

Bhāṣā

Journal of South Asian Linguistics,
Philology and Grammatical Traditions

Vol. 4 – Num. 2

October 2025

e-ISSN 2785-5953



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

e-ISSN 2785-5953

Bhasha

Journal of South Asian Linguistics,
Philology and Grammatical Traditions

Editor-in-chief
Andrea Drocco

Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Venice University Press
Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari
Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venezia
URL <https://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/riviste/bhasha/>

Bhasha

Journal of South Asian Linguistics, Philology and Grammatical Traditions

Semestral journal

Editor-in-chief Andrea Drocco (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Advisory board Gregory Anderson (Institute for Endangered Languages, Salem, USA) E. Annamalai (University of Chicago, USA; Central Institute of Indian Languages, India) Vit Bubenik (Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada) Paolo Di Giovine (Sapienza Università di Roma, Italia) Hans Henrich Hock (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA) Leonid Kulikov (Universiteit Gent, België) Malhar Kulkarni (Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, India) Silvia Luraghi (Università degli Studi di Pavia, Italia) Tiziana Pontillo (Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Italia) Adriano Valerio Rossi (Università degli Studi di Napoli «L'Orientale», Italia) Krzysztof Stroński (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland) Boris Zakharyin (Moscow State University, Russia)

Editorial board Valentina Barnabei (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia) Erica Biagetti (Università di Pavia, Italia) Lucrezia Carnesale (Università di Pavia; Università degli Studi Bergamo, Italia) Maria Casadei (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland) Bryan De Notariis (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Managing editor Andrea Drocco (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

Head office Ca' Foscari University of Venice | Department of Asian and North African Studies | Dorsoduro 3462, 30123 Venice, Italy | bhasha_journal@unive.it

Publisher Edizioni Ca' Foscari | Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari | Dorsoduro 3246, 30123 Venice, Italy | ecf@unive.it

The ISMEO co-financing was provided by Progetto MUR Storia, lingue e culture dei paesi asiatici e africani: ricerca scientifica, promozione e divulgazione CUP B85F21002660001.



ISMEO

© 2025 Ca' Foscari University of Venice

© 2025 Edizioni Ca' Foscari for the present edition



Quest'opera è distribuita con Licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione 4.0 Internazionale
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License



Certificazione scientifica delle Opere pubblicate da Edizioni Ca' Foscari: tutti i saggi pubblicati hanno ottenuto il parere favorevole da parte di valutatori esperti della materia, attraverso un processo di revisione anonima sotto la responsabilità del Comitato scientifico della rivista. La valutazione è stata condotta in aderenza ai criteri scientifici ed editoriali di Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

Scientific certification of the works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari: all essays published in this issue have received a favourable opinion by subject-matter experts, through an anonymous peer review process under the responsibility of the Advisory Board of the journal. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

Sommario

ARTICLES

Old Theme, New Debates

Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa on Autonymy

Émilie Aussant

179

Śābdabodha of Cognitive Maze

Shruti Kanitkar, Malhar Kulkarni

195

Evolving Trends in Sociolinguistic Research in Nepal

Bhim Lal Gautam

213

**La cosiddetta ‘strong and rough r’ /r/ del tamil
e l’occlusiva alveolare protodravidica */t/: A reappraisal**

Marcello De Martino

229

REVIEWS

Tatiana Oranskaia, Anvita Abbi

The Heart of Change: Issues on Variation in Hindī

Giulia Ferro

265



Articles

Old Theme, New Debates Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa on Autonymy

Émilie Aussant

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - EA 2120 GREI, France

Abstract Identified at an early date, autonymy has always been an important theme in the discourse of Indian Sanskrit grammarians. But this phenomenon also aroused the interest of other ancient Indian language theorists, and rightly so. In the section of the *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra* devoted to the object(s) of noun (*nāmārthanirṇaya*), Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa comments on two *kārikās* taken from Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita's *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā* relating to autonymy. It is not a mere gloss: the seventeenth century grammarian seeks above all to reaffirm the authority of the theses developed within the Pāṇinian school by refuting doctrines defended in other circles. This is an opportunity for us to study the dimensions of the autonymic phenomenon around which the 'new' debates crystallize. For between Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* and Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra* are the ins and outs of the autonymy issue the same? What is at stake at Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's time? These are the main questions this paper tries to provide answers to.

Keywords Autonymy. Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa. Sanskrit. Vyākaraṇa.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The First Debates on Autonymy. – 3 Debates in the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries: Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra*. – 4 Concluding Remarks.



Peer review

Submitted 2025-07-16
Accepted 2025-09-22
Published 2025-12-23



Open access

© 2025 Aussant | CC BY 4.0



Citation Aussant, É. (2025). "Old Theme, New Debates. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa on Autonymy". *Bhasha*, 4(2), [1-16], 179-194.

1 Introduction

Like all natural languages, Sanskrit has a metalinguistic function that enables it to describe itself.¹ The essential feature of this metalinguistic function is the production of what Western linguists call ‘autonyms’. Indian Sanskrit grammarians have also clearly identified the autonymic phenomenon, usually illustrating it with a pair of sequences:

- (1) *gauś calati*
The cow moves.²

Where the word *gauḥ* makes one understand its usual *artha* ‘object’ (i.e., to put it quickly, a cow); the word *gauḥ*, in this case, is qualified as *artha-padārthaka* which has as its object [its] object’, and

- (2) *gaur ity ayam āha*
He says ‘*gauḥ*’.³

Where the word *gauḥ* does not convey its usual *artha* ‘object’ but the word *gauḥ* of sequence (1); the word *gauḥ* of sequence (2) is qualified as *svaṛūpa-padārthaka* ‘which has as its object its own form’, or *śabda-padārthaka* which can be rendered, in this context of use, as ‘which has as its object [one/its] form’.

The autonymic phenomenon is thus identified by Indian Sanskrit grammarians, and it is so at an early date, as attested by the formulation of the *sūtra* 1.1.68 of Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (hereafter A), which I would translate simply as follows (‘simply’, i.e. deliberately leaving aside various problems of interpretation that commentators will raise and that would take us far beyond the topic of this paper):

- (3) *svaṃ rūpaṃ śabdasya_aśabdasaṃjñā* || (A 1.1.68)
A word designates its own form, unless it is a technical term.

¹ This paper was initially presented on the occasion of the 16th Journée du Monde Indien, held in Paris in June 2024, in honor of Prof. Georges-Jean Pinault. I thank Maria Piera Candotti for her reading and insightful remarks.

² Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.

³ Indian Sanskrit grammarians present this example as being taken from ‘current usage’. (Cf. *loke gaur ity ayam āheti gośabdād itikaraṇaḥ paraḥ prayujyamāno gośabdaṃ svasmāt padārthāt pracyāvayati* |; MBh ad A 1.1.44, 102).

If one sticks to this translation/interpretation,⁴ the aphorism states that in grammatical *sūtras*, words (mainly nominal or verbal bases to which suffixes have to be added) are mostly autonyms,⁵ and that words functioning in a ‘normal’ or expected way, i.e. non-autonymous words that convey their *artha*, their usual purpose, are the technical terms of grammar (the *saṃjñās*, actually less numerous than autonymous words). In grammar, one is therefore dealing with a situation that is the reverse of that of common usage, which the *Mahābhāṣya* (hereafter MBh) sums up in the following terms:

śabdaṇa_uccāritena_artho gamyate | gām ānaya dadhy aśāna_ity arthā ānīyate ’rthaś ca bhujiyate | [...] | iha vyākaraṇe ’rthe kāryasya_aśaṃbhavaḥ | agner dhag iti na śakyate ’ṅārebhyaḥ paro dhak kartum | (MBh on *vārttika* 1 ad A 1.1.68, 175-6)

When a word is uttered [in common usage], an object is understood. [When one says:] ‘bring the cow’, ‘eat the curd’, an object is brought, an object is eaten. [...] Here, in grammar, it is impossible to apply a [grammatical] operation to an object: [when the *sūtra* A 4.2.33] *agner dhaK* (‘After *agni*, [one adds the suffix] *dhaK*’),⁶ one cannot add [the suffix] *dhaK* to hot coals.

Indeed, if one interprets *agni*, in the *sūtra* A 4.2.33, as implying its usual *artha*, i.e. burning coals or fire, this does not make sense because it is obviously the word *agni* itself that is intended here, in grammar. And this applies to the vast majority of words found in the *sūtras* of the A.

The characteristic of autonymous words in grammatical rules is that they are not specifically marked. This is easy to understand: autonyms are everywhere, they represent ‘the norm’, as it were. The *sūtra* A 4.2.33 is a perfect illustration of the phenomenon: *agni* is not followed by the particle *iti* (nor is it in composition with a term like *pada* or *śabda*), so it is submitted to the syntax of the ‘sentence’ and is inflected like a noun. In grammatical rules, the convention of marking

⁴ Commentators (at least those whose texts have come down to us) consider this *sūtra*, whatever its function (*paribhāṣā*- or *saṃjñā-sūtra*), as ultimately... useless! For more details on interpretation issues posed by the aphorism and the various analyses (both Indian and Western) which were made of it, and which I cannot repeat here, see Aussant 2005 and Candotti 2006.

⁵ Cf. *Vākyapadīya* (hereafter VP) 2.130: *loke ’rtharūpatām śabdaḥ pratipannāḥ pravartate | śāstre tūbhayarūpatvaṃ pravibhaktam vivakṣayā ||* “In common usage, the word is understood as consisting in its meaning/object. In grammar, however, [one can understand] either one (i.e. the meaning/object or the form of the word) according to the speaker’s intention”.

⁶ The sequence *dh-* of *dhaK* should be replaced by *ey-*. The addition of this secondary suffix leads to the formation of the derivative *āgneya* ‘[oblation] whose deity is Agni’.

autonyms is reversed compared to that of common usage where the autonymous word is marked either by *iti* (cf. *gaur ity ayam āha*) or by a ‘presenter’ term (e.g. *gośabda* ‘the word *go*’). I will come back to the case of inflected autonyms later.

Unsurprisingly, the *sūtra* A 1.1.68 will generate a long series of debates⁷ among ancient Indian grammarians. One discussion predominates quite clearly in the commentaries and sub-commentaries that have come down to us: it is about explaining the relationship between the word *agni* that appears in the *sūtra* A 4.2.33 and the word *agni* that receives, in practice, the suffix *ḍhaK*. I will be addressing very briefly this discussion in the first part of the paper, which is devoted to the first debates on autonymy. In the same part, I will recall another debate, whose scope and stakes, *a priori* much more modest, do not foreshadow the role it will later play in thoughts on the autonymic phenomenon. In the second part, I will present the issues around which the grammarian Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa articulated his reflection on autonymy at the very beginning of the seventeenth century. If the phenomenon is still under discussion, are the horizon and the ‘effects’ of these discussions really the same? Have other points of interest emerged over time? If so, which dimensions of the autonymic fact do they revolve around?

2 The First Debates on Autonymy

The two terms mentioned at the very beginning of this article, *arthapadārthaka* ‘which has as its object [an] object’ and *svarūpa-śabdapadārthaka* ‘which has as its object [one’s own] form’, can already be found at an early date in texts relating to *Vyākaraṇa*. However, these terms appear sporadically, i.e. without being associated with a precise context of discussion and without giving rise, either, to specific developments.

The most significant debates are eventually focussed on two Pāṇinian *sūtras*: (1.1) the *sūtra* A 1.1.68 mentioned above and (1.2) the (*pratyāhāra*)*sūtra* 2 ṛḷK, which teaches the sound units *ṛ* and *ḷ* which respectively represent the class of *ṛ* timbre vowels and the class of *ḷ* timbre vowels. Let us take a quick look at them again.

⁷ Why was this *sūtra* formulated, what is its status or function (*paribhāṣā*- or *saṃjñā-sūtra*), exceptions and/or additions to point out, mainly.

2.1 Discussions about A 1.1.68

The main framework here is exclusively grammatical and even, to be quite exact, metagrammatical: the aim is to explain, as I briefly reminded us in the introduction, how the word *agni* used in the *sūtra* A 4.2.33 (a word qualified as *sūtra-sthā* ‘which stands in the rule’) can refer to the word *agni* which receives grammatical operations and is intended for common use (a word qualified as *prayoga-sthā* ‘which stands in usage’).

Several answers were proposed by grammarians. Those most frequently encountered (because they were agreed upon?) emphasize two points:

1. the *agni* word of the *sūtra* and the *agni* word that receives grammatical operations are united by a naming relation: the word of the *sūtra* is the name (*saṃjñā*) of the word that receives grammatical operations (*saṃjñin*);
2. being related, these two words are distinct.

The question of the distinction between the word of the *sūtra* and the one which receives grammatical operations has been variously dealt with (cf. Aussant 2005). These various treatments can be summarized as follows:

- some grammarians (Kaiyaṭa, Haradatta) considered that the word *agni* of the *sūtra* A 4.2.33 is a universal (or ‘word-type’, *sāmānya* or *jāti*) and that the word *agni* which receives grammatical operations is a particular (or ‘word-occurrence’, *vyakti*);
- others (Patañjali, Vāmana and Jayāditya) defended the idea that the word *agni* of the *sūtra* A 4.2.33 is a whole (*samudāya*) and that the word *agni* which receives grammatical operations is a part (*ekadeśa*) of this whole;
- still others (Bhartṛhari would probably be the first), thought of the word *agni* of the *sūtra* A 4.2.33 as having the capacity to be a means of understanding (*grāhakatva-śakti*) and the word *agni* which receives grammatical operations as having the capacity to be an object of understanding (*grāhyatva-śakti*).

2.2 The *pratyāhārasūtra* 2 ṛK: *anukaraṇa* and *prakṛti*

The autonymic phenomenon is also mentioned, albeit incidentally, on the occasion of another discussion, relating to the teaching of *l* in the *pratyāhārasūtra* ṛK, a *sūtra* that has, *a priori*, no link with the linguistic phenomenon in question. For the earliest commentators, a question immediately arises, which can be formulated as follows: is it justified to teach *l*, a sound unit that is scarcely encountered in

the language? A first answer is put forward (and this is the ‘final’ view, that of the *siddhāntin*): this sound unit must be taught because it is found, among others, in imitations of faulty, corrupted forms. The expression used is *aśaktijānukaraṇa*, literally ‘imitation [of what is] produced by incapacity’. An example is given: a Brahmin woman pronounces *ṭtaka* instead of *ṛtaka* (which is an individual’s proper name); the *ṭtaka* pronounced by the Brahmin woman is certainly a corrupted form; but if someone ‘imitates’ this *ṭtaka*, in other words, if someone, for example a grammarian, quotes this form saying “the Brahmin woman said ‘*ṭtakaḥ*’” (*brāhmaṇy ṭtaka ity āha*), will the imitation (*anukaraṇa*)⁸ of this *ṭtaka* itself be corrupt?⁹

A debate ensues (under the 3rd *vārttika*),¹⁰ during which two conceptions of imitation are confronted:

- according to the first conception (defended by Kātyāyana?), imitation is like the original (*prakṛtivad anukaraṇam bhavati*),¹¹ which means that it aims at the same thing, i.e. the same result (*artha*!) as the original and entails the same consequences as the original. The imitation of a reprehensible act (the examples cited are drinking alcohol, killing a Brahmin... and corrupted uttering of a word) is therefore just as reprehensible as the act imitated;
- according to the second conception (defended by Patañjali), if the imitation has no other purpose than to imitate, drinking alcohol in order to do as or to represent what X does (and not to get drunk), killing a Brahmin to do as or to represent what Y does (and not to take revenge), in other words, if it is a mechanical or symbolic imitation (cf. Renou 1942, 25), it certainly resembles the original (since it is performed in the same way), but it differs from it in that it does not aim at the

8 Cf. Candotti 2006, sections 5.3 to 5.5.

9 The issue at stake is as follows: if the imitation of the corrupted form *ṭtaka* is considered as correct, the initial *ṭ* can be considered part of the vocalic sound units to be taught, and this allows the application of the *sandhi* prescribed in the A (e.g. the *ī* of *brāhmaṇī* becomes *y* in contact with *ṭ*). If it is not correct, the operations taught in the A cannot apply.

10 *anukaraṇam śiṣṭāśiṣṭāpratiśiddheṣu yathā laukikavaidikeṣu || (vārttika 3 ad ṛṭK, 20)* “Imitation of what is taught, what is not taught or what is not forbidden [is considered as correct – *sādhu* is used in Patañjali’s gloss], as in common and ritual practices”. What is taught: donation, sacrifice, recitation; what is neither taught nor forbidden: hiccuping, laughing, scratching.

11 I.e. it behaves or must be treated like the original, whatever it may be. *ṭ*’s teaching advocate does not question this maxim, he simply restricts its scope to that of the grammatical treatise: it is the imitation of what is taught (and is therefore, by definition, correct) that behaves/is treated like the original. This does not apply to the imitation of a corrupted form.

same thing as the original... it aims at the original itself. Hence the following observation:

anyo 'paśabdapadārthakaḥ śabdo [...] na cāpaśabdapadārthakaḥ śabdo 'paśabdo bhavati | (MBh *ad ṛ!K*, 20-21)

the word that has a corrupt word as its object is different [from the corrupt word]; [...] and the word that has a corrupt word as its object is not a corrupt word.

From this point of view, the imitation of a reprehensible act, *because it does not aim at the same thing as the imitated act*, is not reprehensible.

One notes that here, unlike the discussions that unfold around the *sūtra* A 1.1.68, the framework of reflection is not exclusively grammatical: the starting point is the *imitation of an act*, and the examples cited (drinking alcohol, killing a Brahmin) quite explicitly evoke the theme of the retribution for acts¹² – and, perhaps, even the idea of the intention that would determine the punishment.

Back to the subject at hand, i.e. the imitation of a corrupted word, the two conceptions of imitation can be formulated as follows:

1. either one assumes that the 'imitation word' is identical to the word it imitates (the term used here is *prakṛti*, the 'base'; later, it will be *anukārya*): this means that the *ṭtaka* uttered by the grammarian, which imitates the *ṭtaka* uttered by the Brahmin woman, is also a faulty form of the proper noun *Ṛtaka*. The consequence will be the same in both cases (that of the imitated word *ṭtaka* and that of the imitation word *ṭtaka*): since grammar is not concerned with faulty forms, it does not have to teach the sound unit *ṭ*;
2. or we assume that the 'imitation word' is not identical to the word it imitates, insofar as the *ṭtaka* uttered by the grammarian, which imitates the *ṭtaka* uttered by the Brahmin woman, is not aimed at the individual named *Ṛtaka* but at the *ṭtaka* uttered by the Brahmin woman. As a 'good imitation', the *ṭtaka* uttered by the grammarian is correct; it therefore falls within the scope covered by grammar and the sound unit *ṭ* must be taught.

If, in this passage, the term *anukaraṇa* refers only to imitations of corrupted words, it will gradually designate imitations of words in general, until it becomes, in discussions of the autonymic phenomenon that are not related to the *sūtra* A 1.1.68, the consecrated term to designate autonyms.

¹² Presumably the *pauṛuṣakāra* (human initiative), here.

3 Debates in the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries: Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra*

Let us now take a leap forward in time and see how Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa, a grammarian of the Pāṇinian school who lived in the early seventeenth century, presents the debates relating to the autonymic phenomenon. The general framework of reflection is no longer that of the 'beginnings', for under the influence of *Mīmāṃsakas* and *Naiyāyikas*, the horizon of discussions relating to language has, over the centuries, gradually shifted: first the exegetes, then the logicians, were primarily interested in the sentence, and especially in the analysis of its meaning and the knowledge it generates (*śābdabodha*): it was no longer, or no longer only, the form of words (the grammarians' privileged object of study) which was at the heart of the discussions. Above all, *Mīmāṃsakas* and *Naiyāyikas*, while elaborating their analyses of the sentence, resort to *Vyākaraṇa*'s tools but attribute new functions or meanings to them. It was undoubtedly this 'diverted' use of their tools that gradually¹³ determined grammarians to take part in these new discussions, clarifying and defending their positions from the sixteenth century onwards.¹⁴

The work by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa that interests us is very clearly part of this polemical context. In it, the grammarian comments on a collection of 76 *kārikās*,¹⁵ largely composed by his uncle, Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita (another famous name from the Pāṇinian school). These 76 *kārikās* set out the theses defended by the grammarians concerning various semantic issues (*artha-prakriyā*); Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's commentary, which has come down to us in two versions (a long one, the *Vaiyākaraṇa[siddhānta]bhūṣaṇa*, and a short one, the *Vaiyākaraṇa[siddhānta]bhūṣaṇa-sāra*) explains them showing that only the theses put forward by the great masters of *Vyākaraṇa* (generally Patañjali and Bhartṛhari) are admissible for they are supported by valid arguments.

3.1 Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita's *kārikās*

In the section he devotes to the object of the noun (*nāmārthanirṇaya*), Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa comments on three of Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita's *kārikās*, the

¹³ Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*, even if it does not take a polemical approach, can probably be seen as 'laying the foundations' for this grammarian appropriation of the thinking about the sentence (but Bronkhorst 2012, 75, seems to think that this 'challenge' has been ignored for a long time).

¹⁴ Cf. Cardona (1980, 305) and above all Bronkhorst (2012).

¹⁵ This work would have been commented on only twice: by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa (who wrote several versions of his commentary) and by a student of Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita (cf. Joshi 1993, 10).

last two of which directly concern autonymy. The first of the three *kārikās* is formulated as follows:

ekaṃ dvikaṃ trikaṃ cātha catuṣkaṃ pañcakaṃ tathā |
nāmārtha iti sarve 'mī pakṣāḥ śāstre nirūpitāḥ || (VSK 25)

What we call the object of a noun [consists of] one, two, or three [elements], but also four [or] five [elements]; all these theses have been explained in grammar.

This first *kārikā* teaches that grammarians considered that nouns could have up to five *artha* 'objects' (universal, particular or individual substance, gender, number, *kāraka*).¹⁶ The second *kārikā* states the following:

śabdo 'pi yadi bhedenā vivakṣā syāt tadā tathā |
no cec chrotrādibhiḥ siddho 'py asāv artho¹⁷ 'vabhāsate || (VSK 26)

If one wishes to express a difference [between the word imitated and the word that imitates it], the word too (i.e. the word imitated) [is] so (i.e., is the object of the word that imitates it);¹⁸ if one does not [wish] to [express a difference between the imitated word and the word that imitates it, i.e. if one considers that there is only one and the same word], this [word], because¹⁹ it is grasped via auditory perception, etc., manifests itself as an object.

The two conceptions of imitation expounded in the *Mahābhāṣya*, in the passage relating to imitations of corrupted words, are found here, albeit formulated slightly differently (*anukaraṇa* is not used, in particular). In the present context, i.e., articulated to the preceding *kārikā* (25), one understands – and this is how Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa invites us to interpret things – that, in the case of the word that imitates/the

¹⁶ The history of this list is to be made. One can probably consider the *padakāṇḍa* of Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* as an essential first milestone... where the (own) form of the word is not mentioned among the possible *arthas* (autonymy is not absent from the work, however: it is mentioned occasionally, in each of the three *kāṇḍas*). In the *Mahābhāṣyadīpikā*, Bhartṛhari's comments on *sūtras* A 1.1.1 and A 1.1.68 are missing, but reflections relating to autonymy can be found, notably under A 1.1.44 (cf. Candotti 2006, 301, 306, 308-9).

¹⁷ The Ānandāsrama Sanskrit Series' edition (1901) gives *artho*, but the variant *arthe* is indicated by the editor. The Śrī Venkateśvara Vedic University's edition (2016) gives *artha*. Deshpande (1992, 197) and Das (1990, 132) read *arthe*. In his *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* (edition used: Pondicherry 2019 – where *arthe* is given in the *kārikā*), Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa suggests to read *arthe va bhāsate* and to understand *arthavad bhāsate*.

¹⁸ That is to say that, in this case, *śabda* is the sixth *nāmārtha*.

¹⁹ I follow Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's reading here, who glosses *api* by *hetu*.

case of the autonymous word, one can:

1. either consider that it possesses an *artha* 'object' (i.e. the imitated word, which is then the sixth *artha* of nouns);²⁰
2. or consider that the autonymous word does not possess any *artha*, and that it is the word itself, insofar as it is perceived, that is understood.

In the long version of his commentary – and this is one of the 'new issues' around which discussions of autonymy crystallize among 'the moderns' – Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa explains that the first conception of imitation (the difference thesis) makes it possible to justify the inflected forms of autonyms (a case typically encountered in the Pāṇinian *sūtras*, as seen previously with *agner dhaK*) because, according to the *sūtra* A 1.2.45 *arthavad adhātur apratyayaḥ prātipadikam*, any linguistic form possessing an *artha* (derivatives and compounds being covered by A 1.2.46) is a 'nominal stem' (*prātipadika*) and can therefore be inflected. The second conception of imitation (the non-difference thesis) on the other hand, justifies uninflected forms of autonyms – two examples of which are given in *kārikā* 27, which follows – the idea being that a linguistic form which does not possess any *artha* is not a nominal stem, and therefore cannot be inflected.

I will come back to this second conception later, as Kaṇḍabhaṭṭa links it to another thesis that grammarians, especially the 'moderns', have been at pains to defend, and which is also one of the 'new issues' of schools' debates.

The third *kārikā*, therefore, ties in with the previous one (26) and teaches the following:

ata eva gav ity āha bhū sattāyām itīdṛśam |
na prātipadikaṃ nāpi padaṃ sādhu tu tat smṛtam || (VSK 27)

Thus (i.e., if one does not wish to express any difference between the word imitated and the word that imitates it), [a word] such as [*go* or *bhū* in:] 'he says *go*', '*bhū* [is used] in the sense of existence', is neither a nominal stem nor an inflected word, it is nevertheless considered as correct.

In the examples quoted, the terms *go* and *bhū* are not inflected, they are devoid of (nominal) endings. Since they are attested (and

20 Formalization of the *svarūpa-śabda-padārthaka* which is found at an early date. To be noted: Bhoja (eleventh century), in the *sūtra* 1.1.7 of his *Sarasvatikaṇṭhābharāṇa*, gives *anukaraṇa* as a *prātipadika* ('nominal stem') subtype, alongside *samāsa* ('compound') and *nipāta* ('indeclinable').

the second example is well-known to all specialists of grammar: *bhū sattāyām* is a sequence in the *Dhātupāṭha*, the ordered list of verbal roots that accompanies the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, the grammarian has a duty to explain them. This is what Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita does (the idea is already clearly formulated in the *Praḍhamanoramā* ad A 1.2.4):²¹ the absence of inflexion in the given examples can be explained if one considers that the word that imitates is not different from the word imitated: the word that imitates then has no object of its own (i.e., not distinct from that of the imitated unit) and therefore it cannot be a nominal stem nor, *a fortiori*, an ‘inflected word’ (*pada*, defined as a base ending with a nominal or verbal inflection – cf. A 1.4.14 *sUP-tiNantaṃ padam*).²²

The ‘modern’ debate around autonymy therefore seems to be limited, if one sticks to Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita’s *kārikās* 26 and 27,²³ to the rehabilitation of the two conceptions of imitation, conceptions already expounded in the *Mahābhāṣya* but, as one has seen, with an emphasis on the thesis of the difference between the word that imitates and the word imitated. The two theses (difference and non-difference between the imitating and the imitated word), however irreconcilable they may be, seem to be fully accepted by sixteenth-century grammarians, who opted for one or the other depending on the form to be explained (it would therefore be the linguistic form – and its context of use – that would point towards one thesis or the other, not membership of a school or, more simply, fidelity to an argumentative line). This is the clear conclusion reached by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa, at the end of this chapter devoted to the *artha* ‘object’ of words, in the brief version of his commentary. His particularly dense demonstration echoes the debates of his time, and I would now like to say a word about two other issues about which reflection on autonymy crystallized in the sixteenth century.

21 *anukaraṇeṣu tu anukāryeṇa sahābheda vivakṣāyām arthavattvābhāvād eva na prātipadikatvam | ‘bhū’ sattāyām iti yathā | bheda vivakṣāyām tu samjñā syād eva | ‘bhuvo vuk’ [A 6.4.88] iti yathā |* (2003, 367-8).

22 On non-inflected *anukaraṇas*: Patañjali seems to tolerate – tacitly: he says nothing – the phenomenon. It is in the *Kāśikāvṛtti* (ad A 1.1.16) that the role of speaker’s intention (whether or not to indicate a difference between the imitating and the imitated word) is first mentioned (cf. Candotti 2006, 332).

23 The discussion is also found in the *Śabdakaustubha* ad A 1.1.16 (1898, 49-52).

3.2 (Other) Issues in the sixteenth-century Autonymy Debate

3.2.1 One or Several Meaning Relation(s)?

When it comes to explaining how a word can denote itself, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa begins by ruling out recourse to *lakṣaṇā*, the ‘function’ or ‘secondary meaning relation’.

The meaning relation²⁴ that generally links a word (*pada*) to its object (*padārtha*) is called *ṛtti*. Most ancient Indian language theorists consider that this *ṛtti* can be of several kinds – the ‘basic’ distinction (the *Nyāya* one) corresponding roughly to the one one makes between ‘primary meaning’ and ‘secondary’ or ‘figurative meaning’:

- a. the *ṛtti* is primary when it links the word to its primary meaning/object (*artha*), e.g., the word *go* and a cow; in this case, it is often designated – as here – by the term *śakti* ‘[expressive] capacity’;²⁵
- b. the *ṛtti* is secondary when, due to an incompatibility between the primary meaning/object of the word and its context of use, it links the word to a ‘secondary meaning/object’ via the primary meaning/object, e.g., the word *go* and a simple-minded person; in this case, it is designated by the term *lakṣaṇā* ‘trope/figurative use’.

Grammarians are probably the only ones to have always defended the idea that words have a single meaning relation (the *śakti*), whatever their use; a secondary meaning is not linked to the word by a specific meaning relation, according to them. The fact that the word *go* can be used either to denote a cow or to denote a simple-minded person is explained by the will of the speaker (*vivakṣā*): he alone decides to limit the *śakti* of the word to the denotation of this or that *artha*. Logicians, on the other hand, accept the idea of *lakṣaṇā*; and in the context of the autonymic use of a word, it works perfectly: in *agner dhaK*, the understanding of the primary object ‘fire/burning coals’ does not occur on hearing the sentence, so it is the word *agni* itself/ the form of the word *agni* that is understood, *secondarily*. In this case, logicians resort to the *lakṣaṇā* of the *nirūḍha*-type, which can be translated by ‘conventional’ and is equivalent, to put it quickly, to a fixed metaphor. This type of *lakṣaṇā* functions very much like the *śakti*: the understanding of the object, though secondary, is instantaneous. The thesis of the single *śakti* is therefore seriously put to the test in cases of autonymous words, and in much of the early

²⁴ Sometimes conceived as a ‘function’ (*vyāparā*). Cf. Gerschheimer 1996, 1: 49–50.

²⁵ One finds also *abhidhā* ‘expression/designation’ and *mukhyavṛtti* ‘principal *ṛtti*’.

part of his commentary (even before the citation of the *kārikā* 26), Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa endeavors to reaffirm its effectiveness and economy (on the explanatory level).

3.2.2 Śakti and the Non-Difference Thesis

The *śakti* comes up again when the thesis of non-difference between the imitation word and the imitated word is explained. According to this thesis, as one has seen, the autonymous word is not provided with an *artha* 'object' and it is the word itself, insofar as it is perceived, that is understood or, to use Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's words, that becomes the content (*viśaya*) of verbal knowledge (*śābdabodha*).²⁶ Formulated as it is, this thesis does not involve the *śakti* at all, it seems to reduce the understanding of the word to purely auditory perception – a conception which leads to a whole series of problems, not to mention the fact that it does not 'fit' with the imperative, for grammarians, to go through the *śakti*.

Reaffirming that only an entity that is connected to the *śakti* can become the content of verbal knowledge (what is grasped by pure auditory perception cannot be), Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa reintroduces the *śakti* into the process but without assigning it an 'active' role, so to speak. To do this, he resorts to a mode of analysis he borrows from the *Navya-Nyāya*, which consists in presenting the *śakti* as a property (*dharma*) residing in a support (*āśraya*) – the word – and conditioned by a 'determinant' (*nirūpaka*)²⁷ – the object of the word. The word, insofar as it possesses the *śakti*, and the object of the word, insofar as it conditions it, are both connected to the *śakti*. As such, both can be contained in verbal knowledge, i.e. can be understood by hearing the word. To support his point – and perhaps, too, to give it a more grammatical tone – Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa quotes a famous *kārikā* by Bhartṛhari:

grāhyatvaṃ grāhakatvaṃ ca dve śakti tejaso yathā |
tathaiva sarvaśabdānāṃ ete prthag avasthite || (VP 1.56)

26 *śabdārthayor abhede pratyakṣe viśayasya hetuvāt svapratyakṣarūpām padajanyopasthitim ādāya śābdabodhaviśayatopapattir iti* | (1901, 30) "If there is no difference between the word (i.e. the imitation word) and its object (i.e., the imitated word), once the knowledge produced by the word has been grasped, [knowledge] which consists in the direct perception [of the word] itself, the [word]-content of knowledge, [because it is] perceived, being cause, it (i.e., the word) becomes the content of verbal knowledge". Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra* is one of the first *Vyākaraṇa* texts in which the 'verbal knowledge' (*śābdabodha*) theme, developed by *Navya-Nyāya*, is addressed. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa was at least preceded by Bhaṭṭojī Dikṣita who, 'challenged' by the theory of verbal knowledge, took a fresh look at *sphoṭa*. Would Bhaṭṭojī Dikṣita's master in this field have been Rāmākṣṇabhaṭṭācārya (cf. Bronkhorst 2012, 69-73)?

27 Cf. Ingalls 1988, 46; Gerschheimer 1996, 22-3.

Just as light has two capacities, [that] of being perceived and [that] of causing perception, so these two [capacities] exist, distinct, in all words.

If one glosses explicitly the parallel between the word and the light, this means that when one hears the word//sees the light, one understands//perceives two things: the word itself//the light itself and the object of the word//the pot that the light enlightens. If, due to the speaker's will//an obstacle interposed between the light and the pot, the word//the light is not in contact with its object//the pot, one understands//perceives the word//the light alone; if one can understand the word alone upon hearing the word, it is precisely because it is linked to the *śakti*, as a support.

4 Concluding Remarks

Reaching the end of this investigation, it appears that the treatment of the autonymic phenomenon, as Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa presents it, is linked only to the debate that is formalized (in part – perhaps it already exists, elsewhere, in another form) in the *Mahābhāṣya*, in connection with the imitation of corrupted words (*brāhmaṇy itaka ity āha*) and which will surpass the disciplinary field of 'strict' grammar. If this debate 'catches on' in other disciplines, it is undoubtedly due to its starting point (the imitation of corrupted words), which is far less technical than that embodied by *agner dhaK* and, beyond the purely linguistic dimension, touches on themes central to several fields (retribution for acts, intention and sanction). No mention is made of the purely grammatical debate that developed long ago in connexion with the *sūtra* A 1.1.68, which primarily tackles the autonymic phenomenon as a naming relation and which sets out to distinguish the two terms of the relation.

The reason for this seems to be that only the first debate, which presents the two conceptions of imitation, makes it possible to explain why some autonyms are inflected and others are not, a problematic situation if ever there was one, and one on which grammarians were presumably summoned, by theorists from other schools, to take a stand. Moreover, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's argument in this context illustrates quite well the relentlessness of grammarians in defending the thesis of a single (primary) meaning relation – the *śakti*, and the idea that, even in the thorniest cases, one cannot do without it. The permanence of the *śakti* theme in Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's commentary may also indicate that the fundamental debate, particularly 'sharpened' by the autonymic phenomenon, is indeed that of the – or *the* – meaning relation(s).

One final point should be mentioned. In the short version of his commentary, Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa does not take sides with either of the two theses (difference or non-difference between the imitation word and the imitated word): he ‘merely’ presents them, condensing to the extreme the main arguments that grammarians (notably Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita) have been led to formulate to justify them. This is not the case in the longer version of his commentary, where he openly states that the non-difference thesis is more appropriate (*tasmād yuktataram abhedapakṣam pratīmaḥ* – 2019, 515). The argument he puts forward is that cases of non-inflected autonyms – explained by the non-difference thesis – are more numerous: in fact, all autonyms found in common use (*laukika*) of the language, marked by *iti* or a presenter term, fall into this category. The flexion of autonyms, found mainly in grammatical literature, is qualified as *sautra*, i.e. linked to the conventional procedures (cf. A 1.1.68) adopted in the Pāṇinian treatise, in other words, it is a marginal phenomenon. Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa, no doubt influenced by the debates that have led grammarians to move beyond the restricted framework of thought on Pāṇinian metalanguage, therefore opts for the thesis that covers the greatest number of cases, all domains of use taken together.

Bibliography and Abbreviations

Sanskrit Sources

A = Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

See Renou 1966.

MBh = Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*.

The Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali [1880] (2005). Vol. 1. Edited by F. Kielhorn. Revised and furnished with additional readings, references, and select critical notes by K.V. Abhyankar. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.

Praughamanoramā of Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita.

The Praughamanoramā of Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita (2003). With its gloss called *Laghuśabdaratna* by Śrī Haridīkṣita, with three commentaries the *Bhairavī*, *Bhāvaprakāśa* & *Saralā* by Śrī Bhairava Miśra, Vaidyanātha Pāyagunḍe and Gopāl Śāstri Nene. Ed. by Gopāl Śāstri Nene. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, The Kāśī Sanskrit Series 125.

Śabdakaustubha of Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita.

Śabdakaustubha by Paṇḍit Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita (1898). Edited and revised by Paṇḍit Rama Krishna Shastri. Benares: Chandraprabha Press Company Limited, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.

Sarasvatikanṭhābharaṇa of Bhoja.

Sarasvatikanṭhābharaṇa of Bhojadeva (1937). Edited by T.R. Chintamani. Madras: University of Madras, Madras University Sanskrit Series 11.

Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa of Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa.

The Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntabhūṣaṇa of Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa (2019). With the *Nirāñjanī* commentary by Ramyatna Shukla and *Prakāśa* explanatory notes by K.V. Ramakrishnamacharyulu. Part II. Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, Shree

- Somnath Sanskrit University, École Française d'Extrême-Orient, Collection Indologie
139 – Shree Somnath Sanskrit University Shastra Grantha Series 5.
Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra of Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa.
See VSK.
VP = Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya* (*kārikās*).
See Rau 2000.
VSK = Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita's *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikās*.
Vaiyākaraṇa-siddhānta-kārikās of Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita (1901). With the
Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra commentary composed by Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa. Pune:
Ānandāsrama Sanskrit Series 43.

Secondary Literature

- Aussant, É. (2005). "L'autonymie dans la tradition grammaticale sanskrite pāṇinéenne". *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, 27(1), 73-92. <https://doi.org/10.3406/hel.2005.2050>.
- Bronkhorst, J. (2012). "Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita and the Revival of the Philosophy of Grammar". Watanabe, Ch.; Desmarais, M.; Honda, Y. (eds), *Samṣkṛta-sādhutā: Goodness of Sanskrit. Studies in Honour of Professor Ashok N. Aklujkar*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 54-85.
- Candotti, M.P. (2006). *Interprétations du discours métalinguistique - La fortune du sūtra A 1.1.68 chez Patañjali et Bhartṛhari*. Firenze: Firenze University Press. Kykéion Studi e Testi. Scienze delle Religioni, 1,5. <https://doi.org/10.36253/88-8453-451-8>.
- Cardona, G. [1976] (1980). *Pāṇini. A Survey of Research*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Das, K. (1990). *A Pāṇinian Approach to Philosophy of Language (Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa's Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra critically edited and translated into English)*. Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.
- Deshpande, M.M. (1992). *The Meaning of Nouns. Semantic Theory in Classical and Medieval India – Nāmārtha-nirṇaya of Kauṇḍabhaṭṭa*. Translated and annotated. Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-2751-6_2.
- Gerschheimer, G. (1996). *La théorie de la signification chez Gadādhara*. 2 vols. Paris: Publications de l'Institut de civilisation indienne, Diffusion De Boccard.
- Ingalls, D.H.H. [1951] (1988). *Materials for the Study of Navya-nyāya Logic*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Joshi, S.D. (1993). "Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa on the Meaning of Sanskrit verbs (1). An English Translation and Annotation of the *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra*. Chapter 1 with the Introduction". *Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism – Saṃbhāṣā*, 14, 1-39.
- Rau, W. (2000). *Bhartṛharis Vākyapadīya. Versuch einer vollständigen deutschen Erstübersetzung nach der kritischen Edition der Mūla-Kārikās*. Hrsg. von O. von Hinüber. Mainz; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur – Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Einzelveröffentlichung 8.
- Renou, L. (1942). *Terminologie grammaticale du sanskrit*. 3 vols. Paris: Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Historiques et Philologiques, Champion.
- Renou, L. (1966). *La grammaire de Pāṇini. Texte sanscrit, traduction française avec extraits des commentaires*. 2 vols. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient.

Śābdabodha of Cognitive Maze

Shruti Kanitkar

IIT Bombay, India

Malhar Kulkarni

Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, India

Abstract The discussion on *Śābdabodha* till date has been regarding the most essential component in the sentence, but the problem of interlinking two or more sentences has not been discussed by scholars in the Indian tradition. The authors have attempted to address this problem in a joint project, undertaking examples of groups of sentences and observing their linkages to each other. This paper focuses on the cognition of complex sentences, in the form of a dialogue, involving multiple meanings of the same words, leading to a case of misinterpretation. A cognitive maze is created in front of the readers, where one has to retrace the meanings in the intellect of speakers from the response elicited by them. This study is in accordance with the verbal cognition theory of Pāṇinian grammar.

Keywords Śābdabodha. Verbal cognition. Conversation. Cognitive maze. Misinterpretation.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Scope and Limitations. – 3 *Śābdabodha* of Cognitive Maze. – 4 Stepwise Construction of *Śābdabodha*. – 5 Step 1: Observing Possible Meanings of Some Words. – 6 Step 2: Backtracking Śiva's Answers. – 7 Step 3: Understanding the Maze of Meanings. – 8 Stages of Cognition. – 9 Writing the *Śābdabodha*-s. – 10 Conclusion. – 11 Application.



Peer review

Submitted 2025-03-25
Accepted 2025-09-22
Published 2025-12-23



Open access

© 2025 Kanitkar, Kulkarni | © 4.0



Citation Kanitkar, S.; Kulkarni, M. (2025). "Śābdabodha of Cognitive Maze". *Bhasha*, 4(2), [1-18], 195-212.

1 Introduction

The literal translation of *Śābdabodha* is ‘verbal cognition’.¹ We prefer to continue using the same Sanskrit term in our paper to maintain a technical proximity as well as because it is widely used in all the treatises and texts explaining sentence meaning and linguistic features of Sanskrit, for example *Vyutpattivāda*,² *Vaiyākaraṇa-bhūṣaṇasāra*,³ Dash (1999), and Deshpande (1987). In *Vaiyākaraṇa-bhūṣaṇasāra*, the word *Śābdabodha* has been used in the main text and also in the *Parīkṣā* commentary⁴ to mean verbal cognition that arises from the understanding of a sentence. Thus, the term *Śābdabodha* is widely used to refer to the cognition of sentence meaning.

The next important question is: What is a sentence? There are many definitions of a sentence, an apt and concise definition being, ‘*ekatiṅ vākyam*’ (*Vārttika* 12 ad A 2.1.1, *Mahābhāṣya*), which translates as ‘a sentence is that which contains one verbal form.’ The term ‘*tiṅ*’ is a technical term in Pāṇinian grammar denoting the terminations added to the verbal root, i.e., verbal endings.⁵ Here, *tiṅ* denotes the word ending in *tiṅ*, i.e., a *tiṅanta*, a verb. Another definition from the *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya* also underlines the importance of verb – ‘*ākhyātām sāvyayakārakavśeṣaṇam vākyam*’ (*Vārttika* 10 ad A 2.1.1, *Mahābhāṣya*). This means that:

a sentence is a group of words which contains a verb-form along with (related) action-promoters (*kāraṇas*, agent, object etc.), indeclinables and qualifiers. (Deshpande 1978, 196)

These definitions of a sentence quoted above, are given in *Mahābhāṣya* while discussing the compatibility of two words for

1 At the time of submission of the paper, the author was a doctoral research scholar working in the said institute. Currently, the author has completed doctorate and is working as Assistant Professor in Chanakya University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.

2 शाब्दबोधे चैकपदार्थे अपरपदार्थस्य संसर्गः संसर्गमर्यादया भासते | (*Vyutpattivāda*, 2). Translation: In *Śābdabodha*, being a single word-meaning, the association of other word-meaning flashes by the measure of proximity (unless stated otherwise, all translations were done by the authors).

3 पर्यवस्यच्छाब्दबोधाविद्रुप्रावक्षणस्थितेः शक्तिग्रहेऽन्तरङ्गत्वबहिरङ्गत्वचिन्तनम् || (*Bhūṣaṇasāra*, verse 36, 12). Translation: ...It became staying at the moment before, not far from *Śābdabodha*.

4 तादृशवाक्यजन्य-शाब्दबोधाव्यवहितप्रावक्षणवृत्ति-शक्तिग्रहनिष्ठान्तरङ्ग-बहिरङ्गभावस्य..., 272. Translation: The state of being inner component (*antaraṅga*) or outer component (*bahiraṅga*) that is dependent on acquisition of meaning, which happens just one moment before the verbal cognition emerging from that kind of sentence.

5 *Tip-tas-jhi-sip-thas-tha-mib-vas-mas-tātāñjha-thāsātham-dhvaṁiḍ-vahi-mahiṅ* (A 3.4.78). These are the endings added to the verbal roots to form the forms that are used in all tenses.

compounding, under the aphorism in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.1.1.⁶ They show the indispensability of a verb in the sentence. These definitions form the basis of the grammarians' theory of verbal cognition which gives the most essential place to the verbal root amongst all the components in the sentence. The verbal root is the centre of grammarians' *Śābdabodha* with all other components getting linked to it (Deshpande 1978, 201).

Until today, the Pāṇinian grammatical tradition, of which Malhar Kulkarni is a part and active proponent of, accepts that there is a relationship of cause and effect between the collection of meaning in the intellect and the sounds that are produced thereafter to communicate (Kulkarni 2021, 488). Perception of the sound and arising of the cognition of meaning are two beginning and end points of the verbal cognition. Through our work, we aim and attempt to throw light on the process of *bodha* (cognition) of a set of sentences through the external sounds produced by the speaker. This research aims to discover the constituents or components of the cognitive apparatus within a particular sentence unit or verse. As a part of the research, various types of sentences from Sanskrit literature have been studied, and their cognitive structures have been investigated.

2 Scope and Limitations

The field of formal semantics speaks about various aspects of sentences and the syntactic combination of morphemes in a structured manner (Fodor 1980, 4). The meaning of simple as well as complex sentences has been studied in this field in mainly algebraic terms, as a case of function application (Heim, Kratzer 1998). However, the authors of this article focus primarily on the cognitive study of the Sanskrit language. Indian grammatical tradition has deliberated on the semantic and cognitive aspects of the Sanskrit language in detail. Malhar Kulkarni has received training in this grammatical tradition. Leveraging this fact, we have based our study on the Indian theories of sentence meaning, specifically, on the grammatical tradition with emphasis on those aspects of sentences that have not been directly dealt with in the tradition.

The specific cognition (*viśeṣabodha*) is where each word unit and its specific meaning is distinctly cognized and registered by the human intellect, and not a generic one (*sāmānyabodha*). Such a specific cognition is the topic of our broad study. This cognition or

⁶ *Samarthānām prathamād vā*. A 2.1.1 Translation (by S.C. Vasu): The *taddhita* affixes, on the alternative of their being used at all, comes after the word that is signified by the first of the words in the construction in a *sūtra*.

bodha is written in a style specific to *Navya-Nyāya* doctrine and one developed and taught by Malhar Kulkarni in the form of *prakāratā* and *viśeṣyatā* (terminologies explained later). Even though the style adopted is that of *Navya-Nyāya*, the philosophy of cognition is that of the *Vyākaraṇa* school, which considers the meaning of the verbal root to be the main qualificand in the sentence. We have, thus, limited our scope to develop the application of the existing theories of *Śābdabodha*-verbal cognition to the hitherto unexplored area of a given group of sentences.⁷ Its comparison with the globally accepted semantic theories may be undertaken in the future.

3 Śābdabodha of Cognitive Maze

As per the Oxford dictionary, a maze is

a structure consisting of a network of winding and intercommunicating paths and passages arranged in bewildering complexity, so that without guidance it is difficult to find one's way in it; a labyrinth. (Oxford English Dictionary 1978, 262)

This word has been associated in the current context with verbal cognition, and then the compound term 'Cognitive maze' has been generated, as coined by Malhar Kulkarni. This English term is an equivalent to the Sanskrit term *bodhabhrami*, also coined by Malhar Kulkarni to explain the same phenomenon. As the examples will demonstrate, there are complex cognitive structures at play in the process of communication, and their complexity makes the head(s) go spinning, thereby resulting in the halt of the communication process itself. In this process, a deliberate manipulation of words and their meanings resulting in complicated cognitive patterns is observed.

How does a person understand the meaning of a sentence? G.M. Bhattacharya says in his paper:

When a meaningful sentence is uttered, the hearer, if he knows the language and is attentive to it, automatically and instantly understands the meanings of the word elements in the sentence. Thereafter, the ideal hearer cognizes the syntactic relation between the discrete word meanings. (Bhattacharya 1977, 73)

When this process happens, the conversation is said to be complete. But if the hearer does not cognize the expected meaning, then the

⁷ Kindly refer to Section 9 in this paper, for understanding the utility of implementing this style.

resultant cognition needs to be studied with special attention.

In a conversation, the speaker and the listener are generally expected to be on the same level of understanding; only then can the conversation be considered complete. But if the meaning intended by the speaker is not grasped correctly by the listener, then it will lead to a very distinctive kind of conversation, because it will be a case of misinterpretation. Furthermore, if a context is such that misinterpretation is done on purpose, to create a complexity of cognition, i.e., a cognitive maze, can the *Śābdabodha* of such conscious misinterpretation and cognitive maze be interpreted and structurally displayed? If yes, in what manner? This is the problem addressed here. Let us try to understand the concept of cognitive maze with an example as shown below:

kas tvam śūlī mṛgaya bhiṣajam nīlakaṇṭhaḥ priye'haṃ
kekām ekām kuru paśupatiṃ naiva dṛśye viśāṇe |
sthāṇur mugdhe na vadati tarur jīviśeḥ śivāyā
gacchātavyām iti hatavacāḥ pātu vaś candracūḍaḥ ||
(*Subhāṣita-ratna-bhāṇḍāgāram*, *Maṅgalācaraṇa-prakaraṇam*, Śiva
45)

This is a verse about a conversation between Śiva and Pārvatī, who are considered to be the primordial couple and important deities in Hinduism, and the complexity of their dialogue, which results in a cognitive maze. It is typical of traditional Sanskrit poets to impose human characteristics on deities and present their cognitive tussle in a humorous way. There are numerous verses about various deities depicting conversations of this kind. We take the verse above as an example of those verses where more than one meaning of a word can be understood at the same time. The cognitive maze stated here is also considered the cause of poetic wonder. Let us see the general meaning of the verse (translated by the authors):

Pārvatī	Who are you?
Śiva	I am <i>śūlin</i> (one who holds a trident).
Pārvatī	Then go to a physician.
Śiva	O beloved, I am <i>nīlakaṇṭha</i> (one having dark throat).
Pārvatī	Then utter the cry of a peacock.
Śiva	No, I am <i>paśupati</i> . (Lord of all beings).
Pārvatī	But I cannot see your horns.
Śiva	O infatuated lady, I am <i>sthāṇu</i> (stable ascetic).
Pārvatī	But a tree does not talk.
Śiva	I am the life-Lord of Śivā. (Śivā = Pārvatī)
Pārvatī	Then go to the forest.

In this way, that moon-crested Śiva, who became speechless, may protect you all.

For complete communication to occur, we must presume an “ideal hearer”, as explained by Matilal (1988, 114), who comprehends the meaning in the speaker’s intellect without bringing his/her prejudices and is also a competent language user. Thus, it is assumed that the realm of sounds (*śabdākāśa*) and the realm of meaning (*arthākāśa*) in the intellect of both the speaker and listener are equal and the same, giving rise to a complete communication.⁸

According to Malhar Kulkarni, *arthākāśa* is the semantic space. *Śabdākāśa*, according to Malhar Kulkarni, is the space of words, phrases, and sentences linked and used to express the *arthākāśa*. When both these spaces in both the speaker and the hearer are corresponded with each other, successful communication can be vouched for. It is a state that we can describe as the speaker and listener being on the same page.

In the present case, Śiva is speaking something, so let us say that the words he utters are ABCD, technically known as *śabdākāśa*. Pārvatī hears those words as they are, and cognizes first the sounds in her intellectual apparatus, without any flaw.⁹ Thus, the *śabdākāśa* is the same for both of them. Moving forward, when Pārvatī interprets the words that she has heard, the cognition in her head is visibly different with respect to what Śiva had in his mind. Therefore, their *arthākāśa*-s do not exactly match. This is shown in Figure 1.

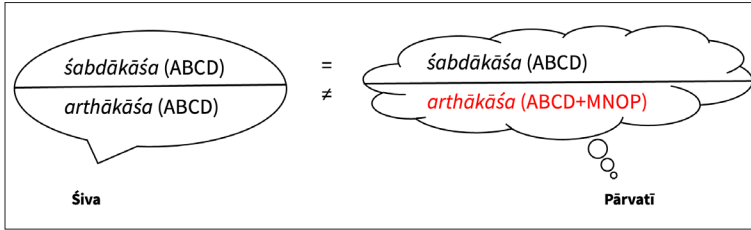


Figure 1 Difference in śabdākāśa and arthākāśa

⁸ These concepts are explained in *Śabdasūtra*, an original unpublished text by Dr. Malhar Kulkarni.

⁹ Cf. the following quote by Magrassi, Aromataris, Cabrini, Annovazzi-Lodi, and Moro (2015): “Our results suggest that in normal hearing people, sound representation is at the heart of language and not simply a vehicle for expressing some otherwise mysterious symbolic activity of our brain”.

Thus, it is a complex conversation involving various layers of cognition. The *Śābdabodha* of this conversational element will be presented and analysed step by step.

4 Stepwise Construction of *Śābdabodha*

In the first step, the sentences in the verse have to be written systematically, following closely the view of the grammarians, with the assumption of a verb in each sentence. It is observed that in Sanskrit, the existential verbs *asti* and *bhavati* are often not explicitly included in the sentence and have to be understood by the readers. For instance, '*ahaṃ śūlī*' will literally translate as 'I *śūlī*' due to the absence of a verb; however, an existential verb must be understood there by the reader while cognising the meaning. Hence, while enlisting the sentences in the verse, these verbs are to be integrated. As we are following the *Vyākaraṇa* model of *Śābdabodha*, no sentence can be left without a verb. We are essentially restructuring the sentences in the verse in a basic, easily cognisable format of agent-object-verb (*kartr-karma-kriyāpada*) with additions of other *kāraka-s* as per requirement.

At the next step, we need to analyse each case of purposeful misunderstanding on the part of Pārvatī. The conversation opens with Pārvatī's question to Śiva, asking him, probably from inside the house, to introduce himself. In answer to that, Śiva states his epithet *śūlin* – holder of trident (an epithet applicable only to him, as no other deity or man holds this specific weapon). Pārvatī's reply suggests that she has comprehended the meaning intended by Śiva, but intentionally pretends to misinterpret it. This creates a rift in cognition, and the same continues for five continuous occasions, with Śiva telling some more of his epithets and Pārvatī persistently and consciously misinterpreting them, thus creating a maze which finally makes Śiva speechless.

Systematically deciphering the meaning in Pārvatī's intellect is the next step, and understanding the meaning of the verse as a whole is the last step.

5 Step 1: Observing Possible Meanings of Some Words

The words or epithets that are used by Śiva to describe himself have multiple meanings, and Pārvatī has interpreted those words differently. As in the case of language in general, a single word can have an array of meanings, and therefore it offers ample scope for interpretation. To arrive at the precise meaning comprehended by Pārvatī, multiple possible meanings of these words should be listed.

Śiva's epithets, viz. *śūlin*, *nīlakaṇṭha*, *paśupati*, *sthāṇu*, and Lord of Śivā are given in Table 1 together with their multiple meanings. An average competence of Sanskrit ensures some of these meanings, but only the most contextually relevant meaning is generally triggered when a particular word is heard.

Table 1 Possible meanings of key words in the verse

No.	Word	Meaning
1.	<i>śūlin</i>	1. The holder of weapon 2. <i>śūla</i> Person having a disease called <i>śūla</i> 3. Śiva who is the wielder of <i>triśūla</i>
2.	<i>nīlakaṇṭha</i>	1. Gallinule/water-hen 2. Wagtail (bird species) 3. Sandalwood tree 4. Peacock 5. Śiva
3.	<i>paśupati</i>	1. Possessor of cattle, a cowherd 2. Deity of fire, 3. <i>Agni</i> Śiva
4.	<i>sthāṇu</i>	1. Steady, firm 2. Trunk of a tree, stump 3. Specific type of fragrance 4. Specific type of posture 5. Pillar 6. A kind of spear or dart 7. Śiva
5.	<i>śivā</i>	1. Salvation 2. Turmeric 3. Ointment made from cows' bile 4. Wife of sage Aṅgiras 5. A female jackal 6. River called Śivā 7. Pārvatī

The sources of these meanings are the Monier William's Sanskrit-English dictionary¹⁰ and J.V. Oak's Sanskrit-English *Śābdakośa*.¹¹

6 Step 2: Backtracking Śiva's Answers

To arrive at the precise meanings comprehended by Pārvatī, we have to backtrack Śiva's answers by studying Pārvatī's replies. The

¹⁰ Edition 1, reprint in 1986.

¹¹ Edition 6, 2011.

meanings comprehended by Pārvatī are understood by us only after we cognize the replies given by her. In a nutshell, we have to study the meaning of Śiva's sentences as comprehended by Pārvatī. All the sentences uttered by Śiva are in answer to Pārvatī's first question 'Who are you?' This will be explained in more detail on the next stage of cognitive analysis.

As a first step, sentences in the verse were systematically rewritten with the assumption of a verb in each sentence. The verse contains 12 sentences in total. Further, we have formed 5 sets out of these sentences. Let us study them now:

Set 1

tvam ko'si?	(<i>tvam kaḥ asi</i>) ('Who are you?')
aham sūly asmi.	(<i>aham sūlī asmi</i>) ('I am sūlin.')
tvam bhiṣajam mṛgaya.	('Fetch a physician!')

The reply '*tvam bhiṣajam mṛgaya*' gives a hint to Pārvatī's understanding of the previous sentence. We think that, as she is talking about a physician, there must be some connection to a disease in her comprehension. Among the meanings of the word *sūlin*, we find one meaning that refers to a disease. We then infer that precisely that meaning must be the one comprehended by Pārvatī. So let us restructure the interrelation of the meanings intended by Śiva and the meanings comprehended by Pārvatī. In this case, what Pārvatī has understood Śiva is saying is *aham sūlarogī asmi* ('I am a diseased person'). The first question 'who are you?' is continued in all the sets because all the statements by Śiva are in answer to this first opening question.

Once Śiva realises the miscomprehension on Pārvatī's part, he tries to explain using the next epithet, which is being discussed below in Set 2.

Set 2

ahan nīlakaṇṭho'smi.	(<i>aham nīlakaṇṭhaḥ asmi</i>) ('I am nīlakaṇṭha.')
tvam ekām kekām kuru.	('Utter a cry of peacock.')

Here, Śiva used the word *nīlakaṇṭha* with the intention that now, at least, Pārvatī realises that she is talking to Śiva and not a person with a disease. But up comes Pārvatī's reply in which the word *kekā* appears. The word *kekā* refers to the sound specifically uttered by a peacock. Thus, we come to know that the meaning comprehended by Pārvatī from the word *nīlakaṇṭha* is none other than the 'peacock'.

Thus, according to Pārvatī's understanding, the meaning of Śiva's sentence is *aham mayūraḥ asmi* ('I am a peacock'). To remove the misunderstanding, Śiva provides another epithet in the next set of sentences.

Set 3

aham paśupatiḥ asmi. (*aham paśupatiḥ asmi*) ('I am paśupati.')
tava viśāṇe naiva dṛśye staḥ. ('But your horns are not visible.')

Now we observe that Pārvatī's reply contains a reference to horns. Horns are a specific feature of animals like cattle, hyenas, rhinos, etc. But this reference does not match any of the meanings of *paśupati* listed above. Neither Śiva nor the deity Agni has horns. If the protector of cattle, which is the literal meaning of the word *paśu-pati*, is understood to be a human, he too does not have horns. *Paśu* here refers to cattle whose chief can be a bullock, who leads his herd. The bullock possesses horns. In this way, the process of the meaning comprehension by Pārvatī can be explained. So, the interpretation of Śiva's sentence in Pārvatī's head is *aham vṛṣabhaḥ asmi* ('I am a bullock').

Set 4

aham sthāṇurasmi. (*aham sthāṇuḥ asmi*) ('I am sthāṇu.')
tarurna vadati. (*taruḥ na vadati.*) ('A tree does not talk.')

By doing the same process of analysis, we discover the interpretation of Śiva's sentence in Pārvatī's head as '*Aham vṛkṣa-kāṇḍam asmi.*' ('I am a tree-trunk.')

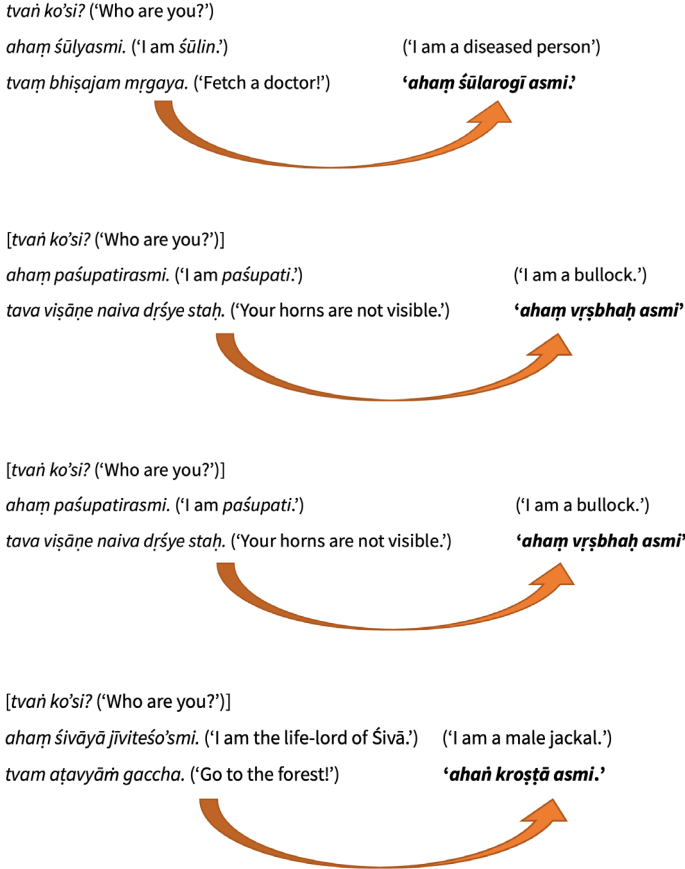
Set 5

aham śivāyā jīviteśo'smi. (*aham śivāyāḥ jīviteśaḥ asmi*) ('I am the life-lord of Śivā.')
tvam aṭavyāṇ gaccha. ('Go to the forest!')

The reply has reference to the forest, and out of all the meanings of *śivā*, only the jackal, who is a wild animal, is compatible with the meaning 'forest'. Therefore, we discover that the meaning of *śivā*-as comprehended by Pārvatī is 'female jackal'. We also know from the context that, as per the intention of Śiva, the meaning of the word *Śivā* is 'Pārvatī', and Śiva wants to say that he is the life-lord of Pārvatī herself, i.e., Śiva himself. In this case, the meaning of Śiva's

sentence as comprehended by Pārvatī is – *ahaṃ kroṣṭā asmi* ('I am a male jackal.'). And then she responds by asking him to go to the forest.

This is backtracking, where we have deciphered the meanings of the keywords in the verse by considering Pārvatī's replies. Let us see this in a visual form:



7 Step 3: Understanding the Maze of Meanings

The precise meanings in the cognitive areas of the speaker Śiva and the hearer Pārvatī are deciphered by analysing the relation of the meaning appearing in Pārvatī's reply to the most compatible meaning of the concerned word. As seen in the last step, we get these precise meanings from backtracking, which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Appropriate meaning of keywords

Original word	Śiva's meaning	Keyword in Pārvatī's reply	Pārvatī's meaning
<i>śūlin</i>	Holder of trident	Physician	Having disease <i>śūla</i>
<i>nīlakaṇṭha</i>	One whose throat is dark because of deadly poison	Peacock cry	Peacock
<i>paśupati</i>	The controller of all the beings	Horns	Bullock
<i>sthānu</i>	A steadfast ascetic	Tree	Tree-trunk
<i>śivā-jīviteśa</i>	Lord of Pārvatī	Forest	Female jackal's mate; a male jackal

8 Stages of Cognition

This complex type of *Śābdabodha* involves several cognitive steps before it is completed. Let us look at these stages one by one:

Stage 1 Understanding the Most Compatible Meaning

When Pārvatī's first question is uttered, its meaning generates the expectancy (*ākāṅkṣā*) for its answer. The next sentence uttered by Śiva is the answer to the question that satisfies the expectancy condition. The question is: 'Who are you?' and Śiva says, 'I am *śūlin*'. We comprehend the meaning 'I am Śiva' from this reply sentence.

Stage 2 Incompatible Answer

After the utterance of the word *śūlin* by Śiva as an answer, the natural expectancy is that Pārvatī recognises *śūlin* as Śiva and lets him enter. Or she asks him to do something related to his *śūla*. But the sentence uttered by Pārvatī is 'Then go and fetch a doctor'. This sentence has no compatibility with the previous sentence, 'I am *śūlin*'. This incompatibility creates a problem in cognising the entire *Śābdabodha*.

Stage 3 Backtracking

Adhering to the fact that the sentence by Pārvatī cannot be uttered meaninglessly in the verse, our intellect goes back to the previous sentence and rethinks the meaning of the word *śūlin*. There can be many meanings of a word that are totally unrelated to each other.

The intellect tracks the most compatible meaning with the reference of the next sentence that was uttered.

Stage 4 Selection of the Most Compatible Meaning

Another meaning of the word *śūlin* springs forth, namely ‘one who has the disease *śūla*’. It is a general understanding that a disease and a doctor have a professional connection (*vṛtti sambandha*). Therefore, the reference to the doctor in the answer of Pārvaṭī is most compatible with only this meaning of *śūlin*. In the case of the second word ‘*nīlakaṇṭha*’, the reply by Pārvaṭī is, ‘Utter a *kekā*’. A *kekā* is the cry specifically uttered by a peacock; therefore, the association with the most compatible meaning ‘peacock’ is understood.

Stage 5 Clash of Two Cognitions

The meaning of *śūlin* as interpreted and suggested by Pārvaṭī is understood by the listener. But this does not totally discard the first and primary meaning that would otherwise have been undisturbed if the suggestive answer had not been uttered by Pārvaṭī. Thus, there is a clash of two cognitions in the intellect: the primary cognition and the decoded cognition. This is termed ‘Cognitive Friction’ by Malhar Kulkarni. According to him, this gives rise to ‘*Camatkṛti*’ or poetic wonder. This is also stated by his *sūtra*: *jñāna-gharṣaṇa-janyaṁ jñānaṁ camatkṛtiḥ*¹² (‘The cognition generated by the friction of cognitions is *camatkṛti* or Poetic Astonishment.’)

9 Writing the Śābdabodha-s

In this work, we write the *Śābdabodha* of each of these sentences resorting to the terminology specific to the *Navya-Nyāya* school and the bracket parsing model methodology developed by Kulkarni et al. (2010). This involves technical terms *prakāra*, *viśeṣya*, etc. Implementing this terminology is important:

1. To show the implementation of the theories presented in Sanskrit texts, i.e., to check whether they are applicable or not.
2. In achieving precision about the meaning of each component in the sentence, like agent, object, instrument, etc.

¹² From an unpublished Sanskrit text entitled *Camatkāra-bhāgavatam* by Malhar Kulkarni.

3. For its objectivity due to the usage of scientific terminology. The written Śābdabodha-s can be briefly found in works on Nyāya¹³ as well as Vyākaraṇa,¹⁴ but the exhaustive Śābdabodha-s, along with the links in various sentences, is the contribution of the authors.

The property of being a *prakāra* (modifier) is *prakāratā* (modifierness), and the property of being a *viśeṣya* (head) is *viśeṣyatā* (headedness). These two properties are never absolute; they are always with reference to each other. In order to highlight this association between them, we have followed a specific scheme. There are multiple *prakāratā*-s and *viśeṣyatā*-s in the structure of *bodha*. To facilitate smooth association of *prakāratā* to its corresponding *viśeṣyatā*, each tag has been assigned a numeral, followed by the abbreviation of the tag, i.e., 'p' for *prakāratā* and 'v' for *viśeṣyatā*. Thus, the correspondence can be understood by cognitively linking the tags having the same number, e.g., 1p, 2p, 3p shall have 1v, 2v, 3v associated with them in the Śābdabodha. The meaning of these terminologies is as follows:

Prakāra = qualifier (*viśeṣaṇa*)
Viśeṣya = qualificand
Prakāratā = modifierness (state of being modifier)
Viśeṣyatā = headedness (state of being a head)
Nirūpita = in relation to
Niṣṭha = having, that rests in, residing in¹⁵

Based on the concepts discussed above, the linkages among the sentences can be stated briefly as follows:

<Pārvatī says 'who are you'> (1p)Niṣṭhaprakāratā-nirūpita [{<Śiva says 'I am *sūlin*'> (1v)Niṣṭhaviśeṣyatā} (2p)Niṣṭhaprakāratā-nirūpita <Pārvatī says 'you look for a physician'> (2v)Niṣṭhaviśeṣyatā] (3p)Niṣṭhaprakāratā-nirūpita <Śiva says 'I am a diseased person'> (3v)Niṣṭhaviśeṣyatā
< X > Niṣṭhaprakāratā-nirūpita <Śiva, whose words are shattered repeatedly in this way, may protect you all> Niṣṭhaviśeṣyatā.

¹³ Nyāya-siddhānta-muktāvalī, Kiraṇāvalī commentary, ed. Narayancharan Shastri & Shwetvaikuntha Shastri, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1972, 303 - 'नैयायिकास्तु प्रथमान्तमुख्यविशेष्यकशाब्दबोधं मन्यन्ते - चैत्रः तण्डुलं पचतीत्यत्र तण्डुलनिष्ठपाकानुकूलकृतिमांश्चैत्र इति |'.

¹⁴ *Vaiyākaraṇa-bhūṣaṇa-sāra, Parikṣā* commentary, 20 - 'पाककर्त्रभिन्नो देवदत्त इत्याकारकस्य शाब्दबोधस्य ततो जननवदित्यर्थः|'.

¹⁵ Kulkarni Malhar et al. 2010, 108.

[Here, **X** denotes Set 2, Set 3, Set 4, and Set 5, connected in the same manner as shown in the first instance. All the sets of conversation are finally connected to the last line of the verse said by the poet to the readers.]

A simple meaning of the linkages stated above can be as follows:

- Group 1 - <Pārvatī says 'who are you'> is the qualifier in relation to <Śiva says 'I am śūlin'>, which is the qualificand.
- Group 2 - <Śiva says 'I am śūlin'> is the qualifier in relation to <Pārvatī says 'you look for a physician'>, which is the qualificand.
- Group 3 - <entire Group 2> is the qualifier in relation to <Śiva says 'I am a diseased person'>, which is the qualificand.

This is the Śābdabodha of the first set; the sets have been discussed before.¹⁶ Similarly, we get the Śābdabodha of all five sets sequentially. In the end, all these sets become qualifiers to the final sentence of the verse, viz., <Śiva, whose words are shattered repeatedly in this way, may protect you all>, which becomes the qualificand.

This is the Śābdabodha of the entire verse. It is originally elaborately written in Sanskrit by the authors, but it is not given in this paper in order to avoid prolongation. The representation of the entire Śābdabodha in a diagrammatic form is given in Figure 2 as follows:

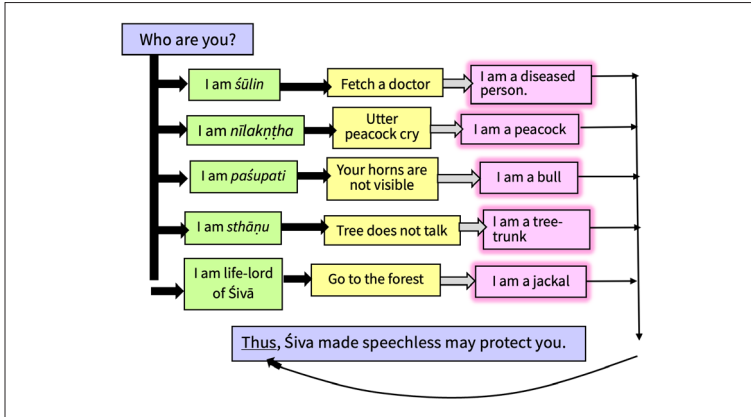


Figure 2 Diagrammatic representation of the cognitive maze

¹⁶ See step 2 of Śābdabodha, *infra*.

10 Conclusion

The aim and results of the present study can be summarized as follows: in a communication that can be said to be successful, the meaning intended by the speaker is wholly understood by the listener; the *śābdākāśa* and *arthākāśa*, i.e., the words and meaning in the intellect of the speaker and listener, are essentially the same. But in this present *Śābdabodha*, the communication is incomplete, as the *arthākāśa* in the intellect of the speaker and listener varies, and this gives rise to a complex structure of *Śābdabodha* wherein the meaning intended by the speaker is neglected and the other meaning understood by the listener takes the front seat. The second meaning intended by the listener is never explicitly stated during the conversation, but it is elicited by the response expressed by the listener. This entire conversation depends on the intellectual capacity of the one who comprehends, as he/she is expected to know the different meanings of some crucial words used in this verse.

This verse is an example of a conversation between Śiva and Pārvatī where the names and epithets of Śiva are (purposely?) misunderstood by Pārvatī to mean something else, and responses adhering to that are expressed by her. A verbal cognition takes place from the sentence uttered by Śiva, and that cognition is shattered on hearing the answer uttered by Pārvatī, making us rethink Śiva's sentence and cognise it again. This goes on in a chain, and the end of this conversation is that the conversation remains incomplete. The purport of Śiva is not grasped by Pārvatī till the end, and therefore Śiva is said to be *hatavacāḥ* – 'whose words have been shattered again and again' – by Pārvatī. This is the cognitive maze.

This entire piece of misinterpretation has created poetic wonder because the cognitions of Śiva and Pārvatī are clashing again and again. This is called *camatkāra* and is aptly defined by Prof. Malhar Kulkarni as *jñānagharṣaṇajanyam jñānam camatkṛtiḥ* – 'a cognition generated by cognitive friction is poetic wonder'.¹⁷

Many times, misinterpretation of some words or sentences happens in daily conversations. This can lead to a chaotic situation, but when the sentences spoken by both persons are analysed, backtracking leads us to the interpretation of the words or phrases by the listener, and we can arrive at the complete *śābdabodha* of the conversation in the manner mentioned in this paper.

This verse is about two powers which are cognising and speaking. It is a clever play of words or a tussle between those two. This verse appears in the *Mangalācaraṇa Prakaraṇa* of *Subhāśita-ratna-bhāṇḍāgāram*, and thus, this conversation is considered auspicious.

17 See footnote 13.

This is because it is happening between these two universal powers. The verse ends with the line that ‘may Śiva protect you who is made speechless by his wife’. This speechlessness is considered to be auspicious. In normal language and in general circumstances, for two strangers, this kind of incompatibility of answers can be offensive. Therefore, it is very important to understand the context of the conversation. This cannot be generalised for all people.

In the case of two strangers conversing, such a misunderstanding will not go up to five instances. Either person will stop at the second, or at the most, third instance, as he/she will understand that the other person is either mentally unfit to understand the speech being said by the first person, or they are purposefully not ready to accept the correct meaning. However, because the persons involved in the present conversation are not strangers, but a husband and wife, they take this tussle ahead as a play of words. This is a cognitive path; the speaker is going through one cognitive path, and the listener is not going through that path, purposefully, in this case. Therefore, a maze is created in front of the readers/listeners. And the *Śābdabodha* of such a maze is methodically presented in this paper.

11 Application

This technique of systematic interpretation of conversational sentences, and its writing in scientific format,¹⁸ can be useful for machine learning and Natural Language processing. In this system of writing the verbal cognition, each important element in the sentence is taken into account, and the relation between two sentences is also systematically shown. Such a study, specifically for a transparent and detailed cognition of data in Sanskrit language, has not been carried out before, and the authors plan to take it forward for its application in the technological area.

Some points, like specifying the gender of words in the writing of *Śābdabodha*, understanding the detailed position of gerunds and the verbs in them, etc., shall be undertaken for future study.

¹⁸ See point 9 of this paper. The same is elaborated in detail in the author’s upcoming doctoral thesis titled ‘The *Śābdabodha* theory of *Saṅgraha*’ submitted for examination.

Bibliography

- Bhattacharya, G.M. (1977). “Śābdabodha as a Separate Type of pramāṇa”. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 73-84.
- Deshpande, M. (1978). “Sentence-Cognition in Nyāya Epistemology”. *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 195-216.
- Deshpande, M. (1987). “Pāṇinian Syntax and the Changing Notion of Sentence”. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 68, 55-98.
- Ingalls, D.H. (1988). *Materials for the Study of Navya-Nyaya logic*, vol. 40. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Fodor, J.D. (1980). “Semantics: Theories of Meaning in Generative Grammar”. *Synthese*, 43(3), 461-4.
- Joshi, S. (ed.) (1996). *Vaiyākaraṇa-bhūṣaṇa-sāra*. Parīkṣā commentary. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.
- Jwalaprasad, G. (ed.) (1973). *Vyutpattivāda (Śabdakhaṇḍa)*. Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan.
- Kulkarni, M.; Sohoni, S.; Ghag, N. (2015). “Compositionality in Pāṇinian Grammar”. *Gauri-gauravam (Gauri Mahulika Felicitation Volume)*, 288-92.
- Kulkarni, M. (unpublished). *Camatkārabhāgavatam*. An original unpublished text composed in Sanskrit.
- Kulkarni, M. (unpublished). *Śābdasūtra*. An original unpublished text composed in Sanskrit.
- Kulkarni, M.; Ajotikar, A.; Ajotikar, T.; Katira, D.; Dharurkar, C.; Dangarikar, C. (2010). “Headedness and Modification in Nyāya Morpho-Syntactic Analysis: Towards a Bracket-Parsing Model”. *Sanskrit Computational Linguistics: 4th International Symposium = Proceedings* (New Delhi, India, 10-12 December 2010), 106-23.
- Matilal, B.K. (1988). “Śābdabodha and the Problem of Knowledge-Representation in Sanskrit”. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 107-22.
- Shastri Joshi, S. (ed.). (1939). *Vaiyākaraṇa-bhūṣaṇa-sāra*. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit series.
- Shastri, N.; Shastri, S. (ed.) (1972). *Nyāya-siddhānta-muktāvalī*. Kīraṇāvalī commentary. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.
- Tatacharya, N.S.R. (2005). *Śābdabodhamīmāṃsā*, vol. 1. New Delhi: Institut Francais de Pondicherry; Rashtiya Sanskrit Santhan.
- Tripathi, B.P. (1980). *Vākyapadiyam*, vol. 2. 2nd ed. Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya.

Dictionaries

- The Oxford English Dictionary* (1978). Vol.6. Oxford: The University Press. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.271836/page/n1/mode/2up?view=theater>.
- Monier William's Dictionary* (1986). Motilal Banarsidass. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.31959/page/n5/mode/2up?view=theater>.

Evolving Trends in Sociolinguistic Research in Nepal

Bhim Lal Gautam

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Abstract This paper provides an overview of different trends in sociolinguistic studies in Nepal from a socio-historical perspective, based on available data, research, and publications. It briefly outlines and critically assesses research conducted through sociolinguistic surveys of Nepalese languages from 2008 to 2022 by various institutions. The paper then describes the current sociolinguistic situation in Nepal, its impacts, and its context within the changing scenario of multilingualism. It highlights various aspects of applied linguistics and their significance in preserving and protecting minority languages in Nepal's unique language contact situations. The overview suggests that the process of language officialization and management has often been a source of conflict in many local areas, where people speaking different languages share educational materials in the same classroom.

Keywords Survey. LiNSuN. Contact and conflict. Change. Policy.

Summary 1 Background. – 2 Methods. – 3 An Overview of Linguistic Studies in Nepal. – 4 Sociolinguistic Survey of Nepalese Languages (2008-22). – 5 Sociolinguistic Studies in the Last Decade . – 6 Evolving Trends in Sociolinguistic Researches. – 7 Conclusion and Implications.



Peer review

Submitted 2025-10-07
Accepted 2025-11-03
Published 2025-12-23



Open access

© 2025 Gautam | © 4.0



Citation Gautam, B.L. (2025). "Evolving Trends in Sociolinguistic Research in Nepal". *Bhasha*, 4(2), [1-16], 213-228.

1 Background

Nepal is diverse in culture, language, ethnicity, and ecology. It has more than 124 languages and 142 ethnic groups (NSO, 2023). The languages of Nepal belong to the Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, and Dravidian (Munda) families, along with a language isolate, Kusunda. This linguistic diversity forms part of Nepal's socio-historical identity, where cultural and ethnic diversities are essential elements of Nepalese society.

Nepal's ethnic and cultural diversity is unique because people often speak one language but represent many ethnicities. For instance, Newar is a language spoken by a single ethnicity (the Newar people), whereas various ethnic groups such as Brahmin, Chhetri, Thakuri, and Sanyasi share Nepali as their common mother tongue. Similarly, other ethnic groups speak distinct languages such as Tamang, Limbu, Sherpa, Thakali, Kumal, Majhi, Dhimal, Byansi, and Satar.

Some ethnic groups are multilingual, speaking more than one language. These include the Magar (Kham, Kaike, Poike, Dhut), Chepang (Bankariya, Chepang), Gurung (Ghale, Gurung), and Rai (Bantawa, Chamling, Kulung, Yamphu, Thulung, etc.). Several ethnic groups in the Terai region speak one of three major languages – Maithili, Bhojpuri, or Awadhi – yet belong to diverse communities such as Yadava, Musahar, Teli, Chamar, Kurmi, Lohar, Rajput, Kayastha, and Thakur.

Languages spoken in Nepal are classified into different families and groups, as shown in Table 1, which presents the population distribution among the major language families.

Table 1 Population of major language families in Nepal

SN	Language family	No. of languages	No. of speakers	% of speakers
1	Indo Aryan	47	22.807.534	78.3%
2	Tibeto-Burman	72	6.249.472	21.4%
3	Austro Asiatic	3	59.174	0.2%
4	Dravidian	1	40.637	0.0%
5	Language Isolate	1	87	0.00%
6	Others		5.200	0.0%
7	Unidentified		2.474	0.0%
Grand total		124	29.164.578	100%

Source: Population of Nepal by Mother Tongues (NSO, 2023)

The table shows that Indo-Aryan languages account for the largest proportion of the population (78%), whereas the Tibeto-Burman (TB) language family represents the largest number of languages (72). However, TB languages are spoken by only 21.4% of the total

population, which is quite remarkable. The Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, and other language groups each account for less than 1% of the total population, indicating a significant disparity between majority and minority languages and reflecting a complex sociolinguistic landscape.

The multilingual reality of Nepal has drawn the attention of scholars both in the past and present. The nuances of multilingualism and its impact on daily communication across linguistic communities play an essential role in shaping communities, affirming identities, and participating in cultural activities. Since language and culture are inseparable, conducting a historical review of research trends in linguistic studies not only helps scholars understand where the discourse is heading but also how future researchers can contribute to and expand the field.

However, such topics remain under-researched in the Nepalese context. Therefore, this paper summarizes sociolinguistic surveys conducted between 2008 and 2022 by the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LiNSuN) and the Language Commission (LC) Nepal, focusing on their methodologies and findings through selected case studies, with the aim of guiding future research in a more systematic and meaningful direction.

2 Methods

This paper employs a qualitative-interpretive approach to sociolinguistics through the analysis of socio-historical documents. The reason for using this method is to review previous works and assess their impact on sociolinguistic studies in Nepal. By examining documents related to linguistic and sociolinguistic research from different periods, the paper aims to uncover how language both reflects and constructs social identities, ideologies, and power dynamics over time.

Sociolinguistic survey reports (2008-22) and related studies serve as a lens through which to examine the interaction between language and society in the Nepalese context. These documents provide insights into how people have used language and expressed their beliefs from a sociolinguistic perspective. Most of the survey reports were collected from the Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University (TU), and a qualitative-interpretive approach was applied, focusing on historical background and methodology. Finally, key themes were generated and synthesized to form the basis of this paper.

3 **An Overview of Linguistic Studies in Nepal**

Linguistic studies in Nepal have a history spanning more than two centuries. The first linguistic research was carried out by Brian Houghton Hodgson (1828-1888), a pioneering naturalist and ethnologist who worked in India and Nepal. He published several papers on Nepalese languages in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. His study was based on comparative wordlists of about 53 Nepalese languages.

Subsequently, William Carey completed a study of about 33 languages spoken in the Indian subcontinent, among which *Nepal[i]*, *Mythilee (Maithili)*, and *North Koshala (Awadhi?)* were identified as languages of Nepal (Grierson 1927, 11-12). Hoernle (1880) carried out a typological study of Nepali and several Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Nepal.

Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (LSI) conducted a systematic linguistic study of the South Asian region, including more than 30 Nepalese languages (1927, 389). Grierson categorized these languages into various families and subfamilies based on social and geographical factors and produced descriptive grammatical sketches based on limited data and analysis.

Between 1965 and 1975, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) conducted descriptive studies of 21 different languages. SIL published wordlists, phonemic summaries, texts, sketch grammars, and sociolinguistic information on 57 Nepalese languages.

Similarly, Chura Mani Bandhu carried out a field survey in the Bagmati and Janakpur areas in 1968. According to Bandhu (personal communication), the team surveyed eight languages: Thami, Jirel, Majhi, Danuwar, Pahari, Dolakha, Newar, and Tamang. Bandhu's fieldwork was based largely on his personal experience rather than a systematic methodology.

Warren Glover and John K. Landon (1980) conducted a detailed study of Gurung dialects that was more systematic than previous works. Their study included analyses of language attitudes, wordlists, isoglosses, sound shifts, intelligibility testing (a modified Casad method), and demographic distributions. This represented one of the first comprehensive studies of Gurung spoken in the Gandaki-Dhaulagiri region.

Between 1981 and 1984, Werner Winter initiated the *Linguistic Survey of Nepal* project, conducting extensive fieldwork in eastern Nepal with a focus on the Rai-Kiranti languages. His research covered around 40 languages spoken across the Terai and highlands of eastern Nepal.

Toba et al. (2002) prepared a basic sociolinguistic profile of 59 Nepalese languages (45 Tibeto-Burman, 11 Indo-Aryan, 1 Austro-Asiatic, 1 Dravidian, and 1 language isolate – *Kusunda*) using a

questionnaire adapted from the *UNESCO World Languages Report (China)*.

The Central Department of Linguistics at Tribhuvan University conducted preliminary documentation of around 30 languages between 2004 and 2008, supported financially by the National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN). This documentation included basic lexicons, grammar outlines, and texts based on narratives and conversations. Collectively, these efforts made a unique contribution to linguistic research in Nepal and laid the groundwork for more detailed and systematic sociolinguistic studies in the years that followed.

4 Sociolinguistic Survey of Nepalese Languages (2008-22)

In 2007, the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LiNSuN) project (2008-18) was initiated by senior linguists including Chudamani Bandhu, Tej Ratna Kansakar, Yogendra Yadava, Madhav Pokharel, Noble Kishore Rai, Nirmalman Tuladhar, and David E. Watters. It was commissioned by the National Planning Commission of Nepal and officially launched in 2008 at the Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.

The LiNSuN project primarily focused on the sociolinguistic survey of all Nepalese languages, with the goal of preparing comprehensive sociolinguistic profiles. However, after the establishment of the Language Commission (LC) of Nepal in 2016, sociolinguistic surveys continued with financial support from the Commission. The LC also employed the same tools developed under the LiNSuN project. The Sociolinguistic Survey (SLS) adopted the following tools.

4.1 Sociolinguistic Survey Questionnaires

A set of sociolinguistic questionnaires (A, B, and C) was used to understand the language situation (Gautam 2019). These questionnaires included biographical information, language use patterns, bilingualism/multilingualism, language attitudes, and other metadata.

Questionnaire A was administered to real speakers selected based on age, gender, and literacy level across different geographical locations of the language community.

Questionnaire B was distributed during focus group discussions conducted through participatory observation at each survey site.

Questionnaire C was given to language activists and local leaders to identify different attitudes toward language and community.

4.2 Sentence Repetition Test (SRT)

The Sentence Repetition Test (SRT) was recently developed by survey investigators working in South Asia. It operates on the assumption that one cannot easily repeat long and complex utterances correctly. This technique was used in the Sociolinguistic Survey of Nepal (SLS) to assess the language attitudes of native speakers and to test their levels of competency in Nepali and other dominant languages in a multilingual context (Gautam 2019).

4.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is another qualitative research tool used to explore people's opinions about a language and their attitudes toward bilingualism and multilingualism (Gautam 2019). This technique also gathers biographical data and information on literacy resources and educational experiences, allowing participants to share their aspirations and motivations related to language use and identity.

4.4 Dialect Survey

Based on a standard 210-word list elicited from native speakers across five different locations within a language area, various dialects can be identified, along with sociolinguistic variations determined by lexical similarity among different groups. The results can be presented in a table illustrating relative linguistic distances among speech communities, while lexical differences can be compared through a detailed matrix of word pairs.

The technology for evaluating, comparing, and interpreting word lists is well established (Blair 1990, 21-32; Simons 1984) and provides useful preliminary information about any previously undescribed language.

4.5 Progress and Activities

In 2008, LiNSuN conducted a pilot study in Jhapa District to test and evaluate the developed questionnaires. Jhapa is the only district where languages from all major families are spoken. Thirteen languages – Malpande, Karuwa, Sadri (Kissan), Danuwar, Marwari, Nepali, Maithili, Urdu, Hindi, Bantawa, Meche, Uraun, and Khadiya – were surveyed by a team of experts and researchers. Following this comprehensive pilot study, the SLS questionnaires

and SRT modules were revised and refined for use in the main field surveys. The pilot phase verified the effectiveness of the LiNSuN tools for future surveys. The sociolinguistic surveys were conducted with financial support from the Government of Nepal, the Embassy of Finland, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), the Language Commission (LC), and several other institutions such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) Nepal and the National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN).

Altogether, the survey covered 104 languages, and 95 language reports were prepared, representing all language families and geographical regions of the country. Table 1 provides a summary of these surveys.

Table 1 Summary of Languages in SLS

Year	Indo-Aryan	Tibeto-Burman	Austro-Asiatic	Dravidian	Remarks
2009	2	3			LiNSuN
2010	1	3			LiNSuN
2011	1	4	1		LiNSuN
2012	14	6			LiNSuN
2013	7	6	1	1	LiNSuN
2014	2	7			LiNSuN
2015	2	3			LiNSuN
2016	4	7			LiNSuN
2017		6			LiNSuN
2017	4	11			LC
2018		5			LC
2019		1			LC
2020		2			LC
Total=104	37	64	2	1	

Source: LiNSuN (2008-18) and Language Commission Nepal.

The table shows that out of 104 sociolinguistic surveys, only 23 were conducted by the Language Commission Nepal with technical support from the Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University. This suggests that SLS activities have not been sufficiently structured or analyzed in line with the evolving trends in sociolinguistic research in Nepal. A review of all survey reports indicates that the same tools were applied uniformly across all languages, which is problematic. Tools suitable for major languages such as Nepali, Tamang, Newar, and Maithili cannot effectively capture the linguistic realities of smaller or endangered languages such as Tilung, Kumal, Lohwa, or Chepang (Gautam 2019). This highlights the need for

future sociolinguistic studies in Nepal to adopt more theoretically and methodologically refined approaches.

5 Sociolinguistic Studies in the Last Decade

Beyond the national sociolinguistic survey, several studies have been conducted by organizations such as SIL International, the University Grants Commission (UGC) Nepal, the Nepal Academy, and the Language Commission Nepal, both individually and collaboratively.

Gautam (2016) conducted a study titled *Contact Nepali in Kathmandu Valley*, based on qualitative and quantitative data collected from Newar, Maithili, and Sherpa speakers in the valley. Supported by UGC Nepal, the study highlighted recent linguistic contact phenomena in Kathmandu from a sociolinguistic perspective.

In 2017, the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) at Tribhuvan University conducted a study on language shift in Nepal with financial support from the Language Commission. The study analyzed Limbu, Tamang, Newar, Maithili, Tharu, Jumli, Doteli, and Nepali, using questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.

With University Grants Commission (UGC) support, Gautam (2020) conducted a detailed study on language shift among Newar speakers in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, and Kabhrepalanchok districts, focusing on language use and attitudes across age, gender, and socio-professional groups.

Gautam (2023) also completed a sociolinguistic study of the Tamang community in Kathmandu Valley, focusing on language attitude, shift, and change, supported by the Nepal Academy. Data were collected from Sundarimal, Nagarkot, Bosan, and Dakshinkali using questionnaires (Gautam 2021), interviews, and narratives.

Currently, the Research Management Cell (RMC) at the Central Department of Linguistics is preparing updated sociolinguistic profiles of seven selected languages – Maithili, Chamling, Gurung, Bhujel, Kumal, Hayu, and Doteli – in both Nepali and English. These ongoing efforts demonstrate that sociolinguistic research in Nepal is expanding with new methods, techniques, and theoretical orientations, aligning with global trends in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics.

6 Evolving Trends in Sociolinguistic Researches

Contemporary sociolinguistic studies in Nepal have expanded to encompass various areas of applied linguistics, including language planning and policy. Earlier surveys were limited to descriptive tools

and guidelines, often lacking strong theoretical frameworks. Gautam (2019) points out several methodological shortcomings in earlier studies, such as inconsistent sampling and inadequate site selection. The following points illustrate emerging trends in sociolinguistic research in Nepal.

6.1 Language Planning and Policy

Scholars from various theoretical and methodological backgrounds use the terms *multilingualism* and *plurilingualism* to describe linguistically diverse societies, individuals' communicative abilities, and educational approaches that promote multiple languages in schools (Erling, Moore 2021).

Following the implementation of Nepal's 2015 Constitution, 11 new languages were recommended as provincial and official languages by the Language Commission in 2022: *Limbu, Maithili, Bajjika, Bhojpuri, Tamang, Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tharu, Awadhi, and Doteli*. Bagmati Province has already passed a law authorizing its provincial languages, while other provinces are in the process of doing so. However, there is still no comprehensive plan for managing Nepal's linguistic diversity within a multilingual framework.

As Strani (2020, 26) notes, power imbalances in multilingual settings are influenced not only by education and access but also by government policy and language choice. Some local authorities – such as the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Kirtipur Municipality, and several municipalities outside the valley – have already initiated mother-tongue education at the primary level. However, these initiatives are often driven by emotional or political motivations rather than grounded multilingual policy, which could result in unintended consequences for Nepal's multiethnic and multilingual society.

In this context, a balanced language policy must be developed and implemented to effectively manage languages across different regions, ethnicities, and communities. The 2015 Constitution supports the preservation and promotion of Nepalese languages through careful language planning. The process of language officialization should be guided by principles of linguistic and social justice so that marginalized language communities – such as *Kusunda, Raute, and Lunkhim* – can benefit equally.

6.2 Language Contact and Conflict

A political language conflict reaches its most intense point when language becomes the central symbol of disagreement, bringing together disputes from politics, economics, administration, and

education under a single issue (Nelde 2010, 35). Such conflicts arise when differing values, beliefs, and worldviews collide, deeply influencing how people perceive themselves, raise their children, receive education, and engage with their communities (37).

Nepal's multilingual context has produced complex situations due to issues of language contact and conflict. Many urban centers have become linguistic hubs for Nepali, English, and Hindi (Gautam 2022), driven by language politics in education, business, and other socio-political spheres. Studies have already indicated the presence of language conflicts within both communities and classrooms in cities such as Kathmandu Valley (Gautam, Poudel 2024).

Social, historical, political, and economic power relations strongly influence the linguistic outcomes of language contact (Sankoff 2001; Thomason, Kaufman 1988), shaping ideologies and attitudes toward languages. Reviewing various sociolinguistic survey reports reveals a high degree of bilingualism and multilingualism in several language communities – such as Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Thulung, Tharu, and Limbu – driven by media, migration, and inter-caste marriage in Nepal's sociocultural context. Table 2 illustrates the multilingual situation among Awadhi children.

Table 2 Language known by Awadhi children

Languages	Male	Female	Where learnt?
Nepali	57%	60%	Schools, colleges, in towns, cities
Hindi	53%	33%	Local markets, India, watching Hindi movies and televisions
English	13%	3%	School, colleges
Tharu	7%		In the society
Source: Thakur, Yadav (2013)			

The table shows that a majority of Awadhi children are bilingual in Nepali and Hindi. Among male respondents, 57%, 53%, 13%, and 7% of children are bilingual or multilingual in Nepali, Hindi, English, and Tharu, respectively. Similarly, 60%, 33%, and 3% of female respondents' children speak Nepali, Hindi, and English. Awadhi children acquire their mother tongue at home and learn Tharu within the community. Nepali and Hindi are acquired through education, media, and urban exposure, while English is primarily learned in schools and through media technologies such as mobile phones and online communication. This extensive multilingualism creates both linguistic contact and conflict across age and social

groups. Multilingual classrooms in Nepal exemplify such conflict, as home and community languages are often marginalized while official or dominant languages are imposed for instruction. Gautam and Poudel (2024) identify significant language conflicts in multilingual classrooms in Kathmandu Valley.

6.3 Areal and Typological Study

In any sociolinguistic research, it is essential to understand the value of areal and typological studies for future perspectives. Considering ethnographic, sociocultural, ecological, and geographical factors, Nepal's languages can be categorized into the following groups.

6.3.1 Language with Diverse Ecological Landscapes

Nepal's geography is highly diverse in terms of vegetation, landscape, and climate. Between 2010 and 2022, I studied five languages spoken in the Terai region: Awadhi, Doteli, Tharu, Bhojpuri, and Khadiya. Among them, Khadiya is a minority language spoken by a small number of people in the eastern Terai. It is largely confined to older generations and family domains, with younger speakers shifting to Nepali or English due to education and employment. In contrast, Tharu, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Doteli are widely spoken in the central and western Terai, each with multiple dialectal varieties. However, the younger generation often speaks Nepali, English, or Hindi outside the home domain. Similarly, I participated in sociolinguistic surveys of languages spoken in the hilly and mountainous regions – such as Kaike, Dhuleli, Thulung, and Lohwa. Kaike and Dhuleli are relatively isolated, with strong language vitality, while Lohwa speakers are in frequent contact with Tibetan, English, and Nepali due to tourism in Upper Mustang. Languages such as Thulung, Aathpahariya, Lungkhim, and Limbu, spoken in the eastern hills, experience intense contact with neighboring languages such as Nepali, Kulung, Bantawa, and Tamang. Migration, modernization, media, and the education system contribute to intergenerational language shift in these communities.

6.3.2 Cross Border Languages

Many cross-border languages are spoken between Nepal, India, and China. I have personally observed three Indo-Aryan languages – Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Kurmali – spoken in the Terai

bordering India, and two Tibeto-Burman languages – Dhuleli and Lohwa – spoken in Bajhang and Mustang, bordering China (Tibet).

Kurmali is spoken by a small number of speakers in Jhapa District (Kantharghutu, Anandagunj, Kachhubari, and Maheshpur). Awadhi is spoken in the western Terai districts (Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Banke, Bardia, Dang, Kailali, and Kanchanpur), while Bhojpuri is spoken in Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, and Rupandehi. The mother-tongue proficiency among Bhojpuri speakers remains strong, with lexical similarity ranging from 56% to 92% among surveyed varieties, indicating dialectal diversity without loss of mutual intelligibility.

In 2016, I visited Dhuleli communities near the Chinese (Tibetan) border. The Dhuli core survey point showed 79-81% lexical similarity with other sites (Jagera, Nyuna, and Balaudi) (Regmi, Prasain 2017). In 2017, I visited Lohwa-speaking villages in Upper Mustang, where the Lo Manthang core point exhibited 70-79% similarity with other sites (Kimaling, Chungjung, Choser, and Charang) (Regmi et al. 2018).

My observations suggest that border languages near China (Tibet) are heavily influenced by Tibetan dialects and cultures such as *Lhosar*, *Bon*, and *Buddhism*, whereas languages in the Terai are influenced by Hindu and Indian cultures. Nevertheless, some minority groups like Dhuleli and Lohwa have preserved their linguistic and cultural identities. Most minority languages, however, are shifting toward dominant languages such as Nepali and English (Gautam 2025).

6.4 Language Shift and Endangerment

Many languages in Nepal are undergoing rapid shift toward Nepali, English, and Hindi (Gautam 2021; Gautam et al. 2022). A major cause is the *M³ effect* – media, music, and marriage – which accelerates language shift toward dominant languages (Gautam 2020). Inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages are increasingly common among communities such as Thulung, Lungkhim, Aathpahariya, Tamang, Newar, Magar, Gurung, and Limbu. English and Hindi are especially popular among the younger generation due to mass media and entertainment, particularly Hindi cinema and music.

When conducting sociolinguistic surveys, it is crucial to consider the sociocultural context of each language and its community. For example, Lungkhim is nearly extinct, surviving within a single family in a multilingual community in Suryodaya Municipality, Ilam, where Bantawa is dominant. In Lunkhim (Bhojpur), residents speak Kulung and Nepali but no longer use Lunkhim in daily conversation.

7 Conclusion and Implications

Nepal has a long history of sociolinguistic studies, surveys, and linguistic research. Many ideas, methods, and approaches have evolved alongside changes in the nation's sociolinguistic landscape. Ethnographic observation remains vital for understanding the ethnic identity of people and places, particularly amid identity politics.

Participant observation – long central to qualitative sociolinguistics – is increasingly employed in quantitative studies as well (Johnstone 2000, 80). Cultural background, socio-economic status, caste, gender, and social roles are all critical in understanding linguistic peculiarities.

Younger generations are often less invested in heritage languages and cultures, instead embracing globalization, modernization, and digital communication. Case studies based on qualitative data are essential to understanding how language connects with community roles and cultural identity through personal narratives.

Since the 1990s, Nepal's neoliberal policies have valorized English as a global commodity, creating a hierarchy in which minoritized languages such as Newar, Sherpa, Maithili, Tharu, Limbu, and Kurmali occupy lower status. Rapid socio-political and economic transformations across all linguistic communities have reshaped individual identities, influenced by age, gender, social status, and lived experience – challenging traditional notions of Nepal's sociolinguistic landscape.

Future research should prioritize the lived realities of language use, diversity, and socio-political contexts, exploring how ethnic and cultural practices evolve within Nepal's multilingual society in the era of globalization.

Bibliography

- Bandhu, C.M. (1968). *Report of the Preliminary Linguistic Survey in Bagmati and Janakpur zones of Nepal* [in Nepali]. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, Center for Nepal and Asian Studies.
- Blair, F. (1990). *Survey on a Shoestring: A Manual for Small-scale Language Surveys*. Arlington: Summer Institute of Linguistics and The University of Texas.
- Casad, E. (1974). *Dialect Intelligibility Testing*. Norman: Summer Institute of Linguistics International.
- Central Bureau of Statistics (2011). *Population Census*. Kathmandu Nepal. <http://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/Home/Details?tpid=5&tfsid=1>
- Erling, E.; Moore, E. (2021). "Socially Just Plurilingual Education in Europe: Shifting Subjectivities and Practices Through Research and Action". *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 18(4), 523-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2021.1913171>.
- Gautam, B.L. (2014). "Present Sociolinguistic Survey of Nepalese Languages". *Workshop on Nepalese languages Laboratoire Dynamique Du Langage* (Lyon, France, 27 March 2014).
- Gautam, B.L.; Sapkota, S. (2014). *A Sociolinguistic Survey of Thulung* [unpublished report]. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Linguistics, Linguistic Survey of Nepal.
- Gautam, B.L.; Thakur, I. (2014). *A Sociolinguistic Survey of Limbu* [unpublished report]. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Linguistics, Linguistic Survey of Nepal.
- Gautam, B.L. (2018a). "Sociolinguistic Survey of Nepalese Languages". *DLAP-3* (Mahidol University, Thailand, 23-25 July 2018).
- Gautam, B.L. (2018b). "Language Shift in Newar: A Case Study in the Kathmandu Valley". *Nepalese Linguistics*, 33(1), 33-42.
- Gautam, B.L. (2019). "Sociolinguistic Survey of Nepalese Languages: A Critical Evaluation". *Language Ecology*, 3(2), 190-208. <https://doi.org/10.1075/le.19004.gau>
- Gautam, B.L. (2020). *Language Contact in Kathmandu Valley* [unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation]. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University.
- Gautam, B.L. (2021). *Language Contact in Nepal: A Study on Language Use and Attitude*. Switzerland AG: Palgrave Macmillan Publishers.
- Gautam, B.L. (2025). "English Language Politics in Nepal: A Socio-historical Perspective". Giri, R.A.; Gnowali, L. (eds), *Handbook of English language education in Nepal* 34-45. New Delhi: Routledge India, 34-45. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003508540-5>.
- Gautam, B.L.; Adhikari, D.R. (2017). *A Sociolinguistic Survey of Kurmali*. Unpublished report submitted to Language Commission Nepal, Kathmandu.
- Glover, W.W. (1971). "Swadesh List Calculations on Thirty Tibeto-Burman Languages". Kathmandu: Summer Institute of Linguistics [mimeo].
- Glover, W.W.; Landon, J.K. (1980). "Gurung Dialects". Wurm, S.A. (ed.), *Papers in South-East Asian Linguistics No. 7, Pacific linguistics series A, No. 53*. Canberra: Australian National University, 29-77.
- Grierson, G.A. (1927). *Linguistic Survey of India, Volume 1 Part 1*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass
- Government of Nepal. (2015). *Constitution of Nepal, 2015*. Kathmandu.
- Grierson, G.; Konow, S. (1898-1927). *Linguistic Survey of India*. 19 vols. Calcutta: Superintendent of government printing, India. Reprinted 1967. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

- Hale, A. (1993). *Sociolinguistic Survey of Nepal*. A proposal for a joint project to be conducted under the auspices of the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies with the sponsorship of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Draft Three, 15 April 1993.
- Hansson, G. (1991). *The Rai of Eastern Nepal: Ethnic and Linguistic Grouping. Findings of the Linguistic Survey of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Linguistic Survey of Nepal and CNAS.
- Heller, M. (1995). "Code Switching and the Politics of Language". Milroy, L.; Muysken, P. (eds), *One speaker, two languages. Cross-disciplinary perspectives on code-switching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 156-74.
- Hodgson, B.H. (1847-48). "On the aborigines of the sub-Himalayas". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 16, 1235-44, 17, 73-8.
- Hodgson, B.H. (1857-8). "Bahing Vocabulary". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 26(5), 486-522, 27(5), 393-442.
- Hodgson, B.H. (1857a). "Comparative Grammar of the Languages of the Broken Tribes of Nepal". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 26(5), 317-32.
- Hodgson, B.H. (1857b). "Comparative Vocabulary of the Several Languages (dialects) of Celebrated People Called Kirantis, Now Occupying the Easternmost Province of the Kingdom of Nepal, or Basin of River Arun". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 26(5), 333-71.
- Hodgson, B.H. (1857c). "Vayu Vocabulary". *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 26(5/6), 372-485.
- Hodgson, B.H. (1880). "Vocabulary of the Dialects of the Kiranti Languages". Hodgson, B.H., *Miscellaneous essays relating to Indian subjects, Volume 1*. London: Trübner & Co, 178-215.
- Johnstone, B. (2000). *Qualitative methods in sociolinguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, M.P.; Gary, F.S.; Fennig, C.D. (eds) (2013). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. 17th ed. Dallas, TX: SIL International. [http://www.ethnologue.com \(/country/np.\)](http://www.ethnologue.com (/country/np.))
- Mikhailovsky, B. (1988). "Phonological Typology of Nepal's Languages". *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area*, 11(2), 25-50.
- National Statistics Office/NSO. (2023). *National Population and Housing Census 2021: National Report on Caste/Ethnicity, Language & Religion*. <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/np/downloads/caste-ethnicity>.
- National Statistics Office/NSO. (2023). *Population by Mother Tongue and Sex, Nphc 2021*. <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/np/downloads/caste-ethnicity>.
- National Planning Commission, GoN. (2007). *Linguistic Survey of Nepal: Proposal*, Central Department of Linguistics, TU राष्ट्रिय योजना आयोग, नेपाल सरकार (२०६५): नेपालको भाषिक सर्वेक्षण: प्रस्ताव, भाषा विज्ञान केन्द्रीय विभाग, त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय
- Nelde, P.H. (1987). "Language Contact Means Language Conflict". *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 8(1/2), 33-42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.1987.9994273>.
- Nelde, P.H. (2010). "Language Contact". Kaplan, R.B. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 325-34.
- O'Leary, C.F. (ed.) (1992). *Sociolinguistic Survey of Northern Pakistan*. Vol. 2, *Languages of Northern Areas*. NIPS and SIL.USA.
- Radolf, C. (1989). *Sentence Repetition for Studies of Community Bilingualism* [prepublication draft, unpublished manuscript].
- Regmi, D.R. (2010). "Linguistic Survey of Nepal: Progress, Challenges and Prospect". *Linguistic Survey of Nepal: Progress, Challenges and Prospect and Field Report*

- Presentation Workshop* (Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University, Nepal, 21 June 2010).
- Regmi, D.R.; Gautam, B.L.; Regmi, A. (2017). *A Sociolinguistic Survey of Lohwa Language* [unpublished report]. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Linguistics, Linguistic Survey of Nepal.
- Regmi, D.R.; Prasain, B.R. (2017). *A Sociolinguistic Survey of Dhuleli* [unpublished report]. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, LiNSuN Central Department of Linguistics.
- Sankoff, G. (2001). "Linguistic outcomes of language contact". Trudgill, P.; Chambers, J.; Schilling-Estes, N. (eds), *Handbook of Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 638-68.
- Simons, G.F. (1984). *Word list analysis in the field with a notebook computer. Occasional papers in academic computing*, 5. Dallas: SIL International.
- Strani, K. (2020). "Multilingualism and Politics Revisited: The State of the Art". Strani, K. (ed.), *Multilingualism and Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 17-45. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-40701-8_2.
- Thakur, I.; Yadav, S. (2013). *A sociolinguistic survey of Awadhi* [unpublished report]. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, LiNSuN Central Department of Linguistics.
- Toba, S. (1973). "Preliminary exploratory language survey report of some Rai languages (dialects)" [mimeo].
- Toba, S. (1991). *A Bibliography of Nepalese languages and linguistics*. Kathmandu: Linguistic Society of Nepal. (2nd edition. 1998. Kathmandu: Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University)
- Toba, S.; Toba, I.; Rai, N.K. (2002). *UNESCO language survey report*. Kathmandu: UNESCO.
- Webster, J. (1992). "The sociolinguistic survey of Tibeto-Burman dialects: North Gorkha District" [mimeo].
- Webster, J. (2001). "The sociolinguistic study of Limbu". *Journal of Nepalese Literature, Art and Culture*, 4(1), 51-84.
- Wheeler, E.S. (2015). "A framework for studying languages in contact: a prolegomenon to a theory". *WORD*, 61(1), 75-86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.2015.1006860>.
- Winter, W. (1984). *Distribution of languages and sublanguages in Eastern Nepal*. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, CNAS.
- Winter, W. (1986). "The linguistic survey of Nepal". Kolver, B. (ed.), *Aspects of Nepalese Traditions*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 171-9.

La cosiddetta ‘strong and rough r’ /r/ del tam̩l e l’occlusiva alveolare protodravidica */t̪/: *A reappraisal*

Marcello De Martino

Centre de Recherche sur le Monde Iranien (CeRMI) – Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Inalco) di Parigi, Francia

Abstract The distortion of the reality of phonetic data perpetrated by modern linguists in their iron determination to interpret the necessarily approximate descriptions of the ancients in such a way that they appear to confirm personal scientific hypotheses regarding past phonological systems which, as such, can no longer be directly tested with objective instrumental surveys, sometimes reaches truly remarkable levels; in this regard, the case of how the testimonies of the grammarians of southern India were (mis)used when they attempted to illustrate Tam̩l, the most important language of the Dravidian group, following the example of their northern Indian colleagues who in their treatises admirably and with great expertise exposed Sanskrit in its phonological and morphological aspects down to the smallest details is emblematic.

Keywords Tam̩l grammarians. Trubeckoj. Functional Phonology. Rhotics. Proto-Dravidian Phonology.



Peer review

Submitted 2025-07-17
Accepted 2025-12-14
Published 2026-01-09



Open access

© 2025 De Martino | © 4.0



Citation De Martino, M. (2025). “La cosiddetta ‘strong and rough r’ /r/ del tam̩l e l’occlusiva alveolare protodravidica */t̪/: *A reappraisal*””. *Bhasha*, 4(2), 229-262.

DOI 10.30687/bhasha/2785-5953/2025/02/004

Talora arriva a livelli veramente notevoli la distorsione della realtà dei dati fonetici perpetrata dai moderni linguisti nella loro ferrea determinazione ad interpretare le descrizioni necessariamente approssimative degli antichi in modo tale che esse sembrino confermare le personali ipotesi scientifiche riguardanti dei sistemi fonologici passati che, in quanto tali, non sono più esperibili direttamente con oggettive rilevazioni strumentali;¹ riguardo a ciò è emblematico il caso di come siano state (mal) utilizzate le testimonianze dei grammatici dell'India meridionale che si cimentarono ad illustrare il tamīl, la lingua più importante del gruppo dravidico,² sulla scorta dell'esempio dei loro colleghi nordindiani i quali nei loro trattati esposero mirabilmente e con grande perizia il sanscrito nei suoi aspetti fonologici e morfologici fin nei minimi dettagli,³ il Pāṇini (vissuto forse nel V o IV secolo a.C.) del Tamīl Nāṭu fu Tolkāppiyāṇār, il mitico autore del *Tolkāppiyam* (tam. தொல்காப்பியம்),⁴ il *pendant* tamilico dell'*Aṣṭādhyāyī*. Tolkāppiyāṇār aveva suddiviso le lettere alfabetiche tamiliche che rimandano ai suoni non vocalici (*mey*

Articolo già pubblicato su *Lumina. Rivista di Linguistica storica e di Letteratura comparata* VIII(1-2) 2024, 221-56.

1 Un altro caso macroscopico di travisamento dei dati pòrti dai grammatici latini attuato dai moderni glottologi ai fini di conferma delle proprie ricostruzioni linguistiche è fornito dalla presunta pronuncia volgare (o 'vernacolare', secondo Wright) [wɔ] della /ō/ di Roma che si evincerebbe dalla *scriptio* RVOMA di Pompeo, *Commentum Artis Donati*, in *Grammatici latini* V (ed. H. Keil, Lipsiae 1868, 285, ll. 6-9), che avrebbe attestato già nel V sec. d.C. la dittongazione protoromanza, si veda Wright 1982, 59-60: in realtà il grammatico africano utilizzava la lettera in questo caso *supervacua* V prima della O come mero diacritico per indicare un suono breve della /ō/, ossia [o], così come si faceva per la grafia EQVOS → [ekwos] → nom. sing. /ēkwūs/ dove il suono [o] era un allofono combinatorio di /ū/, vocale normalmente realizzata foneticamente come [ɔ], si rimanda a De Martino 2003 (nulla di tutto ciò ha capito Mancini (1994, 622-4, 626-7): invero, ciò non ci stupisce, dato che Mancini, purtroppo, non è propriamente uno studioso di grammatici latini ma un iranista, come dimostra il suo saggio *Note iraniche* del 1987 di 98 pagine).

2 Krishnamurti 2003, 16-24; in generale per la linguistica dravidica si rimanda a Zvelebil 1990.

3 Il testo di riferimento per apprezzare l'abilità e la perizia dei grammatici indiani nel descrivere gli aspetti fonetici e persino fonologici del sanscrito è Allen (1953), ma si veda anche D'Avella 2018 e soprattutto Hock 2016; per una visione d'insieme sulla letteratura grammaticale indiana si veda Scharfe 1977 nonché Lowe 2024 e i riferimenti in esso contenuti.

4 Sul *Tolkāppiyam* si veda David 1952 e in particolare sulla fonetica del tamīl Subbiah 1968, mentre su Tolkāppiyāṇār (o Tolkāppiyar) e sulla tradizione grammaticale tamīl si rimanda a Chevillard 2014, a Chevillard, Passerieu 1989, ad Annamalai 2016, 718-27: «The Tamil tradition» e soprattutto al classico Subrahmanya Sastry 1934; sull'influenza del modello grammaticale del sanscrito sulla descrizione del tamīl attuata dai grammatici tamilici si veda Meenakshisundaram 1974, mentre per una comparazione tra Pāṇini e Tolkāppiyāṇār, si rimanda a Trautmann 2006, 42-72, cap. 2: «Pāṇini and Tolkāppiyar». Di notevole interesse sono anche gli articoli contenuti nel numero monografico «La Grammaire Sanskrite Étendue» di *Histoire Epistémologie Langage*, 39(2), 2017.

eḷuttu, tam. மெய் எழுத்து), in tre specie (*iṇam*, tam. இனம்), e cioè 'forti' (*val(l)-iṇam*, tam. வல்லினம்), che contrassegnerebbero delle occlusive, 'tenui' (*mel(l)-iṇam*, tam. மெல்லினம்), le quali corrisponderebbero a dei suoni nasali, e 'medie' (*iṭai(y)-iṇam*, tam. இடையினம்), che indicherebbero dei suoni sonoranti non nasali. Sulla base di questa tripartizione e sull'accertamento personale dei dati fonetici del tamil, nel 1856 il reverendo Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) [fig. 1] nella sua grammatica comparativa delle lingue dravidiche enunciò quella che egli definì la legge della «convertibilità delle sorde e delle sonore» (*The Convertibility of Surds and Sonants*) [fig. 1]:⁵ in questo idioma del sud dell'India non ci sarebbe stata l'opposizione fonemica «sorda vs sonora», né quella «occlusiva vs fricativa» nella serie delle occlusive, inquantoché queste ultime vengono pronunciate come sorde in posizione iniziale di parola, quando sono geminate e in connessione con altre occlusive, mentre vengono realizzate come sonore dopo consonanti nasali e in posizione intervocalica, nel qual caso le occlusive possono presentarsi anche come fricative più o meno sonore;⁶ è evidente che la caratteristica della sonorità come quella della fricatività dipende dalla minore tensione muscolare utilizzata nel produrre le occlusive stesse, le quali assumono in tamil un'articolazione rilassata o lene in una posizione 'debole' qual è massimamente quella intervocalica (/Occl./ → [+ sonoro]/V__V), dove l'apertura glottica, necessaria all'agevole fonazione vocalica, favorisce le articolazioni consonantiche alla sonorità, così come accade di fronte ad elementi fonetici *naturaliter* sonori in quanto sonoranti come quelli nasali (/Occl./ → [+ sonoro]/[+ nasale]__): si può dire a tal proposito che le nasali abbiano come distintivo il tratto [+ sonoro] il quale è predicibile da quello [- teso] e che pertanto esse siano da ritenersi come le 'vere' articolazioni sonore del tamil che si oppongono alle occlusive, le quali hanno il tratto distintivo [- sonoro] predicibile da quello [+ teso]; al contrario, in una posizione 'forte' qual è quella iniziale di parola (/Occl./ → [- sonoro]/#(#)__), le occlusive ricevevano un'articolazione tesa che è tipica dei foni sordi, tensione che si ritrova nei nessi consonantici non nasali e nelle intense, dove in entrambi i casi la realizzazione è in tamil sempre quella sorda (/Occl./ → [- sonoro]/__Occl.²). Si può quindi ben comprendere

⁵ Caldwell (1856, 102-5), di cui una parte viene riportata *verbatim* dalla terza edizione del 1913 (138-9) in Subrahmanya Sastri 1934, 49-51; si veda anche Ramaswami Aiyar 1928.

⁶ Zvelebil (1970, 83): «As far as Old and Middle Ta. and Old Ma. go, we may set up one set of stop phonemes, viz. /k c ʈ t t p/ with the following allophones: root-initially, always vl. stops [k c t p]; intervocalically when single [g d d] - voiced and possibly, at least [g], [d], spirantized; in this position, c and p have already spirantized allophones [s] and [v] (with a very few exceptions of intervocalic -p-); and /t/ has an intervocalic allophone [ɾ]; in gemination, always voiceless [kk cc ʈt ʈt tt pp]; after nasals, voiced [g j d d d b]; in Old Ta. stops after nasals could possibly have been voiceless in some dialects».

per quali ragioni i grammatici dell'India meridionale definirono le occlusive come «forti» e le nasali come «tenui»,⁷ poiché essi si riferivano alla vera opposizione presente nel sistema fonologico del tamīl che era quella «teso vs rilassato», il che è alquanto significativo considerando il fatto che costoro adottavano in pratica la medesima prospettiva ermeneutica dei loro colleghi greci e latini, i quali con la teoria della εὐφωνία/*sonoritas*, cioè della 'sonorità', spiegavano *tutte* le caratteristiche fonetiche e acustiche degli elementi ostruenti dei sistemi fonologici del greco e del latino in termini di forza ovvero di energia articolatoria spesa nell'emissione del quantitativo di aria polmonare che faceva risuonare gli organi fonatori (trachea, tratto orale, cavità nasali), come si riscontra nel caso della ripartizione delle occlusive in *litterae tenues/lenes* (γράμματα ψιλὰ), ossia 'deboli' sorde 'sfiatate', e in *asperae* (δασέα/τραχέα), cioè 'forti' aspirate 'piene di fiato'; è altresì interessante il fatto che si ricorresse anche per i suoni del tamīl al concetto di *medietas*/μεσότης, essendo le sonanti della lingua dravidica ritenute medie per avere esse un grado medio di tensione muscolare tra le articolazioni naturalmente forti e sorde, sarebbe a dire le occlusive, e quelle leni e sonore, cioè le nasali: infatti, le articolazioni delle medie (*iṭaiyiṇam*) del tamīl non sono né delle occlusive né delle nasali, ma delle approssimanti (/y/ [j], /v/ [v] e /l/ [ɭ]), delle laterali (/l/ [l] e /l/ [ɭ]) e una monovibrante (/r/ [ɾ]), quindi, secondo la prospettiva di Tolkāppiyāṇār, non sono né forti, né leni, ma una via di mezzo.

⁷ Si confrontino le giuste considerazioni fatte in proposito da Lisker (1958, 301): «The contrasting sets which Tamil orthography renders by *p t ṭ k* and *pp tt ṭt kk* differ in closure duration, to be sure, but this may be considered a concomitant of the other phonetic dimensions which serve to separate the two sets: fricative vs. stop, flap vs. stop, and voiced-lenis vs. voiceless-fortis».

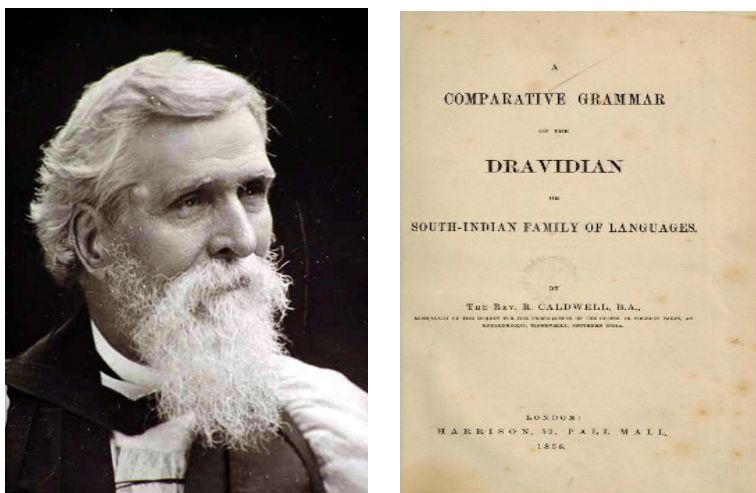


Figura 1 A sinistra Robert Caldwell, a destra la sua opera *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages* del 1856 dove egli enunciò la legge della «convertibilità delle sorde e delle sonore» in tamīl

Se la teoria esplicativa del grammatico indiano rispetto al modo di articolazione era comprensibile in termini di tensione e lassità, non altrettanto lo era la disposizione degli elementi fone(ma)tici del tamīl relativa al luogo di articolazione: le occlusive, secondo Tolkāppiyaṇār, sarebbero state sei di numero, che egli nel *sūtra* 19 del suo trattato grammaticale esponeva in sequenza, iniziando con la velare *k*, per passare alla palatoalveolare *c*, quindi alla postalveolare retroflessa *ṭ*, poi alla dentale *t*, alla labiale *p* per finire con un elemento distintivo rotato (*rhotic*) *r* il cui suono, contrassegnato dalla lettera *ṛ*, venne definito dallo stesso Caldwell in perfetta conformità con la terminologia grammaticale grecolatina come «forte e ruvido» (*strong rough r*), quasi fosse una specie di *P/p* con spirito 'aspro', al fine di distinguerlo dal suono identificato dalla lettera *ṛ*, il quale venne chiamato dal reverendo-linguista «morbido» (*soft r*) (Caldwell 1856, 60) come una sorta di *p* con spirito 'dolce' e che era invece attribuito dal grammatico tamilico alla serie delle «medie» sono(ran)ti non nasali. Tutte queste affermazioni di Tolkāppiyaṇār crearono un notevole sconcerto tra i linguisti occidentali, poiché non si ravvisa generalmente nella pronuncia del tamīl standard una differenza tra la /r/ «aspra» e quella «lene», entrambe le quali si realizzano o come polivibranti [r] o come monovibranti [r] alveolari.⁸ stante ciò, non si poteva quindi

⁸ Zvelebil (1970, 96): «The *phonetic* nature of the (graphic) *r* in contemporary continental Tamil is still a matter of dispute. According to Firth, there is no contrast between (graphic)

concepire come la /r/ *strong rough* potesse essere considerata dal grammatico tamilico alla stessa stregua di un'occlusiva *tout court*; a complicare le cose si aggiungeva la circostanza per cui, a differenza della /r/ «lene» (ṛ) che non si trova mai geminata, la /r/ «aspra», la cui lettera tamilica ṛ viene solitamente contrassegnata con <r> (ma anche con <R>),⁹ può esserlo in un contesto intervocalico, nel qual caso la migliore pronuncia è quella di un'occlusiva alveolare sorda intensa con soluzione monovibrata (*tapped*),¹⁰ ossia <rr> (ṛ ṛ) → [t:r]/V__V, così come appare ad un'accurata analisi fonetica.¹¹ questo tipo di nesso consonantico si ritrova anche quando la lettera ṛ è preceduta dalla lettera ண், la quale indica in tutti gli altri contesti un suono nasale alveolare [n] (si veda tam. டுபாண் *poṇ* [poṇ] 'oro'), così che la sequenza alfabetica ண்ṛ viene resa, in una pronuncia di un registro «alto», come [ndr] → <ṇr>.¹² L'auctoritas scientifica della

r and *r* in pronunciation; initially, the sound is a voiced fricative (sometimes of two taps), intervocalically a two-tap voiced fricative. According to Švarný, Zvelebil (1955), the difference between *r* and *r* is only a graphic distinction, the actual pronunciation of both being identical. These authors have described it as the lower apical vibrant. According to Mervart (1929) and Beythan (1943) there is, however, some difference between *r* and *r* in pronunciation. M. Shanmugam Pillai (1960) also states a contrast between one-flap *r* and the geminate continuant *r* in ST (standard literary Tamil). I am now inclined more than ever to think that in most dialects of spoken continental Ta., and in the idiolects of most speakers of common Ta. (CT), there is *no* contrast at all between the two in actual pronunciation»; Subrahmanyam (1983, 345-6): «In the older stages of the three literary languages, Tamil, Kannaḍa, and Telugu, the trill *r* (< *ṛ) was generally kept distinct from the flap *r* but in the modern standard colloquials it fell together with the latter. However, the Kanyakumari dialect (and probably the Jaffna dialect) of Tamil and the Kannaḍa dialect spoken by the Soliga tribe in the Biligirirangan hills still keep them apart as do modern Malayalam, Toda and Koṇḍa. Evidence from the inscriptions in the three languages, Tamil, Kannaḍa and Telugu indicates that in the spoken varieties of these, *r* merged with *r* at a very early time although they were kept distinct by and large in the written form. In one 12th century Tamil inscription, *nirutta* for *nirutta* 'that which was established' occurs and this indicates that even by the 12th century *r* was confused with *r* in spoken Tamil (see Shanmugam 1968, 88). Such confusion occurs in inscriptions from the 10th century onwards».

9 Come fa Tuttle 1937.

10 Sulla differenza articolatoria tra suoni polivibranti *trills* ('trilli') e monovibranti *flaps* ('scatti' o 'strusci') e *taps* ('battiti' o 'colpi') si rinvia a Mioni 1986, 44-4 e soprattutto a Malmberg 1977, 183-8 e a Ladefoged, Johnson 2015⁷, 186-9 [Ladefoged 2001⁴, 150-2]; per la differenza fra *trills* e laterali si rimanda a Ladefoged, Cochran, Disner 1977.

11 Si veda Balasubramanian 1982, 91, 93.

12 Sui nessi nasale più occlusiva si rimanda a Kumaraswami Raja 1969. La pronuncia comune di ṛṛ e ṇṛ è, rispettivamente, quella alveolare [t:] e [nd] o postalveolare retroflessa [t:] e [ṇd], si veda Subrahmanyam 1983, 350, 352, laddove quella originaria [t:r] e [ndr] è ormai rarissima in quanto antica, si veda Caldwell 1856, 109: «'r', when doubled, is pronounced as 'tr', though written 'rr.' [...] the compound 'nr' acquires the sound of 'ndr'»; le pronunce originarie [t:r] e [ndr] di, rispettivamente, ṛṛ e ṇṛ sono quelle della nostra cara amica Florence Jayaseeli Paul, originaria di Vellore in Tamil Nāḍu ma residente a Roma, che è stata per molti anni la nostra insegnante di tamil e, in definitiva, il nostro Mentore per la migliore dizione di questa lingua dravidica.

tradizione grammaticale indigena tamilica, al pari di quella indiana relativa alle lingue arie antiche come il sanscrito e il vedico, non venne messa in dubbio dai più avveduti studiosi moderni occidentali, dato che essa veniva addirittura ritenuta come un'antesignana della moderna fonologia occidentale dal punto teorico: il sistema alfabetico tamil e la speculazione linguistica del *Tolkāppiyam* sembravano avessero colto la qualità eminentemente fonematica e addirittura arcifonematica del lingua tamil, con la sua non rilevazione grafica del tratto fonetico della sonorità e della fricatività,¹³ un fatto che non mancò di essere notato – con un certo stupore, invero – dai più attenti teorici di fonologia del XX secolo (Jones 1967³, 23);¹⁴ purtuttavia, se la differenziazione seriale operata da *Tolkāppiyānār* tra «forti» occlusive e «leni» nasali risulta simmetrica e giustificata dal punto di vista fonetico *stricto sensu*, il parallelismo tra queste due serie e quella delle «medie» sonanti sembra non esserci; infatti, secondo l'autore del *Tolkāppiyam*, «le lettere forti si dicono *k, c, ṭ e t, p, r*»,¹⁵ le «leni si dicono *ṇ, ñ, ṇ e n, m, ṇ*»¹⁶ mentre quelle «medie si dicono *y, r, l e v, ḷ, ḷ*»¹⁷ e pertanto vi sarebbe questa ripartizione in tre livelli:

13 Zvelebil (1970, 82): «This situation (namely that intervocalic voiced stops are regular, phonologically conditioned, positional allophones of one series of stop-phonemes, in complementary distribution with voiceless initial stops) was obviously well understood by those who first devised or adapted the Tamil system of writing; they had a clear conception of the basic principles of the phoneme and its positional variants, and Tamil orthography is truly and fully phonemic in this respect [Zvelebil (1970, 82, nota 8): «On the other hand, those who disagree with the hypothesis of one series of stops, voiceless initially and voiced intervocalically (i.e. those who consider the state of affairs as reflected in e.g. *Te.* and *Ka.* as the original situation) obviously doubt the ingenuity of ancient Tamil grammarians and their ability to solve fundamental phonemic problems; but they themselves seem to be, at the same time, too much under the spell of the Tamil graphemic system. In this connection, cf. F.B.J. Kuiper, «Two Problems of Old Tamil phonology»[1958], p. 216: «...nothing prevents our assuming that the grammarians of Old Tamil, while using (like the comparativists of the first decades of the 19th century) the term 'letter' (*eḷuttu*) to denote both a symbol and the sound represented by it, practically operated with (the)... concept' of the phoneme. Cf. also Daniel Jones, *The Phoneme, Its Nature and Use*, p. 23: «Those who originally invented this (i.e. Tamil, KZ) orthography must have had a clear conception of the phoneme idea, though the theory has never been formulated»]».

14 Jones 1967³, 23, citato nella nota precedente.

15 *Tol. E.* 19: *Valleḷut t-eppa ka-ca-ṭa ta-pa-ra* (tam. வல்லெழுத் தென்ப கசட தபற), in Subrahmanya Sastri 1928, 3.

16 *Tol. E.* 20: *Melleḷut t-eṇṇa ṇa-ñ-a-ṇa na-ma-ṇa* (tam. மெல்லெழுத் தென்ப னுண்ணுமன), in Subrahmanya Sastri 1928, 4.

17 *Tol. E.* 21: *Itaiyeḷut t-eṇṇa ya-ra-la va-ḷa-ḷa* (tam. இடையெழுத் தென்ப யரல வழன), in Subrahmanya Sastri 1928, 4.

	velare	palato- alveolare	postalveolare retroflesso	dentale	labiale	alveolare polivibrante
occlusive	/K/[k]	/C/[tʃ]	/T/[t]	/T/[t̪]	/P/[p]	/R/[r]
nasali	/N/[ŋ]	/Ṇ/[ɲ]	/ṇ/[ɳ]	/ṇ/[ṇ]	/m/[m]	/N/[n]
	palatale approssimante	postalveolare monovibrante	alveolare laterale non retroflessa	labiodentale approssimante	postalveolare approssimante retroflesso	postalveolare laterale retroflessa
sonanti	/y/[j]	/r/[r]	/l/[l]	/v/[v]	/ɭ/[ɭ]	/ɻ/[ɻ]

Come è possibile notare, Tolkāppiyaṇār nei *sūtrāḥ* 19 e 20, cioè quelli relativi alle occlusive e alle nasali, presenta le lettere, cioè i suoni, secondo la loro articolazione in una progressione che va dal luogo più posteriore del cavo orale, nella fattispecie quello velare, al luogo più anteriore, che è quello labiale, con eccezione dell'enigmatica *r* «aspra» la quale sembra al di fuori di ogni localizzazione intraorale o extraorale:¹⁸ sembra logico supporre che questa azione, per così dire, discriminatoria da parte del grammatico indiano fosse dovuta ad una specifica caratteristica dell'articolazione della vibrante, la quale avrebbe dovuto avere il tratto peculiare dell'occlusività; dato che il nesso /NR/ (= <nr>) e la geminata /RR/ (= <rr>) avevano come resa fonetica, rispettivamente, [ndr] e [t:r], è lecito dedurre che quello contrassegnato dalla lettera tamīlica ṇ fosse, ad un dipresso, */tʃ/, cioè il suono di un'occlusiva alveolare sorda con soluzione monovibrata (eventualmente anch'essa sorda, ossia */tʃ/), il quale non sarebbe stato attestato poiché l'arcifonema vibrante occlusivo /R/, così come la vibrante sonante /r/ indicata dalla lettera ṛ, non ricorre mai all'inizio di parola in tamīl: questo particolare suono «forte», quindi, compariva solo se l'elemento era geminato (quindi con un'articolazione intensa) oppure se si trovava dopo nasale (nel qual caso era sonoro), mentre in posizione intervocalica si leniva, in un certo senso «fricativizzandosi», e perdendo così la sua occlusività si mutava in una polivibrante sonora [r], ossia /R/ → [r]/V__V, la quale è effettivamente il modo normativo di esprimere la lettera ṇ (= <r>) nel registro alto del tamīl, dove la realizzazione fonetica come monovibrante sonora [r] è riservata alla pronuncia della lettera ṛ (= <r>), realizzandosi così l'opposizione /R/ vs r/ [r vs r], si veda tam. அறை *arai* [araj] 'camera' vs tam. அரை *arai* [araj]

18 Una siffatta disposizione delle occlusive era chiaramente ripresa dal sistema fonologico sanscrito, si veda Staal 1962.

'metà'.¹⁹ Con tale ricostruzione del suono occlusivo alveolare con metastasi vibrata *[tr], l'arcifonema /R/, ovvero la *strong r*, trova la sua ragion d'essere come elemento distintivo separato da tutti gli altri suoni forti del tamīl riguardo al luogo di articolazione, inquantoché il modo di articolazione è complesso tanto quanto quello dell'elemento /C/, il quale ha una resa affricata palatoalveolare [tʃ] in posizione 'forte' che in definitiva altro non è se non un'occlusiva alveolare palatalizzata [tʲ] con soluzione fricativa palatoalveolare (o postalveolare) [ʃ].²⁰ Tolkāppiyāṇār, e al suo séguito tutti i grammatici dell'India meridionale, dovrà aver sentito il suono complesso della lettera ṛ come un *unicum* nel suo genere – come di fatto è –,²¹ il quale pertanto non era rapportabile ad alcun altro suono delle articolazioni «forti», così come non era rapportabile ad alcun suono «lene» la corrispondente nasale ṇ (= /ṇ/), per la quale, se la *r* «aspra» aveva una resa *[tr], bisognerebbe ipotizzare per analogia come realizzazione fonetica originaria quella di una nasale alveolare con soluzione vibrata *[nr], divenuta poi una semplice nasale alveolare [n] in forza di un processo di semplificazione verificatosi nel nesso ṇṛ (= <ṇr>), sarebbe a dire /NR/ *[nrdr] > [ndr],²² va

19 La stessa opposizione si verifica in malayāḷam, si veda Ladefoged 1971, 50-1. Zvelebil (1970, 97): «There are, nevertheless, speakers who make a distinction between *r* and *ṛ*, consciously aiming at a 'pure', 'classical', 'correct' pronunciation of Ta., and these speakers have, in my opinion, one postdental to alveolar apical flap 'one-tap' *r* (graphic *r*) and another postalveolar to cacuminal apical trill 'two-tap' *r* (graphic *r* < *t), a continuant, the difference between the two being both in quality and duration. Tuttavia se si considera che anche ad un registro alto non esiste l'arcifonema /R/ ma solo il fonema polivibrante /r/ [r], la rappresentazione fonemica per la geminata al posto di /RR/ [t:r] dovrebbe essere /r:r/ con la regola /r/ → [t:] (o, meglio, [tː])/_ __r, dove per [tː] si intende la catastasi o tenuta di un'articolazione occlusiva alveolare sorda intensa.

20 Secondo Meile (1943-45, 74), l'arcifonema /C/ avrebbe nella pronuncia moderna e standard del tamīl una resa fricativa dentale [ʃ], «forse leggermente prepalatale» (Meile (1943-45, 74, nota 1): «peut-être légèrement chuintante») anche in posizione iniziale, cioè «forte».

21 L'elemento/dr/ postulato in sumerico (si confronti Bauer 1975) è di fatto ipotetico.

22 Pavaṇanti Muṇivar (tam. பவணந்தி முனிவர், *floruit* circa 1178-1214), l'autore del *Naṇṇūl* (tam. நன்னூல்), l'opera grammaticale sudindiana più importante dopo il *Tolkāppiyam*, nel *sūtra* 86 enuncia: «Toccando abbondantemente la punta della lingua contro il palato vengono i suoni *r* e *ṇ*» (*aṇṇam nuṇi-nā ṇaṇi urṇ ra ṇa varum*, tam. அண்ணம் நுனி நா நனி உறின்ற ன வரும்); Ramaswami Aiyar (1931, 179) traduce: «*R* and *n* are produced when the tongue-tip is closely attached to the palate» e a tal proposito Vijayavenugopal (1968, 177-8) fa alcune considerazioni in merito: «Lastly comes the description of /r/ and /ṇ/. With reference to the other stops he has used only the word 'urā'. He wants to contrast /r/ and /ṛ/. Probably by his time the /r/ has become a trill. The palate and the front part of the tongue come into greater contact ('*ṇaṇi urṇ*') for articulating /r/ and /ṇ/. There is no mention of the curling up of the tongue. It is significant that even with reference to the pronunciation of /t/ which must have become cerebral in his time, he does not mention the word '*aṇartal*' a retroflexion of the tongue. This because he is following Tolkāppiyam». Invero, a noi sembra chiaro che il termine avverbale *ṇaṇi* 'abbondantemente' (si veda *Tamil Lexicon*, 1924-36, IV, 2192: «Well, abundantly») utilizzato da Pavaṇanti nel *sūtra* 86 – che ricorda molto la

comunque detto che la ricostruzione di un suono del tipo *[nr] per **ன்** non sarebbe strettamente necessaria, inquantoché detta lettera tamilica connota nel nesso /NR/ l'arcifonema nasale la cui resa fonetica è un'articolazione nasalizzata omorganica dell'articolazione occlusiva successiva, ossia /N/ → [+ nasale¹]/__Occl.¹, dove è ovvio che per [+ nasale¹] nel caso specifico si intende la catastasi o tenuta di un'occlusiva alveolare nasale [n^o]:²³ da ciò si deduce che probabilmente il suono normativo del fonema /n/ fosse stato sempre e ovunque quello di una nasale alveolare [n], come sembra dimostrare la geminata **ன்ன** (= /nn/) che in tamil ha come realizzazione fonetica un suono nasale alveolare intenso non vibrato [n:] (si veda tam. கன்னம் *kaṇṇam* [kannam] 'guancia', prestito da sanscr. कर्ण *karna*, dove *nn* = *rn*!) e non uno vibrato del tipo *[n:r], attuandosi così una perfetta simmetria fonemico-fonetica tra l'opposizione /R/ vs *n*/ [*tr vs n] e quella /C/ vs *ñ*/ [ʈ vs ɲ], dove l'*affricata* palatoalveolare forte aveva come *pendant* «lene» un elemento nasale dalla semplice articolazione consonantica palatale [ɲ] senza metastasi fricativa e non un suono complesso quale poteva essere un'*affricata* sonora nasalizzata *[ɖʒ].

A tali considerazioni di puro buon senso che confermano la bontà delle interpretazioni e delle analisi dei grammatici antichi indiani si è opposta la ristretta prospettiva ermeneutica *more geometrico demonstrata* dei glottologi occidentali moderni, i quali non hanno colto minimamente le importanti informazioni sulle esclusive proprietà fonetiche e acustiche dei suoni del tamil²⁴ che provenivano loro dal *Tolkāppiyam* in modo forse troppo subliminale per essere comprese, preferendo invece supporre per la lettera tamilica **ṛ** il suono «forte» originario di un'occlusiva alveolare sorda */t/, usualmente trascritta con il segno <ṛ> in totale conformità grafica con quello <r>, suono

definizione μάλιστα δὲ σειομένην usata da Platone *Cratylus* 426e per indicare la vibrante greca - non possa riferirsi che all'occlusione ripetuta dovuta ai battiti della punta della lingua sulla zona postalveolare, da cui si evince che il grammatico sudindiano intendesse probabilmente per *r* e *n* un'articolazione occlusiva con metastasi o soluzione vibrata.

23 Anche in questo caso se si ritiene che pure in un registro alto non vi sia l'arcifonema /R/ ma solo il fonema polivibrante /r/ [r], la rappresentazione fonemica dovrà essere /NR/ con la regola /N/ → [n] (o, meglio, [n^o:])/__r.

24 La realizzazione della *r* tamil come occlusiva con soluzione vibrata è stata da noi già indicata cursoriamente ben ventisei anni fa in modo leggermente diverso, in De Martino (1997, 30, nota 58): «A nostro avviso, le pronunzie Tamil dei nessi *rr* e *nr* sembrano essere conservative di uno stato originario PDr: si può ipotizzare che il fonema [-sonorante] ricostruito PDr */t/ avesse una realizzazione *[tʀ], ovvero fosse un'occlusiva alveolare con soluzione vibrata sorda, la quale poi in posizione intervocalica avesse una resa 'lenita' *[ɾ], ovvero divenisse una vibrante fricativa sonora come il suono del fonema ceco /ř/; successivamente, in Tamil l'allofono 'lene' *[ɾ] dovrebbe essere stato attratto dal fonema [+sonorante] /r/ [r], laddove le altre lingue dravidiche avrebbero perso la soluzione vibrata di */t/, ossia */t/ > *[tʀ] > [t]».

che essi ricavano dalla comparazione con le altre lingue dravidiche, dove alla *strong r* corrisponde effettivamente detta ostruente, si veda tam. *parru* 'afferrare', koda *paṭ-* 'id';²⁵ al contempo costoro hanno valorizzato l'attuale pronuncia delle sequenze alfabetiche *ṛṛ* e *ṇṇ* nel moderno tamīl standard, la quale è, rispettivamente, [t:] e [n:~ŋ:].²⁶ L'occlusiva alveolare */t/ [t] sarebbe stata così il fonema protodravidico²⁷ da cui sarebbe provenuta la *r* del tamīl in forza di

25 Sul protofonema */t/ e sugli esempi terminologici delle diverse lingue dravidiche storiche messi in comparazione per ricostruirlo si rimanda a Zvelebil 1970, 94-100. Lo studio linguistico-comparativo che ha determinato la convinzione presso i dravidologi che la lettera tamilica *ṛ* (traslitterata *r*) contrassegnasse in origine un'occlusiva alveolare */t/ [t] è quello di L.V. Ramaswami Aiyar (1895-1948), in un saggio di ben 83 pagine complessive apparso in due riprese sul *The Journal of Madras University* dal titolo «The History of the Tamil-Malayalam Alveolar Plosive», nel 1936 e nel 1937 il quale rappresenta l'ampliamento di due studi brevi precedenti, il primo del 1929 («Notes on Dravidian II. IV. Alveolar d e tt in Tamil-Malayālam») e il secondo del 1931 («Notes on Dravidian. The r-sound of Dravidian»); in questo monumentale studio, tuttavia, appare evidente come il suo autore partisse dal presupporre *a priori* un fonema alveolare occlusivo protodravidico */t/ (già ipotizzato in Venkatarama Aiyar (1920, lxxxiv)) e poi utilizzasse le varie attestazioni fonemiche corrispondenti nelle lingue dravidiche storiche per suffragare quell'elemento originario preconstituito - il che è contrario alla buona prassi comparativa -, mentre non dava alcuna spiegazione soddisfacente dal punto di vista fonetico circa le presunte evoluzioni Protodrav. */t/ [t:] > [t:r] → tam. *rr* e Protodrav. */Nt/ [ndr] > [n:~ŋ:] → tam. *nr*: tale deprecabile metodologia è in un certo senso comprensibile, visto che Ramaswami Aiyar non era un glottologo ma un professore di inglese, nella fattispecie al Maharajah's College di Ernakulam, e il suo background culturale era propriamente quello di geologo e di avvocato, professione che praticò prima di diventare docente, si veda Krishnamurti 1969, 314.

26 Come osserva Subrahmaniam (1983, 350, 352), è interessante notare che la pronuncia [t:] e [n:~ŋ:] per, rispettivamente, *ṛṛ* e *ṇṇ*, è quella per *nt* e *tt* del malayālam, una lingua dravidica che deriva dal tamīl (precisamente dalla fase iniziale del tamīl medio) e non dal Protodravidico, come lo stesso Ramaswami Aiyar afferma, in Ramaswami Aiyar 1936, 143-8: «On the whole, except for a very few archaisms [...], the features of Mal[ayālam] morphology are directly related to or immediately derivable from, a stage of speech corresponding to what may now be described as Early Middle Tamil» (148). Per Zvelebil (1970, 97) nella maggior parte delle lingue dravidiche il nesso alveolare Protodr. **nt* (= tam. /NR/) è divenuto dentale *nt* [nt̪] o retroflesso *nd* [nd̪], si confronti anche Zvelebil 1970, 100.

27 Subrahmaniam (1983, 344-5): «There is conclusive evidence to say that the alveolar trill *r* of Old Tamil, Malayalam, Old Kannaḍa and Old Telugu was a plosive (**t*) in Proto-Dravidian (Ramaswami Aiyar (1937); Bh. Krishnamurti (1961, 44). Apart from the languages listed above, the trill *r* is still preserved as distinct from the flap *r* in Toda (in which it is a voiceless trill) and in Konda. The following are evidence that the sound concerned was originally a plosive; 1. Like plosives and unlike non-plosives it occurs in post-nasal position, i.e. in the combination Ta. -*nr*- (<**nt*-). Kota and Toda still retain the plosive pronunciation of it in this combination. 2. In Old Tamil, it takes the enunciative vowel like the other stops (note that *Tolka:ppiyam*, *Eluttatika:ram*, sutra 19 considers *r* as a *valleluttu* i.e. plosive along with *k*, *c*, *ṭ*, *t* and *p*). In other words, *r*, like the other plosives does not occur word-finally without the enunciative vowel. 3. Malayalam still retains the original (alveolar) plosive pronunciation of it in gemination. Kota and Toda also retain the plosive pronunciation of the original geminate although the gemination is simplified in them. Additionally, as has been pointed out above, these two languages have preserved the plosive in the combination (*sic*) *-*nt*- in the shape of -*nd*-. Irula, Pa:lu

(non meglio determinati) mutamenti fonetici evolutivi,²⁸ ma, invero, tutta questa ridda di speculazioni che ha portato i dravidologi ad ipotizzare un tale elemento primitivo è stata permessa unicamente da un *argumentum ex silentio*, cioè dal fatto che in tamīl (e nelle altre lingue dravidiche) la *strong r* scempia non compare mai in posizione iniziale «forte» di fronte a vocale dove, realizzandosi necessariamente come sorda, essa avrebbe costituito così una prova privilegiata e definitiva per ricostruire un protofonema o con un suono */t/ o con uno */tr/. Ma soprattutto, nell'operare tutto ciò, i comparatisti occidentali non si sono avveduti del fatto che la loro ipotesi ricostruttiva andava contro il dettato dei grammatici, finendo col rendere contraddittorie le asserzioni di Tolkāppiyāṇār molto più di quanto a loro non sembrassero: parrebbe illogico, infatti, che il grammatico indiano avesse posto nella sua progressione della serie delle lettere «forti» la *t *dopo* la labiale p qualora il suo suono fosse stato quello alveolare [t], poiché in tal caso l'accorto autore del *Tolkāppiyam*, dall'orecchio fine – e filologico –, avrebbe collocato logicamente la *t fra l'articolazione postalveolare retroflessa ɖ [ɖ] e quella dentale t [t]. Inoltre, i linguisti moderni hanno

Kurumba, Beṭṭa Kurumba and Paniyan also have retained ɾ (< *t) and ɖ (< *tt) without merger (so Zvelebil 1980, 18-19). 4. In the post-nasal position and in doubling, it merges with other plosives (dental, retroflex and even palatal) in many languages (see below). This type of merger with some other plosive even when it is non-geminated is found in Tuḷu, Kolami, Naiki (Chanda) and in Parji. As has been observed by Krishnamurti (1961: 31) the change of the original alveolar plosive to a trill is part of the general process of weakening or spirantization of plosives in the intervocalic position (see 20.2.); It (*sic*) must have taken place in the later stages of Proto-Dravidian itself because the trill occurs in the majority of the daughter languages'; Zvelebil (1970, 97-8): «We may therefore conclude: ɾ and r are different phonemes in PDr (i.e. *t: *r), but they have merged and lost contrast completely in continental Tamil, Kannaḍa, Telugu and some Ma. dialects, further in Ko. Koḍ. Br., partly in Tu. Kol. Nk. Go. Kui, Kuvi, Kur. and Malto. The original phonetic difference between ɾ and r, after it became a voiced trill in late PDr (or early PSDr?), seems to have been one of a trill continuant versus a single flap».

28 Secondo il dravidologo ceco Kamil Zvelebil (1927-2009) questa sarebbe stata la situazione fonologica delle occlusive nel Protodravidico con i processi fonetici storici di spirantizzazione ovvero di lenizione, Zvelebil (1970, 81):

	/k/	/c/	/t/	/t/	/t/	/p/
pos. iniziale	[k]	[tʃ]*	–	–	[t]	[p]
pos. intervoc.	[g → γ]	*[dʒ] ~ [ʃ → j]	[d]	[d → ɾ]	[d → ð]	[b → β → v]
	↳ [h]: [γ]	↳ [s]: [j]		↳ [r]: [ɾ]	↳ [θ] sporad.	↳ [v]
	↳ [x]: [γ]					↳ [φ] sporad.
	↳ [y]: [ç]					

dove il mutamento [d → ɾ] di */t/ protodravidico sarebbe una specie di lenizione come quella di [d > r] in latino arcaico, si veda Zvelebil (1970, 79-80): «Also, the weakening of Pdr alveolar stop *t to a trill in all Sdr languages may probably be regarded as an additional proof»; peraltro Zvelebil in tale contesto attua un parallelismo tra lenizione dravidica e quella celtica citando proprio le teorie di Martinet sulla lenizione in romanzo e in celtico, in Martinet (1970, 81, nota 7): «There might have been a direct connection between the frequency of geminates and the 'lenition' (weakening of intervocalic consonants) as in Gaulish, cf. A. Martinet, *A Functional View of Languages*, [Oxford 1962,] p. 147 [= Martinet (1984², 203-4, cap. V: «L'evoluzione linguistica»)]».

trascurato l'importanza delle pronunce del registro alto relative alla *strong r* le quali sono invece da considerarsi conservative di uno stadio antico del tamil, non tenendo in alcun conto la realizzazione [t:r] della geminata *rr* (= *ந்ந்*) la cui origine non viene affatto spiegata (è più logica un'evoluzione fonetica semplificativa quale *[t:r] > [t:] che una inversa (di che natura?) come *[t:] > [t:r]!)²⁹ e dando delle estemporanee soluzioni *ad hoc* alla resa fonetica [ndr] del nesso *nr* (= *ன்ற்*), dove si è ritenuto che vi fosse l'epentesi di un suono occlusivo omorganico alla vibrante alveolare nella sequenza *[nr], un fenomeno simile a quello dell'intrusione del suono dentale occlusivo in *ἀνδρός* (< **ἀνρός*),³⁰ gen. sing. di *ἀνής*, si veda lat. *Nero*, sanscr. *narah*. Quel che è più deprecabile, tuttavia, è che da parte di *tutti* (!) gli studiosi che si sono occupati della ricostruzione del sistema fonologico protodravidico si è ignorata totalmente la testimonianza dello stesso Tolkāppiyāṇār relativa alle caratteristiche fonetiche dei quattro elementi *r*, *r*, *n* e *l* i quali venivano da costui tutti accomunati dal luogo di articolazione,³¹ nella fattispecie nella parte anteriore del palato ovvero (post)alveolare, e differenziati tra loro per il modo di articolazione, ora dall'occlusività (*r* e *n*)³² ora dalla non occlusività (*r* e *l*):³³ orbene, la presenza della monovibrante /r/ [r] è

29 Ramaswami Aiyar (1929, 145): «The origin of Tamil-Malayālam *t* has to be traced to certain ancient phonological changes still peculiar to this group of languages. *r* (alveolar) and *r* (the latter much more than the latter) are sometimes pronounced with a certain amount of trilling in Tamil and Malayālam, and in this process of trilling, an alveolar *t* and, rarely, a retroflex *ṭ* are incorporated. This was presumably so common a feature of ancient Tamil that even when *r* occurred singly it was sometimes pronounced as *tr* or *dr* (corsivo nostro)»; è incredibile come lo studioso indiano non abbia tratto le dovute conseguenze dalla sua ultima asserzione, cioè che il fonema originario del tamil fosse non una semplice occlusiva alveolare momentanea [t], ma una a soluzione mono [tr] o polivibrata [tr].

30 Zvelebil (1970, 97, nota 21): «The modern Ta. high standard and formal pronunciation of the cluster (graphic) -*nr*- < **nt*-, i.e. alveolar [ndr] may be either a preservation of the pronunciation of -*r*- < **t*- as an alveol. plosive following the homorganic nasal plus [r], i.e. [nd] + [r], a kind of hypercorrectness, influenced by the grapheme -*r*-, or a secondary development of the plosive, the later insertion of occlusion, after **t*- [d] was 'weakened' (lenition) to -*r*- [-r-], i.e. **nr*- [nr] → [ndr], a phenomenon analogical to the Greek *ἀνής* - *ἀνδρός*, or the Germ. *minder* < Mhd. *minner*, or the Fr. *moindre*, etc.».

31 Si veda l'analisi dei relativi *sūtrāḥ* da parte di Vijayavenugopal (1968, 168-70).

32 Tol. P. 94: «Quando la punta della lingua avvicinandosi in alto *tocca* il palato,/ allora dolcemente si producono i suoni [r] e [n]» (*aṇari nṇi-nā aṇṇam orṭa/ rahkāṇ ṇahkāṇ āyiraṇṭum piraṅkum*, tam. அணரி நுனி நா அண்ணம் ஒற்ற/ நஃகான் னஃகான் ஆயிரண்டும் பிறக்கும்), in Subrahmanya Sastri (1928, 13) e Ramaswami Aiyar (1931, 178).

33 Tol. P. 95: «Quando la punta della lingua avvicinandosi verso l'alto *sfrega* il palato,/ allora dolcemente si producono i suoni [r] e [ṛ]» (*nṇi-nā aṇari aṇṇam varuṭa/ rakāra lakāram āyiraṇṭum piraṅkum*; tam. நுனி நா அணரி அண்ணம் வருட/ ரகார ழகாரம் ஆயிரண்டும் பிறக்கும்), in Subrahmanya Sastri (1928, 13) e Ramaswami Aiyar (1931, 178) e Subrahmanyam (1983, 427, nota 5). Secondo Ramaswami Aiyar (1935, 146): «[i] t is difficult to see from a present-day stand point (i) why *r* and *l* should be clubbed together with regard to their manner of production, (ii) there is any "gentle rubbing" at all in the production of *l* which (as evaluated to-day in Tamil) involves no 'rubbing'».

la prova inequivocabile che questo piccolo raggruppamento fonetico fosse per l'autore del *Tolkāppiyam* una sorta di «miniserie *rhotic*»³⁴ dove il suono del fonema sonoro /l/, la cui realizzazione fonetica standard è quella di un'approssimante postalveolare retroflessa [ɭ], veniva presentata alla stregua di una monovibrante retroflessa [ɾ], la quale viene ritenuta effettivamente dai tamilofoni nativi come una variante della corretta pronuncia di *l* (= *ḷ*)!³⁵ Peraltro, il fatto che nessuno dei suddetti quattro elementi si trovi in tamīl e nelle altre lingue dravidiche in posizione iniziale di parola³⁶ (tranne in casi seriori

of the tip», da cui si deduce che il dravidologo indiano non avesse affatto compreso che con il «gentile sfregamento» *Tolkāppiyaṇār* si riferiva all'unico veloce battito della punta (retroflessa o no) della lingua sulla zona postalveolare nelle articolazioni delle monovibranti: infatti il verbo *varuṭu-tal* significa 'accarezzare' (si veda *Tamil Lexicon* (1982, VI, 3520): «To rub; to massage»), ma anche 'battere o far vibrare uno strumento musicale' (si confronti Winslow 1862, 919: «to beat or thrum a musical instrument»).

34 Su come i suoni *rhotics* siano percepiti come una classe fonologica naturale si veda Howson, Monahan 2019; in generale per questi elementi fonetici si rimanda ad Howson 2018 e a Wiese 2011.

35 Zvelebil (1970, 148-9): «Švarný and Zvelebil (*Archiv Orientální*, 1955) have described Ta. *l* as a 'higher apical vibrant' in opposition to *r*, a 'lower apical vibrant' (the statement is accompanied by a number of palatograms, linguograms and roentgenograms, showing the articulation of retroflexes in Ta., Te. and Hindustani). Taking into account these and others data, it seems that 1. the phoneme is definitely not a lateral; 2. the reflex of */ɾ/ in the older stages of the literary languages was a kind of retroflex fricative; 3. the phonetic value of *l* in modern Ta. and Ma. seems to range from retracted voiced fricative (what I have elsewhere designated by the symbol [ʁ] [sic: per [ɭ]]) to retroflex voiced vibrant [ɾ]. These two variants of *l* (which I would, in a phonemic inventory of Ta. -Ma., prefer to symbolize by /ɾ/) are considered by the Tamil and Ma. speakers themselves as the standard, 'correct' pronunciation (corsivo nostro)». Va ricordato che secondo i grammatici nordindiani la vibrante sanscrita sia sillabica *r̥* (= ऋ) che asillabica *r* (= ॠ) poteva avere una pronuncia retroflessa [ɾ] oltre a quella alveolare [r], si veda Allen 1953, 53-5 e De Martino 1997, 28-38, il quale ha ipotizzato per la resa retroflessa della vibrante sanscrita un'interferenza della pronuncia dravidica sull'elemento fonemico della lingua indoaria, un fatto già intuito dai glottologi del XIX secolo, si confronti Vinson 1903, 19: «Le *ṛ* est prononcé dans toute sa pureté, paraît-il, par les வெள்ளாழர் *veḷḷājar* 'propriétaires-cultivateurs' de l'intérieur; c'est proprement, nous dit-on, un mélange de *j*, *l* et *r*. Beaucoup de linguistes supposent que c'était primitivement un *r* cérébral, le *ṛ* urdū ou *ṛ* hindī [Vinson (1903, 19), nota 1: «Les grammairiens indigènes disent que *ṛ* *l* et *ṛ* *ṛ* d'une part, *ṛ* *r* et *ṛ* *j* de l'autre, se prononcent de la même manière; les deux derniers sont produits, disent-ils, par le frottement de la pointe de la langue contre le palais»]. Sulla serie delle liquide in tamīl si rinvia agli studi di McDonough, Johnson (1997) e di Narayanan, Byrd, Kaun (1999) mentre sui suoni *rhotics* e sui fenomeni di rotacismo in diverse lingue si vedano Barry 1997 e Catford 2001.

36 Subrahmaniam (1983, 343) e Zvelebil (1970, 95): «Alveolar */t/ does not occur word-initially» e soprattutto Zvelebil (1970, 77): «No consonant of the alveolar or the cacuminal-retroflex series, i.e. *t*, *ṭ*, *r*, *ṛ*, *ṇ*, *ṇ̄*, *ṛ* begins a word in PDr», dove si notifica che anche la laterale *l* e la serie delle retroflesse presentano tale preclusione; secondo un ragionamento logico, a parte la serie delle retroflesse *t*, *ṭ* e *ṇ* (a cui potrebbe essere aggiunta la *l* come [ɭ], che infatti Zvelebil designa graficamente come <ɾ>), rimarrebbero la «liquida» laterale *l* e la «miniserie» *tolkāppiyaṇāriana* «liquida» *ṛ*, *ṇ*, *ṇ̄* nella sua realizzazione fonetica vibrante [ɾ], e *r*: dato che questi ultimi tre (o quattro) elementi non presentano alcuna cifra di «lateralità», è ovvio dedurre che fosse la loro «roticità», a costituire la caratteristica ostativa ad essere iniziali di parola, da cui si

di metatesi)³⁷ avrebbe dovuto indurre i comparatisti a ritenere che tale condizione potesse riferirsi probabilmente alla caratteristica *rhotic* di queste unità distintive, il che confermerebbe la legittimità del miniraggruppamento di Tolkāppiyaṇār. È ovvio, pertanto, che se si accoglie la nostra ipotesi di un originario suono occlusivo alveolare a metastasi vibrata */tr/ per la *r* (= ṛ) del tamil – la lingua più importante per la ricostruzione del sistema fonologico protodrauidico così come lo è per la ricostruzione di quello indoeuropeo il sanscrito –, allora per conseguenza logica si dovrebbe presupporre anche nella lingua comune protodrauidica un elemento fonemico (o arcifonemico, secondo la fonologia praghese o trubeckojiana) dalla medesima realizzazione fonetica complessa, che quindi potremmo rappresentare graficamente con il segno */tr/.³⁸ ciò non sarebbe una circostanza di poco conto a livello linguistico storico-comparativo, se si considera il fatto che, a quanto ne sappiamo, un'unità distintiva del genere sarebbe davvero un *unicum* nel panorama delle lingue naturali, vive e morte.

Per quanto riguarda il mancato parallelismo di luogo di articolazione degli elementi «forti» *k, c, ṭ, t, p, r* e «leni» *ṇ, ñ, ṇ, n, m, ṇ* con quelli «medi» *y, r, l, v, ḷ, ḷ* nel dettato del Tolkāppiyam, esso è in effetti rilevabile *ictu oculi*, ma, a nostro avviso, l'autore del trattato grammaticale non aveva voluto attuare alcuna corrispondenza tra le prime due serie e la terza: in quest'ultima l'intento di Tolkāppiyaṇār era in realtà quello di evidenziare una correlazione interna tra i suoi sei elementi costitutivi. Il grammatico sudindiano aveva infatti presentato nei suoi distici le tre serie degli elementi non vocalici mettendoli a gruppi di tre per ogni serie, ossia *k, c, ṭ* e *t, p, r* per le lettere «forti», quindi *ṇ, ñ, ṇ*, e *n, m, ṇ* per quelle «leni» e infine *y, r, l* e *v, ḷ, ḷ* per le lettere «medie»; in pratica, questo modo di unire gli elementi gli permetteva di evidenziare nella serie delle lettere «medie» due parti, ognuna delle quali iniziava con una semivocale a cui seguivano due liquide, la prima vibrante e la seconda laterale: la prima sezione era connotata

evince che tale posizione fosse interdotta a tutti i suoni retroflessi e «liquidi», ossia laterali e *rhotics*.

37 Si veda Subrahmaniam 1983, 231-2.

38 Per Zvelebil (1970, 96): «It would now seem that the best phonetic interpretation of */t/ for PDr would be voiced alveolar plosive (with probably slight friction)», dove appare evidente che il dravidologo ceco non si riferisse, con la cursoria quanto timida precisazione fonetica messa tra parentesi, ad un'esplosione vibrata come quella del suono [tr]: come per Pierre Meile riguardo alla sua alveolare «apicale» *R* del tamil dall'indefinito suono «spirante sonoro» in posizione intervocalica, anche per Zvelebil, con la sua occlusiva alveolare protodrauidica */t/ caratterizzata «probabilmente da una leggera frizione», dobbiamo rilevare un'imprecisione nella definizione fonetica dell'elemento fonemico ricostruito che si rivela alquanto sospetta, inquantoché la caratteristica vibratile o rotata della *strong r* tamilica è un dato che non può essere sottaciuto e tuttavia difficile ad essere spiegato a livello linguistico, sia sincronico che diacronico.

dal suono «chiaro» dell'approssimante palatale [j], dalla timbrica identica a quella del vocoide omorganico [i], la seconda, invece, era caratterizzata dal suono «scuro» dell'approssimante labiodentale [ʋ], dalla timbrica affine a quella del vocoide labiovelare [u]; le due terzine di suoni delle lettere «medie» erano quindi state costituite per la loro peculiarità *timbrica*, dove la vibrante *r* [r] e la laterale *l* [l] (una sorta di *light l*) non retroflesse erano sentite acusticamente «chiare», mentre le articolazioni retroflesse sia vibrante *l* [r] (una specie rotata di *dark l*, ossia di laterale alveolare velarizzata [ɭ])³⁹ che laterale *l* [l] erano percepite come «scure» all'orecchio (di probò filologo!) di Tolkāppiyaṇār: ciò è corretto dal punto di vista acustico *stricto sensu*, essendo le articolazioni retroflesse definibili con il tratto distintivo [+ bemollizzato] in quanto l'incurvarsi all'indietro della lingua provoca un abbassamento delle frequenze alte nello spettro sonoro, un fenomeno che talora è dovuto anche, come nel caso del suono approssimante retroflesso [ɭʷ], variante labializzata di [ɭ] (la quale, come si ricorderà, è la pronuncia tamīl standard proprio di *l*), ad un'eventuale presenza di protusione labiale, una coarticolazione che caratterizza sia il vocoide posteriore o velare dal timbro «scuro» [u] che l'approssimante labiodentale [ʋ], i quali sono anch'essi definiti in modo pertinente dal suddetto tratto.⁴⁰

Questa particolare metodologia analitico-interpretativa dei dati fonetici del tamīl messa in atto dai grammatici sudindiani non è stata affatto apprezzata dai fonologi occidentali, i quali invece non si sono peritati di attribuire ad ogni elemento della serie occlusiva «forte» un suono sonantico «medio» che gli corrispondesse a livello articolatorio, così come era stato fatto da Tolkāppiyaṇār per

39 Si veda alla precedente nota 35, Zvelebil 1970, 149 sul suono [ɭ] di *l*; come si vedrà tra poco sopra nel testo, Trubeckoj al séguito di Firth considerò il suono approssimante [ɭ] della *l* alla stregua di una «sonante velare» più o meno retroflessa, simile ad una specie di [u] o, meglio, di *[ʌ] approssimante. Sulla differenza acustica relativa alle formanti tra il suono [ɭ] e le laterali alveolari e retroflesse in kannāḍa e malayāḷam si veda Tabain, Kochetov 2016.

40 Jakobson, Fant, Halle (1952, 34, 50, figura 8) definiscono i suoni occlusivi retroflessi con il tratto [+ flat], ma ciò è stato criticato da Odden (2005, 161) e soprattutto da Hamann (2003, 134-6), la quale rimanda a Shalev, Ladefoged, Bhaskararao 1993, dato che secondo questi fonologi i tratti binaristici di Jakobson-Fant-Halle si rivelerebbero insufficienti a descrivere le particolarità fonetiche delle retroflesse del toda (per le quali si veda Hamann 2003, 21-2). Dal punto fonetico *stricto sensu* la migliore trattazione delle cerebrali nelle lingue indiane rimane quella di Švarný-Zvelebil 1955, nella quale si evidenzia come le lingue dravidiche esaminate, ossia tamīl e telegu, presentino un'articolazione dei propri suoni retroflessi occlusivi molto più arretrata rispetto ai corrispondenti suoni della lingua aria presa a confronto, nella fattispecie l'hindi (sulla correlazione di retrazione e retroflessione si rimanda ad Hamann 2002), si veda anche Hamann 2003, 22 per la differenza di posizione della lingua nell'articolazione della fricativa retroflessa [ʂ] in tamīl e in toda; quella relativa alle retroflesse è, in definitiva, un'area linguistica ben definita, si confrontino Ramanujan, Masica 1969, 562-71 (dove si descrivono i fonemi con i tratti acustici jakobsoniani 562-71) e Tikkanen 1999.

le nasali «leni» di questa lingua dravidica: è stato questo il caso del russo Nikolaj Sergejevič Trubeckoj (cir. Николай Сергеевич Трубецкой, traslitterato in francese Troubetzkoy, in inglese Trubetzkoy, 1890-1938) [fig. 2], il primo linguista occidentale moderno ad aver tentato un'interpretazione del sistema fonologico del tamil fondata su rigorosi criteri strutturali e funzionali. Sulla base delle indicazioni date nel sommario *A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation* dal fonologo inglese John Rupert Firth (1890-1960) [fig. 2], messo in appendice alla seconda edizione del 1934 dell'*A Progressive Grammar of Common Tamil* [fig. 2] del reverendo Albert Henry Arden (1841-1897), Trubeckoj individuò cinque arcifonemi consonantici, che nella fattispecie sarebbero stati la «gutturale» (*gutturale*) /K/, la «palatale-sibilante» (*palatal-sibilantische*) /C/, l'«apicale retroflessa» (*retroflexe apikale*) /ʈ/, l'«apicale piatta» (*flache apikale*) /T/ e la labiale /P/, escludendo così dal novero delle occlusive la *strong r* contemplata dai grammatici indigeni:⁴¹ non essendoci la correlazione di fricatività⁴² in tamil, in questa lingua il fonologo russo dovette giocoforza trovare quella di sonantinità (o di 'liquidità')⁴³ e come *pendants* sonantici scelse per la /P/ l'approssimante labiodentale /v/, per la /ʈ/ e la /T/, rispettivamente, la laterale retroflessa /ʎ/ e quella non retroflessa /l/, e infine per la /C/ indicò la semivocale palatale /y/; rimanevano l'occlusiva velare /K/, l'approssimante postalveolare retroflessa /ʎ/ e il suono vibrante /r/: Trubeckoj si risolse a costringere – nel vero senso della parola! – i primi due elementi in una correlazione esclusiva.⁴⁴ Il linguista

⁴¹ Si veda la nota 13.

⁴² In Trubeckoj [1939, 136-8] (1971, 174-7), la correlazione di fricatività è considerata dal Principe linguista come un modo di superamento di ostacolo di primo grado (*Überwindungsartkorrelation ersten Grades*) ed è stata da lui designata come correlazione di avvicinamento o di occlusione (*Annäherungskorrelation oder Verschlusskorrelation*).

⁴³ Le semivocali /y, w/ del tamil vennero ritenute in modo assai azzardato da Trubeckoj alla stregua di «liquide» (si veda il testo italiano e quello tedesco da noi messi in corsivo alla nota seguente): il fonologo russo infatti intendeva per «liquida» qualsiasi «sonante non nasale» (*nichtnasaler Sonorlaut*), essendo una sonante una «consonante non ostruente» (*Nichtgeräuschlaut*), cioè non occlusiva e non fricativa, mentre considerava la vibrante /r/ una «liquida non laterale» (*nichtlaterale Liquida*) (Trubeckoj [1939, 60] 1971, 80), sottintendendo così un'opposizione di «liquidità» /l-r/ che si attua mediante il tratto distintivo [± laterale], una supposizione, quest'ultima, del tutto ingiustificata dal punto di vista fonologico funzionale, che lo espone alle giuste critiche di Martinet (1942-45, 27-8).

⁴⁴ Trubeckoj (1971, 172-3): «La correlazione di sonantinità, cioè un'opposizione bilaterale e proporzionale fra sonanti e non-sonanti, è naturalmente possibile solo in quelle lingue nelle quali l'opposizione fra occlusiva e fricativa è fonologicamente non-pertinente. Un caso di questo genere si ha, in forma molto chiara, nel tamil [Trubeckoj (1971, 347, nota 128): «Cfr. J.R. Firth, *A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation* (appendice alla seconda edizione della *Grammar of Common Tamil* di Arden, 1934)]. Ci sono qui cinque fonemi non-sonanti che si realizzano in maniera

russo, per attuare la correlazione di sonantinità /K-l/, si basò su

diversa a seconda dell'ambiente fonetico: all'inizio di parola come occlusive aspirate (p^h , t^h , $ʈ^h$, k^h , $č^h$), nel mezzo di parola dopo vocale come spiranti (precisamente β , δ , ζ sonore e x , $\$$ in genere come sorde), dopo nasale come occlusive sonore (b , d , g , β , δ , ζ) e dopo r come occlusive sorde non-aspirate (p , t , $ʈ$, k , $č$). Qui dunque le opposizioni fra non-sonanti sonore e sorde, aspirate e non-aspirate, come fra occlusive e spiranti, sono regolate dall'ambiente fonetico circostante e sono fonologicamente non-pertinenti. L'essenza fonologica di questi cinque fonemi del tamil consiste da una parte nella loro appartenenza a determinate serie di localizzazione, dall'altra nel fatto che sono delle non-sonanti. A queste cinque non-sonanti nel tamil corrispondono cinque sonanti: al fonema labiale P una w , al fonema apicale piatto T una l , al retroflesso apicale $\check{T}$ una $\check{l}$ retroflessa, al palatale sibilante $\check{C}$ una y . Per quel che riguarda il fonema gutturale K , nel tamil sembra corrispondergli la sonante R (« r » nella trascrizione di J. Firth), la cui realizzazione viene così descritta da J. Firth: «È una continua non-fricativa con una colorazione indeterminata di vocale posteriore; viene prodotta colla ritrazione di tutta la massa della lingua verso dietro, l'allargamento del bordo della lingua dalle due parti, così che questa diventa per così dire grossa, corta e tozza e si avvicina al mezzo del palato duro» (XVI). *Solo la r del tamil sta completamente al di fuori delle serie di localizzazione e non sta in rapporto di opposizione bilaterale con nessun altro fonema* (corsivo nostro) [Trubeckoj (1971, 347, nota 129): «Questa speciale posizione della r nel sistema consonantico del tamil comporta che r sia l'unico fonema sonante dopo il quale possono stare altre consonanti (p , t , k , n) e che ricorre non solo dopo vocale, ma anche dopo consonante (specialmente dopo t). Dopo l sono ammesse p e v , ma, a quanto pare, solo in parole straniere, per esempio *reyilvee* = *ferrovia*]. Si tratta dunque nel tamil di una correlazione sonantica (o correlazione liquida se ci decidiamo a indicare come liquide anche w e y (corsivo nostro)), che comprende tutto il sistema consonantico (ad eccezione di r). Altri esempi di questa specie non ne conosciamo», [Trubeckoj (1939, 134-5): «Die Sonantenkorrelation, d. i. ein eindimensionaler und proportionaler Gegensatz zwischen Sonorlauten und Geräuschlauten, ist selbstverständlich nur in solchen Sprachen möglich, wo der Gegensatz zwischen Verschlusslaut und Reibelaut phonologisch irrelevant ist. Ein solcher Fall liegt in sehr klarer Form im Tamil vor [Trubeckoj (1939, 134, nota 2): «J.R. Firth, „A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation“ (Anhang zur 2. Auflage von Ardens „Grammar of Common Tamil“, 1934)]. Hier bestehen fünf Geräuschlautphoneme, die je nach der Lautumgebung verschieden realisiert werden: im Anlaut als aspirierte Verschlusslaute (p^h , t^h , $ʈ^h$, k^h , $č^h$), im Inlaut nach Vokalen als Spiranten (und zwar β , δ , ζ als stimmhafte, x , $\$$ meistens als stimmlose), nach Nasalen als stimmhafte Verschlusslaute (b , d , g , β , δ , ζ) und nach r als stimmlose unaspirierte Verschlusslaute (p , t , $ʈ$, k , $č$). Hier sind also die Gegensätze zwischen stimmhaften und stimmlosen aspirierten und unaspirierten Geräuschlauten, sowie zwischen Verschlusslauten und Spiranten, durch die Lautumgebung geregelt und phonologisch irrelevant. Das phonologische Wesen der fünf genannten tamilischen Phoneme besteht einerseits in ihrer Zugehörigkeit zu bestimmten Lokalisierungsreihen, andererseits darin, daß sie Geräuschlauten sind. Diesen fünf Geräuschlauten stehen nun im Tamil fünf Sonorlaute gegenüber: dem labialen P -Phonem ein w , dem flachen apikalen T ein l , dem retroflexen apikalen $\check{T}$ ein retroflexes $\check{l}$, dem palatal-sibilantischen $\check{C}$ ein y . Was das gutturale K -Phonem betrifft, so scheint ihm im Tamil der Sonorlaut R (in J. Firths Transkription ' r ') zu entsprechen, dessen Realisation von J. Firth so beschrieben wird: „Es ist ein geräuschloser Dauerlaut mit einer unbestimmten hintervokalischen Färbung; er wird durch Zurückziehung des ganzen Zungenkörpers nach hinten, Ausbreitung des Zungensaumes nach beiden Seiten, so daß dieser sozusagen dick, kurz und stumpf wird und sich der Mitte des harten Gaumens nähert, erzeugt» (XVI). *Nur das tamilische r liegt ganz außerhalb der Lokalisierungsreihen und steht zu keinem anderen Phonem in einem eindimensionalen Oppositionsverhältnis*» (corsivo nostro) [Trubeckoj (1939, 135, nota 1): «Diese Sonderstellung des r im tamilischen Konsonantensystem bewirkt, daß r das einzige Sonorlautphonem ist, nach dem andere Konsonanten stehen dürfen (p , t , k , n) und das nicht nur nach Vokalen, sondern auch nach Konsonanten (namentlich nach t) vorkommt. Nach l werden zwar p und v geduldet, aber, wie es

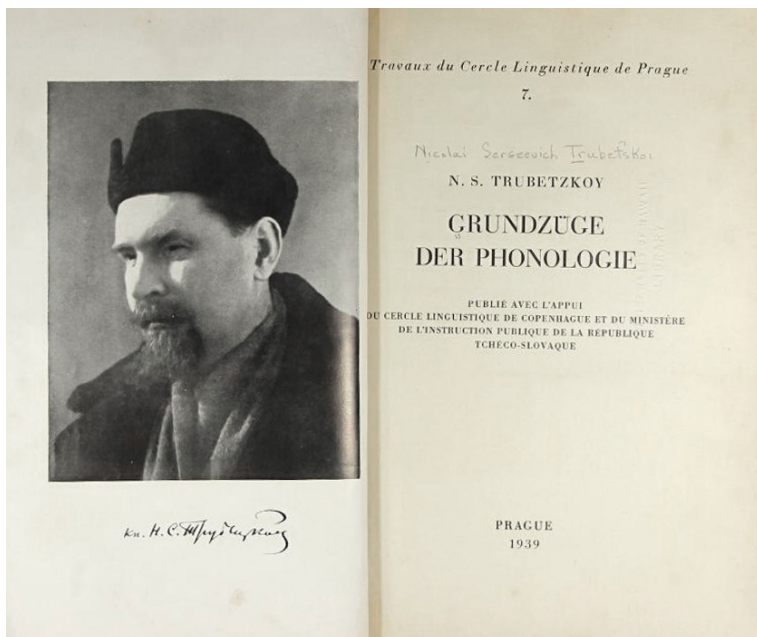
ciò che a riguardo della natura fonetica della /l/ affermava Firth, il quale descriveva così il suono corrispondente alla lettera tamilica ள்: «Una continua non fricativa con un'indeterminata qualità di vocale posteriore non arrotondata (corsivo nostro). La ள viene prodotta tirando indietro tutta la lingua e ingrandendone il bordo ai lati in modo tale da renderla spessa, corta e, per così dire, spuntata, così che essa si avvicini alla parte mediana del palato duro[; il risultato è una sorta di suono r liquido molto arretrato; a volte il lato inferiore della punta della lingua è sollevato verso il palato medio]», dove la parte da noi messa tra parentesi quadre non è citata in traduzione tedesca nei *Grundzüge der Phonologie* [fig. 2].⁴⁵ È probabile che sia stata soprattutto la definizione da noi messa in corsivo a convincere Trubeckoj che il suono della lettera ள potesse fungere come una sorta di «sonante velare» più o meno retroflessa, simile ad una specie di [w] o, meglio, di *[ʀ] approssimante: ravvisata perciò una certa somiglianza fonetica con i suoni occlusivi velari, si poteva legittimamente dedurre riguardo alla sonante /l/, che egli connotò con il segno <R>, una parentela di questo fonema con l'arcifonema velare /K/; riguardo al suono della lettera tamil ள, Trubeckoj avanzò altrove nei suoi *Grundzüge* la personale convinzione che esso fosse una non meglio specificata 'liquida gutturale', designata questa volta con il simbolo grafico <λ>;⁴⁶ infine restava l'elemento *rhotic*

scheint, nur in Fremdwörtern, z. B. *reyilvee* „Eisenbahn“]. Es handelt sich also im Tamil um eine Sonantenkorrelation (oder Liquidienkorrelation, wenn man sich entschließt, auch w und y als Liquidae zu bezeichnen (corsivo nostro)), die das ganze Konsonantensystem (mit Ausnahme von r) umfaßt. Andere Beispiele dieser Art sind uns unbekannt»].

45 Firth in Arden (1934², XVI, Appendix: 'A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation'): «A frictionless continuant having an obscure unrounded back-vowel quality (corsivo nostro). ள is made by drawing back the whole tongue, and spreading the blade laterally, making it thick, short and blunt, so to speak, so that it approaches the middle of the hard palate. [The result is a very retracted liquid sort of r-sound. Sometimes the under side of the tip of the tongue is raised towards the mid palate]», riportato *verbatim* tranne l'ultima frase da Sankaran (1951, 8).

46 Trubeckoj (1971, 323), al capitolo in cui si tratta dei segni demarcativi negativi e fonematici: «Nel tamil sono di questo tipo η, i retroflessi ʈ, ɟ e la liquida (gutturale) λ», trad. ital. di Giulia Mazzuoli Porru [Trubeckoj (1939, 256): «Im Tamil gehören hierher η, die retroflexen ʈ, ɟ und die (gutturale) Liquida λ»]. È assai probabile, a nostro avviso, che Trubeckoj per la definizione di «liquida gutturale» riprendesse *grosso modo* quella che aveva dato Firth per il suono della /l/, intesa da questi come «una sorta di suono r liquido molto arretrato» (definizione che egli non citava nei *Grundzüge*, si veda qui sopra nel testo la versione italiana e la nota precedente per il testo originario inglese), dove, però, per «liquido il linguista russo intendeva «sonantico» (si confronti alla precedente nota 45 la versione italiana e il relativo testo originario tedesco da noi messi in corsivo), mentre Firth probabilmente voleva significare «laterale», come sembrerebbe evincersi dalla terza edizione del 1942 (che Clayton considera la quinta poiché egli contava le ristampe del 1910 e del 1930 come seconda e terza edizione, facendo così divenire quarta la seconda edizione del 1934 riveduta e ampliata con il sommario di Firth, si veda Arden 1942³, IV-V, «Preface to the Fifth Edition»; ivi il revisore Clayton, basandosi

/ɾ/, il quale, secondo il linguista russo, era isolato e non aveva perciò l'opposizione fonologica di «sonanticità», dato che per lui la vibrante era l'unico fonema ad esser fuori da qualsiasi tipo di correlazione.⁴⁷



sulle indicazioni di Firth del 1934 (Arden (1942³, V), a p. 49 così descriveva il suono della /ɾ/: «*ϕ* rappresenta un suono peculiare del tamil. Lo si pronuncia come per una normale *r* morbida ma si tiri indietro tutta la lingua ingrandendone il bordo ai lati attraverso la bocca; la punta deve essere rivolta all'indietro contro il palato duro: *il risultato dovrebbe essere un oscuro suono biascicato tra r e l* (corsivo nostro)» (*ϕ* represents a sound peculiar to Tamil. Pronounce as for an ordinary soft *r* but draw back the whole tongue making it spread the blade across the mouth. The tip should be turned back against the hard palate. *The result should be a slurred, obscure sound between r and l* (corsivo nostro)). Sulla /ɾ/ tamilmalayalamica e il suo (contestato) status fone(ma)tico «mediano» tra laterale e *rhotic* si rimanda, oltre ai classici studi di Ramaswami Aiyar (1935) e Krishnamurti (1958), a Punnoose, Khattab, Al-Tamimi (2013).

47 Si vedano alla precedente nota 45 i testi italiano e tedesco da noi evidenziati in corsivo.

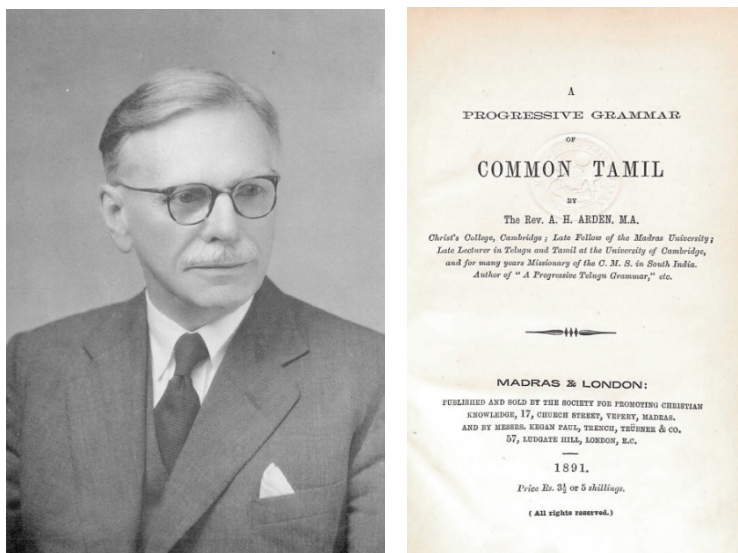


Figura 2 Alla pagina precedente Nikolaj Sergejevič Trubeckoj, in alto a destra i suoi *Grundzüge der Phonologie* del 1939, qui sopra John Rupert Firth, a destra la prima edizione del 1891 dell'*A Progressive Grammar of Common Tamil* di Albert Henry Arden

Pur non contestando l'indubbia plausibilità teorica di una tale analisi fonologica, verso questo primo tentativo di sistematizzazione strutturale e funzionale del quadro fonologico del tamil si possono sollevare parecchie obiezioni. Innanzitutto, Trubeckoj si affidava alle descrizioni fonetiche relative ai fonemi tamilici date da Firth, le quali si connotano per una sbalorditiva superficialità e inesattezza, assolutamente all'opposto della precisa e corretta descrizione fonetica e fonologica dei grammatici sudindiani, *in primis* Tolkāppiaṇār: le conseguenze di tale fiducia⁴⁸ malriposta da parte del fonologo russo

48 Si veda ciò che Trubeckoj scriveva il 17 maggio 1935 all'amico Jakobson riguardo al breve profilo approntato da Firth sulla pronuncia dei suoni tamilici: «Tra le opere di Firth, oltre all'opuscolo recensito da Mathesius in *Slovo a slovesnost*, degne di nota sono la *descrizione del sistema fonologico tamilico* (corsivo nostro), il progetto di un alfabeto latino per il birmano e il suo ultimo articolo sull'uso e la combinazione dei suoni dell'inglese (Isačenko li ha tutti e tre), oltre a un piccolo articolo «The word 'Phoneme'» ne *Le Maître Phonétique* (troisième série, n. 46[, 1934])» (il testo russo è in Trubetzkoy 1975, 333-4, lett. CXLII: «Из работ Firth'a кроме его брошюры рецензированной Матезиусом в Sl. a Sl. заслуживают внимания описание тамильской фонол. системы (corsivo nostro), проект бирманской латиницы и последняя его статья об употреблении и комбинации звуков англ. Языка (все три имеются у Исаченко), а кроме того маленькая статейка 'The word Phoneme' в *Le Maître Phonétique* (Troisième série, No. 46)»). È noto, infatti, che Trubeckoj nutrì una forte stima per Firth, si veda Coleman 2018, 17, il quale ha riportato in inglese un brano della lettera del Principe russo a Jakobson del maggio 1934 dove egli affermava che di tutti i linguisti inglesi

sulla competenza del suo omologo inglese non avrebbe potuto essere più deleteria sulla speculazione linguistica dell'autore dei *Grundzüge*; infatti, Trubeckoj riguardo ai suoni *rhotics* accettava la soluzione provvisoria (!) avanzata da Firth di una non differenziazione di suono tra /R/ e /r/, i quali, secondo il fonologo inglese, sarebbero stati entrambi pronunciati con un suono vibrante con due battiti (*two-tap*) malgrado Firth stesso avesse avvertito in una nota in margine come fosse insufficiente detta presentazione dei fatti fonetici dei suoni rotati tamilici, i quali, a suo avviso, avrebbero dovuto sperabilmente meritare un esame più approfondito onde spiegare l'uso indigeno di due segni grafici differenti, ossia la ꣳ per la /R/ e la ꣴ per la /r/:⁴⁹ a tal proposito altrettanto corriva ci sembra la scelta fatta da Trubeckoj

il più serio gli era sembrato Firth, quando egli l'aveva incontrato nello stesso anno a Londra in occasione di tre conferenze sulle lingue caucasiche settentrionali date dal 19 al 21 marzo all'University College London School of Slavonic and East European Studies dell'University of London dove lavorava come capobiblioteca Sergio Yakobson (1901-1979), fratello di Roman Jakobson, anche se nella lettera all'amico il Князь Trubeckoj rimarcava contestualmente come Firth non fosse un funzionalista nel senso della linguistica praghese: «L'impressione più seria me l'ha fatta un certo Firth: ma il suo opuscolo sul concetto di 'funzione' in linguistica [Firth (1934a)] mostra che non comprende affatto le questioni generali» (il testo russo è in Trubetzkoy (1975, 299), lett. СХХХ: «Наиболее серьезное впечатление на меня произвел некий Firth. Но брошюра его о понятии 'функции' в лингвистике показывает, что он не совсем разбирается в общих вопросах»); diversamente, Trubeckoj aveva un giudizio negativo di Daniel Jones, incontrato anch'egli a Londra nel 1934, si confronti Viel 2010, e anche di Saussure in qualità di fonologo, si veda Mahmoudian 2008, 122-4. Va detto che la teoresi prosodico-fonologica di Firth sembra sia stata influenzata da quella trubeckojana, nel caso specifico, riguardo al concetto di *Grenzsignale* («segno demarcativo», si confronti Scheer 2011, 39-40: «Trubetzkoy's Grenzsignale» e in generale Muljačić 1973, 221-6, che il Principe linguista russo aveva esposto in margine ad alcuni fenomeni accentuali del tamil citando contestualmente lo schizzo fonetico firthiano, in Trubeckoj (1971, 330): «Autre langue invece mostrano una predilezione esagerata per i segni demarcativi, in quanto, oltre all'accentazione fissa che segna tutti i limiti di parola, hanno tutta una serie di altri segni di demarcazione, così che il loro numero in testi continuati è talvolta maggiore del numero delle unità delimitate. Così nel tamil (per lo meno nei brani aggiunti da J.R. Firth al suo *A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation*) circa l'80 per cento dei limiti di parola è indicato da speciali segni di demarcazione, per quanto il tamil possieda un accento fisso sulla prima sillaba (come pure un accento secondario sull'ultima sillaba delle parole più lunghe), per cui la delimitazione della parola è sufficientemente assicurata» [Trubeckoj (1939, 261): «Andere Sprachen weisen umgekehrt eine übertriebene Vorliebe für Grenzsignale auf, indem sie außer der gebundenen Betonung, die alle Wortgrenzen kennzeichnet, noch eine Fülle anderer Grenzsignale verwenden, so daß die Zahl der Grenzsignale im zusammenhängenden Texten manchmal größer als die Zahl der abgegrenzten Einheiten ist. So sind im Tamil (wenigstens in den von J.R. Firth zu seinem „A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation“ beigelegten Textproben) ungefähr 80% aller Wortgrenzen durch spezielle Grenzsignale gekennzeichnet, obgleich das Tamil ohnehin einen gebundenen Akzent auf der erten Wortsilbe (sowie einen Nebenakzent auf der Endsilbe längerer Wörter) besitzt, wodurch die Wortabgrenzung genügend gesichert ist»], si veda Coleman 2018, 15-16.

49 Firth in Arden (1934², XVI, Appendix: 'A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation'): «Note. - In this brief sketch the Tamil r-sounds cannot be fully investigated, but it appears probable that the use of the two written characters, ꣴ and ꣳ, does not correspond to any parallel habits of speech».

di non accordare la giusta attenzione alla particolare pronuncia conservativa [t:r] e [ndr] dei nessi, rispettivamente, *rr* (= *ṛṛ*) e *nr* (= *ṇṛ*) – pur segnalata da Firth!⁵⁰ – che avrebbe certo avvertito l'accorto e intelligente linguista russo di una particolare caratteristica originaria di occlusività della /R/ la cui articolazione l'autore del *Tolkāppiyam* infatti designava come «forte». Più grave dal punto di vista metodologico appare l'assegnazione da parte dell'autore dei *Grundzüge* del fonema approssimante postalveolare retroflesso /l/ [ɭ] (= *ḷ*) a controparte sonantica dell'arcifonema velare /K/: Trubeckoj aveva infatti piegato ai propri fini ermeneutici la definizione molto impressionistica di Firth riguardo al suono di *l*, avvalendosi della prima parte della descrizione fonetica fatta dal fonologo inglese di questo elemento, quella riguardante la natura di «indeterminata qualità di vocale posteriore non arrotondata», la quale giustificava l'incongrua interpretazione trubeckojiana di /l/ come di una «sonante gutturale», e tralasciando invece colpevolmente la parte finale della rappresentazione firthiana del suono della lettera *ḷ*, la quale era *apertis verbis* illustrata come «una sorta di suono r liquido molto arretrato», frase che infatti non viene appositamente riportata dal linguista russo nel suo trattato; la contraddittorietà di un suono *rhotic* «liquido» e al contempo «gutturale» posteriore permane nei *Grundzüge* con l'adozione da parte del suo autore di due segni grafici,⁵¹ nella fattispecie quello <λ> e quello <R>, che indicano in modo subliminale la natura essenzialmente «liquida», cioè di indistinta laterale/vibrante della *l* tamilica. A discolpa di Trubeckoj va detto che

50 Firth in Arden (1934², IX, Appendix: 'A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation'): «Note. – The group **ntr** and **ttr** are neither dental nor retroflex but alveolar, as in English. **ntr**. In the group **ntr**, the **r** is fricative as in English, and the whole group alveolar in articulation. After **n** the **t** is pronounced as **d**, the whole group occurring medially and sounding like **ndr** in the English phrase *undreamt of* or in *laundry*. [...] This **ntr** group is represented in Tamil script by *ṇṛ* which is sometimes transliterated **nr**. **ttr**. Similarly the group **ttr** sounds rather like the **tr** group in the English word *patrol*. The **tt** varies considerably in relative length according to the style of speech and speed of utterance. [...] This **ttr** group is represented in Tamil script by *ṭṛ*».

51 Luciano Canepari evidenzia la contraddittorietà della simbologia grafica adottata da Trubeckoj nei *Grundzüge*, in Canepari (2007, 467): «[Simboli] non-IPA, qualche volta, anche mescolati, tanto che uno stesso simbolo può ricevere valori [molto] diversi». A discolpa dell'operato un po' superficiale del Trubeckoj nel non scegliere una simbologia grafica univoca per l'approssimante postalveolare retroflessa *l* del tamil va ricordato che il linguista russo lasciò incompiuti i suoi *Grundzüge* a cui mancavano una ventina di pagine finali e la revisione definitiva, si veda quanto dice Roman Jakobson nelle «Notizie autobiografiche di N.S. Trubeckoj» in Trubeckoj 1971, XXXVII e nel testo originale tedesco nel «Vorwort», in Trubeckoj 1939, 3: è quindi ovvio che permangano nel trattato trubeckojiano delle imprecisioni che l'autore per il sopravvenuto decesso improvviso del 25 giugno del 1938 non poté emendare, come, per esempio, l'asserzione in Trubeckoj (1971, 203-4 [Trubeckoj (1939, 163)]) circa l'esistenza in italiano di soli *due* fonemi nasali, nella fattispecie, quella labiale *m* e quella alveolare/dentale *n*, quando, com'è noto, ve n'è un terzo, ossia la nasale palatale *ṇ* (<*gn*>).

la sua maldestra azione misinterpretatrice dei dati fonetici del tamīl e delle relative descrizioni firthiane era mossa da una pervicace volontà di trovare una perfetta e non lacunosa simmetria intrafonemica nella correlazione di sonantività all'interno del sistema della lingua dravidica in oggetto: già egli era stato costretto ad isolare la /r/, se avesse desistito dall'inventare una correlazione sonantica /K-l/, si sarebbe trovato con ben *tre* elementi isolati, un numero decisamente eccessivo che avrebbe revocato in dubbio o addirittura inficiato la plausibilità dell'esistenza in tamīl della stessa correlazione di sonantività; pur tuttavia, il linguista russo avrebbe dovuto sapere che non esiste una completezza di corrispondenze correlative nei sistemi fonologici delle lingue naturali, essendoci in questi delle caselle vuote che non devono per forza esser riempite scovando caratteristiche fone(ma)tiche immaginarie quanto improbabili acconce all'uopo per il perseguimento di un'ideale e vagheggiata esaustività.

L'amore per la simmetria strutturale degli elementi fonemici non prendeva solo un fonologo di immenso valore come Trubeckoj, ma pure probi studiosi meno famosi ma più preparati ed esperti del linguista russo in settori linguistici specifici. In occasione dell'edizione francese postuma del 1949 dei *Grundzüge trubeckojiani*, il curatore e traduttore Jean Cantineau (1899-1956), semitista e titolare della cattedra di arabo orientale all'École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes di Parigi dal 1947 al 1956, chiese al suo collega Pierre Meile (1911-1963),⁵² all'epoca professore di

52 Troubetzkoy (1949, 395), «Note du traducteur»: «TAMOUL.M. Meile, professeur de langues de l'Inde à l'École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes, a bien voulu examiner les passages des «Principes de Phonologie» relatifs au tamoul, notamment les pp. 159-160, 186, 307, 309, 313. Il me communique les remarques suivantes : Il n'y a pas en tamoul cinq, mais six classes de localisation des consonnes : labiales, apicales plates, apicales alvéolaires, apicales rétroflexes (donc trois séries apicales, fait inconnu ailleurs), dorsales prépalatales, dorsales postpalatales. Le phonème que Troubetzkoy appelle, selon l'usage, *R*, n'est pas une sonante, mais la *bruyante alvéolaire*: à l'intervocalique, ce phonème est réalisé comme spirante sonore, ce qui fait qu'on entend quelque chose qui ressemble à un *r* (corsivo nostro), mais s'il est géméné, on entend approximativement *ttr*, et le groupe *NR* est perçu à peu près comme *ndr*; en outre, géméné ou devant une autre bruyante, cet *R* n'est pas sonore: le groupe *Rk* est sourd. Ce phonème ne se rencontre jamais à l'initiale: en effet la seule apicale admise à l'initiale est *t*, les apicales alvéolaires et rétroflexes étant exclues. A l'initiale, les quatre autres bruyantes sont plutôt réalisées comme des spirantes sourdes que comme des occlusives aspirées. A l'intérieur du mot, entre voyelles, les bruyantes sont réalisées comme des spirantes sonores (donc *y* et non *x*), à la seule exception de *ç*, qui est toujours sourd à l'intervocalique. Après *r*, les bruyantes ne se rencontrent que géménées (occlusives sourdes); *R* ne se trouve jamais en contact avec *r*. En ce qui concerne les sonantes, on peut proposer les correspondances suivantes: *y* semble la sonante de la série prépalatale, *l* celle de la série apicale rétroflexe, *v* celle de la série labiale; *l* est la sonante de la série apicale alvéolaire, tandis que *r* semble celle de la série apicale plate. Ainsi *r* rentre dans le système consonantique. Peut-être *λ* est-il la sonante de la série postpalatale. Il convient d'observer que *r* ne peut pas être géméné, alors que *R*, qui est une bruyante, peut l'être; d'autre part, *l* et *l* peuvent être géménés, mais ni

lingue indiane moderne presso il medesimo istituto, di controllare i passaggi del trattato del linguista russo relativi al tamil; l'indianista francese rilevò subito nell'analisi fonologica di Trubeckoj l'inesattezza più evidente, cioè quella che nella lingua dravidica in questione vi sarebbero *cinque* classi di localizzazione occlusiva, quando invece ve ne sarebbero *sei*, così come è tramandato dalla tradizione grammaticale sudindiana, la quale considera «forte» la lettera *ṛ*, cioè il suono di *r*, al pari di quello di *k*, *c*, *t*, *t* e *p*: Meile rendeva giustizia così alla *strong r* reintegrandola nella serie delle occlusive da cui l'aveva colpevolmente eliminata Trubeckoj in vista di immetterla nel gioco della correlazione di sonantività individuata dal linguista russo come peculiare del tamil. Va detto che la critica di Meile al modello analitico trubeckojiano si fondava essenzialmente sull'interpretazione linguistica che i grammatici indigeni avevano condotto sulle unità distintive del sistema fonologico del tamil antico, in cui la /R/ occlusiva «forte» era ancora un elemento foneticamente differenziato dalla /r/ sonante «media» e dove tale differenziazione si rifletteva nella suddivisione alfabetica di tipo «fonemico» e «arcifonemico» con due distinti grafemi, ossia, rispettivamente, *ṛ* e *ṛ*, mentre invece l'autore dei *Grundzüge* si rifaceva all'autorità di Firth, per il quale i due elementi in tamil moderno standard avevano la medesima realizzazione vibrante; in effetti, le difficoltà di Meile a sostenere la propria tesi di reinserimento della *strong r* nel novero delle occlusive iniziarono proprio quando egli dovette definire il suono di *r*, che il professore parigino definì come un'articolazione «apicale» alveolare (*apicale alvéolaire*) «non sonante» (*bruyante*, lett. 'rumoroso', termine francese semanticamente omologo a quello tedesco *Geräuschlaute* utilizzato da Trubeckoj) la cui realizzazione fonetica in posizione intervocalica sarebbe quella di una «spirante sonora, ciò che fa sentire qualcosa che rassomiglia a una *r*»: quale fosse precisamente questo suono fricativo sonoro della *r* simile a una vibrante l'indianista francese non lo specificò, ma dato che per lui il fonema tamilico in questione sarebbe stato un'occlusiva alveolare si può immaginare che la sua resa «spirante sonora» fosse una sorta di *[z], cioè una fricativa alveolare sonora, che invero non assomiglia per nulla acusticamente ad una vibrante con uno ([r]) o più battiti ([r]).⁵³ Inoltre, Meile, al contrario di quanto aveva fatto

r, ni *λ* ne peuvent l'être. En ce qui concerne les signes démarcatifs négatifs (p. 307), *l* rétroflexe et *λ* postpalatal apparaissent fréquemment en fin de mot, contrairement à ce que dit Troubetzkoy. Quant à l'initiale (p. 309), ce qui la caractérise quand elle est une bruyante, c'est qu'en cette position elle n'est ni gémisée ni sonore. Enfin (p. 313) le tamoul n'a pas d'accent de mot, mais seulement un accent de phrase».

53 Infatti, i suoni fricativi come le sibilanti hanno come tratto distintivo quello [+ continuo], mentre i suoni *rhotics* a uno ((*one*)-*flap* o (*one*)-*tap*) o più battiti (*trills*) sono contraddistinti dal tratto [- continuo], si veda Jakobson, Halle (1956, 30).

Trubeckoj, accordava la giusta importanza al dato delle pronunce conservative [t:r] e [ndr] dei rispettivi nessi *rr* (= *ṛṛ*) e *nr* (= *ṇṛ*), ma non se ne avvaleva per meglio materiare il suono della *r* così come abbiamo fatto noi sulla stregua delle indicazioni «subliminali» di Tolkāppiyāṇār, e ciò è ben comprensibile: infatti, un'eventuale assunzione per l'arcifonema /R/ di una resa fonetica ad esplosione vibrata [tr] avrebbe inficiato il presupposto *a priori* che la *r* «aspra» fosse in tamil un'occlusiva momentanea alveolare *[t], suffragata, quest'ultima, dalla comparazione interlinguistica dravidica.

A dire la verità, nella sua disamina dello schema ermeneutico di Trubeckoj, Meile diede una prova assai mediocre sia delle sue qualità analitiche di linguista, col proporre una disposizione dei fonemi tamilici nella correlazione di sonantività che alla fine si rivelava peggiore di quella trubeckojiana, sia delle sue capacità ecdotiche del testo dei *Grundzüge*, mal comprendendo le parole del suo autore presenti nello specifico *ductus* espositivo relativo al tamil, peraltro assolutamente esplicito e inequivocabile: infatti, basandosi sull'uso consolidato tra i linguisti di traslitterare la lettera «forte» *ṛ* con il grafema <R> e quella «media» *ṛ* con il segno <r>, così come faceva egli stesso insieme ad altri studiosi di vaglia (Tuttle *docet*), Meile credette ingiustamente che Trubeckoj, avendo utilizzato il simbolo grafico <R> per contrassegnare il fonema /l/ identificato dalla lettera tamilica «media» *ṛ*, avesse confuso questo elemento con la *strong r*, ovvero che egli avesse attribuito a quest'ultima *non* il suono di un'«apicale» alveolare «non sonante» (leggasi: occlusiva) che le era proprio, ma quello sonantico simile a un'«indeterminata qualità di vocale posteriore non arrotondata», di cui Trubeckoj aveva citato *verbatim* la descrizione fonetica fornita da Firth e della quale aveva riportato anche la connotazione grafica <ɹ> adottata dal fonologo inglese.⁵⁴ Ad onor del vero, va detto che il fraintendimento di Meile potrebbe esser stato favorito dallo stesso autore dei *Grundzüge*, il quale in un altro luogo del suo trattato, precisamente a p. 307 della versione francese, aveva scelto allo scopo di indicare l'elemento /l/ il segno grafico <ɹ>, che è quello che venne adottato anche dallo stesso

54 Ci si domanda, in definitiva, se l'indianista *francese*, al di là della fuorviante identità formale dei simboli grafici per /R/ e /l/, avesse ben compreso il chiarissimo testo francese a p. 160 dei *Principes de Phonologie* approntato da Cantineau – e non quello tedesco, forse un po' oscuro, a p. 135 dei *Grundzüge der Phonologie* redatti dal poliglotta Trubeckoj, professore all'Università di Vienna – che era il luogo in cui si trovava l'esposizione dei dati fone(ma)tici del tamil: dalla lettura del passaggio in questione si evince chiaramente che il linguista russo presupponesse un solo fonema vibrante /r/ in quella lingua dravidica e che ciò che lui designava con il grafema <R> era l'approssimante postalveolare retroflessa /l/, come dimostra il segno utilizzato da Firth per connotarla, cioè <ɹ> (il quale per l'IPA indica invece un'approssimante dentale o alveolare, si veda The International Phonetic Association 1999, 177, e che venne contestualmente riportato dall'autore dei *Grundzüge*).

indianista francese per indicare detto fonema sonantico:⁵⁵ ma la conferma che Trubeckoj con la grafia incongrua <R> non si riferisse alla *strong r* ma proprio alla sonante /l/ si può avere da un altro passo del trattato fonologico trubeckojiano, nella fattispecie quello a p. 186 dell'edizione francese, in cui il linguista russo affermava che in tamīl potevano essere geminate tutte le occlusive e tutte le sonanti «eccetto R ed r»,⁵⁶ da cui si evince che con il simbolo <R> egli si riferiva veramente alla /l/, poiché né quest'ultima né la /r/, che sono entrambe sonanti, possono essere geminate in questa lingua dravidica, ma può esserlo l'occlusiva /R/, che in tal caso rende, come sappiamo, il suono [t:r]. Tutto ciò esplicitato in uno schema sarebbe:

55 Zvelebil (1970, 149, nota 40): «Because of the fact, pointed out under 1), any transcription with *l* and a diacritic is unfortunate; but, as M.B. Emeneau says on p. 51, fn. 2 of his *Toda*, 'no transcription can be anything but a *pis aller*', and therefore it is still permissible to use the symbol *l* to indicate reflexes of PDr **r* in the literary languages (as introduced by the *Tamil Lexicon*, and hence most commonly used in India and elsewhere). **r* is used by me for Proto-Dravidian (where Krishnamurti [1958] uses **z*); Burrow-Emeneau, *DED* [1961], use **r* and *r* respectively, maintaining that 'a transcription with *r* and a diacritic seems on the whole less bad'»; si fa notare che un altro grafema utilizzato per traslitterare *ṛ* è stato <ṛ>, ma Harold Schiffman (1938-2022) del Department of South Asia Studies dell'University of Pennsylvania, dove abbiamo operato nel periodo 2009-10, preferiva il segno <ṛ> adottato dal Burrow, Emeneau (1961), si veda Schiffman 1980, 109 (dedichiamo questa parte del nostro saggio riguardante la fonetica del tamīl al caro amico Hal): per le differenti rese grafiche della *l* tamilica si confronti Subrahmanyam 1983, 422-3, nota 5, mentre sui molteplici usi del segno <ṛ> per designare i vari suoni *rhotics* si veda Anselme, Pellegrino, Dediu 2023.

56 Trubeckoj (1971, 198): «A queste lingue appartiene per esempio il già ricordato tamīl, nel quale la correlazione di geminazione comprende tutte le sonanti (eccetto *r* ed *R*) [e tutte le non-sonanti] [Trubeckoj (1971, 352, nota 179): «Cfr. R.J. Firth, *op. cit.*; le occlusive e fricative geminate vengono realizzate come occlusive sorde non-aspirate (con chiusura prolungata), cioè mostrano la stessa realizzazione (solo con occlusione più lunga) che i nessi *r* + non-sonante']», trad. ital. di Giulia Mazzuoli Porru [Trubeckoj (1939, 157): «Zu solchen Sprachen gehört z.B. das oben erwähnte Tamil, wo die Geminierungskorrelation alle Sonorlaute (außer *r* und *R*) und alle Geräuschaute umfaßt [Trubeckoj (1939, 157, nota 4): «Vgl. R.J. Firth, *op. cit.*; es werden dabei die geminierten Geräuschaute als unaspirierte stimmlose Verschlusslaute (mit langem Verschuß) realisiert, d.i. sie weisen dieselbe Realisation (nur mit längerem Verschuß) auf wie in den Verbindungen *r* + Geräuschlaut»]».

Lettera Tamīl	Traslitterazioni	
	Trubeckoj	Meile
ṛ	R, λ	λ
ṛ̥	Ø	R
ṝ	r	r

Il fraintendimento comunque non salvò il critico dei *Grundzüge* dall'accettare la caratteristica timbrica simil-vocalica «posteriore non arrotondata» (Firth *docet*) del suono di /ṛ/ descritta da Trubeckoj come liquida «gutturale» e come sonante «postpalatale» (*postpalatale*) da Meile, il quale, pertanto, promosse anch'egli a controparte sonantica dell'arcifonema occlusivo velare /K/ la suddetta unità distintiva, che in realtà, a quanto abbiamo appurato, di norma si realizza foneticamente come approssimante postalveolare retroflessa [ɭ]. Il quadro delle correlazioni di sonantività proposto dal fonologo russo venne alla fine peggiorato dall'indianista francese, poiché, se questi aveva accettato le coppie trubeckojiane «postpalatale» /K-ṛ/, «prepalatale» (*prépalatale*) /C-y/, «apicale retroflessa» (*apicale rétroflexe*) /Ṭ-ṛ/ e labiale /P-v/, col reintrodurre nella griglia correlativa la /R/ e la /r/ associò quest'ultima sonante all'«apicale piatta» (*apicale plate*), cioè all'occlusiva dentale /T/, e assegnò alla sua presunta «occlusiva alveolare» R (cioè la /R/) la laterale /l/ in qualità di corrispondente elemento sonantico; invero, non si comprende perché Meile non avesse optato per degli abbinamenti più logici dal punto di vista fonetico *stricto sensu* quale quello /T-l/, che era stato legittimamente proposto da Trubeckoj, e quello /R-r/, che aveva piena giustificazione a livello fonetico, avendo entrambe le unità una realizzazione vibrante sia in tamīl antico, cioè, secondo la nostra ricostruzione, [*tr-r], sia in tamīl moderno nella pronuncia di un registro elevato, ossia [r-r]: ma si dovrà ricordare che il linguista occidentale Meile, pur accettando la suddivisione attuata dal grammatico indiano Tolkāppiyāṇār in sei occlusive, non ne recepiva le indicazioni fonetiche, per cui la *strong r* doveva essere un'occlusiva alveolare senza alcuna caratteristica vibratile, il cui indefinito suono «spirante sonoro» emergente in posizione intervocalica era solo somigliante a quello di una *r*, ma non era effettivamente una *r*.

Questo episodio di *querelle* tra due linguisti, peraltro realizzatosi postumo in riferimento a uno dei contendenti, ci ha fornito l'esempio emblematico di come da parte dei moderni esegeti si possano coartare a fini giustificativi e, per così dire, 'promozionali' delle proprie teorie esplicative le notizie preziose fornite dai grammatici antichi sul dato linguistico da costoro preso ad oggetto di studio; invero, si sarebbe tentati a concludere che tutte le qualità che contraddistinguono i grammatici antichi, specie quelli indiani, e cioè l'accortezza metodologica, la precisione analitica e l'alta levatura speculativa

delle teorie interpretative, talora avveniristiche – si pensi alla «fonematicità» se non all'«arcifonematicità» delle lettere tamiliche, o all'uso in Pāṇini del concetto di segno linguistico «zero»⁵⁷ –, indurrebbero a mettere costoro ad un livello di scientificità superiore ai loro epigoni moderni, i glottologi occidentali: ciò, invero, dovrebbe far riflettere sul presunto progresso della scienza linguistica; pur tuttavia, non si deve credere che i grammatici antichi fossero esenti da intenzionali alterazioni dei fatti di lingua oggetto loro di indagine – anch'essi avevano le medesime umane debolezze dei loro attuali successori –, né che potessero esperire i dati studiati con la stessa precisione e oggettività che ottengono oggi i linguisti grazie ai sofisticati strumenti tecnici che la scienza moderna mette loro a disposizione.⁵⁸

Bibliografia

- Allen, W.S. (1953). *Phonetics in Ancient India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Allen, W.S. (1955). «Zero and Pāṇini». *Chatterji Jubilee Volume Presented on the occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (26 November 1955). *Indian Linguistics*, 16, 106-13.
- Annamalai, E. (2016). «Tamil and Dravidian Grammatical Traditions». Hock, H.H.; Bashir, E. (eds), *The Languages and Linguistics of South Asia. A Comprehensive Guide*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 716-28.
- Anselme, R.; Pellegrino, F.; Dediu, D. (2023). «What's in the r? A Review of the Usage of the r Symbol in the Illustrations of the IPA». *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 53(3), 1003-32.
- Arden, A.H. [1891] (1934²). *A Progressive Grammar of Common Tamil, with a Skeleton Grammar, also an App. on Tamil Phonetics* [':A Short Outline of Tamil Pronunciation'] by J.R. Firth. Ed. riv. da A.Ch. Clayton. Madras: Christian Literature Society for India [rist. 1910, 1930, 1942³].
- Aussant, É. et al. (2017). «La Grammaire Sanskrite Étendue». *Histoire Epistémologie Langage*, 39(2), 7-127.
- Balasubramanian, T. (1982). «The Two r's and the Two n's in Tamil». *Journal of Phonetics*, 10, 89-97.
- Barry, W.J. (1997). «Another R-Tickle». *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 27, 35-45.
- Bauer, J. (1975). «Zum /dr/-Phonem des Sumerischen». *Die Welt des Orients*, 8(1), 1-9.
- Burrow, Th.; Emeneau, M.B. (1961). *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Caldwell, R. (1856). *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian family of languages*. London: Harrison and Sons.
- Candotti, M.P.; Pontillo, T. (2021). «Pāṇini's Zero Morphs as Allomorphs in the Complexity of Linguistic Context». Torella, R. (ed.), *Italian Scholars on India General*. Vol. 1, *Classical Indology*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishing House, 13-54.

⁵⁷ Allen 1955 e più recentemente Candotti, Pontillo 2022.

⁵⁸ Si veda Ciotti 2013.

- Canepari, L. (2007). *Fonetica e tonetica naturali. Approccio articolatorio, uditivo e funzionale*, München: LINCOM academic publisher.
- Catford, J.C. (2001). «On Rs, Rhotacism and Paleophony». *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 31(2), 171-85.
- Chevillard, J.-L. (2014). «Snapshots of the Tamil Scholarly Tradition». Archaimbault, S.; Fournier, J.-M.; Raby, V. (éds), *Penser l'histoire des savoirs linguistiques. Hommage à Sylvain Auroux*, Lyon: ENS Éditions, 255-71.
- Chevillard, J.-L.; Passerieu, J.-C. (1989). «La tradition grammaticale tamoule». Aroux, S. (éd.), *Histoire des idées linguistiques*. Tome 1, *La naissance des métalangages en Orient et en Occident*. Liège: Éditions Pierre Mardaga, 417-29.
- Ciotti, G. (2013). «Defining the Svāra Bearing Unit in the śikṣāvedāṅga Literature: Unmasking a Veiled Debate». Mirnig, N.; Szántó, P.-D., Williams, M. (eds), *Puṣpikā. Tracing Ancient India Through Texts and Traditions. Contributions to Current Research in Indology*, vol. 1. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1-24.
- Coleman, J. (2018). «The Secret History of Prosodic and Autosegmental Phonology». Brentari, D.; Lee, J. (eds), *Shaping Phonology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 3-25.
- D'Avella, V. (2018). *Creating the Perfect Language: Sanskrit Grammarians, Poetry, and the Exegetical Tradition* [PhD Thesis]. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- David, H.S. (1952). *A Critical Study of the Tolkāppiyam, with special Reference to the Eḷuttu Atikāram* [Doctoral Thesis]. London: University of London.
- De Martino, M. (1997). «Studi di fonologia storica del sanscrito». *Quaderni Patavini di Linguistica*, 16, 3-51.
- De Martino, M. (2003). «Un caso di falso volgarismo nei grammatici: la presunta pronunzia 'volgare' [wɔ] della /ō/ di 'Roma'». *Göttinger Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft*, 8, 51-70.
- Firth, J.R. (1934). «ðə wə:d 'founi:m'». *Le Maître Phonétique*, 3^{ème} sér., 12(49), 46, 44-6. Rist. in Firth, J.R., «The Word 'Phoneme'». Firth, J.R., *Papers in Linguistics 1934-1951*. London: Oxford University Press, 1-2.
- Firth, J.R. (1934a). «Linguistics and the Functional Point of View». *English studies* 16, 18-24.
- Hamann, S. (2002). «Retroflexion and Retraction Revised». *ZAS Papers in Linguistics*, 28, 13-25.
- Hamann, S.R. (2003). *The Phonetics and Phonology of Retroflexes. Fonetiek en fonologie van retroflexen (met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)* [doctoraats thesis]. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht.
- Hock, H.H. (ed.) (2016). *Indigenous South Asian Grammatical Traditions*. Hock, H.H.; Bashir, E. (eds), *The Languages and Linguistics of South Asia. A Comprehensive Guide*. Berlin: De Gruyter, cap. 7, 707-33.
- Howson, Ph. (2018). *A Phonetic Examination of Rhotics: Gestural Representation Counts for Phonological Behaviour* [Doctoral Thesis]. Toronto: University of Toronto.
- Howson, Ph.J.; Monahan, Ph.J. (2019). «Perceptual Motivation for Rhotics as a Class». *Speech Communication*, 115, 15-28.
- Jakobson, R.; Halle, M. (1956). *Fundamentals of Language*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Jakobson, R.; Fant, G.; Halle, M. (1952). *Preliminaries to Speech Analysis. The Distinctive Features and their Correlates*. Acoustics Laboratory, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Jones, D. [1962², 1950] (1967³). *The Phoneme. Its Nature and Use*, with an Appendix on the History and Meaning of the Term 'Phoneme'. Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons.

- Krishnamurti, Bh. (1958). «Proto-Dravidian *ʒ». Sen, S. (ed.), *Sir Ralph Turner Jubilee Volume I, Presented on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (5 October 1958). *Indian Linguistics. A Quarterly Bulletin of the Linguistic Society of India*, 19, 259-93.
- Krishnamurti, Bh. (1969). «Comparative Dravidian Studies». Emeneau, M.B.; Fergusson, Ch.A. (eds), *Linguistics in South Asia, Current Trends in Linguistics*, 5, 309-33.
- Krishnamurti, Bh. (2003). *The Dravidian Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kumaraswami Raja, N. (1969). *Post-Nasal Voiceless Plosives in Dravidian*. Intr. by Professor M.B. Emeneau. Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University.
- Ladefoged, P. (1971). *Preliminaries to Linguistic Phonetics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ladefoged, P.; Johnson, K. (2015⁷). *A Course in Phonetics*. Stamford (CT): Cengage Learning. [Ladefoged, P. (2001⁴). *A Course in Phonetics*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle].
- Ladefoged, P.; Cochran, A.; Disner, S. (1977). «Laterals and Trills». *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 7(2), 46-54.
- Lisker, L. (1958). «The Tamil Occlusives: Short vs. Long or Voiced vs. Voiceless?». Sen, S. (ed.), *Sir Ralph Turner Jubilee Volume I, Presented on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (5 October 1958). *Indian Linguistics. A Quarterly Bulletin of the Linguistic Society of India*, 19, 294-301.
- Lowe, J.J. (2024). *Modern Linguistics in Ancient India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mahmoudian, M. (2008). «Genèse et développement de la phonologie vus à travers la correspondance de N.S. Troubetzkoy». *La linguistique*, 44(2), 117-26.
- Malmberg, B. (1977). *Manuale di fonetica generale*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Mancini, M. (1987). *Note iraniche*. Roma: Dipartim. di Studi Glottoantropologici, Università «La Sapienza» Roma.
- Mancini, M. (1994). «Un passo del grammatico Pompeo e la dittongazione protoromanza». Cipriano, P.; Di Giovine, P.; Mancini, M. (a cura di), *Miscellanea di studi linguistici in onore di Walter Belardi*, II: *Linguistica romanza e Storia della lingua italiana. Linguistica generale e Storia della linguistica*. Roma: Il Calamo, 609-27.
- Martinet, A. (1942-45). Recensione a Trubetzkoy, N.S. (1939). *Grundzüge der Phonologie*, Prague *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris*, 42(2), 23-33.
- Martinet, A. [1965] (1984²). *La considerazione funzionale del linguaggio*. Bologna: il Mulino. Trad. di: *A Functional View of Languages*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962.
- McDonough, J.; Johnson, K. (1997). «Tamil liquids: An investigation into the Basis of the Contrast among Five Liquids in a Dialect of Tamil». *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 27(1/2), 1-26.
- Meenakshisundaram, T.P. (1974). *Foreign Models in Tamil Grammar*. Karyavattom, Trivandrum: Department of Linguistics, University of Kerala.
- Meile, P. (1943-45). «Sur la sifflante en Dravien». *Journal Asiatique*, 234, 73-89.
- Mioni, A.M. (1986). «Fonetica articolatoria: descrizione e trascrizione degli atteggiamenti articolatori». Croatto, L. (a cura di), *Trattato di foniatría e logopedia*. Vol. 3, *Aspetti fonetici della comunicazione*. Padova: La Garangola, 15-88.
- Muljačić, Ž. (1973). *Fonologia generale*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Narayanan, Sh.; Byrd, D.; Kaun, A. (1999). «Geometry, Kinematics, and Acoustics of Tamil Liquid Consonants». *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 106(4), 1993-2007.
- Odden, D. (2005). *Introducing Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Punnoose, R.; Khattab, Gh.; Al-Tamimi, J. (2013). «The Contested Fifth Liquid in Malayalam: A Window into the Lateral-Rhotic Relationship in Dravidian Languages». *Phonetica*, 70, 274-97.
- Ramanujan, A.K.; Masica, C. (1969). «Toward a Phonological Typology of the Indian Linguistic Area». Emeneau, M.B.; Fergusson, Ch.A. (eds), *Linguistics in South Asia*. The Hague: Mouton, 543-77. Current Trends in Linguistics 5.
- Ramaswami Aiyar, L.V. (1928). «Plosive in Dravidian». *Journal of Oriental Research*, 2, 48-56.
- Ramaswami Aiyar, L.V. (1929). «Notes on Dravidian II. IV. Alveolar d e tt in Tamil-Malayāḷam». *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, V, 145-8.
- Ramaswami Aiyar, L.V. (1931). «Notes on Dravidian. The r-Sound of Dravidian». *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, VII, 176-86.
- Ramaswami Aiyar, L.V. (1935). «Tamil l». *Journal of Oriental Research*, 9(2-3), 140-7, 195-210.
- Ramaswami Aiyar, L.V. (1937). «The History of the Tamil-Malayāḷam Alveolar Plosive». *The Journal of Madras University*, 9(1), 116-66.
- Ramaswami Aiyar [Aiyar], L.V. (1936). *The Evolution of Malayalam Morphology*. Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press.
- Sankaran, C.R. (1951). *Phonemics of Old Tamil*. Poona: Dr S.M. Katre for Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute.
- Scharfe, H. (1977). *Grammatical Literature. A History of Indian Literature*. Gonda, J. (eds), *A History of Indian Literature*, 5(2). Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Scheer, T. (2011). *A Guide to Morphosyntax-Phonology Interface Theories. How Extra-Phonological Information is Treated in Phonology since Trubetzkoy's Grenzsignale*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Schiffman, H. (1980). «The Tamil Liquids». Caron, B.R.; Hoffman, M.A.B.; Silva, M.; Van Oosten, J.; Alford, D.K.; Hunold, K.A.; Macaulay, M.; Manley-Buser, J. (eds), *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (16-18 February 1980). Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistics Society, 100-10.
- Shalev, M.; Ladefoged, P.; Bhaskararao, P. (1993). «The Phonetic Structures of Toda». *UCLA Working Papers in Phonetics*, 84, 89-113.
- Staal, F. (1962). «A Method of Linguistic Description. The Order of Consonants according to Pāṇini». *Language*, 38, 1-10.
- Subbiah, R. (1968). «Tolkaappiyam and Phonetics». *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 10(4), 251-60.
- Subrahmanya Sastri, P.S. (1928). *Tolkāppiyam*, with a Short Commentary in English. Suppl., *The Journal of Oriental Research*, 2, 1-30.
- Subrahmanya Sastri, P.S. (1934). *History of Grammatical Theories in Tamil*. Madras: The Journal of Oriental Research.
- Subrahmanyam, P.S. (1983). *Dravidian Comparative Phonology*. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University.
- Švarný, O.; Zvelebil, K. (1955). «Some Remarks on the Articulation of the Cerebral Consonants in Indian Languages, Especially in Tamil». *Archiv Orientální*, 23, 374-434.
- Tabain, M.; Kochetov, A. (2018). «Acoustic Realization and Inventory Size: Kannada and Malayalam Alveolar/Retroflex Laterals and /ɭ/». *Phonetica*, 75, 85-109.
- Tamil Lexicon* [1924-36] (rist. 1982). Madras: University of Madras.
- The International Phonetic Association (1999). *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association. A guide to the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tikkanen, B. (1999). «Archaeological-Linguistic Correlations in the Formation of Retroflex Typologies and Correlating Areal Features in South Asia». Blench, R.;

- Spriggs, M. (eds), *Archaeology and Language IV. Language Change and Cultural Transformation*. London: Routledge, 138-48.
- Trautmann, Th.R. (2006). *Languages and Nations. The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Trubetzkoy, N.S. (1949). *Principes de phonologie*. Trad. di J. Cantineau. Intr. di A. Martinet, Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck.
- Trubeckoj, N.S. (1971). *Fondamenti di fonologia*. Trad. di G. Mazzuoli Porru. Torino: Einaudi. Trad. di: *Grundzüge der Phonologie*. Prague: Cercle Linguistique de Prague, 1939.
- Trubetzkoy, N.S. (1975). *N.S. Trubetzkoy's Letters and Notes*, prep. for the publ. by R. Jakobson with the ass. of H. Baran, O. Ronen and M. Taylor, The Hague: Mouton.
- Tuttle, E.H. (1937). «The History of Tamil R». *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 57(4), 411-5.
- Venkatarama Aiyar, C.P. (1920). «The Pronunciation of the Hard r in Dravidian Languages». *Proceedings & Transactions of the First Oriental Conference, Poona, Held on the 5th, 6th and 7th of November 1919*, vol. 1. Poona: P.D. Gune for Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, lxxxi-iv.
- Viel, M. (2010). «Le Continental et l'Insulaire: le prince Troubetzkoy rencontre le professeur Jones». *Revue des études slaves*, 81(4), 519-45.
- Vijayavenugopal, G. (1968). *A Modern Evaluation of Nannul (eḷuttatikāram)*. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University.
- Vinson, J. (1903). *Manual de la langue tamoule (grammaire, textes, vocabulaire)*. Paris: Ernest Leroux Éditeur.
- Wiese, R. (2011). «The Representation of Rhotics». van Oostendorp, M.; Ewen, C.J.; Hume, E.V.; Rice, K. (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Phonology*. Vol. 1, *General Issues and Segmental Phonology*. Malden (MA): Wiley-Blackwell, 711-29.
- Winslow, M. (1862). *A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary of High and Low Tamil*. Madras: P.R. Hunt for American Mission Press.
- Wright, R. (1982). *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France*. Liverpool: Francis Cairns.
- Zvelebil, K. (1970). *Comparative Dravidian Phonology*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Zvelebil, V.K. (1990). *Dravidian Linguistics. An Introduction*. Pondicherry: Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture.

Reviews

Tatiana Oranskaia, Anvita Abbi *The Heart of Change: Issues on Variation in Hindī*

Giulia Ferro

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract Review of Oranskaia, T.; Abbi, A. (2022). *The Heart of Change: Issues on Variation in Hindī*. Heidelberg: Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing (HASP), xvi + 266 pp.

1 Introduction

The volume edited by Tatiana Oranskaia and Anvita Abbi, *The Heart of Change: issues on Variation in Hindī*, and published by Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing, proposes different approaches and perspectives on variation. First of all, variation is intended as a basic peculiarity of language itself and of each and every language's vitality and, focusing on Hindī, it takes into account different modality of variation, namely variation through context (geographical/diachronic), internal (grammatical) variation, and in pragmatics and language teaching. Following these topics, the volume is divided into three parts which, respectively, deal with 1) geographic variation, along with glimpses on diachronic perspectives, 2) variation in grammar and discourse in standard Hindī and 3) pragmatic issues within the Hindī teaching framework. The interesting point of this volume lies in its bilingual structure, comprehending 11 chapters both in English and Hindī, respectively 7 and 4, while the abstracts of each chapter is both in English and Hindī. Additionally, as will be discussed later, the different points of view on variation shed light



Edizioni
Ca' Foscari

Submitted 2025-10-07
Published 2025-12-23



Open access

© 2025 Ferro | 4.0



Citation Ferro, G. (2025). "The Heart of Change: Issues on Variation in Hindī". *Bhasha*, 4(2), [1-22], 265-286.

both on possible comprehension of linguistic variability, creating a complex idea of how language – and specifically Hindī – is dynamic, and on fields of research which can and should be explored further.

Overall, the volume is well constructed, presenting several points of view from different disciplines while keeping Hindī as the main topic throughout all contributions. Due to the high variability of each and every presented research (from historical linguistics to morphology, syntax and Hindī in education), occasionally it is hard to follow the *fil rouge* connecting the overarching topic of Hindī variation; nonetheless, this same critique perfectly aligns with the concept of ‘variability’ – which can actually be traced back in the majority of the essays. In addition, the majority of the papers draw to a highly-linguistic background, taking for granted a high competence in Hindī and in the comprehension of the morphosyntax of other New Indo-Aryan languages, while other essays give a shallow contribution to the theme, as Pandey’s हिंदी में लिंग निर्धारण *How to determine Grammatical Gender in Hindi*, which could be very useful for scholars who do not deal with Hindī – if it was not written in Hindī.

2 Part I: Geographic Variation in Grammar and Lexis

Anvita Abbi’s paper, which opens the first part of the volume, deals with emerging varieties of Hindī across India and on the grammatical peculiarities of these same varieties. She focuses on contact Hindī, both in the ‘Hindī belt’ (areas where Hindī is one of the official languages or the official language, such as Bihar, Jharkhand but also the Union territory of Andaman and Nicobar), and in non-Hindī zones, such as Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.

She claims that Hindī is a lingua franca among the uneducated and, along with English, for both educated and uneducated people. It is composed by 57 varieties (according to the Census 2011), and many of these are considered dialects. However, these dialectal forms, or sub-standard varieties, are becoming the major lingua franca, used by the 60% of the population, which is widely accepted in communities all over India and in Union territories, such as the ones examined by the author. The interesting point in Abbi’s contribution is that she presents the grammatical points which are negotiated in contact Hindī, which makes Hindī more accessible and acceptable for a wide range of people and speakers.

The author presents some data regarding the rise, in 2011 census, of people who consider Hindī as their mother tongue, both in states where Hindī is not the primary official language and in states where Standard Hindī is the official language. In general, she states that, along with different registers, there are around six varieties of Hindī, namely:

- Hindī spoken in cosmopolitan cities, a phenomenon observed recently;
- Hindī spoken in the Hindī belt;
- Hindī spoken in non-Hindī zones;
- Hindī spoken in the Northeast (part of the non-Hindī zones);
- Hindī spoken in the Andamans (part of the Hindī belt but subject to various contact phenomena of diverse populations of India);
- Standard Hindī with several registers according to the profession of the speakers.

The linguistic and sociolinguistic situations of the areas taken into account within Abbi's research study are surely different, since in the territory of the Hindī belt Hindī is one or the official language of the area, giving rise to Contact Hindī, exposed to many non-Indo-Aryan languages (as Kharia and Ho, Austroasiatic languages, and Kurux and Malto, Dravidian, in the state of Jharkhand). On the other hand, in non-Hindī zones Hindī is used as a 'language of contact', due to the great variation in the spoken languages of the areas and to the need to communicate within the state and outside the state. In these territories, neither there is a serious attempt to speak Standard Hindī nor the speakers have access to a strong exposure to Standard Hindī - even though it is considered a language of prestige and a means to communicate to a larger population base. However, even if in states like Arunachal Pradesh there are and have been serious attempts from government organisations to imparting knowledge of Hindī, this has been possible through the "sociolinguistic history of the speakers [...] that is the primary determinant of the linguistic outcome of language contact" (Thomason, Kaufman 1988, 35). In this case, the social interactions with outsiders prompted speakers to develop Contact Hindī. Additionally, the changes present in these varieties are the result of the interplay of the model language and the recipient language.

Abbi then analyses Hindī as a Language in Contact, namely within the Hindī-belt Hindī, describing the features of Contact Hindī of Bihar, of Jharkhand and of the Andamans (both of the Great Andamanese and of Hindī used by Andamanese settlers). Surely the sociological features of these territories are different, along with historical immigration and diversity of languages present in the areas, as Abbi describes. Nonetheless, even though there are many points of divergence, there are many common features and partial similarities in all these Contact Hindī varieties, namely:

1. Absence of grammatical gender;
2. Use of the word *log* 'people' as a plural marker for nouns;
3. Absence of oblique case marking on nouns before postpositions;

4. The use of the modal verb *sak-* 'be able to', 'can', as an independent verb.

The author then analyses Hindī as the Contact Language of the Northeast, namely of Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, where this variety arose due to the need of a lingua franca and to the inflow of visitors from the rest of India (mainly speakers of Bangla and varieties of Hindī). In Arunachal Pradesh, there are many scheduled tribes that speak different, mutually non-intelligible languages of different families. In the last decades, infrastructural changes in the region led to higher mobility and the need to communicate among tribes. Hindī, in this case, is seen as an equaliser and it has helped mitigating differences in society. The same can be said for what concerns Meghalaya: the cosmopolitan city of Shillong is inhabited by both indigenous and non-indigenous populations. In general, Meghalaya Hindī is characterised by loans from Bengali, Assamese, Nepali, Bhojpuri, English, etc. and has a formal and an informal register, the former used in government offices and the latter used in public spaces and by workers from various parts of India (traders, cab drivers, hawkers), who have only one link language in common – Hindī. Arunachalese and Meghalaya Hindī, as for the above-mentioned Contact Hindī varieties, have some features in common, such as the use of *lok* 'people (Bengali)' to create plurals, lack of agreement of subject-verb in both gender and number, the use of *-vālā* as a specifier, the use of *sak-* 'can', 'be able to' as the main verb, absence of oblique marking, etc. Abbi lists also many points of divergence between Arunachalese and Meghalaya Hindī, the latter often lacking grammatical function words and still evolving.

Abbi concludes that the contact between Standard Hindī and other languages leads to Hindī restructurisation, with many morpho-syntactic features of Hindī which are simplified or generalised. The role of Hindī to assure contact among peoples and tribes is surely to keep in mind, along with its prestige and the attitude towards it.

Abbi's paper is well structured, full of useful examples of spoken varieties of Hindī while presenting also the sociological-historical perspectives of the areas taken into account, giving an adequate account of ethnographic methodological integration within linguistics. From the point of view of content, it presents both those features of Hindī which are prone to diffusion or loss – therefore presenting Hindī geographical and historical change – while highlighting the importance of Hindī variation in its role as a language for communication and contact and giving the basis for future analysis of Contact Hindī in other areas as well.

Annie Montaut's paper concentrates on the non-lexical categories of *avyay* 'invariables' and their grammaticalisation in the Pahari languages, namely in Garhvālī, with a comparison to Standard Hindī.

The case of Gaṛhvālī's *avyay* grammaticalisation processes with respect to Hindī and other Indo-Aryan languages is widely analysed and exemplified, to show the various path that etymological bases can take into grammaticalisation, turning into any case function, sometimes with different (if not opposite) meaning. The example of the Sanskrit word for 'ear' *karṇa*, is excellent to demonstrate this, since on one hand it was grammaticalised into the ergative/instrumental postposition *na* and on the other into the dative, specific to Gaṛhvālī, *khunī*. Many of the markers taken into account in Montaut's paper are of a more abstract origin, coming from *bhū* 'to be, to exist' in Sanskrit and its diverse forms, but there are also quite specific and unique grammaticalisation processes, and this is the case of *bal*, peculiar of Gaṛhvālī.

The contribution gives many examples of diachronic adpositional changes, suggestions of grammaticalisation processes taken from diachronic, etymological studies and grammars, such as Grierson's, Cātak's, etc. – Montaut stresses the importance of more general grammars in this regard, highlighting that those with a diachronic perspective mention Gaṛhvālī forms. Montaut then presents the main and the most frequent case markers in Gaṛhvālī, where it is clear that there are many co-existing forms even though only some of them are the mostly used. The different usage of case markers is then presented: ergative/instrumental, dative/accusative, instrumental/ablative, genitive and locative. For what concerns the more recent evolution of New Indo-Aryan languages, in the process of changing from Sanskrit inflections to adpositions and auxiliaries, Gaṛhvālī still uses inflectional case markers in some dialects and from the analysis of such changes, along with the etymology of the different markers present in New Indo-Aryan languages, it is clear that Standard Hindī and Gaṛhvālī have different specialisation and grammaticalisation paths. The marker *bal* is quite unique in Gaṛhvālī and Montaut suggests identifying it as an evidential marker: it is used to report an indirect information with some doubt regarding its authenticity, but also to emphasise a given expression, even though its etymology still remains uncertain (from Sanskrit *manye* or from the verb *bol*-). Montaut's analysis is, overall, detailed and well constructed; nonetheless, it focuses on a single Pahari language: it will be interesting to have a wider perspective on grammaticalisation processes considering languages from other areas of the Hindī belt.

Vashini Sharma's paper, entitled *The impact of Other Indian Languages on Dakhinī*, is unfortunately just a draft, since Sharma passed away before the publication of the volume. It is the first paper in Hindī within this volume, and it deals with the complex linguistic background of Hyderabad, analysing it as a linguistic area. In particular, she deals with the phenomenon of convergence in Dakhinī, due to the constant contact with Telugu and other Dravidian

languages. In Hyderabad, where Dakhinī Hindī emerged, Urdū was used as the means of education and communication during the reign of Nizam, and it continued being the medium of conversation both in Andhra Pradesh, and then in the new, language-based whole state of Telangana, whose official languages are, in fact, both Urdū and Telugu. Due to these factors, Dakhinī has been influenced both from Urdū and from local Dravidian languages, as Telugu.

Hyderabad is composed by a majority of speakers of Telugu, which had many contacts with the neighbour Marāṭhī and has developed common features. These – mainly lexical features – are visible also in Dakhinī, since many people code-switch to Dakhinī, even though there is a push to Standard Hindī. In Hyderabad there are also Dakhinī mother tongue speakers,

From the syntactic point of view, Sharma lists the following features which make Dakhinī resemble Telugu more than Urdū/Hindī:

- the use of the ergative particle *ne* does not follow the rules of Standard Hindī and is, in fact, used where it is not expected to be found, as in the examples that Sharma proposes;
- concerning the use of subject + *ko*, specific of Hindī/Urdū, Dakhinī is ‘degenitivising’ for a dativisation;
- agreement in gender and number;
- the use of short versions of emphatic particles, such as *hī*, *bhī*, *to*, which are *-ī*, *-īm* in Dakhinī;
- the use of तुम्हारा *tumhārā* as a possessive determinative adjective instead of अपना *apanā*;
- the agglutination of the auxiliary verb in many forms, such as: the progressive construction (Hindī: रहा + है *rahā + hai* > Dakhinī: रा / रय / रै / रई *rā / ray / raīm*); in the present indicative (Hindī: बोलता हूँ, बोलता है बोलते हैं *bolatā hum, bolatā hai, bolate haim* > Dakhinī: बोलतूँ, बोलतैँ, बोलताउँ *bolatūm, boltaim, boltaum*); in the future indicative; in many cases the use of है *hai* is unexpressed, as in Dakhinī: मेरे को जाना (है) *mere ko jānā (hai)* > Hindī: मुझे जाना है *mujhe jānā hai*; in hypothetical forms; interestingly enough, the grammatical gender is inexplicit in these forms;
- the Hindī/Urdū चाहना / चाहिए *cāhanā/cāhie* is replaced by होना *honā*, similarly to Marāṭhī and Telugu forms;
- the use of the Marāṭhī forms हौ *hai* (Hindī: हाँ *hām*) and नको *nako* (Hindī: नहीं *nahīm*), the latter replacing मत *mat* in negative imperative;
- the way adjective clauses are formed with जो...वह / *jo... vah* in standard Hindī, such a structure is lacking in Dakhinī. Here the independent clause comes in the form of an implicit structure at the phrase level, and here सो *so* is the connecting word;
- the use of बोलके / करके *bolke / karke* instead of the quotative Hindī form कि *ki*, the Dakhinī forms calqued from the Telugu form *-ani*;

- concerning interrogative pronouns and particles, as in spoken Hindi, in Dakhinī too in many cases क्या *kyā* is omitted in closed questions, or is postposed at the end of the interrogative sentence; this is a trait of Dravidian languages, as the form *a?* is found in Telugu; क्यों *kyom* is replaced by forms similar to Telugu ఎందుకు *emduku*;
- name of relatives often take the final -u form (as मामा *māmā* > मामू *māmu*) and the जान *jān* suffix is often added to the appellative (मामूजान *māmujān*).

Unfortunately, the conclusions of this paper are absent, even though the premises of the research are certainly useful to unfold a further analysis of the data: the listed features may, indeed, be elaborated to a greater extent by scholars in this same field.

The last contribution in the part concerning geographical variation is the diachronic analysis of Wessler. In *Cosmopolitan Hindustani Under Aurangzeb: Terminological Matters in François Marie de Tours' Thesaurus Linguae Indiae*, he deals with the analysis of a early-eighteenth-century manuscript of a French Capuchin missionary comparing around 11.000 headwords with the Latin equivalent, the Hindi word in Devanāgarī (surprisingly close to Modern Standard Hindi), the French rendering, a phonological transcription with diacritics and, in Perso-Arabic loanwords, also the Arabic glosses both in Naskh and Nastaliq.

De Tours was based in Surat, modern Gujarāt, where the Capuchins had previously established their central office. This is also where the first known grammar of Hindustānī was composed in 1698, by Johan Josua Ketelaar, a protestant missionary, five years earlier than de Tours' (1703). The document, comprehensive of a dictionary and a grammar, was supposed to be printed, but neither the manuscript remained whole nor it got the chance to be printed. It does not have a constant orthography, since it uses some features of Moḍī and Gujarātī scripts: interestingly enough, a century later in Kolkata, Gilchrist classified 'Hindustānī' as a different version of Hindī to be written in Nastaliq.

A paragraph of Wessler's paper deals with the concept of 'colonial linguistics' in relation with de Tours' manuscript, as Anquetil-Duperron, famous orientalist, introduced it and probably had seen a version of the it while staying in Surat. The study of languages was important for the colonial project, in order to control and command the colonised territory (Cohn 1996); on the other hand, Guha (2011) points out that much more complexity arose in the interaction of different discourses, languages and works of literature within Early Modern India, using the term 'cosmopolitanism' referring to the open to pluralist discourse and setup, the linguistic and lexicographic

research on New Indo-Aryan languages made by Christian missionaries being part of this endeavour.

Coming to the features of the manuscript itself, Wessler lists many instances of the headwords of the manuscript, mainly theologically relevant words (which cover a wide part of the dictionary), describing both the etymology and the orthographic choices. In many instances, the Hindustānī/Sanskrit word presents orthographic divergence from Hindī/Sanskrit features, due to common features of Gujarātī and Marāṭhī, as in the same ‘Hindustānī’ in the title of the manuscript, with the first ‘ī’ in its long form. In many headwords both the Sanskritic and the Perso-Arabic correspondence are listed in a highly Christian vocabulary translation, with a slight preference for Perso-Arabic terminology; in other cases the ‘neutral’ common lexeme is used, that makes it possible to conclude that de Tours’ informants were from the environment of converted people. In conclusion, this contribution sheds light on the importance of such manuscripts in earlier grammatical (and grammarians’) tradition, giving a clear example of how this specimen is entangled with contacts among cultures and languages. The author contemplates in a balanced way the colonial-historical setting, the philological analysis of the manuscript and its importance in the history of thought from a South Asian, Hindī perspective; at the same time, the author does not neglect the crucial role of this type of exchange in the spreading of knowledge on the birth of Hindī as it is known nowadays.

3 Part II: Variation in the Grammar and Discourse of Standard Hindī

The second part of the volume is entitled *Variation in the Grammar and Discourse of Standard Hindī*, and is started by Khokhlova’s paper on *Conative: Compleitive Contrast in Hindī-Urdū Aorist Forms*. Her study focuses on compound verbs in their aorist form (as *kiyā* from *karnā*, *liyā* from *lenā*, etc., which Khokhlova calls V-ā forms) and on the conditions under which this specific feature of Hindī language’s verbs do not denote the completion of the action. These verb forms are composed by a primary stem of ‘major’ verb conveying semantic meaning, and a ‘light’ verb from a restricted inventory of verbs, such as *lenā* ‘take’, *denā* ‘give’, *ānā* ‘come’, *jānā* ‘go’, etc. The methodology of her study is based on elicitation of responses or reactions to a battery of utterances presented to Standard Hindī speakers from different Indian universities.

The issue around whether aorist forms express compleitive meaning has been debated by Hindī grammarians, as Montaut (2004), Kachru (1980), Hook (1974), and many scholars, such as Nespital (1997), Pořízka (1967-69) and Liperovskij (1984), state that V-ā may have

but also may not have completive meaning. Other scholars state that compound verbs, however, may signal the inception or completion of an action, but Khokhlova adds that compound verbs formed from telic stems (that presents an action or event as having a specific endpoint) may bear conative (the attempting of an action as opposed to the action itself) or completive sense, while non-telic stems bear inceptive meaning. In particular, in her analysis she focuses on telic verbs in compound with incremental themes, namely where the argument has properties which determine the progress of the event. These incremental themes may be of different kinds, but, in general, when compounded with light verbs, these incremental arguments may denote an incomplete action:

- when then event's end "is achieved by progressing incrementally through the object" (Dowty 1991), as in verbs like 'eat' or 'build', where the meaning of compound verbs is between conation (attempt) and completion;
- the temporal terminus of the event is achieved progressively, but the object does not change or move, as in Khokhlova's example *laṛke ne kitab paṛh lī lekin do panne bāqī rah gaye* 'the boy read the book, but two pages are left';
- the event's temporal end is "achieved by progressing along measurable degrees of change in some property central to the verb's meaning. Internal argument undergoes some change in a property over time" (Tenny 1994, 17-18), as in Khokhlova's examples with *sāf karnā* 'to clean': *maīne ghar sāf kiyā* (versus *kar di-yā*) *par vah sāf nahī huā*, 'I cleaned the house but it did not become (sufficiently) clean.' However, if the state of the object changes instantly or the verb meaning has a conative semantic, aorist forms of compound verbs cannot denote an incomplete action: she uses the following example: *bacce ne akhroṭ torā par vah nahī tūṭā*, 'The child was cracking (= tried to crack) the walnut but it did not crack.' **tor diyā* could not be used since the action could not be completed.

In general, from the answers of Standard Hindī speakers to the proposed battery, she considers that compound verbs with non-telic stems convey inceptive meaning, while for the ones with telic stems the meaning may be conative or completive, and that compound verbs are usually used in contexts where the action is not supposed to be completed at all, or when the agent considers his goal achieved, despite the action remaining incomplete. Overall, the methodology of the research is clear as are the presented examples which draw the author to the conclusion. However, the selected respondents represent only high-littered Standard Hindī speakers, while at the same time coming from two different areas (Delhi and Wardha):

widening the level of literacy of the respondents may shed further light on a possible variation in aorist compound verbs in Hindī.

Continuing with variation in grammar, Verbeke and Ponnet deal with *ko*-marking of the direct object in relation to three issues: animacy, definiteness/specificity, and verb semantics. In particular, the aim of the research study is to understand:

- if the primacy in *ko*-marking belongs to animacy, definiteness/specificity or to other syntactic features;
- if there is difference between definiteness/specificity, these concepts not being commonly accepted and used by linguists;
- in which degree *ko*-marking depends on the semantic properties of the verb.

The methodology used integrates secondary sources' analysis, dealing with textbooks and grammars of Hindī on the subject of direct object marking, and with primary sources' analysis, namely of 450 selected sentences from the EMILLE Spoken Hindī corpora.¹ The authors thus use data from both a prescriptivist point of view and from spoken Hindī, with dialectal variation and non-standard grammar.

Dividing the analytical part of the paper into 4 parts, the authors firstly present differential object marking with the examples from Mohanan (1994): *Ilā ne bacce ko uṭhāyā* ('Ila lifted a/the child', with the *ko*-marked animate object), *Ilā ne hār ko uṭhāyā* ('Ila lifted the necklace, with an inanimate object marked with *ko*) and *Ilā ne hār uṭhāyā* ('Ila lifted a/the necklace', with the inanimate object unmarked). In this cases, the direct object is marked only in the case of animacy and specificity/definiteness, but when adding the role of animacy to the theme it can be argued that animate non-human arguments are often unmarked, as in Montaut's example (2004): *billī cuhi khāegī* ('The cat will eat the mouse'), even though these are more likely marked than inanimate arguments. Nonetheless, the primacy of animacy can be discussed, since animate nonspecific arguments may lack *ko*-marking.

In this sense, the authors argue that 'specificity' is a subcategory of the concept 'definiteness', or 'familiarity'. Verbeke and Ponnet state that specificity marks the "certainty of the speaker about the identity of the referent" (p. 139), namely 'uniqueness', and in the case of Hindī it is much more precise for the analysis of direct object marking. In Hindī we find the use of the indefinite determiner *ek* 'one': usually the noun phrase which contains this determiner cannot be marked with *ko*. Nonetheless, taking the example from Mohanan (1994), *ravī*

¹ Lancaster University, available on <https://cqweb.lancs.ac.uk/>, created by Hardie (2012).

ek gāy ko kharīdnā cāhtā hai, ‘Ravi wishes to buy a (particular) cow’, the authors argue that *ek gāy* is indefinite but specific, thus leading to the *ko*-marking and giving a prior role to specificity in direct object marking.

Many authors, such as Mohanan (1994) observe that deviation to the above-mentioned rules for direct object marking may be due to the semantic of the verb, the last issue that Verbeke and Ponnet analyse in this contribution. More specifically, some classes of verbs require inanimate objects and do not allow *ko*, like *paṛhnā* ‘read’ and *likhnā* ‘write’, while other classes, where *khojnā* ‘search for’, *lānā* ‘bring’, *bulānā* ‘call’, *mārnā* ‘beat somebody’ belong, are neutral regarding animacy or require animacy. It is in this regard that the authors used the EMILLE corpus of Spoken Hindī, selecting seven verbs and investigating whether actual language usage confirms direct object *ko*-marking or not. Even though the corpus is restricted and does not include all the possible meanings and usages of the chosen verbs (with animate/inanimate objects, with pronouns, with determiners, etc.), it is interesting to observe that many of the searches made by the authors comply with the premises regarding the importance of specificity in Hindī: for example that *gānā* ‘sing’ and *pīnā* ‘drink’ never have a marked direct object since it is inanimate and in many cases nonspecific; or, regarding *banānā* ‘make’ and *paṛhnā* ‘write’, where both *ko*-marking and unmarkedness can appear, since the direct object can be both specific and, for *banānā*, also animate. Pronominal direct objects, both animate and inanimate, are anaphoric and thus specific: this is the reason why they are marked. The use of Spoken Hindī in this analysis marks an interesting point of the research, pulling towards descriptivism and thus embracing Hindī variation.

Kostina’s chapter proposes an understanding of variability in discourse markers in Hindī through a linguistic experiment of text reconstruction. Discourse markers is a concept that has been debated since its introduction by Schiffrrin (1982), which still does not have a common definition nor presents criteria to distinguish these linguistic items from other items, like conjunctions, particles, etc., even in debates regarding Hindī, the most important works on the theme being Sharma (1999), Shapiro (2003), Montaut (2004) and Kachru (2006). In general, the theoretical framework used by the author regarding discourse markers describe these linguistic items as those which i) establish the coherence of discourse, ii) do not influence the meaning of an isolated phrase, iii) do not deliver any grammatical meaning and iv) do not express the speaker’s emotions or attitude towards what is said (Kasevič et al. 2014). They can be connectives as the Hindī forms *lekin*, *par* for ‘but’, *bhī* ‘also’, *aur* ‘and’; emphatic – both expressing strong, as *kyā* ‘what’, *na* ‘is it not so’, and weak emphasis, as *hī* ‘particularly’, *bhī* ‘even’, *tak* ‘even’, *to* ‘certainly’ – and contrastive topic markers, as *to* ‘as

for.../‘indeed’. There are also many complex discourse markers, as *phir bhī* ‘nonetheless’ and *nahīm* to ‘otherwise’. In Hindī there are also emphatic pronouns, compounded by a pronoun + *hī*. These linguistic items do not have fixed language rules and there is a strong variability in their use: this is what the linguistic experiment conducted by the author wanted to prove for what concerns Hindī. She presented a ‘bare’ text, where all the chosen discourse markers were deleted, to 39 Hindī mother tongue speakers but also to 5 non-native speakers. The instructions were to insert the specific discourse markers previously extracted, *hī* (also in its pronominal use), *bhī*, *lekin*, *par*, *to*. Even though the controllability of the test was low, since the participants have filled the gaps by their own distantly and have often misunderstood the instructions, it has been observed that there is great variability in the use of discourse markers – particularly for what concerns complex meanings –, due to personal and stylistic preferences; additionally, many of the items that were deleted by the text are not discourse markers *stricto sensu* but they also convey semantic meaning, since their erasure have compromised the comprehension of the original text. They help mark borders between semantic blocks within the sentence and, finally, their use depends also on the sentence syntax and lexis, but also on the wider context.

Kostina’s paper is rich in samples from the linguistic experiment and the methodology is well explained, and, despite some criticalities in the conduction – namely the misunderstandings of the participants and the uncontrollability of the experiment –, it unfolds the path for further analysis on discourse markers, poses the basis to investigate on more controllable experiment strategies and raises awareness on possible research questions regarding the issue.

Oranskaia’s closing paper of the part of the volume dedicated to grammatical variation proposes a tentative of formalisation of Hindī clause strings – specifically of multicomponent-sequences – including at least one adverbial clause. Their study and interpretation are part of the research subject of complex syntax, central to information and discourse hierarchy in human language and cognition and, in this specific regard, to subordinating modalities. ‘Clause strings’ are ‘intermediary’ clauses between compound (coordinated) sentences/complex (subordinated) sentences and larger texts, and which are usually composed by two or more clauses. The analysis of such clauses is, as the author highlights, fairly neglected and typological data from Hindī are scarcely used and researched on. After listing the basic concepts surrounding complex syntax, the author raises the question of the right clause boundary, specifically concerning Hindī. If in languages written in Latin alphabet boundaries are easily recognisable through punctuation and capital letters, this is not the case of Hindī (and of other New Indo-Aryan languages),

since there is not distinction in this language between upper/lowercase and punctuation is scarcely used. Coming to the specifics of adverbial clauses, they have a “low degree of integration into the matrix clause... and a low degree of interlacing” (Kortmann 1997, 241); additionally, the distance between the adverbial and the superordinate clause is variable, and the adverbial clause’s governor may itself be a complex multiclausal structure – thus presenting a complex and diverse degree of subordination.

Data analysis was made through a workshop in Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi VishwaVidyalaya, with the assistance of students as well. The processed data was gathered from essays of modern Hindi writers, since the features of this genre are closer to the spoken language (and thus the variability) of the authors of these same essays. It was observed that there were “strong structural variations in expressing a same logico-semantic structure” with an alternation of hypotaxis and parataxis (as Oranskaia states in the volume, p. 194). The formalisation process is then described, from the tagging procedure following the principle of Natural Language Processing (clauses parsing, disambiguation of interclausal meanings, disambiguation of intersentential meanings, establishing types of clauses combination), to the formalisation means using different kinds of brackets and tags. Oranskaia then presents thoroughly an example of analysis and formalisation of four clause strings, all built almost uninterruptedly, explaining both the relation between clauses and the kind of relation – often superficially expressed through subordinating or coordinating conjunctions. Overall, as the author herself states, it is necessary to broaden the corpus, particularly with material from Spoken Hindi, in order to shed a brighter light on Hindi complex communication structure and syntax – and thus in variation, since conveying complex meaning makes the speaker face a choice among multiple forms and conjunctions – and in general to widen the knowledge on information structure. Despite this limitation, Oranskaia’s contribution presents a complete presentation of the subject while also explaining thoroughly both the concepts and terms used in the research and the methodology – replicable and where in some phases also students were, virtuously, recruited.

4 Part III: Variation Issues in Hindi Teaching

The third part of the volume is devoted to pragmatic variation, more specifically to variation in Hindi teaching, and it presents three papers in Hindi. The first one, by Agnihotri, deals with multilingualism and language teaching, proposing multilingualism as the nature of language and the identity of being human along with being the most useful means of language teaching. The author considers, in fact,

that a multilingual approach can increase sensitivity and respect towards the many languages present in Hindī (or any other language) classes while at the same time changing the fundamentals of language teaching and training; nonetheless, this is rarely put in practice, since the focus in class is solely on the ‘pure’ side of the language.

Taking into consideration both the universal features every language follows and the specific features of a determined language, Agnihotri exemplifies how variation shall be considered in language teaching, starting from phonology, continuing with morphology, sentence structure and lexicon, thus following the main stages of language acquisition. From the phonological point of view, the constraints of consonant cluster at the beginning of a word must be taken into consideration, as in स्त्री *strī* ‘woman’ since even mother tongue speakers of Hindī may pronounce स्त्री *strī* as /satari/ or /isli/. Coming to morphology, gender is another important feature that needs to be taken into consideration when teaching, since Hindī and English are different languages in this regard – Hindī being a gendered language and English being genderless.

The realm of language is, in fact, not uniform: the author calls this situation multilinguality, but many other concepts have been developed, such as ‘super-diversity’, ‘translanguaging’ and so forth. In addition, classes are multilingual, many languages may co-exist in the mind of a single person in a fluid manner and possessing more linguistic resources can be useful for sensitivity towards languages and thus in language learning. This can be practical to understand how classes need to be reshaped: starting from teacher training (who should show interest in all the languages of the class and have a complete knowledge of how language works), teaching activities and materials.

The theoretical linguistic framework too influenced the perception on language teaching. With the point of view of structural linguistics (Bloomfield 1933), translation of verbs and grammar from the mother tongue to the target language – the audio-lingual method – was believed to be the most useful manner to teach a language, and it is still used today in some contexts. Hymes (1966; 1974), on the contrary, highlighted that the context and society are fundamental aspects in language learning, namely what is the social context where language is used and the reason why it is used, and in further research it was shown that the mother tongue of a student does not influence language learning (if not from the phonological point of view), and that, to learn properly, there is the need for a “challenging input in an understandable way”, as Agnihotri states in the volume (p. 219, translation by the Author). Kumaravadivelu (2006) posits a ‘post-method’, which means that every teacher decides her/his own approach based on the specifics and circumstances of the class. The authors, nonetheless, points out that the languages of the children

are a powerful means for the children cognitive development, thus it is important:

- to introduce new activities and materials;
- to use (in songs, activities, materials etc). every child's language and respect them;
- that the teacher keep learning from the children's materials, even though the teacher does not have to know every child's language;
- to keep in mind that using this approach, children will understand that every language is equal structurally, even though it may not be the same politically or socially; children's confidence will increase when her/his own language gets a voice, and they can compare the languages of the class with specific activities.

The author brings then different examples for useful activities, such as using a couplet from Kabir and discussing the language and the meaning or translating it in the different languages of the class; for older students, also analysing the syntax and the morphology of such couplet in different languages might be an interesting activity, increasing awareness towards metalanguage and multilingualism – for the author the only possible approach towards language and teaching. Agnihotri's approach, despite addressing the importance of being 'sensitive to language' in language teaching, is up to date for what concerns multilingualism and translanguaging in education, presenting useful theoretical approaches to the author's aim, methods to integrate multilingual practices in Hindi classes and expected results of such education.

Pandey's contribution regards grammatical gender in Hindi and the difficulties non-Hindi speakers face when discriminating feminine and masculine words in the learning process. As Guru stated, "it is very difficult to know the gender of non-living words in Hindi because this is mostly a matter of usage. It is difficult to know the gender of these words from both the means of meaning and form" (1920, 162). Difficulties especially arise for inanimate/abstract words and for the realm of animals and birds: the paper has thus the aim of systematising the rules behind gender attribution in Hindi.

Gender can be inferred through meaning, for words such as पुरुष *puruṣa* 'man' and महिला *mahilā* 'woman', etc. and for many names gender is clear from the suffix, as in राजा *rājā* 'king' / रानी *rānī* 'queen', हाथी *hāthī* 'elephant' / हथिनी *hathinī* 'female elephant', etc. On the other hand, many names of animals, insects and birds have been arbitrarily placed in the masculine or in the feminine category. Gender can also be inferred through grammatical context, namely through the predicate, as in वह आ रहा है *vah ā rahā hai* 'he is coming' versus वह आ रही है *vah ā rahī hai* 'she is coming' and in many other examples that

the author quotes. Nonetheless, there are many other forms where the gender cannot be inferred through the predicate but through the extralinguistic context, such as in आप कौन हैं? *Āp kaun haiṁ?* ‘Who are you (formal)?’.

Gender can also be inferred through suffixes, both inflectional and derivational. Regarding inflectional suffixes, the author presents different tables showing plural direct suffixes for feminine and masculine words with different endings, which show the difference of behaviour between the two grammatical gender – namely the use of *-eṁ* and *-yāṁ* suffixes for feminine words and *-e* or zero for masculine words. The author then presents the plural oblique form, for plural substantives followed by a postposition, which is *-oṁ* for both genders. Derivational suffixes, on the other hand, can cause morphophonological changes in the original substantive, especially for Sanskrit tatsamas and Sanskrit-based neologisms. The author presents then tables with *-tā*, *-imā*, *-āvaṭ*, *-(ā)haṭ*, *-anā*, *-i/-tī*, etc. abstract suffixes: every suffix is used with nouns of a specific category to create particular meanings (as participle, abstraction, etc). and all them create a feminine substantive notwithstanding the gender of the root noun. Pandey also lists suffixes which are used to create the feminine corresponding substantive from the masculine noun, as *-ī*, *-ānī*, *-in*. Masculine derivational suffixes are also presented in tables, such as *-tva*, *-ak*, *an*, *-āv*, *-āvā*, *-pan*. Zero suffix nouns are also presented, as in the case of the drop of *-nā* suffix (*jāṁcnā* ‘to check’ m. > *jāṁc* ‘check’ f).. Along with suffixes of Sanskrit origin, there are also Perso-Arabic derivational suffixes used in Hindī, such as the feminine suffixes *-īś*, *-ī*, *-gī*, *-gīrī*, *-at*, *-iyat*, *-ānā*, and the masculine *-āk*, *-gār*, *-gīr*, *-cī* (the latter a Turkish suffix).

Through this very specific and complete paper, Pandey has surely presented a tool which can be used in teaching and for a comprehensive analysis of suffixes and their relationship with gender in Hindī. It also shows the variation of suffixes in Hindī, both from the point of view of their etymology (from Sanskrit or Persian-Arabic) and their meanings/usages. However, despite the usefulness of the contribution and the temptative *fil rouge* to the topic of variation, it seems that this essay only presents strategies to understand gender in Hindī not diving deeper into the reasons for such variation within the language morphological suffixes.

The last contribution of this volume, by Singh, brings a case study regarding attitude towards Hindī learning in Singapore Universities. Singapore gained independence from England in 1965 and from Malaysia in 1965, Malay people being considered the ‘original’ inhabitants. Nonetheless, the ethnic composition of this state is nowadays quite unique, Chinese being the first ethnic presence, followed by Malay, Indian (9,1%) and other ethnicities (Census 2018). Along with ethnic diversity, the Singaporean society is multilingual

too: English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil are all four official languages, with the former being the official language of education and the others as second languages. Other languages too have a role in the state, since many people have started choosing Hindi in local schools and in universities, the latter being the main focus of this paper. Specifically, Hindi is being taught in two universities, in the National University of Singapore (NUS) since 2008 and in the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) since 2014. In the paper, the author focuses on ethnic and social perspectives of the learners, in order to analyse if there are Heritage Learners in Singapore as in European countries, on the interplay between ethnicity and learning, and on the teaching materials. The methodology of the proposed research study is both qualitative and quantitative, through questionnaires, observations and informal interviews/chats with 40 students followed by their analysis. The inclusion of interviews' excerpts is a positive point in the paper.

The paper is then structured in three main topics, the first one focuses on the ethnic perspective on Hindi students, the second one presents the reasons to study Hindi and, lastly, the third focuses on Hindi teaching materials. The paragraph regarding the ethnic perspective presents the number of students by ethnicity in both universities, and in general:

- Malay students choose the language because they are fond of Bollywood and want to understand what is being said without subtitles. Nonetheless, in the last few years there is a strong trend towards Arabic culture and language, even though in one university Malay students are relatively a large number;
- Chinese students, who are few in the courses, prefer studying Tamil since it can be used in government jobs as well;
- Indian students are the first ethnicity learning Hindi in both universities taken into account. Nonetheless, they are not Heritage Learners since both universities teach Hindi as a foreign language, not accepting students with a prior knowledge of the language. They are, thus, non-Hindi speaking Indians (mainly from South India, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada mother-tongue speakers) who consider Hindi the representative language of India and who have an interest in Hindi films.

The author, relying on Romaine (1989) for the factors which motivate language change, draws to the conclusion that learning Hindi is not connected to job opportunities, both for the dominance of English and for the scarce role Hindi has in India too, if not for communication and for family reasons, like visiting relatives. This last reason seems to be shared by different Indian students, 30% of whom have visited India in the last five years, thus drawing to the practicality and the social benefits of the language (Dorian 2014, 207). Also inter-caste

marriages are reasons to study Hindī. In general, the author highlights the need for a development of a positive attitude towards Hindī.

Regarding the second issue, the author asked the students ‘Why are you learning Hindī?’ and ‘How will this language be useful in the future?’. The majority of the students (60%) indicated that Bollywood, Hindī films and songs are their reason(s) to learn Hindī, while many other students want to learn a new language “for the sake of learning a new language”, as Singh states in the volume (p. 255, translation by the Author), to extend their cognitive skills and because they are fascinated by the Devanāgarī script. Another reason to study Hindī is the desire to travel across India and talk to people, also because of the connection among travel, language and culture. For what concerns culture, it is itself one reason to learn Hindī along with the desire to approach it: many students state that they are fascinated by Indian culture, history or politics or that they feel the appeal of the Devanāgarī script. In particular, Indian culture is gaining visibility in Singapore, through festivals like Holi celebrated at many places with enjoyers of different ethnicities. Talking to friends and relatives is an important pull too: due to the education appeal of Singapore for Indians, many non-Hindī speaking Indians have university friends from cosmopolitan cities where there is a trend of speaking Hindī, and understanding what they say make them decide to learn Hindī. Lastly, India’s growing economy and employment opportunities is said to be quite important, even though at the moment few students choose this path.

Lastly, for what concerns Hindī teaching materials, the students are more enthusiastic about the culture along with language. Teachers use audio-video recordings, podcasts, webcasts, etc., even though the ready-made teaching materials for Hindī are still scarce.

In conclusion, Singh’s contribution draws from very interesting research material: on the one hand his contribution paves the way for further and replicable research studies, while on the other it explains what can and should be done to push students towards Hindī learning, since the reasons and motivations to learn Hindi are quite variegated.

5 Conclusion

In this volume, the contributions have displayed Hindī as a linguistic means of administration in the East India Company’s territories, but also a means to understand Indian narratives and to start a dialogue with it, like with de Tours’ manuscript. Hindī has changed geographically, historically but also through contact. In Abbi’s paper, Hindī was displayed as a lingua franca which creates dialogue between different peoples and tribes, and it is in its variation itself

that all this facets of the language can arise. For what concerns its variation in grammar, it is particularly visible how spoken data show a greater variation and many opportunities, hence giving a direction for further research studies, either in complex syntax, in discourse markers and in compound verbs. The contributions of the last part, additionally, have given many resources for teachers and researchers for what concerns Hindi variation but also in the ever-changing nature of language itself.

Overall, all the contributions have dealt with a different and peculiar perspective on variation, contact and change, from philological, educational, morphosyntactical and sociolinguistic perspectives. The *fil rouge* of ‘variation’ is expressed in diversified paradigms – dialectology and geographical change, grammatical variation within the language and addressing variation in Hindi education. Nonetheless, some contributions do not give a clear image of their link to the general themes of the volume or could be better inset in it. More precisely, in the first part Abbi, Montaut and Varna’s contributions, it is clear how variation and from which point of view of the issue – namely contact (and in its results in grammaticalisation, as in Montaut’s) – was dealt with. Wessler’s analysis of de Tours’ manuscript as well, despite showing preliminary results of a wider research, indicates in which variable, cosmopolitan and multilingual environment Hindi’s birth’s premises were rooted.

Regarding the second part, devoted to variation in grammar and discourse, Khokhlova’s contribution’s link to the issues of the volume could be explored further, despite the interest both from the scientific and methodological points of view and the wide variety of examples. In Verbeke and Ponnet’s, Kostina’s and Oranskaia’s essays, variation and – more in general – the issues of the volume are explored from different perspectives: using real, natural linguistic sources (as Verbeke and Ponnet’s and Oranskaia’s Spoken Hindi corpus and the elicitation of native speakers’ competence in Kostina’s) to explore variation from the microlevel of individual speakers, while moving to a broader generalisation of variation on the macrolevels of morphology and/or syntax. All these contributions, additionally, show how variation within Hindi can be assessed on different levels of analysis. An essay regarding lexical variation (which is, and has been, of pivotal importance in Hindi) is, nonetheless, absent.

Lastly, in the part devoted to variation issues in Hindi teaching (completely in Hindi) different perspective on variation in education are addressed, more or less profoundly. Agnihotri’s contribution address the topic of ‘variation’ from the viewpoint of multilingualism both within one language (as in Hindi phonological system) and in Hindi classrooms, where several languages may coexist. Pandey’s paper, despite showing how varied can gender morphological suffix can be in Hindi, shallowly links the presented issues to the broader

theme of variation of the volume: he presents the different origins of gender suffixes in Hindī, while not completely addressing this variety from a more historical perspective. Finally, Singh's essay present another, different approach to the theme of variation, namely the reasons why students of Hindī have chosen this language in two Singaporean universities and, more in general, how attitudes towards languages may vary.

In conclusion, the majority of the contributions explicitly addresses the themes of the volumes, while at the same time giving an example of how insightful, diversified and rich can researches on the same language be.

Bibliography

- Bloomfield, L. (1933). *Language*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Cohn, B.S. (1996). *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400844326-toc>.
- Dorian, N.C. [1982] (2014). "Language Loss and Maintenance in Language Contact Situations". Dorian, N., *Small Language Fates and Prospects: Lessons of Persistence and Change from Endangered Languages. Collected Essays*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 203-22. Brill's Studies in Language, Cognition and Culture 6. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004261938_013.
- Dowty, D. (1991). "Thematic Proto-Roles and Argument Selection". *Language*, 67, 547-619. <https://doi.org/10.2307/415037>.
- Guha, S. (2011). "Bad Language and Good Language: Lexical Awareness in the Cultural Politics of Peninsular India, ca. 1300-1800". Pollock, Sh. (ed.), *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 49-68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw6b7.6>.
- Guru, K.P. (1920). *Hindī vyākaraṇ*. Kāśī: Nāgarī Prachārīṇī Sabhā.
- Hardie, A. (2012). "CQPweb – Combining Power, Flexibility and Usability in a Corpus Analysis Tool". *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 17(3), 380-409. <https://cqweb.lancs.ac.uk/emillehinsp/>.
- Hook, P. (1974). *The Compound Verb in Hindi*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies. The Michigan Series in South and Southeast Asian Languages and Linguistics 1.
- Hymes, D. (ed). (1966). *Language in Culture and Society*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kachru, Y. (1980). *Aspects of Hindi Grammar*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.
- Kachru, Y. (2006). *Hindi*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co. London Oriental and African Language Library 12. <https://doi.org/10.1075/loall.12>.
- Kasevič, V.B. et al. (2014). "Diskursivnye slova vostočnogo teksta" (Discourse Markers in the Oriental Text). *Languages of Far East, Southeast Asia and West Africa: Materials of the 11th International Scientific Conference* (Saint Petersburg, 30 September-2 October 2014). Sankt-Peterburg: Studija NP-Print, 86-90.

- Kortmann, B. (1997). *Adverbial Subordination: A Typology and History of Adverbial Subordinators Based on European Languages*. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter. Empirical Approaches to Language Typology 18.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). *Understanding Language Teaching: From Method to Post-Method*. Marwah (NJ): Lawrence Erlbaum. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410615725-12>.
- Liperovskij, V. (1984). *Glagol v jazyke xindi* (Verbs in the Hindi Language). Moscow: Nauka.
- Mohanani, T. (1994). *Argument Structure in Hindi*. Stanford: Center for the Study of Language.
- Montaut, A. (2004). *A Grammar of Hindi*. München: LINCOM. LINCOM Studies in Indo-European Linguistics.
- Nespal, H. (1997). *Dictionary of Hindi Verbs*. Allahabad: Lok Bharati Prakashan.
- Pořízka, V. (1967-69). "On the Perfective Verbal Aspect in Hindi. Some Features of Parallelism between New Indo-Aryan and Slavonic Languages". *Archiv Orientální*, 1967(35), 64-8, 208-31; 1968(36), 233-51; 1969(37), 19-47, 345-64.
- Tenny, C. (1994). *Aspectual Roles and the Syntax-Semantics Interface*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Thomason, S.; Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*. Oxford: University of California Press.
- Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. Language in Society 13.
- Schiffrin, D. (1982). *Discourse Markers: Semantic Resource for the Construction of Conversation* [Dissertation]. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Shapiro, M. (2003). "Hindi". Cardona, G.; Jain, D. (eds), *The Indo-Aryan Languages*. London; New York: Routledge, 250-85. Routledge Language Family Series. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203945315>.
- Sharma, D. (1999). "Nominal Clitics and Constructive Morphology in Hindi". Butt, M.; King, T.H. (eds), *Proceedings of the LFG99 Conference*. Stanford: CSLI Publications, 5-16.

Semestral journal
Department of Asian
and North African Studies



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia