



Hindi language: Its contemporary importance and aspects

Dr. Sumedh K Hadke

Guest Faculty (Hindi), JDMC-NCWEB Centre, Delhi University, New Delhi, India

Abstract

India is a multilingual country. It is home to two of the world's largest language families, the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. The languages of the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman language families are also spoken in India, though relatively by few people as compared to the speakers of the former two families. Hindi is a New Indo-Aryan language spoken in the North of India by almost 550 million people. According to the 2011 census, 43.63 percent of Indians speak Hindi (it their mother tongue). It is written in the Devanagari script and is the official language of the government of India. English is designated as the associate official language. However, the country is linguistically diverse with 12 scripts and 22 different languages considered as official. Hindi is spoken in North India namely Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and the National Capital Territory of Delhi. These multitude of languages reflect India's culture and diverse history. During the last thousand years, the Indian sub-continent has been both fragmented into many small kingdoms and united under various empires. This has helped spread many common linguistic features, among Indian languages without allowing any particular language to become overwhelmingly dominant. Having attained independence from the British in 1947, Indian leaders chose Hindi as the official language of India in the hope that it would facilitate regional communication and encourage national unity. They were aware of many of the difficulties inherent with instating a single language in India's multilingual environment, and they accordingly laid out a clear timeline and plan for introducing Hindi and phasing English out. Despite this planning, Hindi and English today still share their status as official Languages.

Keywords: Indo-Aryan, official language, Hindustani, information technology, diaspora, translation and interpretation, machine translation systems, mass media

Introduction

Sanskrit has been the chief source of language of Indian culture since ancient times. Pali had been popular in many parts of Asia since Buddhist times as the language of intellectual, scientific and religious discourses. Tamil is an important source language for understanding the synthesis of Aryan and Dravidian elements of Indian culture. From the medieval period, Hindi emerged as a vehicle of culture and a language for contact with people. In contemporary India, Hindi is a link language for 22 or more major regional languages. Being a vehicle of culture, it represents the dynamism of vibrant Indian culture. During the great socio-cultural movements like the Bhakti movement and the freedom movement, Hindi has been a vehicle of communication for millions. Gandhi, Dr. Ambedkar and other leaders' perception of Hindi as the language of communication of the masses, led to it being acknowledged in the Indian Constitution as the official language of the Indian Union. As far as the people are concerned, Hindi is a "great communication language". By analyzing the trends of teaching Hindi globally, we can observe that strategies are being evolved to teach Hindi as a communication language [1].

*Nija Bhasha unnati ahai, saba unnati ko mula
Bina nija Bhasha-gyan ke, mitata na hiya ko sula*

The above couplet (Doha) has been taken from the Bharatendu Harishchandra's famous poem "Matrubhasha ke Prati". This Doha has been cited several times as inspiration

of Hindi movements and events in India Hindi, in present day India, qualifies as a language having multifaceted domains of use. It serves throughout India as a language of wider communication. It discharges various functions in different roles in the network of speech communication, trade-commerce, mass entertainment and day to day practical needs of inter-group interaction. Present research paper emphasizes on the importance of Hindi language in various contexts and point of views.

Evolution

In the beginning there was Sanskrit, one of the most studied and important languages in history. Sanskrit is the language that the Vedas were written in the earliest forms of the Hindu religious texts, and as such has had an incredible influence throughout history over the Hindu and Indian culture. The religious texts also mean that ancient Sanskrit has been preserved for study and is still used in some areas of India, meaning it's one of the rarest examples in the world of ancient languages. Sanskrit uses what is known as the Devanagari script in its written form, and is the mother to several languages that still exist today. The Hindi language is also old, and has a direct line of evolution of Sanskrit. As such, it is part of one of the oldest religious and literary traditions in the world – traditions that have influenced other religions and works of art, whether we realize it or not. As such Hindi is incredibly important in the historic development of the world's cultures, and truly deserves an honour, and its studying. Anyone with an interest in world history or languages would do well to do a little bit of

intense reading on the subject of Hindi [2].

India is a rising power in the world. It is struggling with poverty on a grand scale, but there exists every indication that India is emerging as an economic powerhouse. If nothing else, its huge population means it is a market that no global business can hope to ignore and India has additionally signalled clearly its desire to establish itself as a regional superpower. This all means that we can expect India to have a larger and larger impact on the world in both political and artistic has – making Hindi more and more important as we move forward.

Culture

Many western country people knew that India is home to one of the largest and most successful film industries in the world. Indian cinema has a distinct flavor and has contributed many innovations to the world of films. In order to truly appreciate these films in their original glory, some knowledge of Hindi would be of great help. A little knowledge of Hindi literally opens up a thousands of films to your experience instantly– films that have had a tremendous cultural impact in India and beyond.

Official Status

On 14 September 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted Hindi, as written in Devanagari script, as the official language of the Republic of India. Due to its official status and growing popularity around the world, spoken Hindi is quickly becoming one of the most lucrative linguistic skills in today's economy. First and foremost, Hindi is the official language of the Indian government, and all of its official business is conducted in Hindi. This alone creates a tremendous amount of opportunity for Hindi speakers to get jobs of working for or with the government. At the same time, India remains a country that speaks many different languages and dialects, and so knowing Hindi makes you much more valuable throughout the region as an interpreter, translator, or simply as a liaison in business who is capable of dealing with both government and local elements [3].

Literary Hindi

Hindi literature is broadly divided into four prominent forms or styles, being Bhakti (devotional – Kabir, Raskhan); Shringar (beauty – Keshav, Bihari); Virgatha (extolling brave warriors); and Adhunik (modern). Medieval Hindi literature is marked by the influence of the Bhakti movement and the composition of long, epic poems. It was primarily written in other varieties of Hindi, particularly Avadhi and Braj Bhasha, but also in Khariboli. During the British Raj, Hindustani became the prestigious dialect. Hindustani with heavily Sanskritised vocabulary or Sahityik Hindi (Literary Hindi) was popularized by the writings of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Bhartendu Harishchandra and others. The rising numbers of newspapers and magazines made Hindustani popular with the educated people. Chandrakanta written by Devaki Nandan Khatri in 1888, is considered the first authentic work of prose in modern Hindi. The person who brought realism in the Hindi prose literature was Munshi Premchand, who is considered as the most revered figure in the world of Hindi fiction and the progressive movement [5].

The Dwivedi Yug ("Age of Dwivedi") in Hindi literature lasted from 1900 to 1918. It is named after Mahavir Prasad

Dwivedi, who played a major role in establishing the Modern Hindi language in poetry and broadening the acceptable subjects of Hindi poetry from the traditional ones of religion and romantic love. In the 20th century, Hindi literature saw a romantic upsurge. This is known as Chhayavaad (shadowism) and the literary figures belonging to this school are known as Chhayavaadi. Jaishankar Prasad, Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', Mahadevi Varma and Sumitranandan Pant are the four major Chhayavaadi poets. Uttar Adhunik is the post-modernist period of Hindi literature, marked by a questioning of early trends that copied the West as well as the excessive ornamentation of the Chhayavaadi movement, and by a return to simple language and natural themes [5].

Hindi: Translation and Interpretation

The importance of translation as a multifaceted and a multidimensional activity and its international importance as a socio-cultural bridge between countries has grown over the years. Not only do countries and nations interact with each other, but individuals too need to have contact with members of other communities or societies that are spread over different parts of the world. People and societies want to draw from literature encoded in other languages as well as gain practical knowledge and special skills that different languages may offer. In order to fulfill these needs translation has become a necessary activity that satisfies individual, society and national needs. Since translation works as a bridge between the communication systems of various linguistic communities, therefore knowledge of one language tends to be insufficient. The practical importance of skill in translation and interpreting in English to Hindi and vice versa is very important in the context of globalization and the multilingual situation in India [6].

In coming days India has wide scope in translation and interpretation services, because many multilingual agencies and firms want to open businesses and sell their products in India. We know that India is the biggest market for these multinational companies to advertise and sell their products in Hindi and other languages. Currently, various automatic machine translation systems, search engines and translation agencies such as Google, Microsoft, Babelfish, Yahoo, Raftaar, Hinkhoj, Khoj, Shobdkosh, and Guruji etc [7]. are providing translation services and satisfying the information needs of Hindi users. These online Translation service is intended to provide an instant translation of words, phrases and texts in many languages.

Hindi and Information Technology

Now a days, increasing the role of Hindi in information technology and software development in India has increased massively. It's no surprise that English is spoken widely in India; even though only 12% of the population are formally bilingual in English, a huge proportion of the population of India speaks at least some English [8]. English is often thought of as the sign of an elite upbringing in India. This stems partially from the influence of the British rule, where anyone who wanted to get ahead in the world in India had to learn English in order to deal with with many things. It's long been assumed by many in India that in order to take advantage of information technology systems and other products – even the Internet – you had to speak English. However, in recent years, this is no longer true, and Indians are waking up to the fact that you can get most software and

hardware in Hindi-specific versions. Hindi has made real progress in the information technology sector, with more and more software being written natively in Hindi, and more and more software developed elsewhere requiring translation into Hindi. Information technology alone represents a tremendous career opportunity for those who speak Hindi. It is poised to become one of the most important languages in the world. Those who have a comfort level and skill level in Hindi will be well positioned to take advantage of this in coming years^[9].

One main reason for this change is the simple fact that Hindi is not only the official language of India, which of course would make having information technology available in Hindi a point of pride, but also the simple fact that nearly 550 million people use Hindi as a first language, with tens of millions more speaking at least a little Hindi. That's more people than the entire population of the United States, after all. Free market forces alone will push the makers of software and hardware to cater directly to this huge market. Another reason is India's simple rise to prominence on the world scene. As India matures into a real player in international policy, it's natural for both companies to cater to her needs and for her people to begin asserting their own culture over others. Both of these aspects combine to make Hindi a major part of information technology today.

Hindi and Mass Media

In the field of mass communication, Hindi is a popular language in the electronic media, especially on all TV channels. In Mumbai, the hub of Indian film industry, also known as "Bollywood", people speaking different languages of South Asia work together to create feature films in Hindi, which have been very popular the world over. Television programs and serials in Hindi are hugely popular in Asia and beyond. Hindustani music and Hindi film songs are equally loved globally, especially in Asian countries such as Uzbekistan and other parts of the former Soviet Union. India and Pakistan have always experienced their unity through film music, Hindi films. Ghazals and Sufi music. The communicative value of Hindi language is also evident in the print media, since the largest number of newspapers is published in Hindi. In the changing socio-political scenario, Hindi can play an important role in the fields of tourism, business, mass communication and literary contact. Since the audio-visual media places importance on the spoken word, the spoken form of Hindi will become more popular and acceptable in many parts of Asia^[10].

It has generated several opportunities in the arts and media in India and around the world that target Hindi speakers. From scripting to production, editing and media processing jobs in broadcasting and content delivery, the entertainment industry and other aspects of the media such as journalistic endeavors all require Hindi speakers, translation services and other jobs. Indian songs and hymns have been adopted and used by various popular rap and pop music artists. From science to commerce and business to various multimedia as shown India to become a viable world economy with increasing interest in the world. Bollywood as it is called as the second biggest film following Hollywood. Indian music as becomes influential with not only audiences in the United States but also with the rest of the world^[11].

Hindi is also used in print media as well as TV channels in India. There are lots of magazines, and newspapers written in Hindi. For example, Dainik Bhaskar, Amar Uzala, Aaj

Tak etc. Furthermore, the role of NDTV, ZEE news, Aaj Tak and many other Hindi news channels is similarly important in India.

Hindi is used in social media

Internet has emerged as a go to medium for anyone and everyone looking for any kind of information. Gone are the days when people used to stop their cars at every crossroads while looking for an address, they now access Google maps. Neither do we ask for popular restaurants from our friends, but connect to them on Zomato, nor haggle with taxi drivers because of Uber. The utility of such apps and improvement of connectivity has had a life changing effect on all of us. It is surprising for all of us to know that 'all of us' is not more than 100 million internet users while there are close to 850 million smartphone users alone in the country who see English speaking internet users weave magic with a touch of a button on their fancy gadgets. If India, has to bring the next 300 million users online, then local language content generation will be the driver to reach this target. The wide spread use of social network sites such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and other sites has been growing day by day in India.

Mr. Narendra Modi, prime minister of India, has also embarked upon an ambitious journey to digitize rural India. This means that availability of content relevant to rural and possibly first time internet users has to be in their native language. A farmer should be able to know about the latest farming techniques to improve his output through a touch of a button. We had started out as a social media networking site in Hindi and have seen a phenomenal growth in m-o-m user base. Our endeavor is to generate compelling Hindi language content which is relevant to a mature internet user in a metro and to a first time internet user in a rural or semi urban area. With rising internet usage level among Indians, demand for localized content is at an all-time high. We know that next 300 million internet users will prefer local language internet. According to IAMAI report rural population uses internet mainly for entertainment, followed by communication and social networking. If we have to change this matrix, we have to give what end users want – good quality, easy to access and fun to share local language content^[12].

Hindi and the Indian Diaspora

Hindi has become a prominent international language because of the Indian Diaspora for whom it is a symbol of their cultural identity. Linguistically, the Indian Diaspora has proved to be a replica of Indian society. The people of different states in India use Hindi along with English for mutual contact. Likewise, the Diaspora also uses Hindi as a link language and this process is gaining momentum. In fact, the Diaspora carried this linguistic consciousness of a Pan-Indian Hindi language in their collective mind^[13]. The Indian people who left India took their languages along with the other symbols of their culture. The Ramayana of Tulsidas has helped the existence of Hindi language as a cultural symbol among the Indian Diaspora of countries like Mauritius, Fiji, Surinam, Trinidad, Guyana, etc. As a result of Indians living alongside other linguistic groups of the world for a long time, the contact between Hindi and the world languages has also intensified. Typical examples of the effect of this contest can be found in the Dutch influence on the Surnames Hindi of Surinam and Holland, the Kaibiti

influence on Fijian Hindi and the influence of French Creole on Mauritian Hindi.

Thus, the spoken forms of Hindi have acquired many linguistic diversities, worldwide. As a result of the propagation of Hindi by cultural organizations of the Indian Diaspora, such as the Arya Samaj, Sana tan Dharma Sabha, Hindi Pracharini Sabhas, etc., not only the people of Indian origin, but also other foreigners who came into contact with them, have been learning Hindi because of their interest in the cultural programs and Hindi cinema. This has resulted in increasing interest in Hindi in many countries like England, France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and others. During colonial times, the speakers of colonial languages tried to suppress the Hindi language in different parts of the world where there was a strong presence of Indian Diaspora. However, because of the perseverance of the people, Hindi could survive in these countries. In countries like Trinidad, Hindi has survived only in the spoken form, i.e. as a communication language in the broken form because of the domination of English and Creole. It is a fact that most of the people of Indian origin in Trinidad have no knowledge of the written form of Hindi. The World Hindi Conferences have created an awareness of Hindi among the people of Indian origin and the Indian immigrants. This has stimulated the teaching and learning of Hindi among the Diaspora ^[14]. People are also starting to understand the need for teaching Hindi, especially communicative Hindi, to the younger generation of the Indian Diaspora for whom language can be a bridge to the forgotten culture of their ancestors. The growing interest in the society and culture of India is another reason for learning Hindi worldwide.

Hindi: A contact language for Asia

Hindi is a contact language for South and South-East Asians, especially in the ports, bazaars, tourist spots and pilgrimage centers. Hindustani, or the spoken form of Hindi and Urdu, is a common heritage of the people of India and Pakistan. Linguistically, it is an advantage for better communication between people in India and Pakistan. As a result of the long historical and geographical ties, this common spoken Hindi is very well used in Bangladesh, Burma, Malayasia, Thailand and Singapore. In the north-eastern regions of India and in Tibet, Nepal and the border areas of India and China, pilgrims, traveling traders, Buddhist monks and religious missionaries have always used Hindi as a contact language. Due to the socio-cultural and historical circumstances, the spoken form of Hindi, especially Dakshini Hindi became popular in South India. In the modern period, as an after effect of the Hindi Prachar movement launched by Gandhiji, Hindi became a second language in the whole of South India. Through trade, tourism and Buddhist travel, Hindi reached Sri Lanka and Maldives. Since the Sinhalese and Divehi languages have developed from Pali, they have a wonderful affinity with Hindi. Similarly, Nepali and Hindi have developed from the same linguistic stock even though Nepali has been influenced by the Tibeto-Burman. The people of the Tarai region of Nepal speak Maithili which is an important dialect of eastern Hindi. Hindi is a common communication language for Indians and Nepalis for their socio-cultural, literary and commercial contacts. In Afghanistan, many people are familiar with the spoken form of Hindi. Hindi is also spoken in the Gulf region along with Arabic, and is

playing the role of a link language for Arabic-speaking people and Indians speaking various regional (Indian) languages. In most of the South East Asian countries, spoken Hindi is used in the ports and business and tourist centers like Hong Kong ^[15].

Teaching Hindi as communication language

Teaching Hindi as communication language, is not only linked with the spoken aspect of the language, it is an attempt to find out the linkage between language and its use in the socio-cultural contexts. Many of the European and American scholars like McGregor (1970), Gumperz (1967) and Porizka (1972) have identified the importance of teaching the spoken form of Hindi and they prepared such teaching materials. These were certainly different from the grammatical theory oriented materials on Hindi published by earlier scholars. Even theoretical grammatical works like *Hindin kielioppi* ('Hindi Grammar') by Bertil Tikkanen (1991) and *Vyavaharik Hindi Vyakaran* by Zalman Dymshits (1985) focus more on the communicative aspects of Hindi grammar. Present-day scholars are trying to link the learning of Hindi with popular cultural forms like Hindi film songs, Hindi television serials, newspapers and other culturally important activities such as the presentation of drama, presentation of Bhajan singing and the traditional type of recital of Ramayana and other poetry forms, short story reading, etc. Tomio Mizokami of Japan had even formed a troupe of his students who presented Hindi dramas around the world. In a Warsaw Hindi Workshop, the present author also experimented with dramatization with bilingual adaptation as an effective way of teaching communicative Hindi. Tomio Mizokami has brought out a collection of 301 popular Hindi film songs with Japanese translations ^[16].

Susham Bedi in her article on the teaching of Hindi in America has mentioned that the audio-visual programs plus grammar-translation methods of learning are effective. Adopting the methods followed by the American Defense Language Institute, oral proficiency gives more importance. The aim of such learning can be developing the ability of the student for social interaction through conversation in Hindi either with their grandparents in India or following the dialogues in any social context. Her teaching through selections from television, films and improvisation, video recordings and computer work can equip the student with the use of the communication language. For this purpose, the American institutes are making lab work an inevitable part of such learning. Programs for cyber learning of Hindi are organized in many countries such as Australia and the USA ^[17]. The experiments of Dr. Richard Barz of the Australian National University and the experiments of Afroz Taj through his cyber program "A door to Hindi", funded by the United States Department of Education deserve special mention. Intensive workshops on communication skills in Hindi have proved to be most effective. The experiments in Warsaw and Leipzig have shown that the workshops comprising native-speakers, local teachers and students with involvement in multifaceted cultural activities in the workshop can be most effective for teaching Hindi as a communication language. In countries like Mauritius, a remarkable thing with the MGM Institute is the creative writing program as well as the translation programs with Hindi-French courses. In fact, translation is the best means of cultural communication. Hindi being a link language and a vehicle of link literature, any program for teaching Hindi

as a communication language should promote the teaching of translation from the local language to Hindi as well as from Hindi to the local language. This will certainly help to have a comparative approach in studying Hindi literature. Creative approaches can help to communicate the world culture and world literature through Hindi. Translation from Hindi into foreign languages can help the higher learning process. A typical example is the translation of Premchand's stories and the novel *Godan* into world languages^[18].

Hindi Localization and Language Technology

There are a variety of popular fonts used in Hindi typing; Google input tools, Unicode, Mangal, krutidev, etc. A team of scientists and experts are already working to develop machine translation software and standardize Hindi, however they have not been able to make any major breakthrough. The recent consciousness towards the increasing profile of Hindi language has given hope to millions of Hindi speakers and it is hoped that in times to come Hindi will get recognition and become United Nations official language. This is the time Hindi Center, Hindi universities, Hindi NGOs and millions of Hindi speakers should join hands to increase the profile of Hindi. Hindi Cinema and Bollywood have already made a good contribution, similar Hindi Media has done wonders. Based on the growing importance of Hindi at global front, the future for English to Hindi translation and Hindi to English translation is bright. However, Indian needs efforts to develop various linguistics tools for English to Hindi online translation and develop online Hindi language training programs^[19].

Technology Development for Indian Languages (TDIL) Program initiated by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India has the objective of developing Information Processing Tools and Techniques to facilitate human-machine interaction without language barrier; creating and accessing multilingual knowledge resources; and integrating them to develop innovative user products and services. The benefits of Language technology can reach to the common man only when software tools and human machine interface systems are available in people's own languages. To enable the wide proliferation of ICT in Indian languages, tools, products and resources should be freely available to the general public^[20].

To intensify India's prosperity

The Prime minister of India said the importance of Hindi language was going to increase as India was on course, of economic advancement. A language imbibes the feel of the era and tradition through which it travels. Languages have a big heart. Language is key to the development of personality. As mentioned earlier, Indian movies, language & music are very popular in Uzbekistan. In 2012, Uzbek radio completed 50 years of Hindi broadcasting.

The Government has been actively taking necessary measures for the introduction of Hindi as one of the Official Languages of the UN and popularize the language the world over. For promotion and development of Hindi, a World Hindi Secretariat was also set up in Mauritius in 2008. Among others, the eighth World Hindi Conference was organized in New York in July 2007 and its inaugural session was held at the UN headquarters. The government

continues its efforts in popularizing Hindi worldwide and for the acceptance of Hindi as one of the UN official languages. In this regard, one significant achievement has been the United Nations broadcast its programs on the UN Radio website in Hindi language also. Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj addressed the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly in Hindi on September 23, 2017. Earlier the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Bajpayee and P V Narasimha Rao had given speeches in Hindi in United Nation. The present PM Narendra Modi had also given a powerful speech on climate change in Hindi in United Nation General Assembly^[21].

Conclusion

Hindi is emerging as a communication language on both the national and international level. The teaching of Hindi as a communication language necessitates new strategies. The spoken form of Hindi and the linkage of language and culture should be the focal points in any such teaching program. Many experiments with the help of mass media have been done in this field by scholars at world universities and institutions where Hindi is being taught. The Diaspora is also evolving strategies to make Hindi popular among the younger generation. Gaining experience from international experiments and the ideas that emerged at the workshop in Budapest and the World Hindi Conferences, effective programs may be organized for teaching Hindi as a communication language on a global level. International co-operation is needed for designing multimedia teaching materials with the application of language technology.

While the world has progressed at a rapid pace due to developments in science, the people in the third world are still deprived of its benefits. The developments of science have not yet reached every person in the world and a lot needs to be done in this area. No country could have original development in science and technology using a foreign language neither can it establish its own identity in the field. Thus, in order to take the fruits of science and technology to the common people, it is important that the scientific literature is made available in Hindi.

Therefore, Hindi language has a large importance in various perspectives and dimensions. The growing popularity of Hindi language as Global Hindi to technological developments and the recent development like *raftaar.com*, *bhasaindia.com* are drawing the desirability to make Hindi as a viable language in the field of Internet. The time has come to realize the very importance of our national language. All languages change over time and Hindi being no exception. To genuinely understand the importance of Hindi language one has to learn the actual language to help receive the full benefit of this amazing language later.

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