

YAMUNA KACHRU

Hindi. xxi, 309 pp. (London Oriental and African Language Library, vol. 12.)
Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006. Price not
stated.

This major new analysis of the grammar of Hindi comes from a leading and highly productive scholar in the field: more than a third of the hundred-odd items in the bibliography bear Yamuna Kachru's own name. Without following 'any specific linguistic model', Kachru here sets out the grammar of Hindi with great clarity, and offers many a fresh insight in her analysis of the language.

Kachru's Roman-script Hindi orthographies use a version of IPA, with consonant aspiration being shown by a miniaturized superscript (thus $q̣eɽ^h$ 'one and a half'). Long vowels bear a macron, except that long /a/ is unmarked (*am* 'mango') – sacrificing graphic equivalence in long-vowel contexts such as *sīta*, *dadī* (versus *sītā*, *dādī* in Indological transliteration); short /a/ is shown by a (thus *urmila apne ghar gāi*, p. 168). The orthography follows realized pronunciation rather than a literal system of transcription: on p. 21 Kachru explains that some 'free variation' (between such values as q and k , x and k^h , $ʃ$ and g , z and j , $ʃ$ and $ʂ$) is allowed to stand; thus 'ship' is *jāhaj* rather than *jāhaz*, whether or not one is inclined 'to agree' (*rajī hona*) with such a decision. The system is a subjective one, and leads to a few discrepancies: *xarīd-* mostly but not always buys out *k^harīd-*, while *uʃa* dawns also as *uṣa* (and $ʃ$ could usefully be added to the symbols listed on p. xix). On the other hand, very literal transcription underlies the representation of the demonstrative pronouns in the crisply standardized paradigm *yāh / vāh / ye / ve*, with a parenthesis on p. 266 belatedly admitting that 'vāh' is pronounced *vo* (but lifting the lid no further on this can of phonetic worms). A simplified system of transliteration sans diacritics is followed in the bibliography.

The contents pages of this book indicate a mostly conventional approach to the analysis of grammar, but they do not prepare the reader for the sharpness of Kachru's acumen; her skillful deconstruction of the language, accompanied by copious well-chosen examples, makes her the ideal guide to the complexities of the subject. New insights are particularly to the fore in the last two of the book's eleven chapters, on 'Information structure' and 'Discourse structure' respectively; these sections constitute a new mapping for investigations of meaning and emphasis across a wide range of expressions. Chapter ten considers the role of

‘theme’ and ‘focus’, analyzing subtleties of expression achieved through variations in word order and/or the function of particles such as *to* and *hī*; chapter twelve ranges more widely, and though it deals only with ‘those aspects of discourse...which intersect with grammatical choices’, even this limited purview is rich in detail.

Though matters of register and style, too, are generally discussed only as they involve truly ‘grammatical’ processes, some useful insights are given in brief introductory statements on ‘Sanskritized’, ‘Persianized’ (or ‘Urduized’) and ‘Englishized’ styles respectively. These categories, however, prove to be as slippery as they are interesting, and some controversial points emerge from Kachru’s discussion of the palimpsest of modern Hindi. A textual passage (p. 6) from a 1972 work by Agyeya is taken as an example of Sanskritized style, and it certainly exhibits numerous tatsama words; but many of these are recent calques from English rather than examples of the ‘unimpaired historical development from the Sanskrit tradition of literary creativity’ cited by the introductory paragraph: the word *art^hvan* becomes ‘meaningful’ only by reference to the underlying English idea, and the usage says as much about English influence as it does about the Sanskritic component of Hindi. Secondly, in transcribing a 1969 passage by Onkar Sharad (p. 7), Kachru marks its ‘Persianized’ elements in bold face, but omits from this treatment such common items as *lekin*, *hār*, *ki*, *ya*, *sahāb* and *pēc* (in *dāv-pēc*) – words whose thorough assimilation into Hindi offers further force to the ‘Persianization’ argument. Thirdly, in analyzing the ‘Englishized’ style of a 1998 magazine article on computers, Kachru analyzes the phrase *vārṣ 1995 ke bad* as being ‘clearly formed on the English pattern, e.g., [sic] “after the year 1995”’ (p. 9) whereas interpretation as a (partial) Sanskritization of the standard Hindi *sān 1995 ke bad* (in which *sān* and *bad* both derive from Arabic through Persian) must be a strong alternative contender here. Certain generalisations are stated as bald facts: that both Hindi and Urdu ‘have regional varieties throughout the Indian subcontinent’ (p. 5); that candrabindu ‘is no longer used in Hindi printing’ (p. 39); that ‘Certain combinations of consonants are not available in the Devanagari fonts devised for computers’ (p. 41 n.1). The list (p.1) of ‘major states’ in which Hindi is the state language rightly contains nine names, not the stated ‘six’ (a total that predates India’s most recent series of cartographic changes). Yet overall, the quality of the presentation is of a piece with the great interest of the book.

Given the perspicacity of Kachru’s view of Hindi, one is left wishing for more detail on some aspects of its workings – for example, in the context of imperatives

(p. 78 and environs), it would have been good to know Kachru's view of the subversively sarcastic intention that often underlies usage of the 'polite' forms in *-iega*, or of the infinitive's function as a deferred command. Elsewhere, even such routine sections as that on 'parts of speech' are full of interest, showing correspondences and connections that are overlooked or underplayed in less methodical grammars and (particularly) coursebooks. While continuing to favour such usefully demotic classroom lingo as his own formulation 'ghostposition' (for the 'oblique case with zero postposition' formula in such adverbial expressions as *əgle sal* 'next year' and *həmare ghər* 'at our house'), this reviewer bows his head at the purity of linguistic analysis that eschews such common talk.

Rupert Snell