Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyse the interpersonal address system at Punjabi workplaces, limited to the urban and organizational setups with a special focus on the use of kinship terms in purely professional contexts. The study is qualitative in nature and is based on the methods of observation and survey questionnaire. The data was collected from a sample of 210 respondents from the tertiary educational institutions of Punjab from the age groups of 19- 39, selected with the help of the Simple Random Sampling method. The study concludes that there is a substantial amount of use of kinship terms at Punjabi workplaces and it does not always encode solidarity, rather kinship terms are also used to express either the lower status of the addressee or to overcome the ambiguity about the professional hierarchy of the addressee. The study was significantly delayed by Covid-19 pandemic, particularly at the data collection stages.

Keywords: Interpersonal address; Vocatives; Terms-of-address; Kinship Terms; Sociolinguistics; Punjabi Workplaces; Language and power

1. Introduction

A term-of-address can be defined as that word or phrase which is used for addressing someone in writing or speech. Names, titles, honorifics, diminutive forms, terms of endearment, pejoratives and pronouns qualify as the terms-of-address. Biber (1999) shows that vocatives can take many forms: endearments (honey), kinship terms (Daddy), familiarisers (dude), first name familiarised (Johnny), first name full form (John), title and

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Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special
Focus on Kinship Terms   65

surname (Mr. Smith), honorific (Sir), nickname (Speedy), and even elaborated nominal structures such as: "those of you who want to bring your pets along". Additionally, impersonal vocatives may occur in utterances such as "Someone get that phone, will you!". Choice of vocative forms, therefore, provides an index of (projected or assumed) relationship between the speaker and the addressee (Biber, 1999; McCarthy and O'Keeffe, 2003). Further, it must also be noted that the terms-of-address are different from the terms-of-reference.

While the terms-of-address are nominal items used to talk to somebody the terms-of-reference are nominals used to talk about someone. Thus, the terms-of-reference are integrated in the syntax of the proposition while the terms-of-address are not part of the syntactical structure of the sentence and serve the discourse function of the language. For this purpose, they are located either in the initial or the terminal position of the clause and are considered as vocative adjuncts. Also, there is a special type of term-of-reference which is known as 'Topic' and which is not integrated in the syntax of the clause (Dickey, 1997). For example,

- Mother, you are right. (Term-of-address)
- Mother is right (Term-of-reference)
- Mother, she is always right. (Topic)

Further, this linguistic exchange of communicative and social roles and relationships is executed through multiple ways, but the terms-of-address form the first and foremost site for such exchange. And it must be allowed to be accepted that no communicative situation can ever be relaxed and effective unless the appropriate form of address is chosen right in the beginning. The appropriate choice of a term-of-address to be used in a linguistic exchange is a complex matter and is based on various sociocultural variables like age, gender, status, kinship relation, class, profession, marital status, caste, race, ethnicity etc. Depending upon the ideological significance attached to a variable in a society, that variable assumes prerogative over others and becomes more determining in the choice of a term-of-address. Thus, through these discourses, the ideology of a society is accomplished where the term *ideology* refers to social representations shared by members of a group and used by them to accomplish everyday social practices by acting and communicating them. These representations are organized into systems which are deployed by social classes and other

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   66

groups in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the working of the society (Jaworski and Galasinski, 2000: 36; Van Dijk, 1998).

Thus, the terms-of-address serve as an important construct to access the understanding of the socio-ideological fabric and the power relations of a society thereby forming a site of confluence between language and society.

> Personal address is a sociolinguistic subject par excellence. In every language and society, every time one person speaks to another, there are created a host of options centring around whether and how persons will be addressed, named, and described. The choices speakers make in such situations, and their meanings to those who interpret them, are systematic, not random. Such systematicity in language behaviour, whether of use or interpretation, is universal, although what elements comprise the personal address system and what rules govern its development, vary across contexts. And such variation in structure is, according to the extant empirical literature, correlated with social ends and social contexts of language use. From this view, personal address is a systematic, variable, and social phenomenon, and these features of it make it a sociolinguistic variable of fundamental importance (Philipsen and Huspek, 1985: 94).

In other words, the appropriate choice of terms-of-address determines the pragmatic use of language for effective accomplishment of non-linguistic goals (Asprey and Tagg, 2019; Biber et al., 1999; Clancy, 2015; Leech, 1999). Within the domain of interpersonal address, the use of professional terms-of-address in organisational setups. further, forms an extremely important phenomenon as a systematic and well laid-out professional address system plays a vital role in carrying out effective goal-directed communication by providing the necessary impartiality and distance from the social dynamics of a society.

2. Literature Review

It has been observed that while there has been considerable research in the domain of Interpersonal address at workplaces in English, similar studies for Punjabi language have not been done. Thus, due to limited availability of the literature on the issue, the present study is

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   67

exploratory in nature and is based on the research on interpersonal address in occupational settings conducted in English, particularly in the British and American contexts.

The earliest attempt in interpersonal pronominal address research is now considered a seminal study published by Brown and Gilman (1960) on the use of pronominal address forms in some European languages and provided a universal model of power and solidarity called the *Tu/Vous* model. But the classic and the most influential contribution to the research in interpersonal vocative address was that of Brown and Ford (1961). They considered address terms in American English based on an analysis of modern plays on naming practices in English in communicative dyads in a business in Boston. They indicated:

- that the asymmetric use of title plus last name (TLN) and first name (FN) i.e., TLN/FN indicates inequality in power
- that the mutual use of TLN i.e., TLN/TLN indicates unfamiliarity
- and, that the mutual use of FN i.e., FN/FN is usually initiated by the more powerful member in the relationship (Brown and Ford, 1961; Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021).

Based on the findings of Brown and Ford's study, McIntire (1972) examined the terms of address used by students when addressing their faculty. All the data concerned the faculty and the students of a Social Sciences Department at the West Coast University. The methods used for collecting data were observation of spontaneous speech in various settings and elicitation from informants. In addition to the standard academic setting, two informal settings, a family picnic and a Christmas party were also selected. The study concluded that under informal settings, all students do not find the use of TLN (title plus last name) appropriate but at the same time, they hesitate to use an informal term-of-address for their faculty.

Poynton (1985), also building on early studies of language variation and role relationship variables like that of Brown and Gilman's research, suggests that the tenor of a situation can be broken down into three different continua namely Power, Contact and Affective Involvement. Further, the study suggested that there are correlations between these three social dimensions and the choice of the vocatives used. The key findings of the study may be summed up as:

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms 68

- When the power is equal, vocatives used are reciprocal; when power is unequal, vocative use would be nonreciprocal.
- When contact is frequent, we often use nick names; when contact is infrequent, we often have no vocatives at all.
- When affective involvement is high, we use diminutive forms of names and terms of endearment; when affective involvement is low, we use formal given names (Eggins, 2004: 100-101; Poynton, 1985).

Building up on the existing research, Eckert (1988) notes that treatment of social meaning in sociolinguistic variation has come in three waves of analytic practice. The first wave of variation studies the well-established correlations between linguistic variables and the macro-sociological categories of socioeconomic class, gender, ethnicity, and age. The second wave employs ethnographic methods to explore the local categories and configurations that inhabit or constitute these broader macro-sociological categories. And the third wave points towards, firstly, a robust social semiotic system potentially expressing the full range of social concerns in a given community such that the meanings of variables are underspecified and gain more specific meanings in the context of styles and, secondly, the variation does not simply reflect but also constructs the social meaning and hence is an essential force in social change.

Dickey (1997) examined the relationship between the use of nominal terms in address and that in reference. The study, based on observation and interviews, attempted both to solve a problem in pragmatics and to help the historical linguists and others to know the extent to which it may be justified to extrapolate from referential to address usage and vice versa.

Barron and Schneider (2009), also, based on the extant research in the field, proposed the establishment of variational pragmatics as a sub-field of pragmatics, so as to encourage further research into the effect of macro-social factors on language in action and study the impact of social factors on language use in interaction by distinguishing five social factors namely region, social class, ethnicity, gender, and age.

Rendle-Short (2010), in his paper, studies the interpersonal interpretation of the address terms with respect to their sequential environment with special reference to the term

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   69

'Mate'. Thus, postulating that based on the pre-positioning and post-positioning of a term it can be both friendly as well as antagonistic.

McCarthy and O'Keefe (2003), in their paper, did a corpus study of vocatives sampled from Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) and radio phone in calls using informal, casual conversations among intimates, friends, and close associates. Comparing the two datasets, they found that overall, the CANCODE data revealed a preference for vocatives in relational, topic management, badinage, and face-concerns while the radio data revealed a tendency for vocatives to be used more in the management of phone calls, turn-taking, topic management and face concerns. The radio data showed a greater frequency for initial position than final while the casual conversation data was the reverse. Medial position was seen to be problematic in both datasets and an alternative analysis was proposed. The study concluded that, overwhelmingly, the vocatives serve the pragmatic functions.

3. Methods

The present study was initially conceived as the sociolinguistic study of all kinds of terms-of-address used in Punjab and assess the use of kinship terms as terms-of-address in various contexts. To this end, the initial intentional observations were started in participant naturalistic settings in October 2019 in the form of interview schedule, narrative observation, and conversational interviews and a qualitative study was planned. Field notes of both descriptive and reflective types were taken in a cell phone and a notebook. Based on the observations thus made and a subsequent corpus collected, a questionnaire was constructed for formal assessment of the observations. The items on the questionnaire dealt with terms-of address used in both personal and professional contexts as even at this stage the study aimed to focus on studying the dominance of kinship terms across all kinds of contexts used in Punjabi society. Thus, 21 items dealing with terms-of-address at Punjabi workplaces mixed with 29 items based on information about interpersonal address across various contexts were selected. But at the time of sample selection, it was realized that this project was too ambitious for the scope of a single research paper. Therefore, the sample was restricted to urban workplaces and for this purpose, the tertiary educational institutions i.e., colleges and university departments of Punjab were chosen to draw the sample.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special
Focus on Kinship Terms   70

The respondents in the study were students in the age group of 19- 29 from under-graduate, post-graduate and PhD courses and some early career faculty members not older than 39 years, hailing from all over Punjab. The questionnaire was distributed to 270 respondents with the help of the Simple Random Sample method under Probability Sampling method. From January 2020 the data collection was started. The questionnaire was supposed to be administered personally to the respondents and collected at a later date, but with the advent of Covid-19 and subsequent shifting to the online mode of teaching, accessing the respondents became difficult and the project slowed down substantially though not closed. Finally, by November 30, 2021, data from 210 respondents was obtained. The present conclusions are based on the responses of those 210 respondents. Further on, the primary data collected from the field was substantiated with incidental observations from secondary sources like web sources like WhatsApp, Facebook, and emails in addition to newspapers, magazines and existing literature in both books and journals.

Thus, the present study, under the revised objectives, aims to analyse the address system at Punjabi workplaces, limited to the urban and organizational setups (specifically the colleges and universities of Punjab) and investigate their sociolinguistic concerns with a special focus on the use of kinship terms at workplaces. The study is based on the theoretical model of Systemic Functional Linguistics proposed by Michael Halliday who proposes Interpersonal metafunction includes the lexico-grammatical choices which establish social roles and exchange social power in communicative interactions. Vocatives are an important part of interpersonal metafunction (Butt et al., 1995; Eggins, 2004; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Fontaine, 2013; Thompson, 2014).

4. Results and Discussion

The three major variables which determine the status of an individual and play the decisive role in the selection of the terms-of-address at the Punjabi workplaces are age, institutional hierarchy, and gender. In Punjabi society, while, traditionally, the 'age' formed the most important and decisive factor in assigning respect to a person, in modern conception, the occupational and institutional hierarchy is gaining precedence. The advent of women at Punjabi workplaces may be considered a new phenomenon. But the absence of women at

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   71

Punjabi workplaces does not imply that women, traditionally, in Punjabi families did not work. It simply means that women worked in non-professional capacity generally as the women from affluent classes helped their men on their own farms only. The women from lower castes, although worked for wages on other people's farms and in households, always worked at the lower order jobs like cleaning or cooking where they were considered and referred to as mothers and sisters and were never given enough worth to be assigned professional terms-of-address. Thus, they were addressed either with Kinship terms or First names.

There are both professional and personal terms used at Punjabi workplaces. The professional terms may be classified as Honorifics and Job titles and personal terms include Kinship terms, Family names and Given names. Honorifics are most polite form of address and entail highest power of the addressee. Job titles are also very polite forms and next only to the Honorifics in terms of power of the addresses. Kinship terms are also polite forms of address but they do not entail the interpersonal distance or formality like the Honorifics and Job titles. Thus, they may be called polite but informal forms of address. Name calling is least formal or polite form of address at Punjabi workplaces. Although both Family names and Given names are low in formality and high in intimacy and accrue lower sociocultural power but calling by Family name entails slightly higher sociocultural power of the addressee than Given name. But the dynamics of calling by name can be significantly changed with politeness suffixes such that Family names with politeness suffixes accrue very high sociocultural power only next to Honorifics and Job titles and are both formal and intimate in nature. Given names with politeness suffixes are also more formal than the Kinship terms. Mere Given name without any politeness suffix is least formal address and lowest in sociocultural power.

There are three types of politeness suffixes used at Punjabi workplaces, two indigenous suffixes, namely *Sahib* and *Ji*; and one western suffix namely *Sir/ Madam*. Among these, *Sir/Madam* are most formal and entail highest power followed by *Sahib* while *Ji* among the politeness suffixes is least formal and entails minimum power. While *Ji* is used for both men and women (and even children along with kinship terms like *Beta Ji*), *Sahib* has a complex system of usage and is more prestigious than *Ji* such that *Sahib* is used for one's equivalents

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   72

and super-ordinates while *Ji* is used for one's equivalents and subordinates. In case of men, *Sahib* is used to post-modify both their Family names (*Randhawa Sahib*, *Sethi Sahib, Batra Sahib*) and their Job titles (*Judge Sahib*, *Sarpanch Sahib* etc.) while for women *Sahib* is used with certain Job titles only and markedly Family name plus *Sahib* is never used for women. Further, in Punjab, *Sir* and *Madam* are also widely used as politeness suffixes, for example, *Ravi Sir, Gita Ma'am, Sanjay Sir, Kalra Ma'am, Bhatia Sir, Head Sir, Doctor Ma'am* etc. The use of Given name or Family name along with *Madam* and *Sir* is random. Further, in Punjab, in order to accrue politeness to a term-of-address, only suffixes are used and no prefixes are used for this purpose. Suffixes are used with both personal and professional terms-of-address and with both indigenous and western terms-of-address.

4.1. *Professional Terms-of-address in Punjab*

Interestingly, exclusive Punjabi language professional terms-of-address are unknown in Punjab. The reason for this is that the use of Punjabi as the official language of Punjab has relatively been a newer phenomenon. It was only in 1966 with the linguistic division of Punjab state that Punjabi became the official language of Punjab. Consequently, in Punjab, all indigenous professional terms-of-address are borrowed either from Persian/Urdu or Hindi. Further on, professional address is limited to higher order jobs. The people working at the bottom of the institutional hierarchy are not addressed by any Honorifics or Job titles.

4.1.1. Honorifics

Before the influence of English at Punjabi workplaces, in Punjab, people had certain professional Honorifics like *Huzoor*, *Janaab* and *Sahib* brought in use from Persian/ Urdu vocabulary. Since Urdu was a language which originated in India, these terms may be called as indigenous terms of address. *Sriman* another indigenous alternative is borrowed from Hindi, the language originally dominant in the central plains of India and now the official language of India. But *Sriman* has always been reserved for written formal communication and rarely been used as a vocative in Punjabi workplace. With the change of tenor of the Punjabi society due to the partition of India leading to significant decline in Urdu speaking population and subsequent language policy favouring English over Urdu usage and preference of English at workplaces, these indigenous terms gave way to western term-of-address. In fact, *Huzoor* has been discontinued altogether while *Janaab* is extant only in the

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   73

police, revenue, and legal departments where the Mughal administrative register is still used. *Sahib* is the only Urdu/Persian address term which has survived the anglicisation of Punjabi workplaces and is still prolific.

Markedly, there are no indigenous professional terms of address for women at Punjabi workplaces. Also, though, Punjabis identify authority with masculinity linguistically, *Sahib* is an anomaly as it is never used for women officials. Further, *Sahiba,* the feminine alternative for *Sahib,* is also not used at Punjabi workplaces as there is no indigenous convention of using *Sahiba* for women at Punjabi workplaces. The other feminine alternative of *Sahib* is *Memsahib* which has been in practice but that is exclusively meant for the wife of the *Sahib* and therefore inappropriate for the women who are officials themselves. In political circles of Punjab, there is a convention to use *Biba Ji* for younger but higher status women at workplaces, but it is more common for the women who have a royal lineage and thus have a very limited use.

Currently, *Sir* and *Madam,* which are borrowed from English, remain the most popular terms-of-address in modern, urban, educated occupational settings in Punjab. Moreover, *Sir* and *Madam* are used both as Honorifics and as politeness suffixes with Job titles, Family names, and Given names. For example, *Doctor Sir, Head Ma'am, Gill Sir, Kalra Ma'am, Ravi Sir, Jyoti Ma'am* etc. In case of women, due to the lack of indigenous professional address terms, the use of western Honorifics *Madam* or *Ma'am* becomes the only available choice.

Also, there is a peculiar phenomenon of addressing senior women officers particularly in bureaucratic positions as *Sir* which is otherwise a masculine Honorific. This trend is especially prevalent in case of women employed in senior administrative and bureaucratic positions. The probable reason is that in Punjab, traditionally prestige and authority are always associated with masculine gender. Thus, in Punjabi imagination, everything which is big and important, whether it is 'big' in size or status is conceived as masculine and therefore referred with masculine terms in Punjabi culture.

4.1.2. Job Titles

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms 74

Both men and women are called by their Job titles in Punjab. Although calling male professionals with their Job titles plus Politeness suffixes is much more common. But, while the singular use of *Sahib* as an honorific is absent for women it is perfectly appropriate to call women professionals with their Job title plus *Sahib* on the lines of men. Thus, *Doctor Sahib*, *Manager Sahib*, *Judge Sahib* are gender neutral terms. The reason for this lies in the fact that in Punjabi mind, the authority is always viewed in masculine terms. Punjabi women when acquire professional authority also acquire the right to be addressed with authoritarian terms-of-address traditionally accrued to men.

Further, in Punjab calling by a mere Job title is also considered rude as it is the least intimate form of address. In Punjabi society, calling someone by their job title only without a suffix is unacceptable. The politeness suffixes not only add politeness but also a personal content to otherwise impersonal professional terms. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) argue "Address by title alone is the least intimate form of address in that titles usually designate ranks or occupations, as in Colonel, Doctor, or Waiter. They are devoid of 'personal content' we can argue therefore that Doctor alone, acknowledging as it does that the other person's name is known and can be mentioned" (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021: 268).

Further on, it is noteworthy that the use of Job titles (with politeness suffixes) is limited to adults only. In case of children, the variable of age is emphasised and children never call adults by their Job titles even with the politeness suffixes. It would be considered considerably rude for a child in Punjab to call a doctor as *Doctor Sahib*. Children are always supposed to address the adults with western Kinship terms *Uncle/Aunty* or western professional terms *Sir/Madam*. For example, the most appropriate way for a Punjabi child to address their doctor would be *Uncle* or *Doctor Uncle* or *Aunty* or *Doctor Aunty*.

4.2. *Personal Terms-of-address*
The Punjabi society traditionally has been an agricultural society and therefore supported a culture wherein personal relations enjoyed high value. In terms of Cate Poynton's model, it may be said that the contact among the members of the Punjabi community is high, leading to a high intimacy. This high intimacy is expressed through personal terms-of-address which include Kinship terms, Family names and Given names.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   75

4.2.1. Kinship Terms

The variable of intimacy has significant social consequences because in Punjabi society kin get favoured over non-kin over the distribution of material as well as subtle socio-cultural rewards. Thus, kin-like intimacy is a desired trait across relationships in the Punjabi community. Consequently, often in purely professional situations also, kinship terms are used, in order to convey higher intimacy and solidarity. Another reason for using kinship terms at professional settings is when the role-relationship between the interactants is not well defined or the power hierarchy is ambiguous. Finally, the Kinship terms are also used when the professional terms-of-address are absent for certain professions. This is particularly the case with very low order jobs like janitors, for example. Amongst the politeness suffixes, only *Ji* is used with the kinship terms while *Sahib* and *Sir/Madam* are not used.

Amongst the Kinship terms, the most popular term used at Punjabi workplaces is *Bha Ji*. Literally it means an elder brother. *Bha Ji* along with other Punjabi Kinship terms for brother (like *Bhra Ji*, *Veer Ji* and *Bai Ji* wherein the latter term is specific to Malwa area of Punjab) are used both for brother and brother-in-law but as a term-of-address at workplaces, *Bha Ji* always implies brother. The widespread use of *Bha Ji* at Punjabi workplaces suggests the great importance attached to the blood ties between brothers and stands as the single most important interpersonal relation in Punjab. It is popular to address Punjabi men as *Bha Ji* all over India. The Hindi term for brother-*Bhaiya* is also used at Punjabi workplaces. But the use of *Bhaiya* for elder brother is interesting. Hindi is a sister language to Punjabi. But the voiced and aspirated plosive sound /bh/ of Hindi is pronounced as a tonal sound in Punjabi (Tone is a distinctively unique phonetic characteristic for an Indo-Aryan language like Punjabi.), either with low pitch or high pitch, and when *Bhaiya* is pronounced the Punjabi way, it refers to a migrant labourer from central Indian states and entails class difference as well as the regional and linguistic prejudices. *Bhaiya* along with the suffix *Ji* always has this latter meaning. *Bhaiya* pronounced the same way as it is done in Hindi i.e., with a voiced and aspirated /bh/ sound, and without the suffix *Ji,* refers to older brother and is often used at Punjabi workplaces for politeness and respect. For women *Didi* and *Di* are used but are less frequent.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special
Focus on Kinship Terms   76

The use of *Boy* to address and refer to adult black males has an equivalent use in Punjab also in the form of *Kaka* used as term-of-address by very high officials for adult men of lower ranks. The denotative meaning of *Kaka* is a baby boy making it both reductive in character and blatantly abusive of power.

The children of both sexes and even younger adult men and women are addressed as *Beta* or *Bache* (not *Bacha*). These terms are particularly popular in educational institutions. And, generally, all students irrespective of their age are addressed by these terms. Gender specific terms are less used for girls in Punjabi society. In fact, affection to a girl child is always expressed by addressing her as a son. Thus, in Punjab, girls are also addressed with the same terms-of-address as boys.

Further, while the English Kinship terms-of-address like *Bro* or *Brother* are never used as formal addresses at Punjabi workplaces, the older men in Punjab, if they are equivalent in age to one's father are often addressed as *Uncle Ji* at Punjabi workplaces, particularly, if the role relationship is not clear. The older women of the age of one's mother are often called *Aunty* or *Aunty Ji* even at workplaces. It is noteworthy that there is no western kinship term for a younger woman as there is *Aunty Ji* for older women. Probably, the reason for this is there are no equivalent terms-of-address used for sister or sister-in-law for such women in English which can be borrowed. It must be noted here that the term 'sister' is used as a term-of-reference but not as a term-of-address in Punjabi culture.

4.2.2. Family Names

Punjabi men are often addressed by their Family names suffixed by *Sahib* and *Ji* (*Randhawa Sahib*, *Sethi Sahib*, *Sharma Ji* etc.) but Punjabi women are never addressed by their Family names. In fact, traditionally women did not have family names. The reason being that Punjabi society has been a patriarchal society which implies that the family lineage was transferred from father to son in it. Women, traditionally, were not supposed to bear the Family name. Nowadays, women have started using Family name after their Given name, but they are never known by their Family name exclusively, although it is perfectly common to refer to a man by his Family name. As an example, from general Punjabi culture, *Sandhu* is a Family name in Punjab. There is a popular Punjabi film by the name *Ik Sandhu Hunda Si*

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special
Focus on Kinship Terms   77

(*There Lived a Man Called Sandhu*). But the similar, usage for a woman *Ik Sandhu Hundi Si* (*There Lived a Woman Called Sandhu*) is unimaginable.

4.2.3. Given Names

But while solidarity is appreciated at Punjabi workplaces informality is not. Punjabi people prefer to use formal address system at workplaces and therefore differentiate between the home-spaces and workplaces on the basis of their linguistic choices. Markedly, in Punjabi society, mere First names are not preferred as terms-of-address at workplaces, as calling by name entails lower social status of the addressee (Bruns and Kranich, 2021). The lower status may be in terms of institutional rank or age and even gender sometimes. The asymmetric (non-reciprocal) use of names as terms-of-address is a clear indicator of power differential between different classes. This phenomenon is particularly important from the perspective of intercultural pragmatics as many of the major studies in the domain of interpersonal address are conducted in America, it is often assumed that calling by name may introduce ease and familiarity in communication and is therefore desirable thus ignoring the intercultural variations in interpersonal address (Formentelli, 2009: 181). The Given names are often suffixed with *Ji* for adding politeness for a person with lower rank. For example, *Baljeet Ji, Sarita Ji* etc.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a substantial use of kinship terms at Punjabi workplaces which points towards ineffective negotiation of professional ethic. In addition to uncertainty about the hierarchy of the person, the Kinship terms are also used at workplaces to indicate kin-like solidarity as well as lack of professional terms for certain professions or job ranks. Further, this linguistic evasion of some people at workplaces lead to linguistic appropriation of power and further translates into workplace discriminatory practices like lower wages and denial of other dues associated with life and dignity thus accentuating social hierarchies at work places. The changing address choices at workplaces lead to the flattening of overt power hierarchies and the concomitant phenomenon of democratisation, typically understood in linguistics as a rise of more congenial, less face threatening alternatives in a society apparently more egalitarian, democratic, and anti-authoritarian (Bruns and Kranich, 2021).

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   78

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms 79

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 23:9 September 2023**
Ujjal Jeet, PhD
Interpersonal Address at Punjabi Workplaces and Its Sociolinguistic Concerns with a Special Focus on Kinship Terms   80