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Reflections on Hindi and History

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Reflections on Hindi and History

by

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Dedication

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Abstract

Reflections on Hindi and History

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In this paper, I consider historical periods, linguistic categories, and social theories in relation to *Hindi* in order to trace out the character and trajectory of the language. From sixteenth-century courtly contexts, to the adoption of the *Devanagari* script in the twentieth century by nationalists, Hindi has a polyvalent and yet specific history. I discuss these contexts in which social contact led to linguistic change and in which Hindi acquired many of the lexical, syntactical, and phonological characteristics by which it is recognized today.

I conclude with a section that considers the motif of language and power, and I suggest that the production of knowledge and power in language use, offers both the means of distinction and expression – or, in another sense – of hierarchy and *communitas*. A thread that runs throughout the paper is attention to the contexts in which language use enables elaboration and in which elaboration is eschewed in order to attain social unity. Pursuing a descriptive historical-linguistic project, I neither affirm nor deny the politics of such language use, but rather I indicate the ways in which actors and agents use Hindi to help articulate their agency.

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I. Historical roads

In this section, I review languages related to early modern Hindi and also societal contexts in which the languages were spoken and written. Thus, this section is a wide-ranging literature review, which covers a time span from the sixteenth to the twentieth century.

Perhaps the first distinction to note concerning the language families of South Asia is that between Dravidian and Indo-Aryan ones. The lexical and grammatical relation is wider between them than it is among the languages of each family. In terms of Indo-Aryan languages, on a general level, linguists date them according to their position in relation to the Old, Middle, and New Indo-Aryan branches of the Indo-European language family tree (Masica 2012). Then, with many Indo-Aryan languages, another common distinction to note is the degree to which they underwent linguistic contact with *Persian*, starting from the eleventh century.

For example, linguists Tej Bhatia and William Ritchie (p. 789) suggest the impact of language diffusion from Islamic kingdoms into South Asia “formally began with the annexation of the Punjab by the Turkish ruler Mahmud Gaznavi.” Between the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, they continue, “[a]pproximately 20 words related to royal administration and military organization were borrowed into Hindi from Persian,” and, later on, until the mid-nineteenth century, not just the lexicon but also the morphology and syntax of Persian began to affect the Indo-Aryan languages. For example, Bhatia and Ritchie (p. 790), note that “reverse *compounding* (*sher-e-panjaab* ‘the tiger of Punjab’

rather than the unmarked pattern – *panjaab kaa sher* 'Punjab's tiger), inflectional morphology (plural markers), and word compounding with Persian became a part of modern Indo-Aryan languages as did the conjunct verb construction, complementation (with *ki* 'that'), and conjunction with NPs.”

Looking at a similar time scale and at the literary language of *bhakti* and northern South Asian court traditions, *Braj Bhāṣā*, literary critic Allison Busch finds “four frames of reference” in the history of Hindi. The texts that Busch uses to evidence her claim are eclectic, consisting of a fourteenth century text composed by Sufis in Awadhi, extracts of Hindi's *adikāvya* or first poetry, a sixteenth century “register that lies somewhere between the languages of Awadhi and Braj,” and a mid-twentieth century essay that serves as the preface to one of the more influential Hindi dictionaries to have been printed, the *hindī śabdasāgara*.

The form of much of the literature of Busch's frameworks consists of metered verse, the *dohā-caupāī* “couplet-quatrain” format. A number of other commonalities obtain among the frameworks that Busch outlines, such as the courtly atmospheres where princes commissioned the texts and observed them recorded and read. For example, many of the texts are intertextual to the extent that authors composed them by borrowing from and referencing other texts. Often times, the authors of oral texts are unknown, but at some point governmental scribes, historians, and poets agglomerated and canonized the identities of the texts' authors. Furthermore, poets – like merchants, mendicants, and monks – continually traveled from court to court, from Delhi to Lucknow, or from Tabriz

to Delhi, for example, in order to find sources of patronage, and so the intertextuality spans texts from a wide geographic area.

The *bārahmāsā* “twelve month” tradition forms another, if relatively less urbane, linguistic register of Hindi, which developed during the early-modern era. A folk tradition, of which Jain monks wrote the earliest texts in *Gujarati*, the *bārahmāsā* and its related genres, such as, but not limited to, the *caumāsā* “four month” tradition, in terms of their composition, form a relatively coherent category (Vaudeville). In each of these formats, one sees generalized metrical patterns, such as the *dohā* and *caupāī*.

The verses of the *bārahmāsā* describe aspects of the twelve months as the time distinctions relate to *virāh* or the pain of separation that one feels for a lover and for God. The aesthetic pleasure to derive from the tradition and the taste to cultivate lie in appreciation for the play of the ambiguity of the signifier between the two signifieds. The *bārahmāsā* and *caumāsā* traditions show a high degree of literary sophistication among communities outside the literary traditions of court patronage.

At the courts of South Asia, especially in the north, from the mid-sixteenth century onward, Persian was the principal language of administration and poetry, though not of religion or business in the marketplace, where, respectively, *Arabic/Sanskrit* and, at least around Delhi, *Urdu* had gained salience. Brought from present-day Iran by courtiers and poets of Iranian empires, Persian, even by the fifteenth century, had acquired a position at the courts of kings throughout South Asia.

Most courtiers received an education in Persian and Urdu, for, as historian Muzaffar Alam (p. 327) writes, education in Persian and Urdu was “sufficient to gain employment as a clerk in a local *daftar*” or administrative office. It is worth noting that Hindi borrows the word “daftar” from Arabic. As such, “daftar” can be understood as an example of a word associated with administration and the military that Hindi borrowed from Perso-Arabic early on, as Bhatia and Ritchie suggest.

By the mid-seventeenth century, due to the fact of court patronage of Persian as the language of law, most middle-class people, Hindu and Muslim, associated with the court in Delhi (then called Shahjahanabad, which was founded in 1639) could read Persian. This trend of middle-classes literate in Persian continued up until the early twentieth century, when Indian nationalists began to propose the use of Hindi in Devanagari instead of Urdu in the *nastaliq* script.

Despite the prominence of Persian at South Asian courts, other languages continued to receive patronage and, therefore, also to develop linguistically and socially. Sanskrit is an example. Sanskrit, which means “refined [language]” or “sophisticated [language],” is by no means the oldest inscriptional language in South Asia (Pollock, 1998, p. 6). Middle Indo-Aryan “vernacular” languages, predate Sanskrit as the language of court records. Nonetheless, as Sheldon Pollock (1998, pp. 6-8) suggests, from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries, beginning with the *prashati* “praise-poems” of Rudradaaman, Sanskrit constituted in South and Southeast Asia, a “largely homogeneous political language of poetry... along with a range of comparable cultural-political

practices (temple building, city planning, even geographical nomenclature).” Yet Sanskrit’s geographic breadth entailed a degree of incoherency – there were northern, southern, eastern, and western styles of Sanskrit.

Like Sanskrit, Pali diffused throughout South and Southeast Asia in the first millennium CE, and even before then. *Pali* relates closely to Sanskrit, and many consider it to be the linguistic vehicle of Buddhism. Adherents of each language believed Sanskrit and Pali to be what, in another context, Benedict Anderson (1983, p. 14) has called “truth languages,” or languages that speakers and writers understand to be, not systems of representation, but manifestations of the supernatural – a “non-arbitrariness of the sign.” The idea in Sanskrit of *amrit akṣar*, or the sweet words of the Gods (perhaps, “holy words”), in addition to its name, and each language’s association with political formations, gives picture to the idea in which a language gains power if there exists “the belief on the part of the followers” that the language has power (Anderson, 2006, p. 75).

The ideal-type of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, Pollock writes (1998, p. 10), shows more “than just [the] qualifying [of] the polity for imperial status... [for] Sanskrit mediated a set of complex aesthetic and moral values of imperial culture.” Pollock finds culture’s “source” in the dynamics of the Sanskrit’s lexicon, syntax, and phonology: “[the] source of such capabilities is to be located in the sophisticated and immensely influential Sanskrit disciplines of grammar, rhetoric, and metrics.” By contrast, through the idea of the “Pali imaginaire,” Steven Collins (p. 14) shows that the “Pali texts supported the status quo of tribute-extraction, notably in what is for an outsider the naturalization of

contingent social hierarchies through the doctrine of karma, in the homologies between kings and Buddhas, and in the often close connections between *Ethics, Wealth and Salvation*, as the title of Sizemore and Swearer (1990) has it.”

Both ideal-types consider an entire language and a vast amount of geographic and social space. And both ideal-types consider the ways in which political, economic, and linguistic hierarchies, together articulated the ideologies that subtended agrarian kingdom-states. A difference between the two, is that Pollock foregrounds the linguistic flexibility of Sanskrit to explain the ways in which it enchanted its adherents, whereas Collins instead focuses on the socioeconomic dimensions of Pali to construe how it did the same. Notably, however, in both accounts, the authors pay attention to rhetoric and style, such as, for example, the conventions of narrative arc.

The historiography is worth reviewing for this paper, not only because it shows the range of the language, Sanskrit, from which Hindi takes the largest part of its syntax and lexicon, but also because later South Asian courtiers adopted Sanskritic literary styles as a method to commensurate and unify polities. It is clear that precedents in no way determine the history that follows them. But they do enable later-day agents and actors to draw on the structural characteristics that they inherit from previous generations, in order to gain traditional authority from communities that venerate the historical traditions.

“Al-Hind” is a third ideal-type that contextualizes Central and South Asia before the advent of the Mughal empire. Suggested by André Wink, al-Hind as a geographical area differs from those of the Sanskrit cosmopolis and Pali imaginaire. West of the other

two, according to Wink (p. 7), al-Hind comprised the “territory which, after the conquests of the seventh and early eighth centuries, came under effective domination of the caliphate [and] extended from the Iberian peninsula and North Africa to Central Asia and into the Persian-Indian borderland of Sind which for three centuries remained its easternmost frontier.” Until Mahmud Gaznavi took control of Panjab in the eleventh century, the land of al-Hind was considered by “Arab-Muslim civilization [to be a] cultural hinterland” (Wink, *ibid.*).

During these four hundred years, along the areas of Sind, which today comprise southeastern Iran and south Pakistan, developed a trading diaspora with a standardized currency. Arabic literature from the time notes landmarks such as the city of Kabul, the Indus river, the mountains of the Hindu Kush, and the Kashmir valley, in addition to different “tribes' of the wastes and deserts, swamps and marshes, and of the mountains of the frontier province of Sind which the Arabs strove to integrate into the new political and economic order which was evolving under the aegis of Islam” (Wink, pp. 144-169). The names of those tribes include “Jat,” “Miid,” “Suumras,” and “Afghans,” among others and variations on the titles. The diasporic trading communities that set up shop among these non-Arabic speaking communities, were not all Muslim, and included Jewish and Parsi diasporas (Wink, p. 109). Thus, sociolinguistic contact between Central Asian and South Asian courts took place as a gradual process and involved many aspects of society – trade, war, administration, and literature.

Following the insights of Wink, I suggest that al-Hind may be thought of as another layer of the history of South Asian civilization, generally, and Hindi, specifically, not least because al-Hind is the Persianate etymon of the name “Hindi.” Yet whereas Pollock and Collins move the languages of the ideal-types to the forefront – Sanskrit and Pali – Wink instead focuses on the sociogeographic commensuration of different societies, though Arabic and Persian do play an important role in this process of gradual acculturation. In al-Hind, like in the other two ideal-types, there exists a degree of tension where these cultures and societies meet: “Persian culture and the Sasanid tradition of monarchy and statecraft were at first loathed by the Muslim Arabs as a morally repugnant feature of the *jaahiliyya*, the 'state of ignorance' of pre-Islamic times” (Wink, p. 17). More positively, however, and also like in the Sanskrit cosmopolis and the Pali imaginaire, a degree of literary, commercial, and political flourishing can be seen in al-Hind that contributed to the expanding courtly societies.

The Mughal empire was established in 1526. Arabic-speaking and Persian-speaking communities had a complex relationship with the South Asian Mughal and Rajput kingdoms, marked by social and cultural continuity and discontinuity. The three ideal-types thus outlined enable me to disambiguate some, but certainly not all, of this complexity. A commonality among them is that in each case kingdoms followed some sort of social hierarchy based on cultural and linguistic elements that emanated from a center court. The three ideal-types, layered over one another, form the sociolinguistic milieu of the late-medieval era in which, as Alam and Busch note, developed the

vernacular and courtly literature of early modern South Asia. To gain a better understanding of the kingdom-states in which Hindi took on the lexical, grammatical, and morphological characteristics by which it is today recognized, I now turn to a review of the literature concerning the Mughal empire, the British *rāj*, and the Indian nationalist movement.

By the time of the death of the Mughal empire's third ruler, Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar, or Akbar, for short, the empire had brought some one hundred and ten million people under its control (Asher and Talbot, p. 152). Akbar's rule provided a relative peace that enabled South Asian societies to develop a division of labor and therefore relative social interdependence. As Norbert Elias (p. 177) writes about European society, but which also illustrates trends in South Asia at this time, “the more dependent the upper classes became on the other classes, the greater, therefore, [became] the social strength of these [other] classes, at least potentially.” Centralized bureaucratic power managed lineages of affiliation by the strategic use of titles. Elias (p. 233) continues, “titles deriving from service became simple designations of rank according to size of property and military power.” And the “power which backs up legal titles” was the state.

Historians Asher and Talbot (p. 152) write that Akbar's “stipulation that land taxes be paid in cash forced peasants into the market networks where they could obtain the necessary money, while the standardization of imperial currency made the exchange of goods for money easier.” Coined exchange and linguistic exchange – the *koine* of Hindi

– can be read as parallel and developing infrastructures of commensuration, though they were just two, albeit important ones, among many. In the development from princely states to empires, money and standardizing languages of the court's religious and political traditions formed circuits along which titular affiliation brought increasing numbers of people under the social influence of the center.

In the late sixteenth century, Akbar moved the Mughal court three times, from Agra to Fatehpur Sikri, then to Lahore, and finally back to Agra. At the court developed a delicate balance of power among the courtiers, which comprised factions of Iranis, Turanis, Afghans, Marathas, Uzbek “Mughals,” and Rajputs, among others. These groups used force but also the distinction of refinement to establish legitimate claims of authority over the court and its institutions of the army and administration. The courts in Agra and Delhi were key sites of what Geertz has called the “theater state.”

The official language of the state was Persian, but because of what Anderson (1983, p. 20) has called “sexual politics,” Hindi was never far from the court. For example, Akbar's third wife, Mariam uz-Zumani, was from Jaipur, Rajasthan, where the noble elite, the Rajputs, spoke a form of western Hindi. Akbar and Zumani's son, who eventually succeeded Akbar to the throne in 1605, was Jahangir. One might reasonably assume that the first language Jahangir was exposed to was a Rajasthani version of Hindi. Furthermore, because the prince was thought of as a metonym of the empire, Rajasthani Hindi was therefore, for a time, the empire's mother tongue, if not its official one.

Akbar's grandson and great-grandson, the successors to the throne, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, spoke Hindi in addition to Persian. The kings and their courtiers could talk to people in the market outside the court's halls. Shahjahanabad (Delhi) formed a linguistic melting pot. Persian was the language of administration. Arabic and Sanskrit were the languages of religion. *Khari Boli*, a name of early Hindi, was the language the middle-classes. And Braj was the spoken language of the rural populations in an area of about 2,300 square miles in what is today known as the "Golden Triangle." Around Shahjahanabad, to borrow Victor Turner's phrase, there was a linguistic "condensation" and a "unification of disparate significata," a fact which shows in Modern Standard Hindi's lexicon and grammar, as I will show in the next section.

There were imperial attempts to regulate this linguistic flux. For example, the "Farhangi Jahangiri" was the first Mughal, comprehensive comparative-vocabulary (Alam, p. 329). Akbar intended for it to standardize the Persian used at the court, which Iranis in Qazvin, the capital of the later Safavid empire in Persia, considered a less prestigious version of Persian than their own (Asher and Talbot, p. 156). If the Iranis were the progenitors of Persian, then the Indian courtiers, by the end of the seventeenth century, were the emulators of Persian-language communities in Iran. As noted above, the middle classes around Delhi and in many urban areas in South Asia, knew a version of Persian.

The eighteenth century saw a considerable shift in the nobility's and middle-class's linguistic practice away from the international language to a domestic one, Urdu

(Lehman, p. 126). This happened at the same time that centrifugal forces began to disperse Hindustan. Nadir Shah of Persia invaded from Kabul in the northwest. The Marathas commenced an attack from the southwest in Pune. The British invaded from east and their stronghold in Kolkatta. The Mughals were unable to hold off these advances. The British took control of Delhi by 1803, though Maharashtra, Panjab, and Afghanistan remained fiercely independent for years afterward. The processes of state formation – centrifugal and centripetal – continued (Elias, p. 197).

The British “ethnographic state,” to use Dirks' term (p. 42), was a configuration of military and administrative power in which “anthropology supplanted history as the principal colonial modality of knowledge and rule.” The regime was multifaceted. There were Christian missionaries, East India Company officers, linguists, ethnologists, traders, and courtiers, all of whom wrote about their experiences and what their interlocutors discussed.

They created a representation of the “Orient.” Scholars Edward Said and Philip Almond show that these images circulated from India to London, where they became the *nomos* of colonial policy (Bourdieu, p. 97). *Doxa* then circulated back to South Asia, used as the basis of state patronage so that groups of South Asians competing for patronage began to self-identify by the titles of rank created in part by the colonialists and their interlocutors. As Anderson (1983, p. 163; Geertz, 1973 pp. 93-4) has suggested about colonialism, generally, the census, map, and museum became for South Asia, specifically, the *model for* Indian official-linguistic nationalism in the late-nineteenth century.

Anderson (ibid.) writes that although the colonial state is typically anti-nationalist, nonetheless, “if one looks beneath colonial ideologies and policies to the grammar in which, from the mid-nineteenth century, they were deployed, the lineage becomes decidedly more clear.” I think of the examples of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Penal Code.

One of the institutions of the ethnographic state that had a determining influence on the development of Hindi was the Fort William College in the “cosmopolitan atmosphere” of Kolkatta (Minault, p. 109). “Interested in the living speeches of India,” scholars at the college believed that tax collection could more easily be conducted if officers knew local languages (Das, p. 36). John Gilchrist published many oddly titled works (*The Strangers' East Indian Guide to Hindoostanee; or the Grand Popular Language of India*, 1803), but perhaps his most important work was the 1796 *A Grammar, of the Hindoostanee Language*. Levi-Strauss (p. 19) credits Franz Boas with showing that “the structure of a language remains unknown to the speaker until the introduction of a scientific grammar,” and Levi-Strauss quotes Boas, who writes, “the essential difference between linguistic phenomena and other ethnological phenomena is, that the linguistic classifications never rise to consciousness, and thus give rise to secondary reasoning and interpretation.” One consequence of Gilchrist's publications, specifically, and the British ethnographic state, generally, was an expansion of the public awareness of the fact of standardized language and literary style. Historian Sisir Das (p. 79) writes that the “publications [of the British] had an indirect impact on the Indian

academic life,” which was that “Indians became aware of the inadequacies of text books and the School Book Society was established in 1816 primarily to meet the growing need for well written text books.”

The importation and spread of lithography was another key technological step in the development of Hindi. Orsini (2009, p. 10) writes that the development of the lithograph marks one of the most successful “technology transfers” in South Asian history. Between 1820-40, lithographs were carried inland from the European “coastal Presidency cities” to northern cities like Delhi. Sales of pamphlets and books of the lithograph thus joined newspaper circulations in urban areas (Minault, p. 109). The result, to quote Anderson (p. 44) about European print-capitalism, but the same largely holds true for the Indian version, was that readers “gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language field, and at the same time, that only those hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged.” The sense developed that there were multiple language fields that were linguistically distinctive.

One figure to note in the development of the Hindi public sphere is Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-85), who published enough to be recognized later by many historians as the “father of modern Hindi literature.” Among Harishchandra's works in Hindi were translations of the Asiatic Society of Bengal's journals, the institution that the infamous William Jones started in 1786 (Trautmann). Jones suggested the commonality among the languages of what is today known as the Indo-European family. Revisionist historians suggest that his work is mostly impressionistic and that a systematic study of

the languages was not completed until 1816 when Franz Bopp completed Jones' thought. Western philology, from Jones to Saussure, is founded on comparisons among European and Indo-Aryan languages. Sanskrit, in particular, stood out to many of these philologists as useful to compare to Latin and Greek. The Sanskritic tradition they studied included Vedic Sanskrit literature. The major schools of thought in this discourse are *kalpa* “ritual,” *śikṣāha* “phonetics,” *chanda* “prosody,” *nirukta* “etymology,” *vyākaran* “grammar,” and *jyotiṣī* “astronomy” or math.

Unlike the Fort William College, which focused on living and taxable languages, the Asiatic Society focused on classical languages, and was largely responsible for popularizing notions about the necessary relationship among class, language and – as the “father of modern racism,” Arthur de Gobineau, author of the influential but pernicious “Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races,” (1850) might say – race. Harishchandra translated many of the works of the Asiatic Society's journals, in attempts to represent its knowledge in Hindi. Harishchandra's works thus gave public awareness to Jones's perniciously reductive theories.

To the extent that they promulgated Jones' ideas about race, Harishchandra's publications helped spread the ideas that underpin the caste-system. Susan Bayly (p. 233) writes that by “the early twentieth century, caste had acquired real meaning in the lives of most if not all Indians.” The spread of linguistic technology has been linked to that of social ideas before, perhaps most famously, in Marx's (p. 172) classic statement that the “ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” Regardless of the theory,

historically, the British ethnographic state introduced linguistic and material technologies to South Asia that had a profound influence on the ways that Hindi became the vehicle by which titles of community-belonging differentiated among societies – the organic solidarity of Hindi, in a phrase.

The official-linguistic nationalist movement in India is often dated to the year 1885, when the Indian National Congress was founded. Then a slew of dates document its growth – 1893, the *nagarī pracarinī sabhā* (“Society for the propagation of the Nagari script”); 1906, the All India Muslim League; 1910, the *hindī sāhitya sammelan* (“Hindi Literary Conference”); 1929, the *hindī śabdāsāgara* dictionary. Notably, even by 1910, as Hindi scholar Harish Trivedi (p. 972) writes, nearly “all Hindi writers, of whatever caste or social background... grew up learning Urdu and often basic Persian, even if they never wrote in either language.” Harishchandra and luminaries such as Munshi Premchand, fit this mold of scholar who first learned Urdu-Persian and then Hindi.

Trivedi (p. 958) continues: “Until about a hundred years ago, Hindi was commonly perceived to be an underdeveloped and underprivileged language, fragmented into several competing dialects, backward and dusty by association with its largely rural constituency, and mediievally devout and convention-bound in its literary orientation.” At this time, nationalists contributed to the growth of Hindi. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, for example, in his influential journal *sarasvatī*, “took a strong and normative view on the matter of language” and printed Hindi “in a high register with regular syntax and word

order, elaborate subordinate clauses and a preference for abstract nouns and nominal verbs” (Orsini, 2002, p. 54).

After independence in 1947, Hindi itself became a hegemonic linguistic force – quite a shift from, not half-a-century before, being subordinated to Urdu. Hindi, the *rājbhāshā* “language of the nation,” had standard grammars printed that even specify standard orthography. The so-called Sanskritization of Modern Standard Hindi and *śuddh hindī* (“pure Hindi,” used in government officialese and in formal linguistic contexts), are two results of such institutional intentions.

To recapitulate the main ideas of this section of the paper, I re-state the social, cultural, and political elements around Hindi. The Sanskrit cosmopolis, the Pali imaginaire, al-Hind, the Mughal empire, the British *rāj*, and the nationalist movement, among other strands – such as the vernacular traditions of the bhakti devotional groups – contributed to the formation of the linguistic rope of Hindi. In the modern standard version of the language, the version of Hindi that is authenticated by the government of India today, one can see each of these aspects in lexicon, grammar, phonology, morphology, and compositional style.

Separated into singular entities, the strands of Hindi may be used to promote a social aspect of an otherwise agglomerated language. For example, language users may highlight Persianization, Sanskritization, or Englishization, and eschew the other strands, in order to suggest that Hindi derives from a particular tradition – Persian, Sanskrit, or English. Yet this sort of reduction, a linguistic universalization of a particular aspect of

the language, suggests more about the agent or actor who makes the claim, and about the audience to whom they do so, than it does about the language. In this section, I attempt to show that Hindi comprises elements from all these histories of language and society.

In the next section of the paper, I discuss the lexicon, syntax, and phonology of Hindi. Compared to the interpretation in this section, which has been largely macrohistorical, in the next section, I slow down and spend time looking at examples of Hindi words, phrases, and sentences to show how these macrohistorical phases are embedded in the contemporary language. For example, I look at examples of *tatsama* and *tadbhava* words, Persian and Arabic words, and English words as they are used today. I also consider grammatical constructions that have been adopted from Sanskrit and Persian, such as, respectively, the *jo/vah* correlations and the *ki* particle. In terms of phonology, I consider the articulation of the Hindi syllabary, and in relation to morphology, I consider Hindi written in Devanagari and other scripts such as Latin – the latter of which has become a common script to use on the internet.

II. Hindi's lexicon, syntax, and phonology

The Pater Noster, comparative vocabularies and grammars of common words and sentence structures, and translations of myths and oral histories were the main tools that the British ethnographic state used to codify and redact the languages of South Asia, including Hindi – or as it was then called, Hindustani (Trautmann). The author of the *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, R.S. McGregor (1974, pp. 69-70) writes that by 1811 “the New Testament had been translated into Hindi and printed... and reprintings and other translations followed throughout the country.” McGregor continues: mission “stations were early established in the north, and the presses which eventually followed (Allahabad 1838, Agra 1840, Ludhiana 1836, etc. with the earlier Serampore and other Calcutta presses) published much Hindi material in the following decades.”

These texts, in addition to those of the colonial administration, such as gazetteers, were published, writes Susan Bayly (pp. 109-10), in “the era of the company's confrontation with the many hinterland realms and peoples whose unsettled ways and complex layered schemes of political authority were seen by its officials as a danger and challenge to the new regime's shaky sovereignty.” The British East India Company instituted presses at the time when they attempted to unify the dispersed population. Print-capitalism, as Anderson notes in another context, served as a strong social rope to bind the strands of different areas together, linguistically, through the use of standardized print. The unifying capabilities of print-capitalism thus supplemented those of the

established languages of religion – both spoken and scribal – that had served unificatory purposes up to the technological revolution.

In this section of the paper, I consider the standardized lexicon, syntax, and phonology of Hindi. I also consider linguistic shift and the generation of expression – how, over time, the engine's parts together generate linguistic torque or how the source code functions to create a website of language.

Abstractly put, the lexicon of a language is all “the words and morphemes [morphemes being 'the smallest meaningful units in a language'; e.g. the pictographs 'cat' and '-s' both represent morphemes] of a given language” (Fennell, pp. 9-10). A lexicon, Fennell writes, is a category in flux. There is little “rule or regularity” to a language's lexicon, but there usually is standardization in the language's phonology, morphology, and syntax. This is because, Fennell (ibid.) continues, “the lexicon of a language is subject to continual and often rapid change, and vocabulary is the one part of our language that we continue to learn for much of our lives, while the basic grammatical rules are learned by and large by the time we reach puberty.” Lexicons are often formed by linguistic contact and lexical borrowing among languages.

By way of example, an influx of Latin and Greek loanwords, associated with math, law, and science, entered English after the Italian Renaissance of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Similarly, after the so-called Norman Conquest of England, French words became the order of the day in English courts, as Elias (p. 12) shows them to have been, later on, in Frederick the Great's German court as well, where he published *De la*

littérature allemande (1888) and “lamented the meagre and inadequate development of German writing.” This last point is interesting because it suggests, as Elias shows was the case generally during the early modern era, in Europe, linguistic communities believed in a hierarchy of languages. People acted as if languages had power, and, thereby, as Anderson shows to be the case with the nineteenth and twentieth century history of Javanese, the language gained power as a social fact. As anthropologists often say, social ideas can have material consequences.

It is clear that there were prestige differences among the courts of South Asia, and that part of the difference was established on the ground of what languages were patronized by the court. For example, Mughal emperor Aurangzeb found the Marathi speaking courtiers and kings particularly provincial, and he even at one time referred to one of their kings as a “mountain rat” (Asher and Talbot, p. 238). Another example of the correlation between linguistic style and social prestige in Central and South Asia is the fact that, as mentioned, in the second half of the sixteenth and then seventeenth centuries, many courtiers, aristocrats, administrators, priests, and wealthy merchants spoke and wrote in Persian.

One way to talk about the lexicon of Hindi, is to note the cognates it bears in relation to other languages in and around its spot on the linguistic tree. For example, English is a sub-language of the Germanic branch the Indo-European language-family and Hindi is a sub-language of the New Indo-Aryan branch of the same Indo-European tree. English and Hindi thus share a common linguistic heritage, found at some branching

point during a time four to six thousand years ago. Perhaps it is unsurprising that despite the geographical and temporal divide between English and Hindi, the word for “name” in Hindi is *nām* and the phrase “mother and father” can be translated *mātā aur pitā*. Other examples of cognates include the words *tanāv* “tension” and *bandh* “bind.” Despite this similarity, English and Hindi remain on branches that are relatively far from each other on the same tree, when compared to, for example, the distance between the branches of English and German or, in another example, Hindi and Urdu.

While it is striking that words that look similar may be cognates, it is important to keep in mind that many words which look similar are altogether distinctive. For example, in Hindi the word *karma*, which has many meanings including “action,” “duty,” and “observance,” and the word *karama*, borrowed not from Sanskrit but from Arabic, do not have the same meaning; the later means “generosity,” “kindness,” or “grace, favour” (McGregor, pp. 172, 175). Words and phrases have particular histories that need to be kept in mind as does the fact that sometimes lexical patterns do exist, such as, for example, the words built around the root *bar̥ha* “increased” (McGregor, p. 700).

In reference to Levi-Strauss's notion of the global avunculate, a kinship-scape that traversed the world well before so-called globalization, I note that in Hindi one differentiates between the older and younger paternal uncles but not between the maternal ones. Like etymologies, historical patterns of kinship do not offer an anthropological key to cracking the meaning of any given kinship structure or of its power-base or sociocultural dynamics, as if such an essential meaning were to exist. The scientific point

is not to go around to different societies and to mark on a list which societies have what kind of avunculate system. Rather, following Bourdieu's (p. 54) ideas of the logic of practice, it is better to think of the practice of kinship – such as the use of kinship terminology – as akin not to *langue* but to *parole*. Focus should be put not on rules but – on – “oriented strategies” that are “aimed at maximizing the material and symbolic profits secured through the marriage.”

When “faced with one of the marriages recorded in the genealogies he collects, [the ethnologist, sociologist, or historian] is not in the position of a father or mother who wants a marriage, and a good marriage, for their son or daughter” (Bourdieu, p. 54). And so too the language of kinship on the page (*tau-jī* “father's older-brother,” *cācā-jī* “father's younger brother,” and *māmā-jī* “mother's brother”) has, in speech as *parole*, a practical logic that may either affirm or disabuse imbalances of power. For example, in speech, one might use the distinguishing *tau-jī*, not because a particular *tau-jī* is patriarchal, but because he may respond to the sophistication of the reservation of respect. Framed in a specific way, respectful language can be patriarchal. But it can also be suggestive of other meanings, including ironic and subversive ones. More generally, about the kinship terminology in Hindi, one differentiates between male and female relatives (for example, *dādā* and *dādī* “paternal grandfather and grandmother”) but direct singular terms of elder males are often not pluralized. For example, there is one *dādā* and two *dādā*, just as there is one *rājā* and two *rājā*.

One context in which the performative aspect of kinship terminology is often used in Hindi – or in this case, in Urdu, though the register is low enough that the words are used also in Hindi – is illustrated by the fictive kinship terminology used by the *hijra* community studied by Gayatri Reddy (pp. 52-62, 153) in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. Without going into the specificities of the polyvalent positionalities taken up by hijras in the fields of gender and community, it is worth noting that in hierarchical relationships between teacher and disciple, the words *guru* and *celā* are often used, whereas the word used among the celās of a given house for one another is *behenjī* “sister.” Thus, transposable, the lexicon of kinship can take many forms depending on the lexical atmosphere in which a language event takes place, and any suggestion of a determining influence of kinship terminology and cultural practice is invalid and unsound. Kinship terminology is often a metaphorical idiom.

Another register of vocabulary concerns onomatopoeic words. Often times, these words contain retroflex syllables that give a word a distinctive shape, sound, and style. For example, the verb in Hindi for “to knock” or “to rap” is *khaṭakhaṭānā*; the verb for “to speak nonsense” is *baṛabaṛānā*; and the verb for “to patter” is *paṭapaṭānā*. The staccato rhythmic pattern created by the unstressed syllables in each word, and the repetition of the syllables, gives the sense of the short and repeated sounds of knocking, yammering, and pattering.

Another type of repetition in Hindi, but one that uses repetition and rhyme, demarcates the generality of a word. For example, *cāy-vāy* means something like “tea and

snacks,” *idhar-udhar* means “here and there,” and *parṭī-varṭī* means something like “partying and hanging out.” The first and third examples have an “echo word” or a rhyme of the first word but with a changed syllable and without any independent meaning. The echo word merely indicates a generality of things associated with the first word. The second example, in contrast, has an echo word that itself has a stand-alone meaning and common usage. So, rather than marking generality like the other examples, the second word in the second example, *udhar*, suggests a lexical parallel to *idhar* and thus indicates the signifieds of a range of signifiers between here and there.

Sanskrit loanwords in Hindi are called *tatsama* words, and Hindi words that have an ultimate derivation in Sanskrit, but are not direct loanwords, are called *tadbhava* ones. *Tatsama* words could have been borrowed five hundred years ago or yesterday. Either temporal type of directly borrowed word still counts as *tatsama*. What distinguishes *tatsama* words is not when but how they were borrowed. There are further distinctions of Sanskritic loanwords, such as the *ardhatadbhava* “half-changed” loanword, as well as the *tadbhava* loanword that is borrowed from another *tadbhava* that itself was borrowed from Sanskrit.

Tatsama words include but are in no way limited to the following: *āndolan* “swinging: a movement (political, &c.),” *dalit* “broken or torn to pieces,” “crushed, ground; trampled,” and “oppressed,” and *drishṭi* “sight,” “look,” and “view” (McGregor, pp. 76, 483, 509). A few examples of *tadbhava* words are the following: *gāmv* (actually said *gānv*) “village,” “obs. A site, place,” and, figuratively, “to raid a village (bandits),”

khet “a field,” “harvest, crop,” and “ground, land; region; field (of battle),” and *jān-pahacān* “acquaintance, familiarity” (McGregor, pp. 262, 243, 368). The words *gāmv*, *khet*, and *jān-pahacān*, being *tadbhava*, have etymons in Sanskrit, but these etymons have also often been borrowed into Hindi as *tatsama* words. So, although both words in each set are used in Hindi, the lexical relationship between them still can be represented as follows: *gāmv* < *grām*, *khet* < *kshetra*, and *jān* (*pahacaan*) < *gnāna*. It is worth noting here, moreover, that in each instance there is a reduction of what Fennell (p. 101) calls the “inflection spectrum.” Pictographically, *g* < *gr*, *kh* < *ksh*, and *j* < *gn*. The consonant clusters become either smaller or a single syllable. This sort of reduction in the inflection spectrum results in a reduction of register and therefore potential whereby distinctions but also expressions can be made. *Tatsama* words all would sound ordinary in their affect if they were made audible by a living-room TV's speakers, and so they might be heard everyday, but it is unlikely that an informal conversation would trade too heavily in such types of words – lest *sesquipedality* impose its ignominious cranium. Nonetheless, if a social context, such as a funeral or wedding, calls for a formalized lexical register, then such words can carry an appropriate affect.

The words in Hindi that have been borrowed from Persian are generally of a high register, one specialized and associated often with an office or aspect of the government or poetry. Their lexical register lies in a more formalized atmosphere than the relatively informal, domestic, and earthy – perhaps even funky – *tadbhava* words. A few examples of Persian words are *sarkār* “government, ruling authority; court (of a king),” *dil* “heart,”

“soul; spirit,” and, figuratively, “the feelings, emotions,” and *āvaaz* “sound; noise; echo,” “voice; tone” and “report, fame; rumour; innuendo” among other definitions (McGregor, pp. 990, 496, 95).

Turkish words that Hindi borrowed are often associated with the early modern government in north India and with the Timurid processions of courts and armies that attended those governments. Examples of common Turkish loanwords used in contemporary Hindi include the following: *urdu* “army,” “*mil.* camp, encampment; camp market,” and “Urdu: the distinctively Persianised form of Kharii bolii speech, as used both at more formal or literary levels, and more colloquially;” *kainci* “scissors” or “shears” (McGregor, pp. 132, 214).

Common Arabic words found in barefoot Hindi include *tāriif* “making known,” “praise,” “merit,” “the facts which are to be known (about one): introduction (of a stranger),” and “*hist.* Table of rates and export duties (cf. Engl. *Tariff*);” *dakhīl* “allowed entrance, admitted,” “in occupation, possession (as of land),” and “one introduced or involved (in a business or matter);” and *savāl* “asking, questioning,” “a question,” “request, entreaty; complaint (to a court)” (McGregor, pp. 450, 474, 995).

Due in large part to the British colonial administration, and in part to the production of mass-media in English and its consumption across the world, including – in – Hindi speaking places, there are many loanwords in Hindi of an English etymon. Examples include but are not limited to the following list of three, which is in no way representative of the lexical subset of English loanwords, just as with the lists of tatsama,

tadbhava, Persian, Turkish, and Arabic loanwords, though such lists do give an impression of at least three examples of expression: *love āj kal* “love these days,” *luk aftar karna* “to look after,” and *ṭaim pas karna* “to pass time,” “to navel-gaze.”

With all of these lexical borrowings, it is important to remember that each instance of lexical contact is different from the rest. Thus, the specificity of the singularity of a single language contact, could be elaborated on for some time, such as concerning the sociopolitical context in which it occurred, as well as the mode of general linguistic expression – spoken or written – and whether the act of language contact in question was also in that general mode and not in a different one, which would then alter how the situation should be read according to the fields of Hindi disciplinarization, among other questions about the author and audience. It is not in the scope of this paper to show the specific discursive contexts in which such borrowings happened; rather, I note the “source” language from which the borrowing happened. Furthermore, etymological roots have no ancient and venerable value as signs representing signifieds other than just that, unless, as Anderson would say, there is belief on the part of the adherent in the power of the sign qua signified.

Now I move from the lexicon of Hindi to its syntax. One way of describing the syntax of a language that is popular among philologists, is to consider the degree to which the language is either synthetic or analytical. A synthetic language uses inflections to denote the “basic grammatical relations (subject, direct object, indirect object, etc.)” (Fennell, p. 41). Latin, Sanskrit, and Old English are examples of synthetic languages.

Analytical languages are those in which the word order, pre- and postpositions, and other aspects of relating words and clauses together, rather than a system of inflections, deliver semantics. Modern Standard English, French, and Spanish are examples of analytical languages. Often, synthetic languages are written languages and analytical languages are both written and spoken.

It seems to me that Hindi is somewhere between these two categorical descriptions. Hindi has a relatively complex set of declensions in comparison to, say, English. For example, Hindi has gender and number agreements concerning nouns, adjectives, and verbs, all of which have their own rules of declension that specify the relationship between, for example, a subject and a direct object. For example, *kal subah rām ne cābī usko de di* “Yesterday morning, Ram gave the key to him/her.” The oblique singular pronoun is marked by the particle *ko*, which indicates to whom Ram gave the key (Snell and Weightman, p. 140).

At the same time, Hindi's syntax has standard formats that are often – but certainly not always – followed. The syntax of Hindi, like that of Latin, has a basic format of subject-object-verb (s-o-v). If, furthermore, one needs to show emphasis of a certain part of the sentence, then the syntax can be rearranged. The sentence given above, for example, follows the common s-o-v format. But if one wanted to emphasize the agent or actor who gave the key, then *rām* could be placed at the end of the sentence, so the reader or listener is left with Ram on the mind: *kal subah cābī usko de di rām ne*.

Declensions in Hindi nouns are specified concerning both the number and gender of the noun. Masculine singular nouns decline differently from masculine plural ones, as they do from feminine singular and feminine plural nouns. One similarity among declensions is that oblique plural nouns of both masculine and feminine gender are declined the same way: *mezon* < *mez* “tables < table” and *gharon* < *ghar* “houses < house.” Thus, the *-on* ending marks oblique plural masculine and feminine nouns (Snell and Weightman, p. 42).

Hindi verbs also decline according to number and gender, and, unless the agreement is blocked by the *ko* or *ne* particles, verbs agree with the logical subject of the sentence. Here are a few examples: *laṛaka pānī pītā hai* “a/the boy drinks water,” *laṛakī pānī pītī hai* “a/the girl drinks water,” *laṛake pānī pīte hain* “(the) boys drink water,” and *laṛakiyān pānī pītī hain* “(the) girls drink water.” The logical and grammatical subjects of these sentences agree with the verbs. So, *pītā hai* < *laṛaka*, *pītī hai* < *laṛakī*, *pīte hain* < *laṛake*, and *pītī hain* < *laṛakī*. In a sentence such as the one given above about Ram and the key, the particle *ne* blocks the agreement between the logical subject and the verb, and so verbal agreement is established with the logical direct object, which becomes also the grammatical subject. In the sentence, *kal subah rām ne cābī usko de dī*, “*de dī*” agrees with “*cābī*” the logical direct object and also the grammatical subject.

Verb tenses in Hindi include the habitual, perfective, continuous, future, and passive (Snell and Weightman, pp. 73, 98, 111, 135, 176). Unlike French and Latin, but like English, Hindi distinguishes between the present habitual and the present continuous

tenses. For example, *subah rām cābī detā hai/thā/hogā* “In the morning, Ram gives/gave/must give the key” and *subah rām cābī de rahā hai/thā/hogā* “In the morning, Ram is giving/was giving/must be giving the key.” In the continuous conjugation, one of the auxiliary verbs is *rahanā*, which means “to stay,” “to remain,” or “to wait,” among other things. As an auxiliary verb in this tense, *rahanā* conjugates according to gender and number agreement with the grammatical subject, and it follows the verb stem of the head-verb of the verbal phrase (in this case, *de* – from *denā* “to give”) and precedes the second auxiliary verb *honā* “to be,” which is also conjugated according to gender and number in agreement with the grammatical subject.

In addition to conjugation, verbs in Hindi express a wide range of meaning by compounding together. Verb compounding might be thought of as the motor of expression in a Hindi sentence, as the two verbs blend together to suggest a third, enriched action. There are a number of types of verbal compounding. For example, the so-called modal verbs, *pānā*, *sakanā*, and *cukanā*, are combined to a verbal stem of a head-verb to express, respectively, ability, possibility, and aspect (Snell and Weightman, p. 153). The verbs *lenā* and *denā*, by contrast, can be compounded to a verbal stem in order to suggest a degree of agency or acting either toward (*lenā*) or away from (*denā*) an agent or actor (Snell and Weightman, pp. 155-7). Thus, *likh lenā* and *likh denā* suggest “to write out for oneself” and “to write out for someone else” as in the phrase, *(āp) uskā patā likh līgīye* “Please write out his/her address (for yourself).” The compound verb in this example shows the “economy of expression” that can be achieved in Hindi. In two

words, the compound verb expresses both the action to be performed and the sense of agency and direction the action should take. Such microspecifics of Hindi enable language users to suggest subtle distinctions in agency. The play register and compound verbs, when combined, are structures to be played upon in order to display one's linguistic capital. Thus, to speak or write adroitly with aspects of Hindi is also a way to accumulate symbolic power.

Another type of compound verb in Hindi is *paṛanā*, which is used to suggest either a sense of falling and moving downward or – by extension – a degree of inevitability (Snell and Weightman, pp. 165-6). So, for example, in the sentence *jab vah hamāre gaunv āyā tab mujhe uske ghumāne kī zimadārī paṛī thī* “When he came to our village, then the responsibility fell to me to show him around,” *paṛanā* indicates the obligatory sense of the act. Similarly, when combined with a logical subject marked by the particle *ko*, other types of “compulsion” verbs include *honā* and *cāhiye*, and, depending on the context of the language act, the degree of compulsion that each compound suggests can have different degrees of intensity.

Three other types of compound verbs – three more examples that do not in any way exhaust the types of compound verbs in Hindi, but are still examples of common usages – include a verb stem plus *baiṭhanā*, *māranā*, and *uṭhanā* (Snell and Weightman, pp. 220-1). *Baiṭhanaa*, as a compound, suggests that an action was done inappropriately or in an untimely manner. For example, *raṣṭrapatī ke sāmne vah bol baiṭha ki uske pās paisa nahīn* “In front of the president, he inadvertently said that he has no money.” In this

example, the compound verb expresses the sense of accident by way of suggesting that the accident was – metaphorically – much like the intransitive act of awkwardly moving or sitting down “*baiṭhanā*.” *Māranā* and *uṭhanā* have similar expressivity, in that they bind to the verb stem another action to express the sense of, respectively, striking and getting/standing up.

Another aspect of the grammar of Hindi is the practice of affixation. Affixation in Hindi occurs across Hindi's source languages. For example, a Persian prefix – such as *be-* – can combine with a tatsama or tadbhava word, in order to form a Hindi noun, such as *beswād* “without taste.” Hindi takes prefixes and suffixes from all of its source languages, so there are many options for affixation, though it does seem that, generally, affixation in Hindi happens largely in the context of a given source language.

Ghairsarkārī, for example, has the Persian prefix *ghair* “without” affixed to the Persian word for government to form an adjective akin to “non-governmental.” With suffixes, too, subsets of loanwords often correlate with their source languages, though, as with prefixes, there are examples that contravene the norm.

Other aspects of Hindi syntax and grammar that help give expressivity include emphatic particles, markers of negation, markers of questions, and prosody. Emphatic particles in Hindi include, but are not limited to, *bhī* “also,” *hī* “only,” and *to* “so” or “then.” These particles generally follow the noun or noun-phrase that they modify. Markers of negation include, but are not limited to, *nahīn* “no,” *na* “not” or “no,” and *nā*

“not” or “no.” These can be used almost interchangeably, though there are grammatical structures in which *na* is obligatory.

These words of negation can be placed at the end of a sentence in order to suggest a question, such as in the example of *kal subah rām ne cābī ādamī ko de dī nā* “Yesterday morning, Ram gave the key to the man, no?” In the transliterated version of the Hindi sentence, the reader sees that there is neither a comma after the introductory clause that expresses the time frame nor a question mark at the end of the sentence. This is because in Hindi, the only mark of punctuation is the *danṛa* or “stick” that serves to mark the end of a sentence. Thus, written Hindi uses other cues – such as syntax and inflection – to suggest the connections among words, phrases, and clauses of a sentence. Spoken Hindi, obviously, can make use of breath-breaks in order to express, for example, spaces between clauses.

Unlike French question-sentences, which can be marked by the inversion of the verb with the logical subject, Hindi question-sentences are not marked by subject-verb inversion, but can be marked by the particle *kyā* placed either at the beginning or end of the sentence (Snell and Weightman, pp. 30-1). Thus, *kyā kal subah rām ne cābī ādamī ko de dī* “Did Ram, yesterday morning, give the key to the man?” To place the *kyā* marker at the end of the sentence is more colloquial, and it suggests that the questioning aspect of the utterance is something like an afterthought – right?

The series of correlatives beginning with the syllables *ja* grammatically structure a Hindi sentence to draw some sort of parallel or difference (Snell and Weightman, pp.

162-70). For example, the pronoun *jo* “that” correlates with the pronoun *vah* “it” so that objects that follow the pronouns can be compared, as in the example, *jo bhāshaṅ diyā gayā thā vah bahut acchā thā* “that speech which was given, it was very good.” Other examples of such correlatives include *jaisā* , *vaisā*, *jitanā* , *utanā*.

In Braj Bhāṣā, Awadhi, Rajasthani, and other version of early-modern Hindi, such relative-correlative constructions function as grammatical “complements” that string together clauses. As noted above, with the introduction of Persian to Hindi, the complement *ki* was adopted to fulfill a similar purpose. Thus, in Modern Standard Hindi, instead of saying, *jo bhāshaṅ diyā gayā thā vah bahut acchā thā*, one can say *mujhe lagatā hai ki diyā bhāshan accha thā* “It seems to me that the speech that was given was very good.” Unlike reverse compounding, which, as Bhatia and Ritchie note, has a marked or distinctive tone in Hindi, the complement *ki* does not suggest a Persian influence but is “unmarked” or seemingly standard. Thus, while the adoption of *ki* enabled new types of clause-binding, many of its functions pre-existed the word's arrival in Hindi.

Prosody is the last aspect of Hindi syntax and grammar that I will consider in this section. Fennell (p. 101) writes that the switch from Old English to Early Modern English, was marked by a shift from a synthetic language to an analytical one. Part of the reason that the language shifted, Fennell contends, is that in addition to syntax, prosody in spoken English began to take on greater expressive meaning. Rather than paying attention to the declensions at the ends of words and phrases, people began to listen to the

rhyme and stress of utterances. Fennell suggests that prosody and inflection were thus in competition with one another for the attention of language users, and that as prosody increasingly gained expressive valence in English, to that extent inflection lost expressivity.

A third element of this competition that Fennell does not mention, but which is relevant for a few languages in South Asia, such as Panjabi and Burmese, is tonality (cf: Keeler). Pitch, rhyme, stress, and inflection can serve as structural demarcations of the relations among words and between words and their meanings or semantics. Adept in language often play on these structural elements of Hindi in order to gain authority as language users. For example, reciting a couplet (*shloka*) with the appropriate meter and conjugation can bestow the speaker with rational, traditional, and charismatic authority. Command over the precision of the more subtle aspects of language – such as being able to recite complex metrical poetry that contains a high degree of, for example, but not limited to, conjunct clusters – shows that the speaker has a technical skill, much like the technical skill of the *jyotiś* “astrologer” who can, with great accuracy, predict the motions of the planets and stars visible to the unaccompanied eye.

Having discussed the lexicon and syntax of Hindi, I now move to a discussion of its phonology. In Sanskrit and South Asian traditions and in Western philological traditions, the discussion of phonology has covered a lot of ground. Taking the latter case, by way of example, I follow Fennell (p. 35) in noting that in 1818 Jakob Grimm “codified the correspondences between certain consonants in the Germanic languages and [then in

1822] those in Sanskrit, Latin, and Greek.” In doing so, as Fennel (ibid.) points out, Grimm showed that, gradually over time, there were “mergers” among categories of phonology, such as, for example, the so-called First Germanic Consonant Shift, which occurred, Grimm postulates, some few thousand years ago.

Above, I noted that during the development of Hindi in the early modern era, often times tatsama words became tadbhava ones, and in doing so they simplified by way of either reducing or eliminating the consonant clusters contained in the tatsama words. For example, I mentioned that *gāmv* < *grām* (other examples: *suraj* < *surya* “sun” and *put* < *pūtra* “son”). Just as the morphology of the Hindi pictographs changed (*uraj* < *ury* and *ut* < *ūtra*), so too the sounds corresponding with the signs changed. As far as I know, there has been no systematic study of the ways in which tatsama words changed to tadbhava ones, in a way that might construe a parallel class-change in comparison to the First Germanic Consonant Shift. Instead of pursuing that line of logic, I instead suggest that the distinction in sound between tatsama and tadbhava words might be thought of, like kinship terminology, metrics, tonality, and inflection, as a practical logic to be used in language acts.

A person who speaks with both tatsama and tadbhava words, is able to draw on the cultural capital associated with the revered knowledge of the Sanskritic tradition, in addition to the social capital associated with the elite Hindi users who regularly use tatsama words. In linguistic performance, the ability to break register, not erratically but at appropriate moments, and the ability to include a wide array of words, enables a

storyteller or speaker, agent or actor, to – as Collins (p. 36) quotes Shulman noting – draw frames of referentiality around the language act “almost at will.”¹ Despite the positionality of the author, text, and audience of a language act, breaking register can effect the affect of the “God trick,” to perform language acts from multiple perspectives, which can gain for the speaker the trust of an audience (Haraway).

Another element of the phonology of Hindi that sets it apart from, for example, English, is the marking of aspiration and voice. In the Hindi syllabary, for example, there are the syllables *ka* and *kha*, *ga* and *gha*, *ja* and *jha*, *ca* and *chaa*, *ta* and *tha*, *da* and *dha*, *pa* and *pha*, and *ba* and *bha*. Such minor phonological distinctions, between *pa* and *pha*, for example, can have significant semantic effects. *Pal* means something like “moment” and *phal* “fruit,” just as *pul* means something like “bridge” and *phul* “flower.” The smallest phonological differences of Hindi, can have significant semantic weight – although it is not always the case, as regional variations often alter the phonology and morphology of a word so that clusters of words come to signify the same signified (i.e., weak and strong synonyms). For example, in Rajasthani Hindi, *che* often is used to suggest the same meaning as *hai*, and so the phonological/morphological difference has little semantic valence.

Considering the relation between early modern Hindi (what might be called Braj Bhāṣā or Urdu) and contemporary Hindi, I note that there is a greater degree of

¹ “...the potential for discursive one-upmanship possessed by ascetic specialists in death and transcendental visions gives them, as Shulman puts it, 'what may be a universal feature of clowning – the reflexive gift of the commentator, who is capable of framing experience and of switching frames almost at will'.”

standardization in the contemporary language. The reasons why Modern Standard Hindi is relatively standardized, are eclectic, but among the more influential are the development of print-capitalism and its attendant printing of standardized and standardizing vocabularies (dictionaries) and grammars. Thus, for example, the sentence “*merā mitra gopāl is paṛos kī galiyon men holī khelatā thā*” or “My friend Gopal played Holi in this neighborhood street” might be written in Braj Bhāṣā as “*merou mīta gupāl yā paṛos kī galiyan māhin holī khelat hatou*” (Snell, BIB, p. 1). Similarly, this doha in Braj from Rahim (p. 90) would have, in Hindi, alternative spellings for many of its words: *adham bacan kāko palyo baiṭhi tāṛ kī chānh / rahiman kām na āī hain ye nīras jag mānh* // “low words benefit whom, sitting in the tree's shade, Rahim finds no use in this dried up world.” The Braj words *bacan*, *kāko*, *palyo*, and *mānh* are variant spellings of what in Modern Standard Hindi could be *vacan*, *kisako*, *phulānā*, and *men*, although the Braj Bhāṣā words could be used in Modern Standard Hindi if the speaker wanted to effect the sense of historical speech. Such “God trick” like language events are comprehensible by all language users, but the mechanics of why language events provoke certain affects – the nostalgia of historical speech, for example – may be less clear or may be altogether mesmerizing.

In conclusion of this section, I restate that the lexicon, syntax, and phonology of Hindi are complex and have many social uses. Not only can structural differentiation serve to generate semantic torque, but it can also serve to expand the width of the language so that language use can span an array of registers and therefore meanings.

Similarly, the fact of structural difference enables those who use it to differentiate themselves from those who do not. A social element of exclusion can thus arise from the differential in cultural capital among language users.

Generalizations about lexicon, as Fennell noted, are extremely difficult to make, not least because people continue to acquire vocabulary words throughout their lives as language contact and innovation bring new words and vocabulary-sets to a person's established idiolect. While the syntax and grammar of Hindi have been standardized, largely in reference to the systematicity of other languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, and English, there is still a wide variety of syntactical usages, as seen in both historical texts and contemporary spoken Hindi. Overall, in this section, rather than pin down any rule about Hindi, I have instead attempted to display how the multiple linguistic elements at hand can be used in order to form expression. I also attempted to connect these modes of expression to sociolinguistic aspects of the language, such as the potential of distinction that is often associated with language that spans the registers of Hindi. In the next section of the paper, I further consider this last point – the context of knowledge, power, and language.

III. Language and power

Abstract language about knowledge, power, and language itself means little outside of a specific context. Because it is often used in order to condemn the fact of inequalities among different positionalities, abstract language often carries with it a tone of condemnation, the accusal of infraction. In the composition of expository prose, such indignation can strike the reader as a dismissal of discursive knowledge, and also as a declaration of intended autonomy or secession from an established discourse. Yet I believe that one can use even the most damning essays of Foucault's lecture series to draw a framework that can construe historical and contemporary society from a perspective that, having been made, does not have to – though it can – carry with it the affective might that Foucaultians use to disabuse society of its plights. Failing to distinguish the one from the other, the framework from the indignation, misses the forest for the trees. A Foucaultian irony is only appropriate, moreover, in light of its international circulation throughout the academy.

Yet differences in positionality remain, and social inertia leads to the naturalization of particularisms. People close their minds to other possible lifeworlds. Then, when utterances do cross a given social register, differences in naturalized lifeworlds often prevent a commensuration of cultural maps – or, put poststructurally, the commensuration of cultural maps becomes partial and only glimpses of another – now distorted – lifeworld are the result. As Pollock, Collins, and Wink show, one effect of naturalized lifeworlds in the South Asian ancient and medieval *agoras*, was the partial

commensuration of linguistic and cultural maps among political communities. More generally, differentiated positionalities on the basis of linguistic differentiation – in a phrase, linguistic capital – can be empowering, especially if, diachronically, counterhegemonic groups accumulate this capital. Yet when elite statecraft excludes members of the state by using linguistic technologies, the effect can be debilitating. What is one to make of inflection and analysis in linguistic competition?

If it is audaciously utopian to conceive of the Habermasian public sphere as a linguistic space where all concepts can be taught, perhaps the next best thing to hope for is a public sphere in which, even if commensuration of cultural maps is never complete, the insinuation of metaphor in addition to the specificity of narrated lifeworld can draw together continuities among lifeworlds: the poetics of shared culture. Linguistically, descriptive rather than prescriptive language is philosophically consonant with this impressionistic optimism. It is, as Levi-Strauss (1963, p. 4) found, the case that linguistic concepts serve a contextualized discursive domain in a society and that therefore one should consider conceptual knowledge and society in relation to one another before one compares the conceptual atmospheres of two different societies. But Levi-Strauss's declarations about universal structural laws do sound antiquated – and at times inaccurate – in comparison to today's anthropological discourse. The latter is more attendant to the specificities of the flows and diasporas that mark postFordism.

The production of Hindi, like that of any language, produces knowledge and power. This production takes many forms. There are the spoken traditions that travel

literally by word of mouth and encompass the speech communities of South Asia and its diasporas – an element of “long-distance nationalism” (Anderson 2002). There are written traditions both of the government and civil society. Of the latter, perhaps commercial literature has been the most influential technological element in the unification of Hindi, from the time of the publications of Harishchandra in the 1860s to the sales today of all types of books, magazines, periodicals, and other literary forms. The last three decades or so of the internet and the ubiquity of the Latin script is a further modulation of Hindi that produces knowledge and power. And often times, such as with the circulation of the recitation and publication of poetry online, the knowledge and power that is produced concerns historical poets and literary figures – a reinvention of an older code or a form of linguistic recursion.

The history of the social relations that constitute the ideal-type of Hindi, as it is found in these lesser known corners of the textbooks, suggests that its positionality directly links to a specific historical articulation. It is a social history that is altogether surprising considering that conventional knowledge frames Hindi as a medium of Sanskritization of the “vernacular” languages. Rather than this caricaturcization of a Vulgar Latinesque translanguage of commensuration, historically, Hindi has been associated with Braj of bhakti and Urdu of the so-called Urdu Bazaar in Shahjahanabad, not to mention the literary traditions of early modern Hyderabad and Jaipur. If Hindi is hegemonic to Dravidian languages and other languages of South Asia, it has become so only in the last one hundred years, as before then, though it was still positioned centrally

enough to be used in a limited way throughout South Asia, it was not the preeminent language of the courts.

This is my answer to the question of what to make of the competition between synthetic and analytical language. The fact of linguistic difference enables competition – a hierarchy – on the basis of the languages inherited from previous generations. Such registers can be elaborated or eschewed on the basis of contextual need, as Levi-Strauss (1966, p. 3) suggested about the structure of language generally: “The use of more or less abstract terms is a function not of greater or lesser intellectual capacity, but of differences in interests of particular social groups.” Continuing the structuralist idiom, I suggest that linguistic hierarchy among differentiated social relations thus points to the possible positionalities in the various fields of language. Sometimes, for example, when Mughal courtiers sought to distinguish themselves from others near Shahjahanabad, they used higher registers of the Persian lexicon, while at other times, when they sought to assimilate the linguistic culture of those who gave allegiance, administrators and poets used more accessible words.

It would be, moreover, misguided to assume that royal patronage of court administrators who also wrote poetry, like Rahim, served the sole the purpose of legitimating the royal right to rule, even if employing hundreds of litterateurs had that effect. As seen in dohas and other literature, for example, poets indulged in some degree of *lèse-majesté*. Whether such statements are truly acts of subversion, or whether they are ironic nods to the power of royal authority – that which is so strong it can allow courtiers

the autonomy to contravene the grandeur of the throne – is part of the polyvalency that makes the interpretation of the poetry fun. What does stand out, however, is that the levels of indirection in the poetry, can be understood as part of the tradition of early modern Hindi that enables both differentiation and expression.

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