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THE USE OF SEXIST LANGUAGE IN INTERPERSONAL DISCOURSE: A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELECT EXCERPTS FROM INDIAN CINEMA

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Abstract:

The essence of sexism is still present in society even though many of the obstacles have been removed to date. Working girls and women deal with a lot of issues. The vocabulary used to depict the male and female bodies in the media and on other social media platforms has thousands of connotations, despite the fact that these portrayals show empowerment and people's changed minds. As interpretation and perseverance of thought touches the ideality of the term but its application and surface meaning remain in the hand of the society. And in the process of representation and semantic analysis language provides the foundation it, which in turn allows us to convey our ideas, feelings, and experiences.

Key Words: Sexism, Language, Women, Men

Introduction

Sexism is linked to beliefs about the roles that men and women should play in society and the inherent distinctions between them. Because of gender stereotypes and sexist views about men and women, one gender may be viewed as superior to another. This kind of hierarchical thinking might be antagonistic and intentional, or it can be unconscious and show up as unconscious bias. Everyone is impacted by sexism, but women are disproportionately afflicted. Although the European Union has established legal frameworks to promote equality and fight discrimination, women are still under-represented in leadership roles, excluded from certain economic sectors, paid less than men, responsible for providing unpaid care, and disproportionately the targets of gender-based violence. These inequities are a result of sexist beliefs, practices, and behaviours.

Sexism is the term for beliefs or attitudes that justify oppressing members of the other group because of their gender or sex, such as the idea that one group, usually a male one, should be superior to another, usually a female one. It comprises patterns of behaviour, societal frameworks, and techniques of oppression. These may not be done with a conscious sexist mentality but rather may be unintentional participation in an existing system where one sex (often female) has less authority and fewer advantages in society.

The essence of it is still present in society even though many of the obstacles have been removed to date. Working girls and women deal with a lot of issues. Even while the way the male and female bodies are portrayed in the media and on other social media platforms demonstrates empowerment and people's changing opinions, the language employed to describe these bodies has thousands of meanings. As interpretation and perseverance of thought touches the ideality of the term but its application and surface meaning remain in the hand of the society. And in the process of representation and semantic analysis language provides the foundation it, which in turn allows us to convey our ideas, feelings, and experiences.

Bollywood film plots substantially favour male roles in references and actions "30 times per plot vs 15 for women," according to scholar Madaan et al. (2018), illustrating widespread gender bias. Overt and covert sexist discourse shapes listener attitudes and normalises hierarchical gender roles in speech.

Bollywood films have a significant cultural influence in India and help to define discursive rules. An NLP study of 4,000 Hindi films from 1970 to 2017 found that men were in 30 times as many plots as women, and women were described as "beautiful" or "heartbroken," while men were described as "strong" or "successful."



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I have taken secondary data and research design is qualitative .Sexist language is a significant issue in various media, including movies, advertisements, news, reports, books, political speeches, and television shows. It discriminates against others and reflects societal ideologies and values regarding sex differences. I have taken few selected excerpts like DABANGG, DIRTY PICTURE, HUM TUMHARE HAI SANAM, and GREAT GRAND MASTI. I have selected some of well-known Bollywood flicks with sexist dialogue.

Research Objective

To investigate how sexist language is influencing interpersonal relation and how sexist language works pragmatically in interpersonal interactions in a few Bollywood film dialogues. A focus on how speakers use language to position one another in relation to social norms.

Analysis

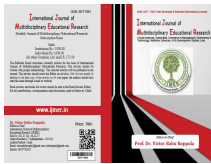
The culture is reflected in movies. They reflect (with some artistic license) the concerns, issues, opinions, and thinking of the modern world. Therefore, we believe that films could be used as a way to gauge how prevalent gender bias and stereotypes are in a certain community. Some actors and actresses have always been associated with sexual explicitness and are only seen in that context because women's sexuality has also been taboo in Indian cinema.

A careful analysis of selected songs revealed that unacceptance of rejection or disinterest is recurrently portrayed as 'masculine' and 'macho'. The purported "heroism" of attempting to convince a woman in spite of her overt rejection and lack of interest was emphasised in a number of songs. Not only do these songs applaud denial of rejection but also construe refusal as a challenge for a stubborn one-sided lover to become more determined to 'achieve his object of desire'. This is evident in verses like 'Tu ne English me jab humko danta to ashqi surrender hua' (When you scolded me in English, your lover surrendered) and 'Tere ko lon haan karake chadni' (I would not give up until I make you say yes). The sub-theme also resonates with the notion of male entitlement; a patriarchal bias deeply embedded in Indian culture (Kumar, Gupta & Abraham, 2002). The preponderance of this theme reflects that being rejected by a woman is culturally viewed as a threat to one's manliness and that real men are expected to resist rejection instead of accepting it. These ideas are the result of patriarchal ideals that have existed for ages and are what keep toxic masculinity alive. Some examples are listed below:

First movie which I have taken is DABANGG:

"Thappad se darr nahi lagta, sahab...pyaar se lagta hai"

This line is taken from the 2010 film Dabangg, spoken by Sonakshi Sinha's character, Rajjo to Chulbul Pandey (Salman Khan). The male lead reinforces physical power under the pretence of caring by using paternalistic authority and calling the smack "love". Rajjo is saying that physical pain or violence doesn't scare her. She's emotionally tough or desensitized to hardship. Despite her external toughness, she fears emotional vulnerability. Love, with its risks of heartbreak, attachment, and loss, is more intimidating to her than physical violence. In the film, Rajjo is portrayed as strong, reserved, and emotionally guarded. Her emotional scars or past experiences perhaps love has caused her more pain than any slap ever could. At face value, the character is saying that physical violence (a slap) doesn't scare her, but emotional intimacy or love does. Rajjo is a woman from a modest background, independent and emotionally guarded, used to hardship and maybe even emotional disappointment in life. She says this to a man who's brash, confident, and unpredictable, almost as a defense mechanism telling him not to mess with her heart. This line may hint at past emotional damage. She may have seen love fail in her life—either in her own experience or in her family (e.g., broken homes, betrayals, abandonment). Women are often expected to endure pain silently. They may learn to hide their emotional needs to protect themselves. This line speaks to how emotional pain leaves deeper scars than physical ones, especially in women's lives. She's saying this to a powerful man reclaiming control of the conversation and establishing boundaries: You may be physically powerful, but love? That's more dangerous to me than your threats. It holds deep emotional truth within a short sentence. This dialogue shows a tough woman who's been through enough to say: I can take hits from life but don't mess with my heart unless you're serious.



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Second example which I have taken is from the movie JAB WE MET:

“Akeli ladki khuli tijori ki tarah hoti hai.”

This line has been taken from the 2008 film, *Jab We Met*, spoken by the character, a railway manager to Geet (Kareena Kapoor). It means a girl alone is like an open safe (or unlocked vault). In the film, this line is spoken by a hotel manager warning Geet (played by Kareena Kapoor) who is traveling alone. He is trying to caution her, implying that: A girl by herself is vulnerable, like an unlocked treasure chest. People might take advantage of her. Society may not protect, but rather prey on a woman who is alone. This line reflects a patriarchal mindset one that treats women not as independent individuals, but as objects to be protected, owned, or stolen. A woman's safety depends on being accompanied or protected by a man or family. An alone woman (akeli ladki) is automatically at risk, and it's somehow her fault if anything goes wrong. It reduces a woman's identity to something valuable but passive, like a safe (tijori) which is not a human being, but a container. It reinforces victim-blaming: suggesting that a girl is unsafe just because she's alone. It objectifies women comparing them to treasure chests rather than people with agency. It reflects the social double standards where men move freely, but women are told to fear the world. However, the film uses this line intentionally to show the mindset of society not to support it. The line reflects a conservative warning; Geet's actions in the movie challenge that thinking.

“Akeli ladki khuli tijori ki tarah hoti hai” is a dialogue that shows how society often sees women as property something to guard, lock up, or control. But the film uses this line to highlight and question that outdated thinking, especially through Geet's strong character.

Third example which I have taken is from the movie THE DIRTY PICTURE:

“Kuch logo ka naam unke kaam se hota hai ... mera badnaam hoke huahai”

The given dialogue is from the film *The Dirty Picture* (2011) spoken by Silk (played by Vidya Balan). She wants to convey that some people earn a name through their work but she became famous through infamy (Kuch logon kanaam unke kaam se hota hai). Some people are respected and remembered because of their talent, hard work, or noble profession. “Naam” here means reputation, earned through worthy deeds. “Mera badnaam hoke hua hai” on the other hand, didn't earn fame through work society values. She became notorious, “Badnaam”, means infamous, often used when someone is shamed or judged by society. This line reflects the central theme of Silk's character. She rises to fame as a bold, unapologetically sexual figure in an industry (cinema) that uses and judges women like her. She's not celebrated for “art” or “talent” the way men or “respectable” actresses are. Instead, she is objectified, criticized, and talked about for being “too much” yet she becomes a star because of it. People enjoy glamour and sensuality but shame the women who deliver it. The idea that women who don't conform to “good girl” standards are easily labeled as bad. A woman owning her identity Silk knows she's “badnaam” but isn't apologizing for it. It shows a woman who is aware of society's judgment, but chooses to embrace her image rather than deny it. “I didn't earn fame by being ‘respectable’, I earned it by being exactly what society tries to silence.” This is a dialogue of defiance, self-awareness, and rejection of double standards.

“Aurat jo haina, rainbow ki tarah hoti hai ... jitne rang utne roop.”

This means that a woman is like a rainbow– she's vibrant, layered, and full of variety (Jitne rang, utne roop). As many colors as the rainbow has that many forms (or moods) a woman can take. This dialogue is a celebration of womanhood, its complexity, beauty, unpredictability, and emotional depth.

Women have many shades, joy, anger, strength, softness, boldness, love, sensuality, pain. Just like a rainbow, they don't fit into one role or one color. They are ever-changing, vivid, and uncontainable. Society often tries to box women into narrow identities: “good”, “bad”, “pure”, and “shameless”. A woman can be many things at once, just like a rainbow can be red, blue, violet, all at once. In the film, where Silk is judged for being bold and sexual, this line asserts that beauty and desire are natural parts of womanhood, not something to be ashamed of. Being colorful (bold, expressive, unapologetic) is not a



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flaw, it's her essence. In Indian culture, women are often expected to be "sanskaari" (modest), silent, or self-sacrificing. This dialogue challenges that ideal, and instead honors the full spectrum of a woman's emotions, identities, and expressions.

"Tumhari baton mein itna horse power haina ... ki aadmi ke dimag kharab ho jaate hai aur godhon ka chalna shuru"

"Horse power" is a technical term used to describe the power of engines; here, used as a metaphor for high energy, boldness, and seduction in her speech. "Ki aadmi ke dimaag kharaab ho jaate hain" means men lose their minds. Men become distracted, overwhelmed, or infatuated, unable to think straight. "Aur godhon ka chalna shuru" means donkeys start moving. This is a double-meaning punch line. It implies even the dumbest or useless men ("gadhai") get excited or start acting due to her presence or words. It also subtly refers to sexual arousal done humorously and indirectly. This line is flirtatious, bold, and sarcastically humorous packed with double entendre (double meaning) delivered with confidence and control. Silk (Vidya Balan) knows the power of her presence and speech and uses it playfully. Silk says this line to highlight how men lose logic and behave foolishly around her. Her power in a male-dominated industry comes not through traditional means, but by owning her personality, sensuality, and sharp wit. The line mocks how easily society (especially men) gets distracted by bold women, yet blames the woman for it. It's also a comment on hypocrisy; men are drawn in, yet quick to shame the same woman. "I don't even have to touch anyone my words alone cause chaos in mind and even the brainless start moving." This is a playful power statement, mixing sensuality, sarcasm, and self-awareness a signature of Silk's character.

"Girl-friend pehle pehle malai jaisi lagti hai ... phir dheere dheere cholesterol jaisa feel deti hai ... and finally seedhe heart attack."

A girlfriend, in the beginning, feels like fresh cream... then slowly starts to feel like cholesterol... and finally, leads straight to a heart attack. "Girl-friend pehle pehle malai jaisi lagti hai" which means in the beginning of a relationship, the girlfriend seems sweet, soft, desirable like malai (cream) rich, smooth, and tempting. But slowly, she starts feeling like cholesterol something heavy, unhealthy, that begins to weigh you down (Phir dheere dheere cholesterol jaisa feel deti hai). It reflects how the initial charm fades, and complications, drama, or emotional burden start to show. In the end, she causes a heart attack (And finally seedhe heart attack), a metaphor for emotional destruction, heartbreak, or unbearable stress. It's a punch-line showing the emotional toll some relationships can take. It means that a man's perspective (within the film) about how relationships can become intense, demanding, and exhausting over time. It pokes fun at how romantic relationships evolve from passion to pressure. Highlights the idealization at the beginning, and how reality often disappoints or overwhelms. It also reflects male frustration or fear of commitment and emotional depth.

"Mujhe jo chahiye ... uska maaza sirf raat ko hi aata hai"

What I want... its pleasure is only found at night. What I desire... can only be truly enjoyed at night. This line is delivered with deliberate double meaning (double entendre). On the surface, it sounds like. The speaker desires something (unspecified), and the enjoyment or satisfaction of it is only possible at night suggesting something sensual, forbidden, or secretive. The dialogue uses suggestive language that hints at sexual desire without saying it directly a hallmark of Silk's dialogues. The word "raat (night)" often symbolizes intimacy, secrecy, pleasure. "The kind of pleasure I crave isn't for the daylight or public eyes, it's something personal, intimate, and night-bound." It also subtly defies societal rules. Most women in traditional settings are expected to be modest, silent about their desires. But here, the woman (Silk) says openly that: "I have desires and I'm not shy to say when and how I enjoy them." Depending on context, "what I want" could also mean freedom, fame, or attention, which Silk often gets on stage, in films, or in her own world at night not in the "daylight" of moral judgment. This line is playful, bold, seductive, and intentionally provocative, Meant to tease and challenge the listener especially men who expect women to be silent or shy about such things. A woman owning her desire without shame, challenging the idea that female pleasure or need is taboo or dirty, the conflict between social judgment (daylight) and personal truth (night). "I know what I want and I enjoy it when the world sleeps, away from its judgment." This dialogue is sensual, rebellious, and empowering said by a woman who doesn't ask for permission to feel pleasure or speak her truth.



“Public samaan dekhti hai ... dukaan nahin”

The public looks at the goods... not the shop. Samaan: product, goods (used here metaphorically for the body, especially a woman's body), Dukaan: the shop (used metaphorically for the person behind the appearance her inner self or character). It means that “people are only interested in what's on display not who's displaying it.” This line reflects how the audience or society often reduces a woman to her physical appearance, especially in cinema. They admire or criticize her body (samaan), but never care to understand the real person (dukaan) her feelings, story, or struggles. It's a sharp statement on how women especially glamorous ones are consumed as visual objects, not seen as whole human beings. In the context of The Dirty Picture, it directly critiques; the entertainment industry, which values an actress's body or sex appeal over her talent or personality. How audiences flock to watch “bold” scenes, but then judge or shame the very actress who performs them. Silk delivers this line not with shame, but with bold self-awareness. She's saying: “I know you're looking at my body, not me. But I'm not blind to that I have turned your gaze into my power.” “People only care about the product, not the person behind it. You stare at my body but you never stop to know my story.” This dialogue is a powerful take on female objectification, especially in the entertainment world wrapped in wit, sarcasm, and truth.

“Holi khelne ka shauk hai ... par teri pichkari mein dum nahin”

You may enjoy playing Holi... but your water gun doesn't have any force. Holi khelne ka shauk hai means you like playing Holi (used here as a metaphor for flirting, intimacy, or bold interaction) Par teri pichkari mein dum nahin means your water gun lacks power. “Pichkari”, water gun, used during Holi is a symbolic reference to masculinity, desire, or manhood in this context. The line is loaded with suggestive humor. On the surface it talks about Holi, but underneath it implies: You talk big or act bold, but you don't have what it takes to back it up either emotionally, sexually, or confidently. It is a way of calling out a man's lack of performance, power, or courage in a playful yet cutting way. It teases and insults at the same time meant to wound the ego of a man who thinks he's impressive, but isn't Silk (Vidya Balan's character) delivers this kind of dialogue with Confidence and control, she's not afraid to speak directly. She knows men try to act dominant or clever, but she flips the power dynamic by mocking their weakness with humor. This line shows that she can't be impressed by just talk, she demands substance. In a patriarchal setup where women are usually objectified, this dialogue: Flips the script by objectifying and mocking the man instead. Challenges the male ego, especially those who think women should be passive or easily impressed.

Fourth example which I have taken is from the movie HUM TUMHARE HAI SANAM:

Tum ek patni ho tumhara pati jaisa chahega waisa hi hoga. Yeh shaadi ka dastoor hai. Sirf bistar par sona hi ek patni ka farz nahi hai. Man se man milna chahiye. Ghar se bahar jane wali auratein hi badchalan nahi hoti; ghar ki baatein bahar le jane wali bhi badchalan hoti hain. Mard aurat ka bhagwan hota hai”

You are a wife, and you must do as your husband says. That is the rule of marriage. This reflects a traditional patriarchal belief, where the husband is dominant, and the wife is expected to be obedient, a mindset still prevalent in many conservative households. “Sirf bistar par sona hi ek patni ka farz nahi hai. Man se man milna chahiye” means a wife's duty is not just to sleep on the bed but minds and hearts must also connect. This is emotionally rich. It shifts the tone from just physical duty to the need for emotional connection in marriage. It points out that marriage without emotional intimacy is empty, and just fulfilling physical or traditional roles is not enough. “Ghar se bahar jaane wali auratein hi badchalan nahi hoti; ghar ki baatein bahar le jaane wali bhi badchalan hoti hain means not only women who go out of the house are considered immoral, even those who take personal matters outside the home are also immoral. This is a comment on gossip, betrayal of trust, or emotional disloyalty. It questions the double standards that label independent women as "badchalan" (immoral), while ignoring how breaking emotional trust can also be harmful. “Mard aurat ka bhagwan hota hai “means a man is a woman's god. This line reflects an extremely patriarchal and outdated belief, often derived from religious or traditional interpretations where the husband is treated as a superior or divine figure. In modern terms, this idea is problematic and criticized, as it erases equality in relationships; a wife's emotional pain and her expectation for genuine connection in marriage, her struggle



between tradition and truth trying to balance what society expects with what the heart needs. A critique of emotional betrayal, not just physical but at the same time, it reflects deeply patriarchal norms where the man's will is seen as law. This dialogue shows the conflict between traditional gender roles and emotional reality. It's about a woman trapped between what she's expected to accept and what her heart truly needs love, respect, and emotional intimacy.

The last movie which I have selected is GREAT GRAND MASTI:

“Balatkar se yaad aaya meri biwi kahan hai.”

This has been taken from the adult comedy film Great Grand Masti. “Speaking of rape... that reminds me, where is my wife?” This line is intentionally written as dark humor within an adult comedy genre, but it is also highly controversial, and for many viewers, deeply offensive and insensitive. Using a serious crime like rape (balatkar) as a punch line, the dialogue crosses ethical lines, even in comedy. The line tries to create shock humor through a jarring connection between the word “balatkar” (rape) and the mention of the speaker's wife. It implies, in a joking way, that being married or being with one's wife feels like some kind of punishment or force which is meant to be “funny” within the film's absurd, exaggerated tone. The dialogue tries to create shock humor by linking rape and marriage but it ends up being insensitive, inappropriate, and harmful. Even in adult comedy, certain lines cross the line, and this is one of them.

“Meri do doodh ki badi-badi factories hain, aaj raat main aapko unke darshan dunggi.

I have two big milk factories; tonight I'll let you see them. “Do doodh ki badi-badi factories” means two large milk factories, a clear sexual innuendo, referring to a woman's breasts. “Aapko unke darshan dunggi”, I'll let you have a look at them tonight. This line is a bold double entendre, part of the film's adult comedy style. It's spoken in a teasing, seductive tone by a female ghost character, intended to tempt or distract the male characters. The “milk factories” metaphor is used to refer to physical attraction in a playful but clearly sexual way. Generate laughter through exaggeration and innuendo. This line comes from a film filled with adult jokes, over-the-top sexual humor, and wordplay. It objectifies the female body and plays into over-sexualization for laughs.

It continues the trend in Bollywood where women's bodies are used as punch lines, often reducing them to physical attributes. A comedic, over-the-top sexual innuendo meant to entertain through double meaning and shock value delivered in a seductive yet ridiculous tone to provoke laughs from an adult audience.

Conclusion

One of the most effective ways that sexism and gender prejudice are practised and passed down is through language. Gender stereotypes that dictate that men should have agentic, competence attributes and women should have communal, warmth traits are reflected in the lexicon used in everyday communication. As a result, the status and power imbalances in society that are connected to the corresponding social roles are discreetly reproduced through language. Moreover, the structure of many languages contains the unspoken but widespread convention that a man is the prototype human being. Because the way grammatical and syntactic rules are constructed, feminine nouns typically come from their corresponding masculine forms. One of the most effective ways for sexism and gender discrimination to be practised and perpetuated is through the use of language. As a result, the status and power imbalances in society that are connected to the corresponding social roles are discreetly reproduced through language. Moreover, the structure of many languages contains the unspoken but widespread convention that a man is the prototype human being. Because of the way grammatical and syntactic rules are constructed, feminine nouns typically come from their corresponding masculine forms. Sexist language is offensive and should be avoided at all costs. Item numbers, which refer to female performers as “items” for consumption, are a prime example of objectification and support Mulvey's theory of the male gaze. Women are shown as weak and in need of masculine authority through protective instructions and metaphors.



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