Pronominal Usage in Family Domain: A Study on Kashmiri Language

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Abstract: This paper discusses the results of the study of pronominal usage with consanguineal kins among Kashmiri speakers. The forms of pronominals collected by the researcher are analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The analysis reports the different pronominal forms used by Kashmiri speakers and their frequency in the total corpus of the data collected for this study. A qualitative analysis of the usage of pronominal forms is provided to describe the various aspects of meaning of the pronominals from the point of view of the native speakers. The analysis shows that there is a predominant reciprocal use of singular pronominal tsI in consanguineal kinship domain. The paper also highlights the correlation between pronominal with kins and the social characteristics of age, gender and education of the interlocutors.

1. Introduction

When choosing a linguistic form to address another person, the speaker's intention is not only to establish communication but also to initiate and maintain some type of relation with his/her interlocutor. Most languages have different ways to indicate who is talking (the speaker) and whom s/he is talking to (the listener). In Kashmiri, as in many other languages, referential address of the interlocutor can be done with nominal (proper name, title, kinship terms, etc.), verbal (verb endings), or pronominal (*tsI, toh^j*) expressions. Pronominal address has been of special interest for linguists concerned with languages that exhibit systems of more than one of such pronouns, Kashmiri being one of those languages. Pronouns in Kashmiri have distinct forms for first, second, and third person. They are inflected for gender, number, and case. There is no gender distinction in the first and second person. Third person pronouns exhibit a three-term distinction, namely: proximate, remote I (R.I within sight) and remote II (R.II out of sight). The distinction refers to the participants in the speech act. Second and third person plural forms are used for honorific singulars as well. The second and third person pronouns therefore perform a social function as they are used as a means of addressing the collocutor in a face to face interaction (in the case of second person pronoun) and referring to the person being talked about not essentially in a face to face interaction (in the case of third person pronoun). The second and third person pronouns will therefore be also referred to as 'Address Pronominals' and 'Pronominals of Reference' respectively.

There are two second person pronominal alternatives in Kashmiri, one of which is singular and the other is plural. Similarly, there are two alternative forms (one singular and one plural) of the third person pronoun in each of its three tiers, that is, Proximate, Remote I and Remote II. It is understood that the choice among the singular and the plural forms is not random. It is also true that the singular and the plural forms can possibly be used with one person, but grammars do not tell adequately which pronoun is appropriate in a given context. More importantly, an ungrammatical sentence from a foreigner or even a native speaker, to some extent may be overlooked or ignored, whereas as inadvertent use of "wrong" pronoun can become highly offensive. It is therefore essential to understand the norms of usage of these pronouns in different contexts and domains. This paper unveils the pronominal usage in the consanguineal kinship domain.

2. Defining Kinship as a Social Domain

Kinship is one of the important aspects of social structure and one of the basic principles for organizing individuals into social groups, categories and genealogy. In anthropology, kinship system includes people related through the bond of marriage and birth. Marriage establishes social recognition of copulation which is the basic need of life. The socially sanctioned union of mates reproduces offspring. It provides the basis for the social status of 'husband' and 'father'. Hence, kinship is the social recognition of the biological ties of marriage and birth and all those who are related to each other through these bonds are known as 'kins' as distinguished from 'non-kins' who may be related to each other through other ways.

Broadly, there are two types of kins:

i.   Consanguineal kins: Those who are related to each other by 'blood' are known as consanguineal kin or cognates and the relationship based on blood-ties is called consanguineous (same blood) kinship.

ii.   Affinal kins: Those related to each other through marital relationship are called affinal kins or affines. The affinal kins are not related through the bond of blood. And, the kind of bond between spouses and their relatives on either side which arises out of legally defined marital relationship is known as affinal kinship.

Kinship is regarded as one of the most important social categories in Kashmiri culture. It is essentially the base for social interpersonal relationship. The family is the base for social organization in Kashmiri culture and also a basic socioeconomic unit in the society. Kinship and family relationships demand loyalty and sacrifice from all members of the family and kin. Kinship and family relationships affect the linguistic behavior of Kashmiri people. A kin is addressed differently from non-kin in face to face communication and in refereeing to them.

The present paper is an attempt to correlate pronominal as a sociolinguistic variable with the social variable like age, gender, education and settlement in the domain of consanguineal kinship.

3. Addressing and Referring to Consanguineal kins with Pronominals

Consanguineal kins include a wide range of individuals with varying degrees of social distance between them. Many of them form well-defined pairs, who are grouped together by their relationship to each other. The relationship existing between different consanguineal kins in the broader domain is cordial and close. However, all consanguineal kins don't share the same relationship in terms of intimacy. Such varying kinship relationships affect the linguistic behavior of the people. With respect to pronominal as a sociolinguistic variable, it is assumed that there is variation in the usage of pronominal with different consanguineal kins.

The data for this study came from the total of 240 respondents with varying social attributes like age, gender, education and settlement. All the responses gathered from the selected sample were analyzed and the frequencies of usage of the variant forms of pronominals were calculated. The variation in the usage of pronominals was analyzed on the basis of the social attributes like age, gender, education and settlement.

The overall pronominal usage with blood relatives is summed up in the Figure 1 which shows the percentage of pronominal variants used to address different consanguineal kins.
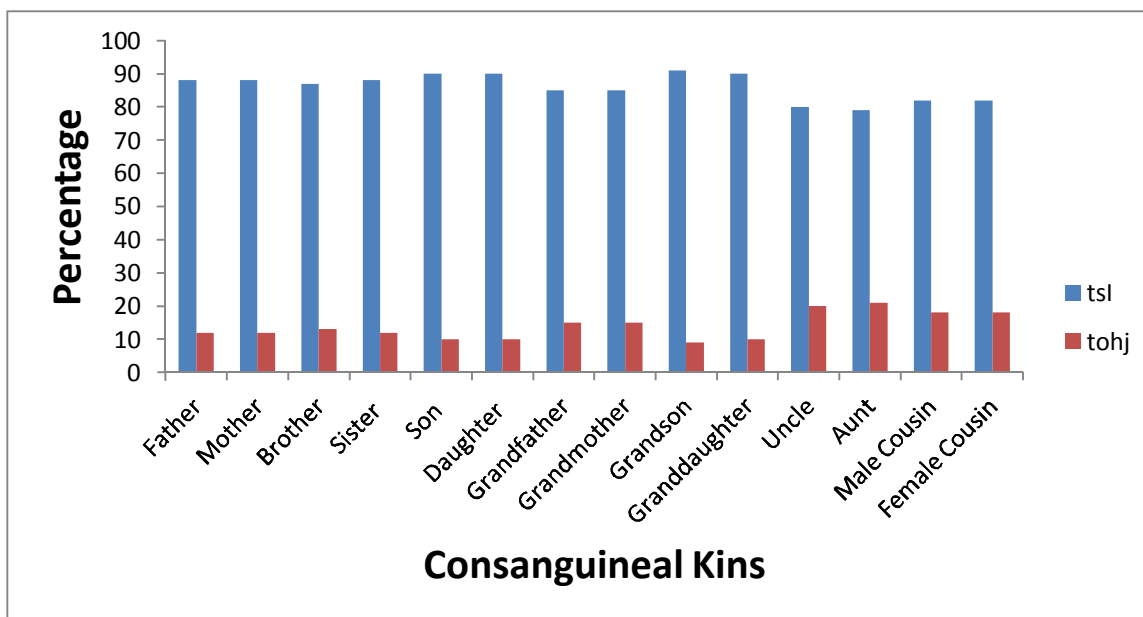

Figure 1. Pronominal Usage (Given Address Pronominal) with Consanguineal Kins

It is evident in the figure that the predominant pronominal variant used to address the consanguineal kins is *tsI*. This can be attributed to the physical proximity, and emotional intimacy between the consanguineal kins that *tsI* is used predominantly.

Since the physical proximity between all the kins listed in the graph is not the same, therefore a variation is seen in the pronominal usage with the different kins. It is evident as we move from primary consanguineal kins (father, mother, brother, sister etc) to the

secondary consanguineal kins (uncles, aunts, cousins etc) a slight increase is seen in the frequency of usage of the plural pronoun *toh^j* attesting the fact that there is variation within the domain because of the varying social distance and emotional intimacy.

To see whether there is a reciprocal usage of the pronominals in this domain, let us see the received form of the pronominals which is graphically represented in the Figure 2.
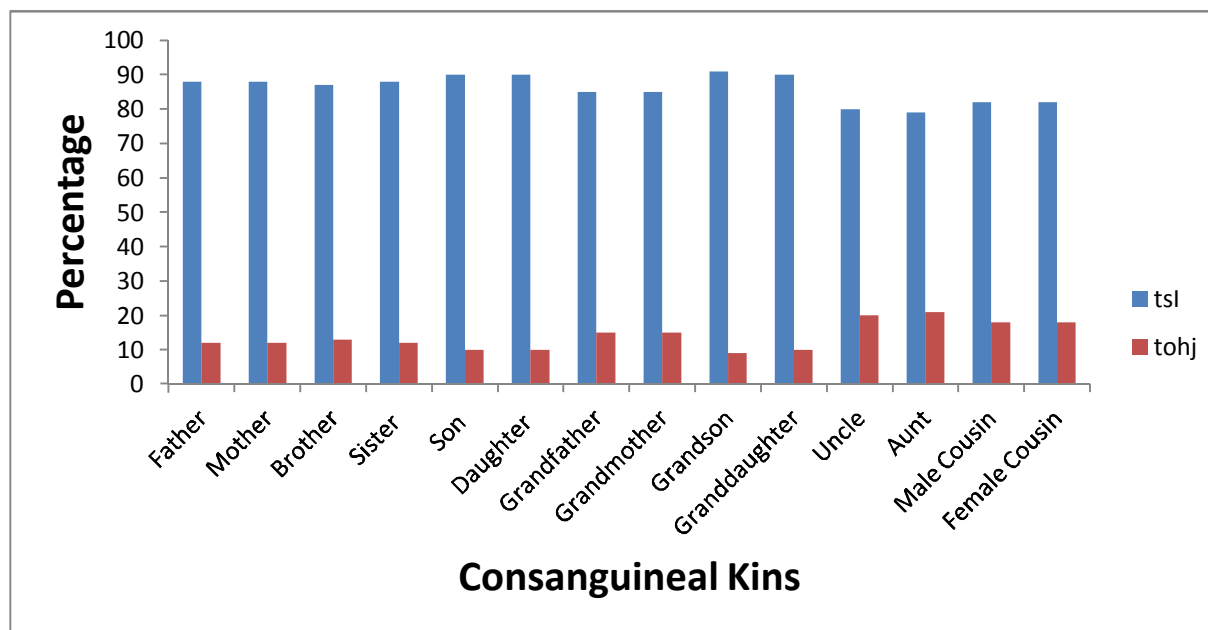

Figure 2. Received Pronominal Variants from Consanguineal Kins

3.1. Correlating Age with Pronominal Usage

In linguistics, age-graded variation is differences in speech habits within a community that are associated with age. Age-grading occurs when individuals change their linguistic behavior throughout their lifetimes, but the community as a whole does not change. The term "age-grading" was first introduced by anthropologist/linguist Charles F. Hockett, but defined as it is used today by sociolinguist William Labov. He defined it as an individual linguistic change against a backdrop of community stability. Age-grading is not limited to changes at any one particular stage in life, but can be studied in the way that babies, adolescents, young adults speak, and the elderly speak.

Like many other social variables that shape the use of language, age is an important variable which affects language use. Age as a variable has thus a huge importance in variationist model of sociolinguistics.

For understanding the effect of age as a social variable on the pronominal usage, 2400 instances of pronominal usage were gathered in each age group, 800 instances each for the address pronominal, proximate pronominal of reference and remote pronominal of reference. The data is tabulated below in Table 1 and shown graphically in Fig.3.

Table 1. Pronominal Usage with Consanguineal Kins across 3 Age Groups

	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	**toh^j**	**tsI**	**toh^j**	yi	yim	Su/so	Tim
AG1 (6-25)	696 (87%)	104 (13%)	744 (93%)	56 (7%)	712 (89%)	88 (11%)	768 (96%)	32 (4%)
AG2 (26-45)	648 (81%)	152 (19%)	704 (88%)	96 (12%)	656 (82%)	144 (18%)	792 (99%)	8 (1%)
AG3 (46 & above)	680 (85%)	120 (15%)	704 (88%)	96 (12%)	672 (84%)	128 (16%)	800 (100%)	0 (0%)

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 3, there is a great deal of variation in the usage of the deferential form of the address pronominal and pronominal of reference across the three age groups. The variation has a proper pattern and is not a random phenomenon as evident from the Fig.1.

It is evident that the non-deferential forms of the address and reference pronominals *tsI, yi, and su/so* are used more in the Age Group 1 than in the Age Groups 2 and 3. Whereas the deferential forms *toh^j*

yim and tim are used more in the Age Group 2 followed by Age Group 3 and their use is least in the Age Group 1.
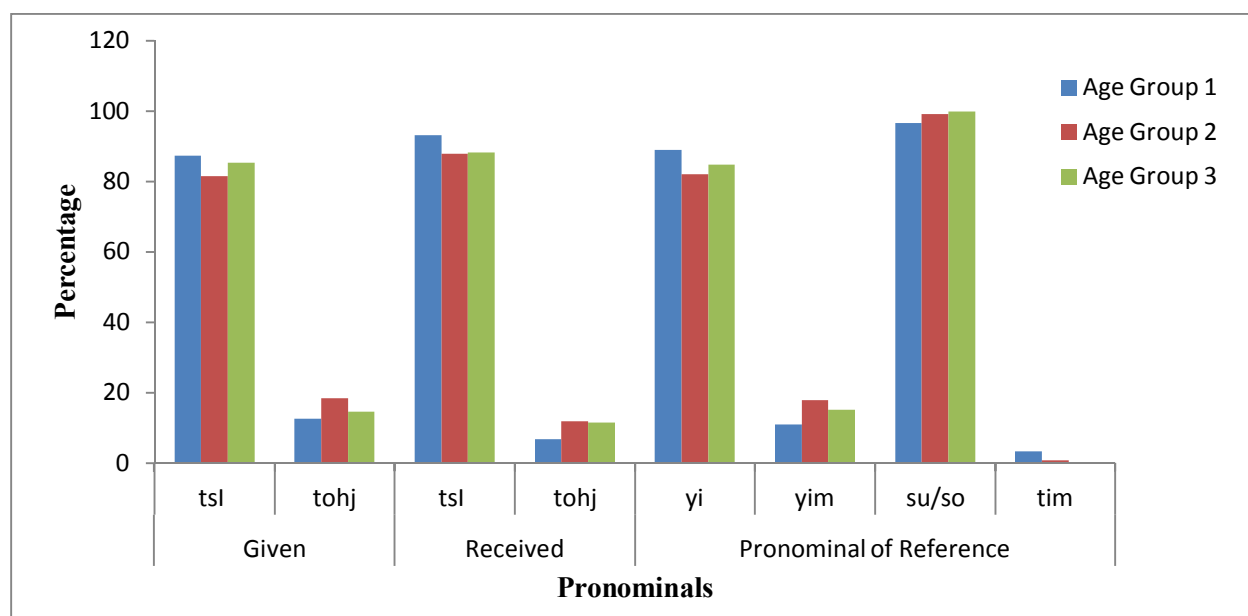

Figure 3. Age-Based Variation in Pronominal Usage with Consanguineal Kins

The pattern is a v-shaped curve (Figure 4). Non prestigious age-graded linguistic features, non-deferential pronominals forms *tsI, yi, and su/so* in the present case, tend to peak during adolescence "when peer group pressure not to conform to society's norms is greatest" (Holmes 1992:184). The use of standard or prestige forms peaks between the ages of 30 and 50.

When people reach middle age, they tend to follow societal norms more because that is when the societal pressure to conform is greatest. At this stage of life, people become more conservative and use the fewest vernacular forms. Non-prestigious forms may resurface in old age when people are out of the workforce and social pressures are reduced.
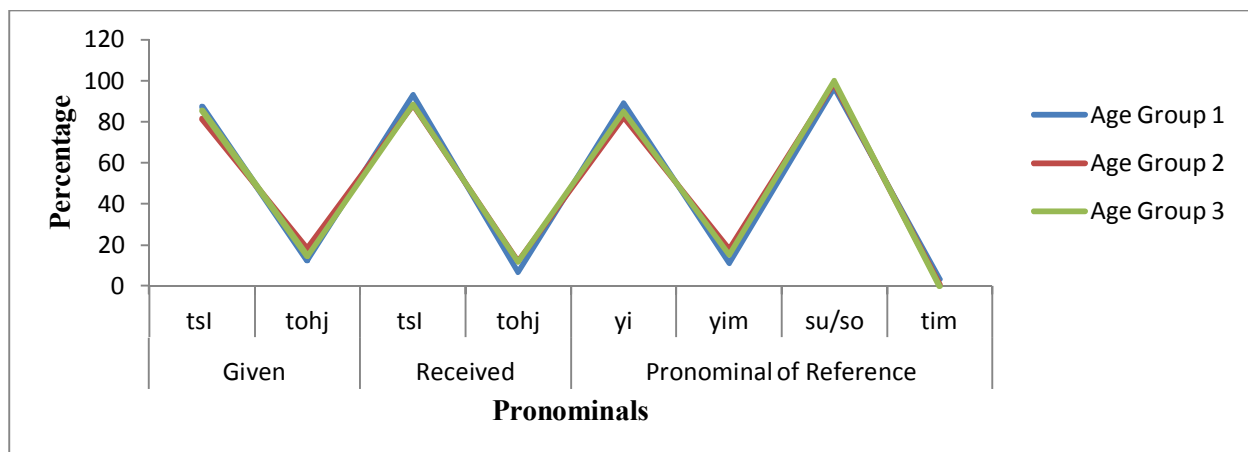

Figure 4. Age-Based Variation in Consanguineal Kinship Domain

3.2. Gender Induced variation in the Usage of Pronominals

Quantitative approaches in the study of language variation have been strongly influenced by the

sociolinguistic methodologies established by Labov's (1966 [1982]) study of the speech community of New York's Lower East Side. The sociolinguistic variables that have been pursued and studied in subsequent

work have often used the non-linguistic variables that Labov investigated as their primary focus. This has led to some valuable findings both within and across cultures, and perhaps more importantly provided the field of linguistics with a model for reaching out and co-opting the methods and existing insights from other fields as a means of enlightening and furthering linguistic praxis. Indeed, much of the essential early work in sociolinguistics research was conducted by extending the frameworks and interests of other fields such as anthropology and sociology. There has been a recent reemphasis in sociolinguistics, led by researchers working on the interaction of language and gender, to renew this tradition of reaching out to other fields in order to benefit from what they can tell us about the interpersonal functions of languages and communication. Sociolinguistic studies have for some time standardly adopted the methodologies of participant observation or network sampling that are drawn from anthropology and sociology. Recently this has been accompanied by resurgence in interest in the methodologies and theory that underlie much of the work that has been pursued in social psychology over the last two decades.

In this domain 1200 instances of pronominals were found each for the address pronominal, proximate reference In his studies of Martha's Vineyard and New York study (Labov, 1966b), Labov considered sex as one factor among many influencing the variation of language behavior. To explain sociophonological variation he used the sociological concept of "prestige," emphasizing language attitudes as a causal factor in choosing a certain variant right from the beginning.

In the present study the norms of usage of the pronominals among males and females are inferred from the data collected for the purpose. For understanding this relationship, the data elicited through the questionnaire from the sample population was analyzed and the instances of usage of the address and reference pronominals by males and females were counted in the consanguineal kinship domainpronominal and remote reference pronominal. The distribution of the pronominal usage with respect to gender is given in the Table 3 and subsequently represented in the graphic form in the Figure 5.

Table 2. Gender-Wise Pronominal Usage between Consanguineal Kins

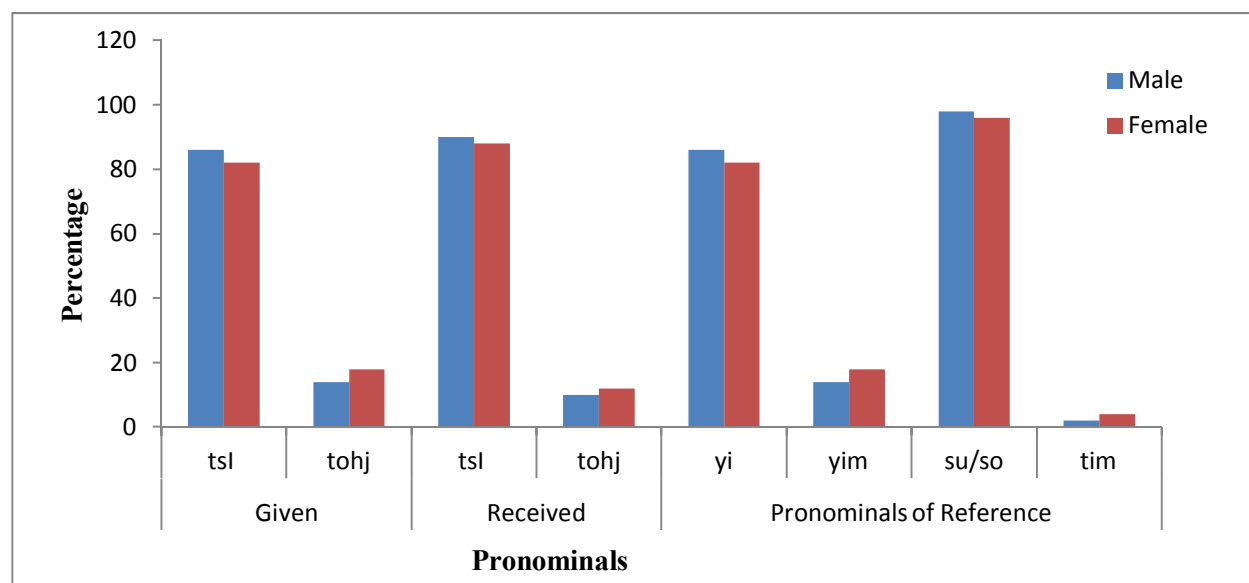|	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	toh^j	tsI	toh^j	yi	yim	Su/so	Tim
Male	1032 (86%)	168 (14%)	1080 (90%)	84 (10%)	1032 (86%)	168 (14%)	1176 (98%)	24 (2%)
Female	984 (82%)	216 (18%)	1056 (88%)	144 (12%)	984 (82%)	216 (18%)	1152 (96%)	48 (4%)

Figure 5. Gender-Wise Pronominal Usage between Consanguineal Kins

The table shows the difference in pronominal usage caused by gender. It is evident that the

difference in the usage of pronominal because of gender has a proper pattern in all the cases of address

pronominals and reference pronominals. In case of address pronominals, the non-deferential singular from is used more to address the consanguineal kins in comparison to its usage by females. The females receive the deferential form of the pronoun more than those of the males.

The same pattern persists in the case of reference pronominal where the deferential forms *yim* and *tim* are more frequently used by females than males.

Focusing primarily on language change, Labov emphasized that women of all classes and ages use more standard variants than their equivalent men.

Thus, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 90) state, "women's language has been said to reflect their conservativism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurture, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control."

3.3. Settlement Induced Variation

The study of sociolinguistic variation has its roots in dialectology, emerging in the 1960s partly as a result of inadequate methods in earlier approaches to the study of dialect, and partly as a reaction to Chomsky's generative programme. Unlike earlier forms of dialectology, it uses recordings of informal conversations as its data (and occasionally reading exercises to examine the role of formality in dialect use); argues for the role of quantitative analysis in highlighting dialect differences; and is interested in how social groups variably select different dialect forms.

The sociolinguistic variationist enterprise begins on the premise that dialect variation is far from free or haphazard, but is governed by what Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) called 'orderly heterogeneity' - structured variation. This 'structure' is manifested in a number of ways, most notably in the regular patterns found when sociolinguists correlate social structure with linguistic structure.
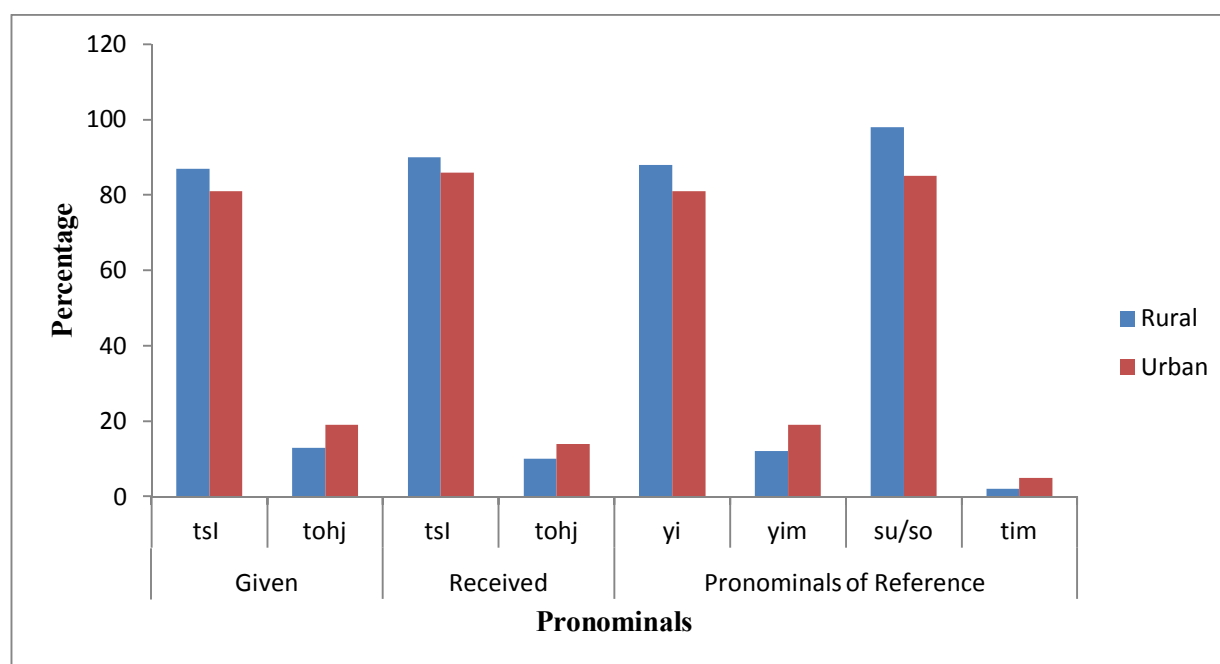

Figure 6. Settlement-Based Pronominal Variation in the Consanguineal Kinship

Table 3. Region-Wise Pronominal Usage between Consanguineal kins

	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	**toh[j]**	**tsI**	**toh[j]**	yi	yim	Su/so	Tim
Rural	1044 (87%)	156 (13%)	1080 (90%)	84 (10%)	1056 (88%)	144 (12%)	1176 (98%)	24 (2%)
Urban	972 (81%)	228 (19%)	1032 (86%)	168 (14%)	972 (81%)	228 (19%)	1140 (95%)	60 (5%)

The stratification of society into rural and urban is a universal phenomenon. The region of residence of

a speaker is an important social variable that can be correlated with the any linguistic variable. In the

present study, the data for understanding the effect of region of residence of a speaker on the usage of the pronominal came from 240 respondents, 120 each from rural and urban backgrounds. A total of 1200 instances of pronominal usage were recorded for each of the linguistic variables, that is, the address pronominal and the reference pronominal in each category: Rural and Urban. The distribution of the usage of pronominals on the basis of region of residence is given in Table 3 and shown in graphic form in Fig. 6.

The data clearly indicates that the usage of pronominals have a well-defined pattern as can also be seen in the fig 3. In case of the given address pronominals, the non-deferential singular pronominal is used more in both rural and urban category and reciprocally the same non-deferential address pronominal is received predominantly in the rural and the urban categories. The trend persists in the reference pronominals also where the non-deferential reference pronominals are used predominantly to refer to the consanguineal kins. The comparison of the results from rural and urban respondents reveals an interesting trend of usage in all the cases of pronominal usage, that is, address pronominals and reference pronominals. The urban respondents seem to give and receive the deferential forms of the address and the reference pronominal more than those of the rural respondents. This may be attributed to the sophisticated life style in the urban areas. One other reason for this variation may be attributed to the predominance of nuclear families in the urban areas which keeps only the lineal kins in proximity and hence social distance with the secondary blood kins increases resulting in the use of deferential forms for them.

3.4. Education Induced Variation

Sociolinguistics studies how language varieties differ between groups separated by certain social variables. One of the social variables reported to have a huge effect on the language use is the level of education.

Table 4

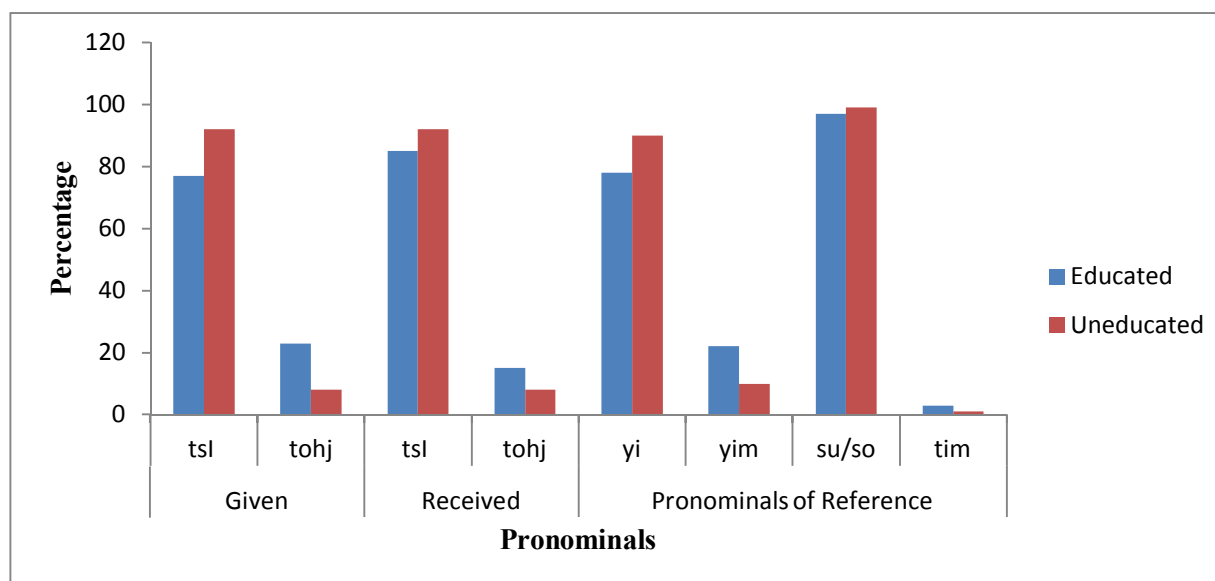|	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	toh^j	**tsI**	**toh^j**	yi	yim	Su/so	Tim
Educated	1044 (77%)	156 (23%)	1080 (85%)	84 (15%)	1056 (78%)	144 (22%)	1176 (97%)	24 (3%)
Uneducated	972 (92%)	228 (8%)	1032 (92%)	168 (8%)	972 (90%)	228 (10%)	1140 (99%)	60 (1%)

Figure 7. Variation in Pronominal Usage in Consanguineal Kinship because of Education

Education has therefore been selected as one of the variables in the present study to see its effect on the choice of pronominal usage. For this purpose, a total of 4800 instances (1200 each for the given address pronominal, received address pronominal, proximate reference pronominal and remote reference pronominal) of pronominal usage were elicited through a questionnaire distributed amongst 240 respondents grouped into 120 respondents each for

educated and uneducated groups. The data is given in the Table 4 and shown in graphic form in the Figure 7.

The data indicates that overall the non-deferential forms *tsI, yi* and *su/so* are used more in all the case as compared to compared to the deferential forms *toh^j, yim* and *tim*. The comparison between the educated and the uneducated groups, however, reveals an interesting result with educated people showing a fair usage of the deferential forms of the pronominals as compared to the uneducated people. In comparison to the overall 77% use of the singular address pronominal by the educated people, 92% of the uneducated people use the non-deferential form for addressing the kins. The educated and the uneducated people receive the 23% and 8% deferential address pronominal respectively.

The trend remains consistent with the reference pronominals as well wherein the educated people use the plural forms of the reference pronominals more than that of the uneducated people. The usage of the deferential reference pronominals is however not so predominant as the address pronominals.

The data suggests that the educated people are polite and their politeness persists even in their referring terms also. The overall trend can be seen in the figure 7 given.

4. Overall Results for Consanguineal Kins

The overall results in the domain of consanguineal kins reveal that the use non-deferential pronominal is predominant. This has to do with the intimacy between the kins. Most of the kins related through blood are emotionally and physically proximate to each other which results in the overwhelming use of the non-deferential form of the pronominals.

The data also reveals that the occurrence of the deferential pronominal is more in the face to face communication which evident from the 15% use of plural address pronominals. The deferential forms are least found in referring to the remote referents. Only 2% of the consanguineal kins are referred to with the deferential form of the remote reference pronominal.

The lesser use of deferential reference pronominal can be attributed to the lesser face threatening potential of the non-deferential pronouns. People tend to be more polite while directly addressing the collocutor and lesser use of polite forms is a feature of referring to people in their absence.

The overall trend of usage of the pronominals in the consanguineal kinship domain is shown in the fig 8.

The graph illustrates that the non-deferential forms of the address pronominal and the reference pronominals are predominantly used in the domain of consanguineal kinship. The predominant use of *tsI* can be attributed to the factors like physical proximity between the kins and their emotional inclination towards each other. Furthermore the pronominal usage reveals that the level of formality in the consanguineal kinship is very low.
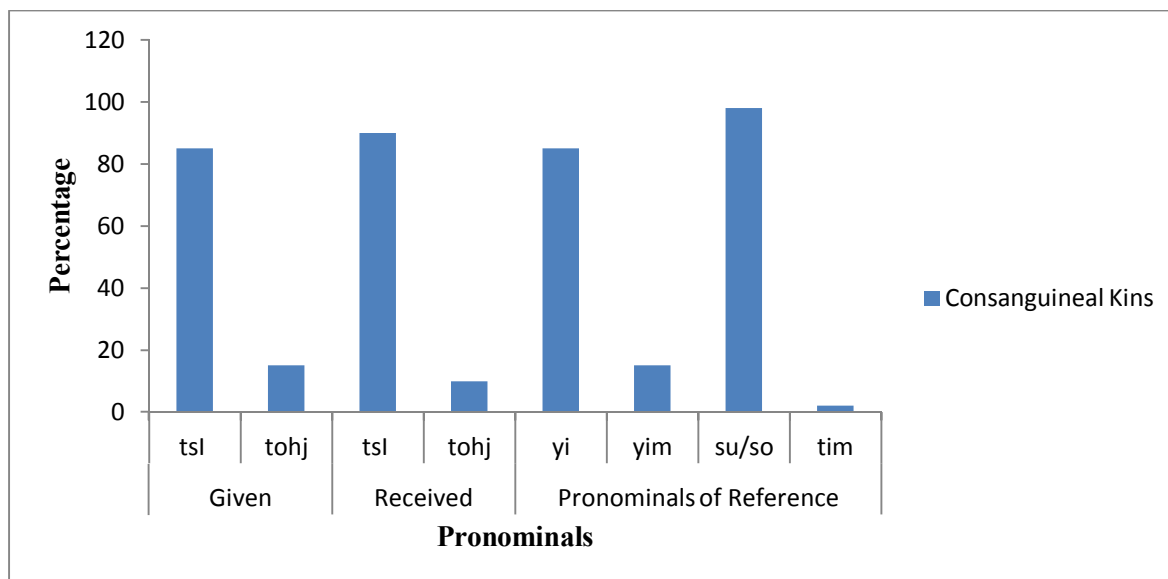

Figure 8. Pronominal Usage in Consanguineal Kinship Domain

5. Conclusion

The paper discussed the pronominal usage in consanguineal kinship domain which is the most basic domain of social organization. Because of the physical proximity between the consanguineal kins and their emotional intimacy with each other, the use of

pronominal among them is different from that in the other social domains. The results of the study reveal that there is reciprocal use of the non-deferential pronominal forms because of the solidarity relationship existing between the kins. The study further reveals that with the domain, the social attributes like age, gender and education also shape the use of pronominals. The frequency of usage of the deferential forms of the pronouns is more among the educated people than that of the uneducated. The use of plural pronominals with singular addressee increases as we move lower to higher age. It also was found that the females use the prestige variants more than the males.

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