

**Singh, Rajendra (1995) : *Linguistic Theory, Language Contact, and Modern Hindustani: The Three Sides of a Linguistic Story*, New York, Peter Lang, 130 p.**

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## Comptes rendus

■ SINGH, Rajendra (1995): *Linguistic Theory, Language Contact, and Modern Hindustani: The Three Sides of a Linguistic Story*, New York, Peter Lang, 130 p.

The book under review is the first serious attempt to explain certain linguistic facts which are either dismissed or mentioned only to be glossed over. These are the facts of languages in contact, more precisely the contact of Hindustani (Urdu-Hindi) with Persian and English. Rajendra Singh uses both functionalism and formalism to explain contact phenomena and gives a synthesis in the end. The stated objectives of his work are to describe the contact situation, to find out how the grammar of Hindustani functions in it, to describe language borrowing in general and, in the final analysis, to gain new theoretical insights.

One interesting hypothesis he begins with is that if a language borrows verbs then it must also borrow adjectives and nouns. Also, if it borrows inflectional morphemes then it also borrows derivational and free ones. Another interesting fact he discusses is the use of redundant compounds in Hindustani such as *tan badun*, *dhan daulat* and *nata rishta*. In these pairs both words mean the same thing but, in the cases given above, the first word of the pair is native while the second one is foreign (Persian or Arabic). Singh explains these compounds on the basis of the "native structural resources of Khari Boli" (p. 21) which included complete and partial reduplication. When Khari Boli came in contact with Persian the foreign words became available and

"the reduplication processes of native origin made use of these non-native items by extending their domain in an entirely reasonable and permissible way, and the functional necessity to eliminate the unstable situation characterized by code-switching made them prosper" (p. 42).

Another contact problem taken up by Singh is that of the breaking up of consonantal clusters. He takes only word-initial clusters like school (which becomes /iskul/) and not word-final ones like form (which becomes /forum/). In a study of the phonetic and phonological features of Pakistani English (PE) this reviewer suggested that clusters are broken up because they do not exist in Urdu (and Hindi).<sup>1</sup> However, although certain phonological rules were given, no satisfactory explanation for the phenomenon was put forward.<sup>2</sup> Singh goes a step forward by arguing

"that the distribution prothesis/epenthesis is sensitive to sonority and if the degenerate segment, the segment that does not fit the well-formedness conditions of Hindustani, is more

or as sonorous as the segment it is adjacent to, it is syllabified with a prothetic vowel, otherwise it is syllabified with the help of an epenthetic vowel" (p. 21).

The crucial question of syllabification itself he answers with reference to Kiparsky's theory which argues that universal rules govern this process. Such an explanation, I believe, is an improvement over the explanations of sociolinguists who merely noted the phenomenon without explaining it at all.

Another contact phenomenon which Singh takes up is that of code-switching — switching from one language to another as in the example given below.

- (1)      Keep straight sidhe jao beta  
             Keep straight straight go son  
             Keep straight. Go straight son.

Sociolinguists, while referring to the code-switching between Hindustani and English, do not tell us what rules (if any) govern it. Indeed, it appears to be so illicit a phenomenon that it often comes as a surprise that there should be constraints on it. Singh gives us some of these constraints which are:

- 1) English conjunctions cannot be used to conjoin non English NPs, VPs and Ss.
- 2) All numbers of the specifier system must come from Hindustani though the Head may be from English (though this is not true if the Head is Hindustani).
- 3) If an English verb is used in a Hindustani sentence, it is adapted to the native pattern.

These and other such constraints govern code-switching, which had not been subjected to rigorous analysis before. What he has proved is not only that such contact facts can be analysed but that generative theory can provide insights into such an analysis.

To sum up, Rajendra Singh provides evidence for the claim that contact situations are not random in nature. They too are governed by language universals which play an independent role in how language is used in contact situations. He shows that the principles of generative theory can explain certain facts of language-contact. That all facts of such a situation cannot be explained should not lead us to imagine "that there is a problem with contact and not with the mutual ignoring of the dominant paradigms of our day practice" (p. 131). Scholars working on language contact, including translators, will find the book very interesting indeed.

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#### Notes

1. RAHMAN, Tariq (1991) : "The Phonetic and Phonological Features of Pakistani English", *World Englishes*, 10 (1), Spring, pp. 83-95.
2. RAHMAN, Tariq (1990) : *Pakistani English: The Linguistic Description of a Non-Native Variety of English*, Islamabad, Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University.