

as such; its aim is, rather, to highlight, besides the important historical part opening the book, some less frequently studied aspects, such as topicalisation, focalisation or word order, and to present to the reader “un portrait de la langue tenant compte des recherches récentes comme anciennes et à l’orienter vers les sources où trouver des compléments d’information” (p. 4).

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first two chapters deal with the political, cultural and social history of the Hindi language (chapter 1), and with its evolution in the multilingual area that constitutes the Indian subcontinent (chapter 2). The opening chapter provides a very useful introduction to the linguistic and political situation of Hindi in India, with some information also on the diaspora. As usual in Montaut’s writings, the facts are given in an amazingly precise though concise form for such a complex topic. Given the complexity of the linguistic situation of Hindi and because of the discrepancy between the various data provided by the Censuses and other sources of information, it seems unavoidable that there remain some ambiguities in the data linked to the number of speakers of the several languages used in India (1.1.3.). Among the very few aspects of the book that could perhaps be improved upon are the maps provided at the end of the chapter. Had they been of a better quality and placed nearer to the topic discussed, they would certainly have done more justice to the quality and density of the information presented by the author.

This opening part also offers a very interesting consideration on the actual variety of ‘the’ Hindi/Urdu language. Retrieving this sociolinguistic reality is never useless, especially for the students learning this language who are generally unaware of its complexity. The author thus rightly underlines that when one speaks of “Hindi”, one should always keep in mind the formal and lexical varieties inherent to it, such as the “high Hindi” or formal Hindi, used in administrative and religious (Hindu) fields, the “standard Hindi”, used within urban and cultural circles, and the formal Urdu, besides the myriads of *bolī* (“dialects”) prevalent in the countryside and all over the so-called “Hindi belt”, whose subsumption under “Hindi” is obviously problematic.

Even more enlightening is part 1.2. which is dedicated to the highly controversial debate on the origins of and links between Hindi and Urdu. Montaut succeeds in recounting the major steps and historical arguments that have shaped these two languages, or rather these “two styles of a same language”, as she quotes the linguist Ashok Kelkar, author of the neologism “Hirdu” (p. 13). She does so by recalling the intricate history of Hindi and Urdu, especially at the time of their ancient variations called *Hindūī*, *Hindavī*, *Hindustānī*, *Dehlavī*, *Bhākhā*, *Kharī bolī*, etc.

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Annie Montaut’s book on the Hindi language and its grammar is an original publication for the French-speaking readership. No linguistic grammar of this scope has been available hitherto in French. By dealing with each and every level of the language, from history and phonology to enunciation, through derivational morphology and syntax, this book provides a comprehensive and innovative view of the system. It is, however, not meant as an outline of Hindi grammar or as a teaching method

Chapter 2 also deals with the sociolinguistic development of Hindi among the multilingual area that is India. Presented between a section on the classifications of the Indo-Aryan languages (2.1.) and a section on bilingualism and diglossia (2.3.), the second section (2.2.) on the development of the New Indo-Aryan languages is highly informative, in respect of, for instance, the morpho-syntactical differences between the western (e. g. Hindi) and the eastern (e. g. Bengali) groups. It effectively helps us understand how this “completely analytical system” that has become modern Hindi emerged from “one of the most rigorously flexional systems” (i. e. Old Indo-Aryan as exemplified by Sanskrit) (p. 44).

After these first two chapters, it will be definitely clear to the reader that the language called “Hindi” is anything but a single, standard, common language that would have simply stemmed from Sanskrit with only some subsequent Persian influences. Montaut clearly reminds us and shows how the evolution and constitution of any language – all the more in the case of Hindi – is made of diachronic *and* areal continuities and innovations, not to mention the importance of sociocultural factors. This helps explain the widespread phenomenon of diglossia in India and its “grassroot[s] multilingualism” (p. 48).

Phonology forms the content of chapter 3. It deals mainly with the phonological rules and the syllabic structure of “standard Hindi”, although some differences of pronunciation are also given, mainly with respect to the Hindi / Urdu polarity. Therefore, a minimal generalisation is made here, despite the actual variety of pronunciations and “rules” among the many “dialects” of Hindi. Of course, this variety would have been impossible to elucidate in any exhaustive way in a book such as this.

The next two chapters belong to the field of morphology. In chapter 4 (“Le lexique et ses catégories”), Montaut rightly reminds us not only that Persian belongs to the same language family as Sanskrit, but also that the conventional designation “Arabo-Persian” used for categorising loanwords from Arabic *and* Persian is strictly speaking artificial (p. 75):

Les mots arabes intégrés dans le stock lexical du hindi sont venus par le persan, d'où la désignation *arabo-persan* en usage dans la tradition et commode malgré sa fragilité scientifique, car la réalité sociolinguistique ne distingue pas les deux sources du vocabulaire injecté à la même époque et dans les mêmes conditions à l'indo-aryen moderne.

This chapter also contains a linguistically and sociologically very useful section (4.2.) on the numerous terms belonging to family terminology (a schema might, however, have helped to visualise and understand this topic, rather difficult for any learner of Hindi). This very rich chapter offers, in the

same way, an interesting demonstration on the important feature of reduplication in the Hindi lexicon (4.4.1.).

Chapter 5 deals with the various constituents (nominal, adjectival, pronominal and verbal) of the clause. Throughout the book, the author regularly makes use of short sentences in order to illustrate a specific point of grammar. However, when (pp. 117ff.) Montaut comments on the specific use of the short form of the imperfect (sometimes called “literary imperfect”), she quotes a whole extract of a literary work. This extract thus provides a very good and helpful illustration of the shift of form that happens with the imperfect. The only regret that can be expressed in this regard is that it is the only instance of this kind and that other extracts and analyses of this sort are unfortunately lacking in the rest of the book.

This chapter also contains some brilliant pages (pp. 119ff.) on the uses and significations of the Hindi aorist (usually called “perfective” in English). These pages will certainly help the reader to understand and distinguish the specificity of this form and its meaning in comparison with the present perfect (*parfait* in French) – a distinction not so obvious to the French speaker, who never uses the aorist when speaking and hence does not always understand the important difference that has to be made between these two forms in Hindi. By contrast with this comprehensive part, the subsequent section (5.4.2.4.) on the moods (imperative, subjunctive and counterfactual) and the passive voice is regrettably short. Although the section on the vector verbs (*semi-auxiliaires perfectivants*, 5.4.2.8.) is rather brief too, it nevertheless explains this complex aspect of Hindi grammar in a brilliantly synthetised way.

Chapters 6 and 7 primarily cover the domain of syntax. In chapter 6 (“Syntaxe de la phrase simple”), the section 6.3. (“Phrases à argument principal marqué”) deals with the various marked argument sentences, i. e. the ergative, dative, possessive and instrumental patterns. These pages shed light on the subtle distinctions of meaning to be made at a semantic level according to the degree of awareness implied in the process by the agent / experiencer / possessor – for instance between statements implying a “conscious awareness” of the agent, and those manifesting a lack of such consciousness. Montaut underlines, in lieu of a conclusion to this chapter (p. 156):

Les énoncés élémentaires mettent en évidence que la structuration syntaxique des énoncés est assurée essentiellement par les rôles sémantiques, eux-mêmes liés à la structure morphologique du lexique verbal, plus que par les catégories syntaxiques d'objet et de sujet.

Chapter 7 (“Syntaxe de la phrase complexe”) completes the preceding chapter with an analysis of such topics as

the non-finite subordination system (7.1.), the correlative system (7.2.), or subordination (7.3.).

The eighth and last chapter entitled “De la grammaire au discours” deals with other important aspects of Hindi grammar such as coordination (8.1.), negation (8.2.), interrogation (8.3.), topicalisation and focalisation (8.4.), reflexivisation (8.5.) and the enclitic particles *to*, *bhī* and *hī* (8.6.). In this chapter, the author stresses the importance of the semantic and discursive dimensions of the grammar, beyond morphosyntax. In particular, the section dealing with the reflexive pronoun and the adjective *ap'nā* (8.5.) offers a detailed view of the several uses of this term, something rarely done to such an extent in grammars of Hindi.

The book ends with an extract from an interview with the Indian film actor Shammi Kapoor aired by the BBC in 2006, given in a quintuple transcription containing the original Devanagari script, its phonetic and ‘Indologist’ transliterations, a grammatical gloss of the terms, and a French translation of the text. This is followed by a Swadesh list in French with the equivalent Hindi words, and finally by a short general bibliography (more specific references are given in the footnotes of the corresponding chapters).

In conclusion, this is a highly valuable book, deserving of a careful reading. It will be helpful primarily to linguists and typologists, but also to students of Hindi, who, however, should already have acquired a good knowledge of Hindi. For the latter, this book will certainly prove to be very useful in helping them understand the subtleties of the language as well as its history and variety. Teachers of Hindi, with interest in linguistics, will also benefit from it, as the book provides very clear and precise terminology and explanations. Those unable to read French can, fortunately, read the more or less equivalent English version by the same author,¹ except for the first two chapters, which make the French version unique and all the more valuable.

¹ Annie Montaut: *A Grammar of Hindi*. (LINCOS Studies in Indo-European Linguistics 2.) München: LINCOS Europa 2004.