Pronominal Usage in Affinal Kinship Domain: A Study on Kashmiri Speakers

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Abstract

Sociolinguistics, as a branch of linguistics, studies the relationship between language and society. One of the dimensions of Sociolinguistics is to correlate a linguistic and a social variable. A linguistic variable is a linguistic item which has identifiable variants, which are the different forms which can be used in an environment. The use of these variant forms in a given environment is shaped by the social factors like class, age, gender, education etc. Kashmiri language falls in the category of the languages in which the second and the third person pronominals qualify as linguistic variables which require a sociolinguistic investigation. In Kashmiri language, the second person pronoun has the variant forms 'tsI' and 'toh^j; and the third person pronoun has the variant forms 'yi' and' yim' in the case of proximate, 'hu' and 'hum' in the case of remote within sight and 'su'/'so' and 'tim' in the case of remote out of sight referents. This study is a step in the direction to unveil the usage of pronominals by the Kashmiri speakers in the affinal kinship domain. The paper gives a qualitative and quantitative analysis of how the usage of pronominals is shaped by the factors like age, gender, settlement and education.

Key Words: Sociolinguistics, Variable, Pronominal, Affine, Kinship

1. Introduction

In many languages of the world, referential address of the hearer or the referent can be pronominal (e.g. *tu, vos*), nominal (e.g. using names, titles, kin terms), or verbal (verb endings). The former has been of special interest for linguists who have concerned themselves with second person singular pronouns of address and with languages that exhibit systems of more than one of such pronouns. The choice, at the disposal of a speaker/addresser to address or refer to his interlocutor/referent, provided by a language in the form of pronominals, qualifies the pronominal as a linguistic variable which can be studied in the framework of the variationist sociolinguistics pioneered by William Labov. The pronominals have been sociolinguistically studied in many languages with Brown and Gilman (1960) being the pioneers. Kashmiri language falls in the category of the languages in which the second and the third person pronominals qualify as linguistic variables which require a sociolinguistic investigation. In Kashmiri language, the second person pronoun has the variant forms *'tsI'* and *'toh^j'*; and the third person pronoun has the variant forms *yi* and *yim* in the case of proximate, *hu* and *hum* in the case of remote within sight and *su/so* and *tim* in the case of remote out of sight referents. This study is a step in the direction to unveil the usage of pronominals by the Kashmiri speakers in the affinal 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

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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 'kin' as distinguished from 'non-kin' who may be related to each other through other ways.

Broadly, there are two types of kin:

i. Consanguineal kin: 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 kin: Those related to each other through marital relationship are called affinal kin or affines. The affinal kin 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 affinal kinship.

3. Addressing Affinal Kin

Affinal kin or affine are those who are related to each other through marital relationship. The affinal kin 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. Most of the affinal kin do not reside in physical proximity. Such relationships develop through marriage and the range of physical proximity between different affinal kin is very wide. Some of the affinal kin remain in physical proximity like the consanguineal kin while as there is a fair bit of distance among certain other affinal kin. The usage of language in the domain of affinal kinship is shaped by such things as emotional attachment, physical proximity, age, gender, education etc. which is discussed in the next section. The affinal kin with respect to whom the pronominal usage is discussed are mentioned in the Figure 3.1 and the frequency of the variant forms of the pronominals is also graphically represented.
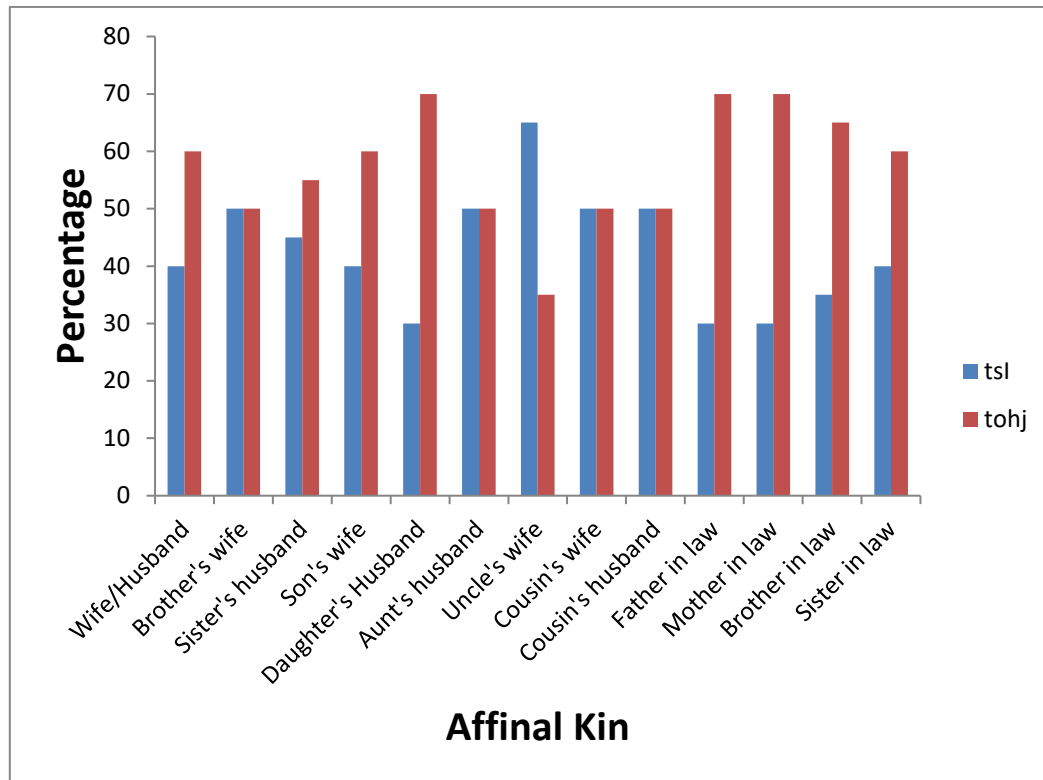
Figure 3.1: Pronominal Usage with Affinal Kin

It is evident from the graph that the use of plural pronominal *toh^j* with the affinal kin is fair. As a norm, the son-in-law commands the maximum respect in the Kashmiri society which is reflected in the highest frequency of usage of the plural pronoun *toh^j* to address son-in-law. It is also evident that other in-laws are addressed with *toh^j*. The predominat use of *toh^j* reflects the high level of formality of such affinal relations. The fair use of *toh^j* with other affinal kin too can be attributed to lesser frequency of contact between the affinal kin. There is also a lesser level of emotional intimacy between the affinal kin.

The frequency of received form of address pronominal from the affinal kin is graphically shown in Figure 3.2.
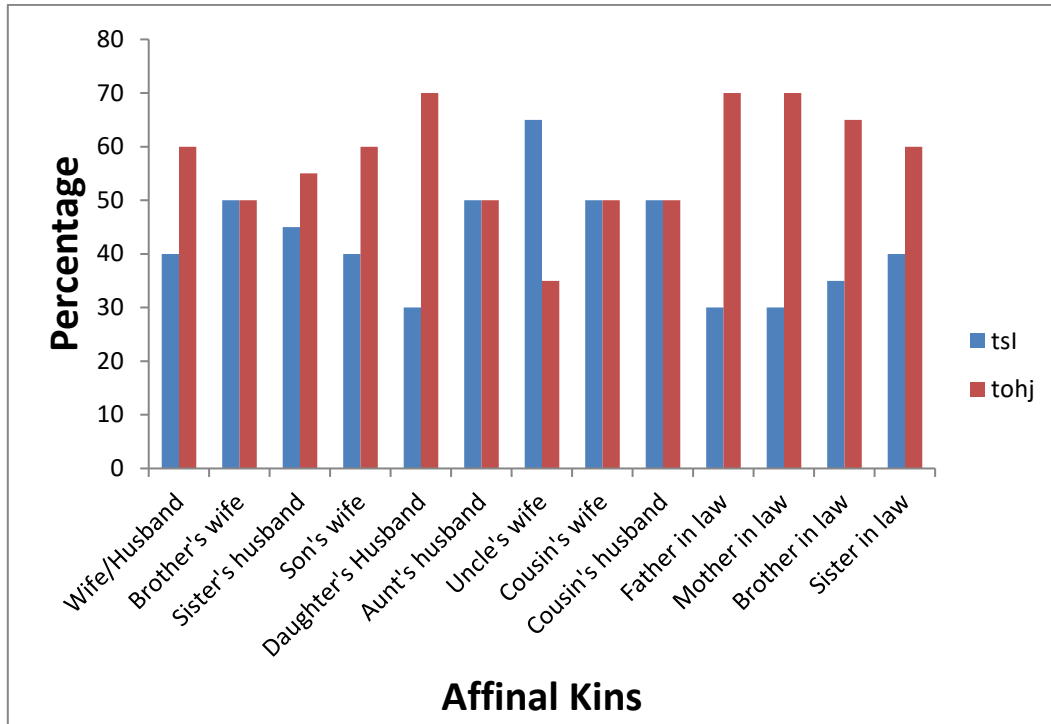
Figure 3.2: Pronominal Variants Received from Affinal Kin

Like the previous section where an overwhelming use of plural pronoun *toh^j* was seen, the trend seems to be the same for the received form of the address. It is evident that the frequency of *toh^j* as a received pronominal of address is high. Therefore, the reciprocal use of the plural pronoun in the affinal kinship domain is the norm.

The variation in pronominal usage within the domain of affinal kinship caused by the social variables like age, gender etc., is discussed in the following sections.

3.1. Age as a Factor in Pronominal Usage

Age is one of the most important social variables that shape the language use in society. The variation in language use because of age has been reported in many early studies. The data for ascertaining the effect of age on pronominal usage in the present study came from the selected sample of 240 respondents stratified on the basis of age into three groups. The number of instances of pronominal usage in the three age groups, as recorded in the questionnaires, is different because of the varying number of affinal kin of the respondents belonging to three different age groups. The number of instances of pronominal usage for the address and the reference pronominal along with percentage is given in the Table 3.1 and graphically shown in Figure 3.3.

Table 3.1. Age-Based Pronominal Usage with Affinal Kin

	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	toh^j	tsI	toh^j	yi	yim	Su/so	Tim
AG1 (6-25)	330 (55%)	270 (45%)	372 (62%)	228 (38%)	360 (60%)	240 (40%)	594 (99%)	6 (1%)

AG2 (26-45)	301 (43%)	399 (57%)	322 (46%)	378 (54%)	329 (47%)	371 (53%)	679 (97%)	21 (3%)
AG3 (46 & above)	520 (65%)	280 (35%)	416 (52%)	384 (48%)	520 (65%)	280 (35%)	800 (100%)	0 (0%)

As clear from the tabulated data, there is a significant variation in the usage of address and reference pronominals in the three age groups. The Age Group 1 predominantly uses the non-deferential address pronominal *tsI* with the affinal kin and receives the same non-deferential address pronominal even more predominantly. The trend is same for the reference pronominals where the non-deferential forms are used in abundance. The higher usage of *tsI* in the Age Group 1 may be attributed to the proximity of the sample population with the affinal kin who are in a sweeping majority affiliated to the respondents either from the parents' side or there is an indirect affiliation of the respondents with affinal kin of the siblings. The affinal relationships in this age group are mostly long standing having resulted in a fair bit of intimacy with the affine.

The data further reveal that the use of the deferential remote reference pronominal in comparison with its counterpart address pronominal is very low because of its least face threatening potential. This once again holds that the face to face communications are more polite.

The data also reveal that the usage of deferential forms of the address and reference pronominal is highest in the Age Group 2. This can be attributed to the obligation expressed by the population belonging to the Age Group 2 to the social norms. During this period of life a new network of affines gets associated because of marriage. The lesser intimacy and proximity between new affine result in the higher use of deferential pronominal forms, both in case of the address pronominal and the reference pronominal.

The use of deferential forms of pronominals sees a dip on going from the Age Group 2 to Age Group 3. This can be attributed to the increasing intimacy between the affines of higher age.

The trend of usage of the address and reference pronominals is shown in the Figure 3.3.
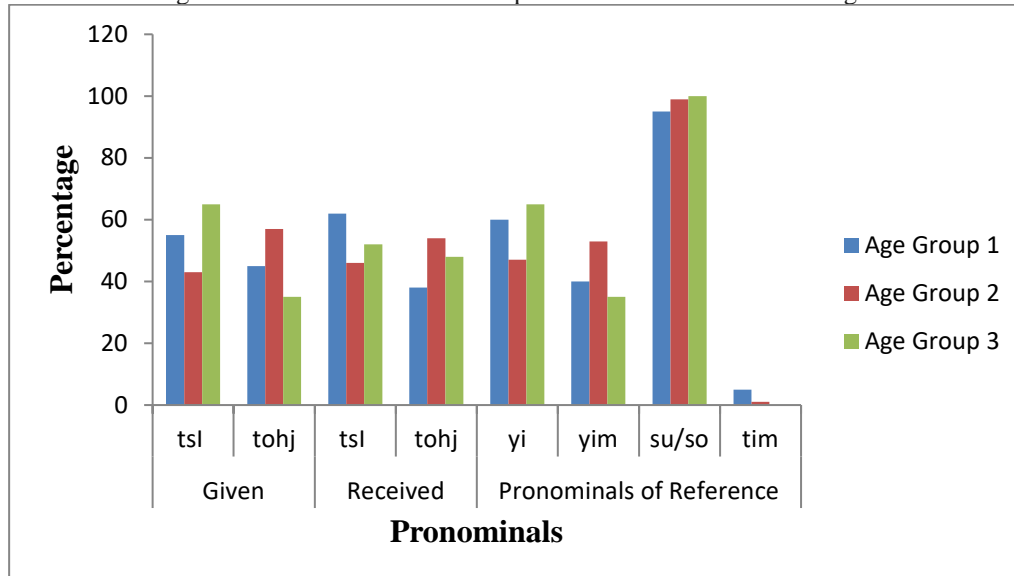

Figure 3.3. Age-Based Pronominal Usage with Affinal Kin

3.2. Gender as a Factor

Men and women, on average, tend to use slightly different language styles. These differences tend to be quantitative rather than qualitative. That is to say that women use a particular speaking style more than men do. To see the reliability of such findings of the earlier works, the data gathered from the sample population was analyzed on the basis of gender and thus the instances of usage of the pronominals by men and women are counted. The distribution of the usage is given in Table 3.2.

The data suggests that women give and receive the deferential form of the address pronominal more than that of men. As evident in the table, 59 percent of the males give the non-deferential form of the pronoun while as only 49 percent of the female population uses the non-deferential form of the pronoun.

The trend persists in the case of the reference pronominal. The deferential forms of the reference pronominal are used by the females more than that of the males.

Table 3.2: Gender-Based Pronominal Variation in Affinal Kinship Domain

	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	toh^j	tsI	toh^j	yi	yim	su/so	Tim
Male	620 (59%)	430 (41%)	588 (56%)	462 (44%)	651 (62%)	449 (38%)	1040 (99%)	10 (1%)
Female	514 (49%)	536 (51%)	536 (51%)	514 (49%)	556 (53%)	494 (47%)	1029 (98%)	21 (2%)

The higher usage of the deferential forms of the pronouns by females may be attributed to their prestige consciousness, subordination and conservativeness.

The trend of usage of the pronominals by males and females is shown in the graphic form in the Figure 3.4.
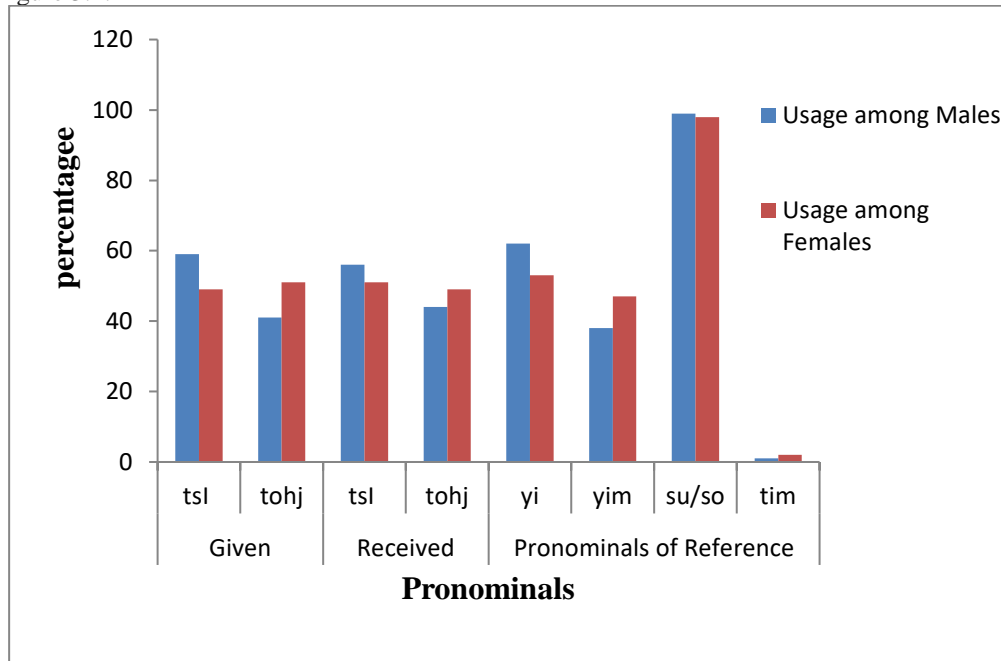
Figure 3.4: Gender-Based Pronominal Variation in Affinal Kinship Domain

3.3. Region as a Factor of Pronominal Usage

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.

Rural/Urban distinction is an important part of the social setup of the Kashmiri society. Assumingly, the speech patterns of the rural and the urban populations show a structured variation. For unveiling the effect of settlement on the pronominal usage, the data was collected from the sample selected on the basis of residence. The total number of instances of pronominal usage in case of address pronominal and reference pronominal were counted and their percentages were calculated both in case of the data gathered from rural and urban respondents. The distribution of the pronominal usage is given in the Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Settlement Based Variation in Affinal Kinship Domain

	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	toh^j	tsI	toh^j	Yi	yim	su/so	Tim
Rural	588 (56%)	462 (44%)	578 (55%)	472 (45%)	630 (60%)	420 (40%)	1029 (98%)	21 (2%)
Urban	546 (52%)	504 (48%)	546 (52%)	504 (48%)	567 (54%)	483 (46%)	1018 (97%)	32 (3%)

The data given in the table reveals that 56 percent of the rural people use *tsI* to address the affinal kin while as in the case of the urban population only 52 percent people use *tsI* as a pronominal address. Consequently, 45 percent and 48 percent receive the deferential form of the pronoun in the case of rural and urban population respectively.

In the case of proximate reference pronominal, 60 percent of the instances of usage are that of the non-deferential *yi* while as the in urban population, 54 percent of the instances of usage pertain to that of the non-deferential *yi*. Conversely, the usage of the deferential pronominal *yim* is predominant in the urban population.

Though there is variation in the use of the remote reference pronominal, the use of the deferential remote reference pronominal *yim* is negligible indicating that the non-face to face communications tend to be almost devoid of the polite expressions while referring to the third person.

The overall higher use of *tsI, yi* and *su/so* with affines in the rural domain may be attributed to the more close-knitted nature of the rural communities. The trend showing the overall use of the pronominals is shown in Figure 3.5.
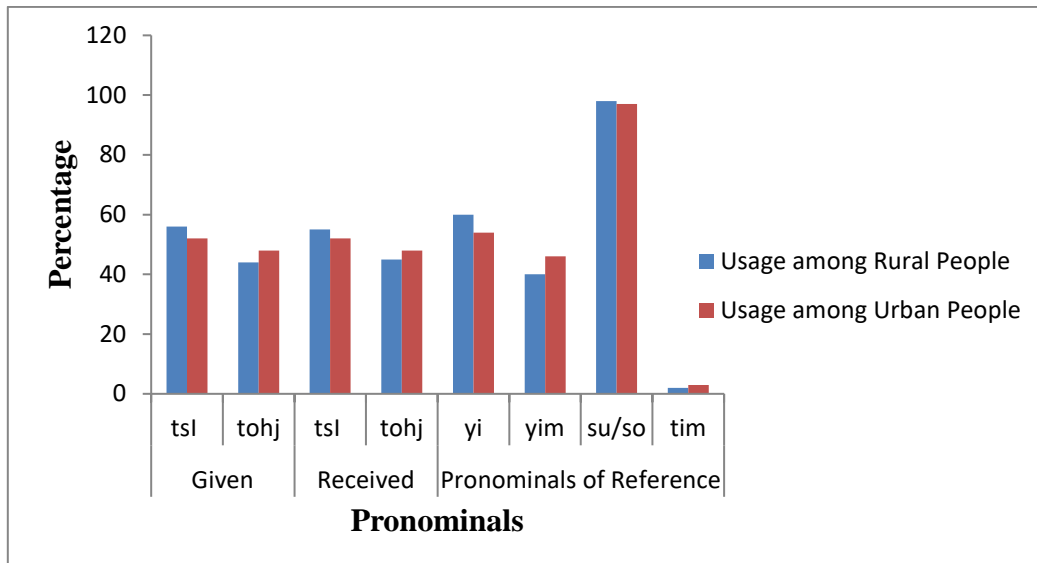
Figure 3.5: Settlement Based Variation in Affinal Kinship Domain

3.4. Education as Factor

The sample for the present study, as already mentioned, was stratified with education as one of the criteria of stratification. Thus the pronominal usage among educated and uneducated population was analyzed. Through the questionnaire, the instances of usage of the address and the reference pronominal were collected. The number of instances of usage by males and females were counted for linguistic variables under study. The number of instances of the pronominal usage recorded for all the pronominals were normalized into percentage. The Table 3.4 shows the number of instances of pronominal usage along with their percentages.

Table 3.4: Education-Wise Variation in Pronominal Usage with Affines

	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	toh^j	tsI	toh^j	Yi	yim	su/so	tim
Educated	494 (47%)	556 (53%)	483 (46%)	567 (54%)	546 (52%)	504 (48%)	1029 (98%)	21 (2%)
Uneducated	630 (60%)	420 (40%)	640 (61%)	410 (39%)	651 (62%)	399 (38%)	1040 (99%)	10 (1%)

The data show that the use of address pronominal *tsI* is used more by the uneducated population (60%) while as the educated population address their collocutors with the non-deferential *tsI* on 47 percent instances.

It is also evident that the educated people receive the deferential form of the address pronominal more than their uneducated counterparts. This indicates the respect towards the educated people.

In the case of reference pronominal, the trend of giving and receiving the deferential forms persists but as compared to the usage of deferential form of the address pronominal, the usage of the deferential forms of the reference pronominals is lower. The lowest use of deferential form is found in the remote referential pronominal. The overall trend is shown in the Figure 3.6..
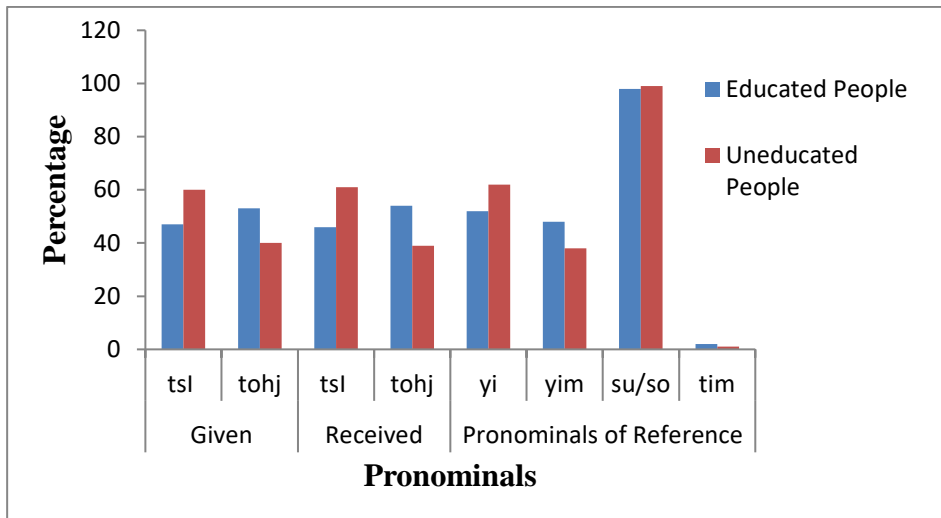
Figure 3.6: Education-Wise Variation in Pronominal Usage with Affines

3.5. Overall Usage of Pronominals in the Affinal Kinship Domain

The overall usage of pronominals in the affinal kinship domain is given in the Table 3.5 and graphically shown in Figure 3.7.

Table 3.5: Pronominal Usage with Affinal Kin

	Given		Received		Pronominal of Reference			
	tsI	toh^j	tsI	toh^j	yi	yim	su/so	tim
Addressing Affinal Kin	1134 (54%)	966 (46%)	1134 (54%)	966 (46%)	1197 (57%)	903 (43%)	2058 (98%)	42 (2%)

The tabulated data shows that the overall usage in the affinal kinship domain is balanced between the deferential and non-deferential address and reference pronominals with the exception of an overwhelming use of the remote non-deferential reference pronominal *su/so*.
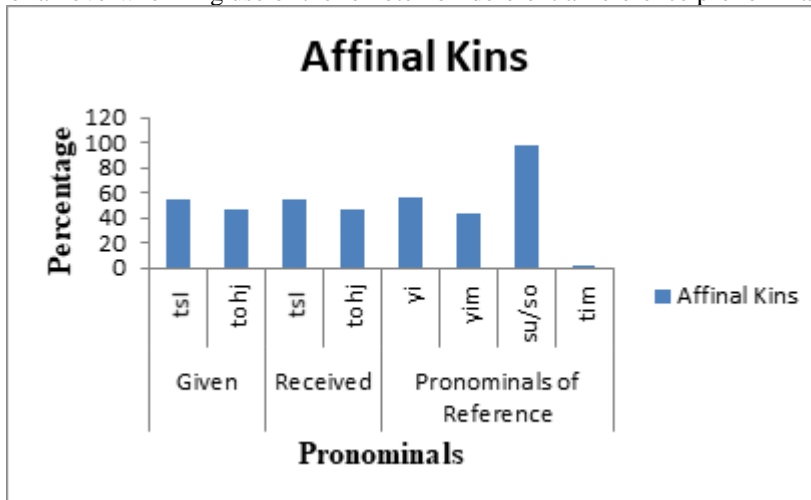

Figure 3.7. Pronominal Usage with Affinal Kin

The table also shows that as we move from the address pronominal to the remote referential pronominal, the use of non-deferential forms increases because the shift happens from direct address to reference.

4. Conclusion

The paper discussed the pronominal usage in affinal kinship domain which is one of the most basic domains of social organization. As far as the nature of the affinal kinship is concerned, it is midway between the consanguineal and the other domains. There is a varying level of intimacy and proximity among different affines and this varying level brings about variation in the use of pronominals. The results of the study reveal that there more the intimacy and the proximity between the affinal kin, more is the use of the non-deferential form of the pronouns in direct address. Many of the affines share a formal relationship with each other and the frequency of contact in such relations is less (high social distance) which results in use of deferential form of the pronouns in direct address. As we move from the address pronominals to the remote reference pronominal, the use of the non-deferential forms of the pronouns increases which is because of the zero face threatening potential of such usages. 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, females and urban folks than their respective counterparts which tells many things about the social relations of power and solidarity among people of different age, gender, education and settlement.

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