

Use of Hindi Interrogative Indicator & Interrogative-Final Rising Intonation

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Introduction

This preliminary research was intended to assess the relevance of further investigation with regard to the seemingly disappearing use of the Hindi interrogative-initial marker 'क्या' (/kya/). In standard Hindi, the use of this particle indicates that a statement is a yes/no question. There was also a notion that there was a specific purpose for omitting the Hindi interrogative marker, and that interrogative-final rising intonation might inversely correlate with the disappearance of 'kya' usage.

Hindi Interrogative Indicator 'क्या' /kya/

'Kya', in standard Hindi, is generally placed at the beginning of a Hindi sentence (though it could occur elsewhere) to indicate that the statement is a yes/no question.

Yah kitaab acchi hai. *Kya* yah kitaab acchi hai?
'This book is good.' 'Is this book good?'

Hypotheses

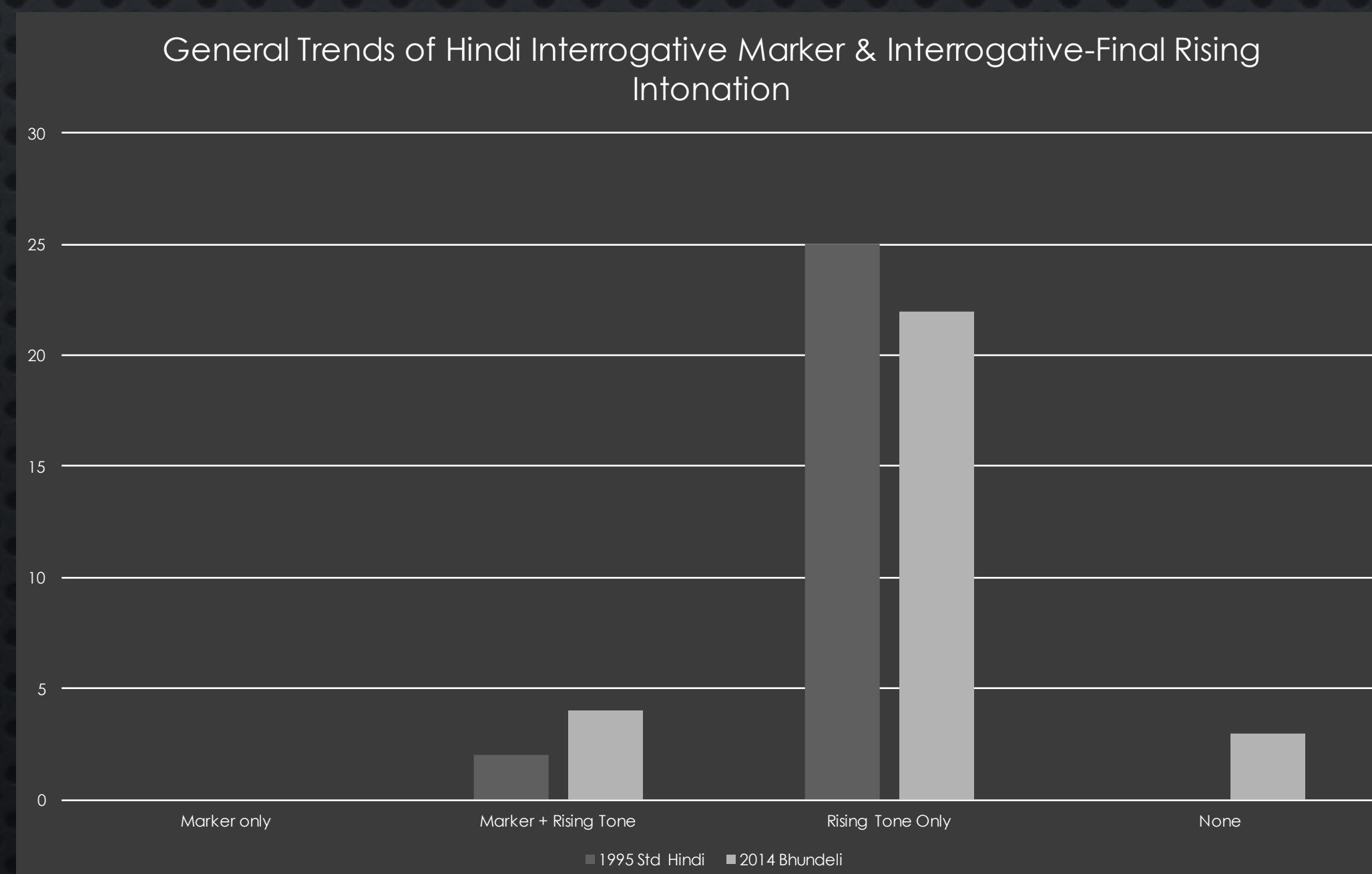
- Use of indicator is both standard (taught in language education) and formal /respectful
- A higher degree of unfamiliarity increases the probability of indicator use
- Certain purposes of speech events, such as formal requests or persuasion, increase the likelihood of indicator use
- The higher the social status of the hearer in relation to the speaker, the more likely the indicator is used

Methodology

Two movies, *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995) and *Gulaab Gang* (2014), were used to represent 'kya' usage in two different decades of Bollywood film. Fifty occurrences of yes/no questions were recorded from each of the movies, translated, and coded based on a variety of sociolinguistic factors, including gender dynamics, power relationships, influences of other languages, politeness strategies, and the motivation of the speaker when using the interrogative. 'Kya' usage within the questions was noted. It was also noted if interrogative-final rising intonation was utilized by the speaker.

Results

- 6/50 y/n questions showed indicator, 47/50 included interrogative-final rising intonation
- The number of occurrences was too low to show significant factor effects
- All 'kya' occurrences were accompanied by interrogative-final rising intonation



Discussion

The low number of 'kya' occurrences in proportion to the number of tokens does not allow for significant generalizations for social or linguistic factors; therefore, none of the hypotheses can be adequately supported at this time.

Conclusion

Since both the interrogative indicator and the interrogative-final rising intonation seem to have semantic equivalence, perhaps what was initially an underwhelming presence of the interrogative indicator attests to a current transition in the Hindi language where a redundant feature is being removed or supplanted.

Further Research

These unexpected results shift the direction of this research to tasks involving isolating the period of time in which the sociolinguistic change began and where it stands today. Next steps include a more stratified and in-depth investigation into Bollywood movies, and having different generations of Hindi speakers (native of India, immigrant and first generation Canadian) of all adult ages participate in:

- Activities where yes/no questions are integral to completion ("Guess Who?" board game)
- Guided discussions
- Narratives

References

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3. Llamas, Carmen, Louise Mullany, and Peter Stockwell. "Politeness and Power." *The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge, 2007. 122-29. Print.