scorpio, *Deccan Herald*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

Stay alert about crucial information on professional and financial matters.  
(Gemini, *The Telegraph*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

Give your opinion without trying to push it, especially in front of colleagues.  
(Aries, *The Asian Age*, Weekly, 08/01/2012)

There are also negative imperative sentences in newspaper horoscopes.

Don't expect immediate changes. (Libra, *The Tribune*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

Don't forget to attend to your responsibilities. (Taurus, *Deccan Herald*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

Do not go through with any new deal if you mistrust the other people involved.  
(Scorpio, *The Asian Age*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

Thus, the language of horoscopes in English newspapers in India carries out its prime functions like to give advice, instil confidence, warn readers, persuade them and predict future events.

You are full of creativity right now. (Aquarius, *The Telegraph*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

It is a good time to re-organise property, possessions and life. (Aries, *The Telegraph*, Weekly, 15/01/2012)

Lexical and syntactic features of horoscopes in INE have features common to the language of horoscopes. Distinct features were not noticed.

### **Comparison of Horoscopes in Marathi and English Newspapers in India**

The horoscopes in Marathi and English newspapers in India have been compared with reference to headings, topics, lexical and syntactic features and punctuation marks.

### **Headings**

Daily horoscopes in all the Marathi and English language newspapers are without headings. In weekly horoscopes in *Loksatta*, *Lokmat*, *Maharashtra Times* and *Sakal*, after the name of the zodiac sign, a heading highlighting or summing up the weekly forecast is provided. In these newspapers the

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Linguistic Features of Horoscopes in Marathi and English Newspapers in India:

A Comparative Study

377

length of headings of weekly horoscopes are similar to that of short expressions in daily horoscopes. However, the weekly horoscopes in *Agrowon* and *Sunday Times of India* are without headings.

## Topics

The common topics of horoscopes in English newspapers in India are family matters, marriage, travel, wealth, health, education, job and business-related issues, relationships, friends and relatives. These themes are also location specific as mentioned by Adorno (1974). He gives examples of traffic problems in Los Angeles. Similarly, horoscopes are determined by astrologer's keen awareness of their readers' lifestyles (Tandoc and Ferrucci, 2014) and aspirations (Evans, 1996).

In the horoscopes in Marathi and English newspapers in India selected for the present study predictions are according to time of the year. For example, predictions related to marriages and exam results are given generally in the month of May and June. However, January (selected for this study) is not a month of wedding or exam results, hence different issues are reflected. Evans (1996) is of the view that horoscopes are determined on the composition of a magazine's readership rather than stars. However, it is difficult to agree that the horoscopes go with the policies of the newspapers as seen in *Agrowon*, agriculture daily dedicated to farmers. Though its main readers are literate farmers, horoscopes focus on job scenario predictions for youngsters. Some examples are given below.

*nokarit adhikarat vaadh hoi:l (meena, 16/01/2012)*

(There will be increase in rights in your job.)

*nokarit apalya adhikarkakshet vaadh hoi:l (vrishabha, 26/01/2012)*

(There will be increase in the area of your rights in your job.)

*nokarichya shodhat asnarya tarunananchi oalkhitun kame margi lagtil (kanya, 26/01/2012)*

(Youngsters in search of jobs will get work through acquaintance.)

*nokarichya shodhat aslelya tarunana susandhi labhatil (kark, 30/01/2012)*

(There will be good opportunities for youngsters who are in search of jobs.)

Horoscopes related to jobs are also found in other newspapers for example, *Maharashtra Times* (23/01/2012 and 24/01/2012).

## Lexis

Examples of horoscope jargon like Cancerian (*The Indian Express*, 25/01/2012) and Taurean (*The Tribune*, 15/01/2012) are found in English newspapers in India. Contrastingly, no horoscope

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Ravindra B. Tasildar, M.A., Ph.D.

Linguistic Features of Horoscopes in Marathi and English Newspapers in India:

A Comparative Study

378



jargon is noticed in Marathi newspapers. Interestingly, the code-mixed words and lexical innovations are rare in both Marathi and English newspapers.

### Use of Pronoun ‘You(r)’

In Marathi newspapers pronoun ‘you(r)’ is generally avoided. The subject of the construction is implied. The absence of subject (here pronouns), is common in the horoscopes. The following expressions are not imperatives.

(*apalya*) *aarthik labhache praman vadhel* (*dhanu, Sakal*, 16/01/2012)

(There will be increase in (your) monetary benefits.)

(For repetition see *kark, tul, Sakal*, 12/01/2012 and *sinha, kanya, dhanu, Sakal*, 14/01/2012.)

(*apan / tumhi*) *shikshankshetrat chamkal* (*dhanu, Maharashtra Times*, 30/01/2012)

[(You) will shine in the field of education.]

(*apanas*) *shəṭrūpida nahi* [No trouble from enemy (to you).]

(*makar, Sakal*, 04/01/2012; *mithun, Sakal*, 12/01/2012

and 16/01/2012 and *kanya, Sakal*, 18/01/2012)

(*apali*) *ichhapurṭi hoi:l* (*dhanu, Agrowon*, 12/01/2012)

[(Your) wishes will be fulfilled.]

In English newspapers in India ‘you(r)’ is sometimes used and sometimes avoided.

You are advised to remain balanced. (Gemini, *Deccan Herald*, 13/01/2012)

Your luck will immensely help you at professional front. (Leo, *The Hitvada*, 06/01/2012)

Remain vigilant while making a commitment at work. (Aries, *The Hitvada*, 06/01/2012)

Investment without consideration would invite losses. (Taurus, *The Hitvada*, 06/01/2012)

### Punctuation Marks

Commas and full stops are the main punctuation marks used in horoscopes in Marathi newspapers. Full stop is the dominant punctuation mark used in horoscopes in Marathi and English newspapers. Full stop is used even in sentence fragments, e.g. after phrases to indicate completion of meaning or to separate one phrase from other.

*kalakshetrat protsahan* (full stop) (*mesh, Maharashtra Times*, 26/01/2012)

(Motivation in the field of art)

*labhadayak divas* (full stop) (*mithun, Maharashtra Times, 31/01/2012*)  
(Beneficial day)

Even in some instances, full stop has been used after single word expressions in daily horoscopes. Consider the following examples.

<i>manastap</i> (full stop)	(anguish)	( <i>kark, Lokmat, 06/01/2012</i> )
<i>pragati</i> (full stop)	(progress)	( <i>tul, Lokmat, 13/01/2012</i> )
<i>traas</i> (full stop)	(trouble)	( <i>kanya, Lokmat, 16/01/2012</i> )
<i>pravasyoga</i> (full stop)	(chances of travel)	( <i>sinha, Lokmat, 28/01/2012</i> )

Comparatively commas are used rarely in horoscopes in both languages. Here are examples from Marathi horoscopes.

*kamachi dagdag hoi:l* (comma) *kharcha vadhel* (full stop)  
(*kumbha, Maharashtra Times, 24/01/2012*)

[(You) will get fatigued due to (overload of) work, there will be increase in expenditure.]

*navyakshetrancha* (comma) *mitrancha parichay hoi:l* (full stop)

[(You) will get introduced to new fields, friends.]

(*meen, Maharashtra Times, 24/01/2012*)

Furthermore, in English newspapers in India exclamatory marks are also used.

Take the initiative! (*Scorpio, The Indian Express, 06/01/2012*)

Consider your loved one's advice! (*Aries, Deccan Herald, 13/01/2012*)

### Use of Gendered Language

Unlike some women magazines previously studied for horoscopes (Evans, 1996 and Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2014), the newspapers in Marathi and English selected here cater to the different social and educated classes, both male and female readers of all age groups. Women readers were only considered for a study by Blackmore and Seebold (2001) because astrology columns are far more often targeted at women than men readers, and surveys show that women more often read them than men do (Svensen, 1990). The present study has rather opposite observation with regard to Marathi newspapers.

Horoscopes in Marathi seem to be inclined towards male gender. For example, in family names *putra* (son) is used while word *kanya* (daughter) is avoided.

*putra-saukhya changale (kumbha, Lokmat, 09/01/2012)*

[(Your) son will keep you happy.]

*putrachinta arogyachi (vrishabha, Lokmat, 11/01/2012)*

[(You will have) worry of son's health.]

*putra chinta rahil (mithun, Lokmat, 16/01/2012)*

[(Your) worry will be related to (your) son].

The language used in horoscopes in Marathi is not only male-oriented but seems to be specifically meant for husbands to read. Perhaps married men are the main readers of horoscopes in Marathi newspapers. Following examples will suffice this.

*pəṭnichā səlla ghyā (vrishchik, Loksatta, 07/01/2012)*

(Seek wife's advice.)

*pəṭnichā səlla mahatvachā tharel (mithun, Agrowon, 21/01/2012)*

(Wife's advice will be important.)

Such examples are also found in other Marathi newspapers (not part of corpus here).

*pəṭnichā səlla labhadayak tharel (tul, Sakal, 05/05/2016)*

(Wife's advice will be beneficial.)

*pəṭnichyā arogyachi chinta hoi:l (kark, Pudhari, 26/03/2016)*

[(Your) worry will be related to wife's health.]

In contrast to Marathi newspapers, horoscopes in English newspapers in India are relatively gender-neutral. The following are some of the examples.

Look at any troubling situation from **your spouse or partner's** perspective and be willing to let **her/him** have the last word if it means keeping the peace (Libra, *The Asian Age*, weekly, 15/01/2012).

Don't forget to reveal your **partner** how much **she/he** is a part of your life today. (Aquarius, *The Hitvada*, 04/01/2012)

*The Asian Age*, weekly (15/01/2012) prefers to use word ‘singles’ repetitively.

**Singles** should stay away from anyone who tries to play mind games – you are worth so much more. (Aquarius, *The Asian Age*, weekly, 15/01/2012)

Those in a committed relationship may want to take it to the next level. **Singles** should stay away from social climbers and users. (Leo, *The Asian Age*, weekly, 15/01/2012)

Thus, the feature which distinguishes horoscopes in Marathi newspapers from horoscopes in English newspapers is gender-bias. Nevertheless, there are attempts to use gender-neutral language in horoscopes in Marathi newspapers, particularly in daily *Lokmat*. See the following instances applicable only to the married readers.

*pṛ̥ṭi / pṛ̥ṭnichya drishtinye labhacha divas (mithun, Lokmat, 28/01/2012)*

[(It is a) beneficial day from husband/ wife’s point of view.]

*pṛ̥ṭi / pṛ̥ṭni tumchyavishayi premal rahil (kanya, Lokmat, 28/01/2012)*

(Husband/ wife will remain loving in your case.)

*pṛ̥ṭi-pṛ̥ṭnichya aroghyachi kalaji ghyavi. (mithun, Lokmat, 23/01/2012 and 30/01/2012)*

(Care should be taken of husband’s / wife’s health).

Such expressions are examples of syntactic ambiguity and lead to multiple interpretations. For instance, the above mentioned second expression means either one has to take care of another. However, the hyphenated use of both the words together also raises the question ‘who’ (should take care)? Is any role of third party expected here?

## Conclusion

The similarity in names of horoscope section is noticed in Marathi and English newspapers. For instance, the name of horoscope section in daily *Lokmat* ‘*ganesh uvachya*’ means ‘Ganesha Says’ which is the name of weekly horoscope section in *Sunday Times of India*. The writers of daily and weekly horoscopes in all the Marathi newspapers are male. Besides, the writer of daily horoscope of *Agrowon* is also writer of the weekly horoscope of *Lokmat* (see Table 2). In English newspapers in India, the writers of daily and weekly horoscopes are both male as well as female.

Brevity, the defining feature of horoscopes, is noticed relatively more in Marathi newspapers than in English newspapers in India. As the space is limited, in the daily horoscopes short expressions and simple sentences are preferred in Marathi dailies. Preference to phrases and incomplete sentences or ellipsis of end verb is a general feature of daily as well as weekly horoscopes in Marathi newspapers. *Agrowon* uses lengthy sentences whereas *Maharashtra Times* and *Loksatta* prefer three word expressions while *Sakal* goes for two or three simple sentences of three words each. In contrast, daily as well as weekly horoscopes are quite elaborate in English newspapers in India. Horoscopes in English dailies in India like *The Indian Express* and *Deccan Herald*, for instance, are quite elaborate. Though space is not a constraint, short expressions are also used in weekly horoscopes in *Lokmat* and *Deccan Herald*.

Use of compound and complex sentences, negative imperatives, ‘You’ (Subject) are commonly noticed in daily horoscopes in English newspapers in India. Imperative words like *tala* (avoid) and ‘beware’ are quite frequent in horoscopes in both the languages. The amazing amalgamation of imperative expressions of prediction and advice in horoscopes like *vaad tala* (avoid arguments) (*meen, Loksatta*, 16/01/2012) and ‘Avoid arguments.’ (*Deccan Herald*, 19/01/2012) are common to both the Marathi newspapers and INE. The modal auxiliaries are used in horoscopes in English newspapers in India. Interrogative sentences were not found in horoscopes. SOV is the common syntactic pattern in Marathi while SVO is the pattern in English. However, OV, the dominant pattern in Marathi horoscopes is used to indicate prediction and warning in the horoscopes. The distinguishing feature of language of horoscopes in Marathi newspapers is the use of gendered language.

There are studies in Marathi grammar, for instance, Valke (1993) and Pandharipande (1997), however, the register of horoscope in newspapers is a bit neglected. Hence there is enough scope for extending the study to a deeper level. Compared to the scope for study of syntactic features of horoscopes, there seems less scope for lexical study of horoscopes in Marathi newspapers. In English newspapers in India as well the genre of horoscopes has not been fully explored. Here we find the genre-specific common features like use of modal verbs, imperative verbs and verbs suggesting future action. Since there are no distinct genre-specific features of horoscopes in English newspapers in India, there is limited scope for either lexical or syntactic study. Finally, it is possible to extend this preliminary research to study comparatively horoscope register in Indian languages.

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Ravindra B. Tasildar, M.A., Ph.D.

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Linguistic Features of Horoscopes in Marathi and English Newspapers in India:

A Comparative Study

387