

Stella Sandahl, *A Hindi Reference Grammar*. x, 156 pp. Leuven: Peeters, 2000.

The aim of this reference grammar is defined as 'to present the Hindī language as clearly as possible in order to understand and translate correctly complex texts, both fiction and non-fiction' (p. v.); it has grown from instructional material used with students who were often already speakers of Hindi or a related language, but wanted to deepen their understanding of its structures. (Such students would require some background in linguistics, since Stella Sandahl pulls no punches in her use of technical terminology.) The aim of offering a clear statement of the language is efficiently and economically achieved within 156 pages; Sandahl's methodology occasionally strikes out on its own, for example by treating the future tense as 'an aspectless presumptive within the subjunctive system' (and the lack of an index leaves readers wondering if they have a future here at all), but the analysis is grounded in copious examples that lend the book a useful readability. The book's conciseness is a great strength, and marks it out from most other grammars that are currently available.

Interestingly, the application of a narrowly grammatical approach to the analysis of a language is seen here to have some rather serious restrictions. Grammarians often allow themselves some latitude when it comes to the realism of their examples (Sandahl's paradigms for the vocative include the nouns *vidhi* 'method', *bhālū* 'bear', *ḍibbiyā* 'little box', and *kuā* 'well' – oh well!), but it does seem important that an intended readership of translators be properly briefed in respect of register and style. Sandahl's choice of vocabulary reflects Sanskritising tendencies that take us far from contemporary Hindi. To offer *duhitā* for daughter (p. 17) is unrealistic, while to offer the classical *kapi* (p. 18) for 'monkey' is to make simians of readers trying to address the real (as opposed to the mythological) *bandar log*.

The application of Sanskritic norms to modern Hindi can also disturb the conventions of the modern language: full homorganic nasal consonants have been used in place of the vowel nasality that is required in words like *ākḥ* and *jāc*. Conversely the use of tilde to transliterate *anusvār* is inappropriate in such contexts as *dāḍ* (for *daṇḍ*, *daṇḍ*) and *ācal* (*añcal*, *aṃcal*). A sense of remoteness from modern conventions returns in the retroflex spelling *lanḍan* (p. 117), which gave way to dentalised *landan* many decades ago – perhaps through a polite dissimilation from *lanḍ*, a rude word for 'penis'. Finally, the Devanagari font here itself has an archaic look both in overall design and in the choice of certain graphs for which more acceptable modern alternatives exist. Furthermore, the particular font used here has difficulty in representing certain Hindi forms that are absent or rare in Sanskrit orthography: subscript dots and *candrabindu* are often mis-located, and the conjunct 'ft' (in common words like *daftar* and *haftā*)

seems to be unachievable. If this list of complaints seems overlong, its justification lies in the need to show that Hindi is not just a kind of debased Sanskrit; it has its own conventions and sensibilities, an awareness of which is necessary for all those who aspire to a knowledge of the language.

Though Sandahl's presentation of the grammatical material is mostly lucid and precise, the book does contain an unacceptably high number of mistakes and idiosyncrasies that need attention. Typographic mistakes are legion, especially in the Devanagari (a passage on p. 101 crams eight typos into four lines); subject pronouns are frequently omitted from example sentences, infringing the rule that permits such omissions only when a subject is clearly established by its context (many of the examples are from literary texts, but only one is so identified). Numerous mistakes unfortunately coincide with the errors most commonly made by the intended readership for this book, namely students learning the language: these shibboleths are exemplified by a missing *ne* (p. 139), the writing of *unhōne* as two words (p. 31), 'this/that' confusions (p. 63, twice), errors of gender (p. 36) and of person (p. 28) and of tense (p. 24), incorrect use of the pronoun *koī* (p. 52), a confusion of *gayā/gāyā* 'went/sang' participles (p. 103), a misinterpreted 'compulsion' expression (p. 112), and failures to translate correctly the nuances of compound verbs — here called 'combined verbs' (passim).

Despite its seemingly rather remote perspective on the language, this book does represent a useful contribution to the Hindi shelf; it is much to be hoped that careful editing may remove some of the existing blemishes from future editions.

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