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In the mouth but not on the map: visions of language and their enactment in the Hindi Belt

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Abstract

While scholars working in colonial and post-colonial North India have devoted a great deal of attention to language variation, they have largely ignored the discursive use of names for language varieties. In this article, I investigate the ways that speakers enter into dialogic relationships with distinct voices, in the rubric of Bakhtin, depending upon which names for language varieties they mention. I reflect upon conversations between residents of Banaras, a city of approximately two million in North India, in which names for language varieties cluster into three sets. Each set of language names invokes particular language ideologies constructed in India's colonial and post-colonial past. The first two sets—one comprised by "Hindi" and "English" and the other comprised by names for more local varieties—intersect official notions about the proper fit between language and its context of use. The third set does not. In order to account for the third set, in which speakers forego official, authoritative descriptions of languages, I note that interactional phenomena, in addition to ideological dimensions of language, are crucial in understanding the ways that people differently reflect on language varieties in practice.

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1. Introduction

When speakers in Banaras, a city of approximately 2,000,000 located in the Hindi-speaking region or "Hindi Belt" of North India, use names to describe languages, they illustrate a practice that is crucial in understanding how they enact language ideology. While speakers in Banaras describe and compare certain languages, Hindi

and English or regional linguistic varieties within the Hindi Belt, they do not target actual utterances in their descriptions. In other words, when talking about Hindi and English or more regionally restricted varieties, persons in Banaras do not reflect upon the production of language in which they are currently engaged. When persons in Banaras do reflect on utterances in making metalinguistic comments, they consistently describe such utterances in terms of their similarity to or difference from some valued type of Hindi; no longer relevant are relationships between Hindi and English, or regional varieties in the Hindi Belt.

In this article I pose the question: Why are all linguistic varieties not open to the same types of ideological reflection in Banaras? I propose that each of three types of metalinguistic discourse finds speakers engaged with what Bakhtin called a distinct “voice.” While engaged in the first type, speakers describe Hindi and English to be relevant to powerful venues and institutions such as printed materials and schools. While engaged in the second, speakers describe regional varieties within the Hindi Belt to be systematically different in terms of quality and geography. While engaged in the third type of metalinguistic discourse, however, speakers employ names for linguistic varieties that make the type distinct; at the same time, they take up distinct “interactional roles,” in Goffman’s sense, vis-à-vis language activity. That is to say, when confronted with actual utterances, speakers describe them as correct or incorrect Hindi. Thus, the first two types provide speakers with ready-made, authoritative projections of languages onto their contexts of use while the third type does not. Interactional roles are crucial to the delineation of voices in metalinguistic discourse in Banaras because they demonstrate that, when confronted with actual utterances, speakers do not invoke authoritative voices.

2. Types of metalinguistic discourse in Banaras

The literature on the social variation of language in India is immense, geographically and topically diverse, comparative, and even critical; still, a stable picture emerges of the convergence of language variety and social value.¹ The government has contributed to the standardization of languages such as Hindi, Tamil, or Punjabi by guaranteeing their legitimacy in the Indian Constitution,² and by using them, with the exception of Hindi, to draw boundaries between states.³ One expects to find them in such contexts as schooling or print media. Standardized

¹ For syntheses, see Masica (1991), Pattanayak (1985), Pandit (1979), and Shapiro and Schiffman (1981).

² Shirley Brice Heath points out that codified policy need not exist for the standard to be ideologically salient: “The legacy of the language situation in the United States is. . . the rejection of an official choice of a national language or national institutions to regulate language decisions related to spelling, pronunciation, technical vocabulary, or grammar. Yet Americans overwhelmingly believe that English is the national tongue and that correctness in spelling, pronunciation, word choice, and usage, as well as facility in reading and writing English, are desirable goals for every U.S. citizen” (1982: 6). For a more recent analysis of the shifting ideological refractions of standardization in the United States, see Silverstein (1996).

³ For accounts of standardization of languages in North India, see Dua (1994), Kaviraj (1992a,b), Khubchandani (1983), Krishnamurti (1979), Southworth (1985), and Sridhar (1987).

languages require, and sometimes indeed create, contexts of official activity. English enjoys similar uses, contexts, and recognition, but its lack of a regional location within India and possession of international use value can offer it additional prestige.

One finds many more names for linguistic varieties in descriptions of contexts outside those produced by standardized languages, but their regional locations can be grouped within the geographic purview of the standard.⁴ While some have used the term “dialect” to refer to linguistic varieties within the region of the standard—sometimes in an overtly pejorative manner—scholars such as Masica (1991) and Shapiro and Schiffman (1981) have shown such terminology to be problematic.⁵ Masica notes that linguistic realities of South Asia present difficulties for demarcating boundaries between languages: “Lacking clearcut geographical units of the European type where dialectal variants can crystallize in semi-isolation, or long-standing political boundaries, the entire Indo-Aryan realm (except for Sinhalese) constitutes one enormous dialectal continuum” (1991: 25).⁶

Whatever the problems involved in mapping linguistic varieties, scholars such as Simon (1986) have shown that distinct linguistic varieties, one identifiable as standard Hindi and the other identifiable as a variety with more restricted geographical dominion, do occur together in interaction in Banaras. Simon explains that the standard is the language variety for participating within or even creating contexts of prestige, while more regionally restricted varieties are for use at home or in intimate contexts and interactions. She provides examples wherein a speaker uses both for pragmatic effect.

While sociolinguistic models for North India have included formal variation and contexts of use in their descriptions, they have left metalinguistic concerns relatively untheorized. In fact, work on linguistic variation in India has rarely noted that talk about language categories is common. Metalanguage is a pervasive and, indeed, an essential aspect of linguistic interaction.⁷ In his introduction to an especially important collection of papers on metalanguage, Lucy notes that only a fraction of metalinguistic discourse denotes a language as such, by means of a descriptor. More often people engage in metalinguistic discourse by correcting one another, emphasizing one another’s points, or inhabiting another’s words in multiple ways, without ever denoting a particular language (Lucy, 1993).

⁴ I call these “regional varieties [within the Hindi Belt]” in order to avoid the pejorative connotations of “dialect,” and wish to point out that Hindi might be considered a “regional variety” when compared to Bengali, Gujarati, or any other standardized linguistic variety in India. I have, however, followed convention in denoting names for regional varieties within the purview of the standard with the use of italics and diacritics (“*Bhojpurī*,” for example), and the name of the standard without (“Hindi,” for example).

⁵ Masica notes generally, “there is unfortunately no universal criterion of linguistic distance for *languages* as against *dialects*, that is, of how different a speech-variety has to be from another to qualify as a separate *language*” (1991: 24; italics in original).

⁶ Magier quotes a *Mārāvārī* saying, “‘Language changes every twelve *kos*, weather every thirty’ (one *kos* equals approximately two miles)” (1992: 339).

⁷ Lucy, for example, writes, “speech is permeated by reflexive activity as speakers remark on language, report utterances, index and describe aspects of the speech event, invoke conventional names, and guide listeners in the proper interpretation of their utterances. This reflexivity is so pervasive and essential that we can say that language is, by nature, fundamentally reflexive” (1993: 11).

Discourse that explicitly names or describes a language variety as a discrete entity, however, deserves special attention because it so often includes commentary about its linguistic form, appropriate or inappropriate uses, characteristic or uncharacteristic users, and relationships to other varieties (Mertz, 1998). Such metalinguistic discourse thus serves as a vehicle for the articulation of language ideology, defined as “ideas with which participants frame their understandings of linguistic varieties and the differences among them, and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities” (Gal and Irvine, 1995: 970). Mertz notes that ideology emergent in metalinguistic discourse can be called “very explicit,” and she gives two examples: “when speakers overtly discuss aspects of language use or when political factions battle over whether monolingualism is necessary for national unity” (1998: 151). Metalinguistic discourse that explicitly denotes one or more languages often enacts the projection of language activity into contexts that concomitantly achieve the normality of linguistic habitats (Silverstein, 1996). Projection of activity lends the speaker engaged in metalinguistic discourse a means of aligning the self with or against others; linguistic habitats are rarely built for one. Metalanguage that is referential—such as description of language by use of a name—is used by social actors to “impose visions of the world... inscribed in language and, most importantly, enacted in interaction” (Gal, 1995: 178).

Scholars who have lived in Banaras attest to the fact that Banaras residents talk about language. For example, Nita Kumar (1988) notes that residents talk about a person’s *mohallā*, or neighborhood, as identifiable, in part, by the way that a person speaks. Simon (1986) reports that Banaras residents talk about a language called “*Banārsī Bolī*” (Banaras talk), specific to the city and different from the *Bhojpurī* spoken in the area surrounding Banaras. Below, I present conversations about languages that occurred between October 1996 and October 1997 in Banaras.⁸ In presenting the conversations, I expand Kumar’s and Simon’s considerations of the relationships between identities of interlocutors, tokens used for metalinguistic descriptions, and contexts that the descriptions help to construct.

First, people involved in the conversations represent several disparate class positions. These include people who have attained university degrees, such as the grammar and high school principals and teachers and some of the parents. They also include people thinking about doing so, such as the students. Finally, they include people who have had little or no educational training, such as the cloth salesmen and some of the parents.

Second, people involved in the conversations utilize a large corpus of names for language varieties, but what names people use are not freely variable. Across the conversations presented below, three discrete clusters of names for language varieties emerge. One includes English and Hindi, most often as rivals. Another includes many names of regional varieties within the area comprised by standard Hindi. Yet

⁸ The examples presented in this article were not tape recorded. In most cases, I make no assertions about metalinguistic practice, apart from the names speakers invoke to describe languages and the boldest outlines of interaction. I wrote from memory immediately after the encounters. In the last conversation presented, the interaction was so brief that I could remember what was said precisely. I have, therefore, given a transcription-like rendition of it.

another includes a single linguistic variety—unnamed in the sense of the other two clusters in that it is linked to no particular institution or geographic locale—that is praised or derided for its likeness to or deviation from Hindi, respectively.

Third, the existence of clusters of co-occurring language names in conversations in Banaras illustrate that inherent in talk about languages is the construction of linguistic difference in terms of appropriate contexts of use. Given the limited number of encounters described below, I do not wish to make the claim that what is apparent is representative—that persons with exposure to education seem to engage in the first and second types of metalinguistic discourse, while those without engage in the third. Rather, I take the three types of metalinguistic description to be evidence of what Silverstein and Urban describe as “entextualization”: “a way of creating an image of a durable, shared culture immanent in or even undifferentiated from its ensemble of realized or even potential texts” (1996: 2).

That the three types of metalinguistic discourse in Banaras embody distinct entextualizations of language activity is unsurprising, given that they intersect ideological visions of language. The polar opposition of institutional acceptability (Hindi and English in Type I) and use in the house and amongst intimates (the languages in Type II) reflects political battles raging in India about which languages should be representative of the nation and used in official spheres. For example, in recent years, Hindu fundamentalist groups have constructed themselves largely against English (Fox, 1990). The mobilization of Hindi as something Hindu in essence was complex and involved many spheres of activity (K. Kumar, 1991b), but part of the success has been due to the urban, educated, English-trained elite’s lack of interest in the fundamentalist linguistic project, the Sanskritization of Hindi (K. Kumar, 1991a).⁹ Politicians have created various connections to the charged distinction between Hindi and English to craft their arguments and increase their popularity. In all of these arenas, names of regional variations within the purview of the standard are never invoked and never considered relevant.¹⁰ Thus, engagement in Type I metalinguistic discourse precludes engagement in discourse of Type II.

The three types also mirror local notions in Banaras about the kinds of places and situations in which different kinds of linguistic varieties should be used. The first type of metalinguistic discourse presented below focuses on the school, one institution in which Hindi and English are widely acknowledged to be the only acceptable linguistic varieties for use. Easy for people around Banaras to articulate, whether or not they are being or have been schooled, is the understanding that talk within and

⁹ Hindi has never managed to become an uncontested language of the nation, however. Das Gupta (1970, 1976) and Ramaswamy (1997), among others, trace resistance to Hindi in other areas of the country, especially Tamil Nadu, where resistance has been fierce, sometimes quite violent.

¹⁰ Glaring contradictions have sometimes resulted. Zurbuchen (1992) points out that Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh at the time, was a proponent of a campaign entitled, “*Angrezī hathāo*” (eradicate English—a play on Indira Gandhi’s slogan, “*garībī hathāo*” (eradicate poverty)). Yadav’s campaign was bent on ousting English from his home state. Uttar Pradesh is the state with the most Hindi speakers, and in which anti-English sentiment connects with unemployment and the lack of opportunities for people without schooling in English. Yadav’s son, Zurbuchen notes, attended an English-medium school during the campaign.

about institutional or official uses of language excludes local varieties (always present in the second type of metalinguistic discourse). Everyone with whom I talked about schools in Banaras noted that schools are the locus of textbooks, and that printed materials preclude the use of linguistic varieties within the Hindi Belt. Concomitantly, schools are the training ground for the language competence needed to attain placement in institutional spheres of employment. Thus, Hindi and English offer linguistic capital through schools that more regionally delimited varieties cannot (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991).

The second type of metalinguistic discourse presented below is about a set of varieties specifically excluded from use in schools and other official contexts, and includes their geographic locations in addition to qualities such as “pure” (*shuddh*), “sweet” (*mīth*), and “clear” (*sāf*). Speakers often select one of these qualities, claim its embodiment in a particular variety, and argue that it makes the variety most like Hindi. For example, one speaker in a conversation presented below constructs an iconic relationship between a linguistic variety’s quality and its orientation east (toward Bengal) or west (toward Punjab). While talk about languages in the Hindi region is common among Banaras residents, and often provides a means for comparing populations around North India in terms of their stereotypical dispositions, as soon as institutional contexts are invoked or entered, Type II metalinguistic discourse is rendered irrelevant and ceases. It would be premature, however, to infer from this that regional varieties offer no linguistic capital whatsoever to their users. Reported below are examples of speakers who use the regional varieties’ differences from standard Hindi to pragmatic ends.¹¹

Far more difficult to articulate is the reason that the third type of metalanguage is discrete. An initial consideration might place the third type of metalanguage with the second; often it is one of the languages found in the second type of discourse that is the focus of the third. The third type of metalinguistic discourse, however, differs from the second because it always presents a single linguistic variety, and does not describe it with its geographically locatable name. For example, the second type offers “*Bhojpurī*,” the name for the linguistic variety whose speakers generally live in the area of eastern Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar, but the token “*Bhojpurī*” consistently fails to surface in the third type of metalinguistic discourse. The third type, in place of “*Bhojpurī*,” uses tokens such as “clear Hindi” (*sāf Hindī*), “sweet” (*mīṭ/hī*), or “useless” (*bekār*). The third type shows that speakers consistently qualify the possession of linguistic capital, in that names used for linguistic varieties foreground their varieties’ evaluation via standard Hindi.

3. Interactional roles and voices among the metalinguistic types

In order to understand the significance of the grouping of metalinguistic terms, one must consider more than the terms used to describe languages, or the linguistic elements one might use to situate them. It is necessary to draw upon work that is increasingly sensitive to the multiplicity of relationships between linguistic productions and their creators. In the words of Briggs, “one must consider which formal

¹¹ See Woolard (1985, 1989) for similar phenomena in Barcelona.

features index other formal features (entextualization) as well as the way they index... aspects of their interactional setting” (1993: 180).

Goffman (1981) noticed that “speaker” and “hearer” are not sufficient in the description of participants’ dispositions toward their linguistic productions in interaction. In order to describe the relationship between participant and utterance, Goffman developed the notion of “footing.” Hanks summarizes three “roles” developed by Goffman to account for footing: “The *animator* Goffman defined as the individual who actually utters a linguistic form; the agent of an act of phonation. The *author* is the individual who has selected the words and sentiments expressed, whether or not he or she voices the utterance. The *principal* is that individual whose position is established, whose beliefs are told, by the utterance” (1993: 134; italics in original). Changes in footing, whether during a stretch of continuous discourse or between utterances separated by temporal and/or contextual factors, involve new role configurations (Goffman, 1981). Hanks, for example, notes the distinction between “direct discourse” in which “animator is author and principal” and “quoted discourse” in which “a speaker animates the utterance of another animator” (1993: 134).

Inclusion of quoted discourse illustrates what is more generally characteristic of the third type of metalinguistic discourse: Unique to it is the involvement of present participants’ utterances in the mention of names for languages. When participants do not quote per se, they nevertheless create an index of prior utterances of the self or other within the context of their present metalinguistic typification. They do this by inhabiting a role structure wherein an author is someone who has been an animator. The author animated by metalinguistic discourse has animated discourse him- or herself, and only metalinguistic discourse of the third type includes an index of that animation (whether the described author’s animation is explicitly quoted or not). Metalinguistic discourse that contains presently spoken utterances as tokens available for description generally belongs to the third type.

A move from the first two types of metalinguistic discourse to the third entails a shift in “the epistemic stance of a speaker role... with respect to the narrated events” (Mannheim and Van Vleet, 1998: 337). Discourse of the first and second types is relatively “disembodied,” divorced from any presently uttered language. Disembodied metalinguistic typification is the domain of argumentation about prestige and contestation (Type I) or variability (Type II). Metalinguistic discourse that indexes present language production (Type III), however, is relegated to singularity as a variety whose identity is always either an estranged or correct form of Hindi. It does not typify language practice as taking place within an alter sphere of activity as in Type I, or as belonging to a set of regional variations as in Type II. What makes the regimentation of participant structures so salient to what epistemic stance is available in metalinguistic discourse is that, when speakers do utilize the utterances produced by themselves or others (Type III), they no longer project those utterances into contexts of prestige (Type I), or equate them with the name used for the “description” of the same language in which the utterance was produced (Type II).

Distinctions between the three types of metalinguistic discourse in terms of which roles their participants inhabit, as depicted in Fig. 1, provide an initial step toward discerning the ways that language ideologies are enacted in Banaras. Social actors do

		Metalinguistic Type	Metalinguistic Description
		Present Utterance Is...	Excluded
II: Linguistic Varieties in the Hindi Belt	“Hindi” “ <i>Bhojpurī</i> ” “ <i>Kannaujī</i> ”		
	Included	III: Embodied Language	“clear Hindi” (<i>sāf hindī</i>) “sweet” (<i>mīthī</i>) “useless” (<i>bekār</i>)

Fig. 1. Metalinguistic types, metalinguistic descriptions and inclusion or exclusion of present utterance.

not apprehend the appropriateness of language use just as they please. Distinguishing the first and second types of metalinguistic discourse is an institutionally projected context in which two and only two languages, Hindi and English, might be found, and from which considerations of variability are actively decried. Visions of place, appropriateness, and value are entextualized such that context produces likely linguistic candidates (and excludes others) and vice-versa. But differences in role configurations show that what interactional resources speakers utilize channel their engagement amongst the three metalinguistic types. Thus, role configurations are consequential to metalinguistic description.

The third metalinguistic type demonstrates that the social value of a linguistic variety that might arise in metalinguistic discourse cannot be deduced from a description of its typical contexts for use unless the act of speaking itself is noted as present or absent in its production. Never represented in explanations of sociolinguistic variation, and never considered convincing or important by persons in Banaras to whom I explained the idea, is a distinction between metalinguistic discourse of the first and second types on one hand, and the third on the other—a distinction that is based on speakers' indexing linguistic productions in metalinguistic interaction.¹²

¹² Silverstein (1981) predicts this state of affairs when he points out that unavoidably referential modes of linguistic activity, such as the use of names for languages, are relatively easy for people to notice compared to non-referential ones, such as the indexical relationship between metalinguistic description and utterance.

At first glance, the first two types of metalinguistic typification appear to be “monologic” in the theory of voices proposed by Bakhtin (1984) in that, “[t]he monologic context is imposed by an underlying presupposition: that truth itself is unified, for thoughts as propositions are timeless in their truth or falsity, and find their meaning only in difference within the system of all propositions” (Hill, 1986: 94). The first two metalinguistic types describe languages using presupposed parameters, project typical situations of use, and never include present interaction. Therefore, they engage in stereotyping.

While the first two types’ mode of description is certainly monologic, description of their use in interaction involves a dialogic relationship between voices. Bakhtin would describe the dialogicity involved in the use of Type I and Type II metadiscourse as speakers being ‘ventriloquated’ by authoritative discourse, conveying monologic constructions of languages, their relationships, and their likely contexts of use. Keane points out that “[t]o speak in a singular or monologic voice appears to be a highly marked outcome of political effort rather than a natural or neutral condition” (2001: 270). Type I and Type II metadiscourses index separate spheres of the political imagination of languages’ formal and social identities. I take Keane’s cue later in order to more fully describe the historical development of the monologic dispositions of the first and second types. For now, put simply, Type I metadiscourse envisions language at the level of the nation state and formulates the relative value of Hindi and English in their post-colonial settings. Type II metadiscourse envisions language at the level of constitutionally acknowledged languages at the level of states—or, in Hindi’s unusual case, a cluster of states—and formulates the relative value of regional varieties within.

The third type of metalinguistic discourse stands apart from the first two because speakers engaged in it are not ventriloquated by authoritative speech. Interactional role configurations show us that when engaged in Type III metalinguistic discourse, speakers, whether quoting discourse or indexing currently produced speech, present their own or an other’s words directly, as of yet unprojected into presupposable contexts and relations with other varieties. Type III metalinguistic discourse involves speakers in a dialogical relationship with actual utterances. A question arises: Why do speakers, when confronted with linguistic productions of actual others, consistently fail to engage in metalinguistic discourse of the first or second types and, instead, label such production standard Hindi or deviant Hindi? Bakhtin provides a clue in his description of the monologic principle: “The accents of ideological deduction must not contradict the form-shaping accents of the representation itself” (1984: 83). When speakers describe actually produced utterances, they seem to sense that the “accents” of the utterances might contradict the “accents” entailed in the first and second types of metalinguistic discourse. Indeed, it is the possibility of such a contradiction that characterizes the third type.

While descriptions of institutional contexts (Type I) or regional characteristics (Type II) fail to index current interaction, such indexes seem to cause a crisis of consciousness for speakers with respect to the first two types. Standard Hindi serves as the backdrop for all metalinguistic activity of Type III; dialogicity with actual utterances entails a dichotomous verdict: standard or non-standard. On one hand,

speakers praise linguistic production, but always as a particularly correct or valuable, i.e. standard, form of Hindi. On the other, speakers disparage (actual) linguistic production, but always because it exhibits features that contradict the standard. Speakers engaged in dialogic relationships with the voices of actual others are not able to engage voices that configure languages institutionally (Type I) or geographically (Type II). Thus it can be said that tokens of actual talk presented as quoted discourse are “in the mouth but not on the map.”

4. Hindi and English in competition (Type I)

Many scholars have traced the unequal avenues to social and economic power that languages help to construct in India. Many have begun with effects of British colonial practices on the way that language came to be perceived to index social value. Washbrook (1991) argues that the colonial encounter involved not only disparate languages, but also disparate ways of reckoning languages' relationships to the social world. British ideas about standards (whose artifacts are grammars and dictionaries) and language populations (whose artifact is the linguistic census) were simply not amenable to indigenous language, based as it was in notions of substance, contextual variability, and relative plurilingualism. Plurilingualism established South Asia in the eyes of the British as “a land of Babel brought to perpetual chaos by the sheer perversity of its natives” (Washbrook, 1991: 187).

Trautmann (1997) charts a shift of British attitudes toward South Asian languages. The first period, “Indomania,” was characterized by keen British interest, if only for South Asian languages' ability to provide grist for hypotheses rooted in Biblical scholarship or the reinvigoration of British aesthetics. The second period, “Indophobia,” was characterized by British denigration of indigenous languages and ideas, a consequence of a larger project to uplift the morality of natives by distancing them from their own lack of reason.

Viswanathan (1989) shows that intense debates raged and shifted within the colonial regime about the place of English and indigenous languages in government and pedagogy as well as the appropriateness and potential effects of natives engaged with English literature.¹³ These debates were spun around a central tension in the colonial project: the promotion of an (inequality-producing) bureaucratic regime required for capitalist expansion versus the moral reform of a degenerate, hapless society with the dissemination of (equality-producing) Western knowledge. Out of

¹³ Viswanathan explains that debates became increasingly polarized. Increasingly pitted against one another were the rationales of Christian moralists and utilitarians; both used English literature's effects on the indigenous population for the organization of their critiques. Moralists claimed that, “The study of English literature had merely succeeded in creating a class of Babus... who were intellectually hollow and insufficiently equipped with the desirable amount of knowledge and culture” (Viswanathan, 1989: 159). Utilitarians “found that the humanizing motive was in fact an evasion of responsibility toward equipping the Indian with the knowledge required for making him useful to society” (Viswanathan, 1989: 158). Viswanathan points out that one of the most devastating effects of both realms of critique was that they never mentioned a critique of policy itself but used the capacity of Indians as the focus of argument.

these tangled debates emerged a new force in Indian society, an elite whose identity was partly constructed by the English language and whose access to the language was mediated by education.

Viswanathan's explication of the nexus incorporating language, social identity, and education sets the stage for understanding contemporary discourse about language and institutions in Banaras, specifically pre-college education. In Banaras, pre-college education is a vehicle for the production of its consumers' social identities by means of language distinctions. Anthropologists are becoming increasingly aware of the ways in which languages often find ideological concretization in their institutional manifestations. Spitulnik (1998), for example, demonstrates that radio in Zambia provides a template upon which languages are presented both as equal and as hierarchically valued. The arrangement of languages by their channel assignments, their allotments of radio airtime, and the program contents for which they are utilized have become indexical of national unity, but also of linguistic exposure and prestige. Spitulnik explains that radio organizes and heightens the stakes of linguistic representation with its general visibility and iconic relationship to the state.

Like radio in Zambia, schools in Banaras both are created by and create language difference. Many types of schools exist in North India including government, private, English-medium, Hindi-medium, the medium of another region,¹⁴ convent, those with religious affiliations of various kinds, and Montessori, to name only a few. In Banaras all of these types exist. Reference to the ostensible language of instruction, however, can serve to organize them into opposing types: English- and Hindi-medium schools. "Medium" refers to the primary language in which classes are taught; to a school's type; and finally, to the disposition of student and supporting family engaged in its activity.

The most common configuration of the two school types is a dual embodiment of opposing traits. The schools are discrete and opposed because of their medium difference, while the vicissitudes of the difference are hardly confined to linguistic matters. They are the most commonly mentioned types of schools because they provide an opposition that connects with contests of much broader significance in Indian social life. One manifestation of the language medium opposition is English's association with Delhi, the nation's capital, and with places outside of India, versus Hindi's association with Banaras (*vis-à-vis* Delhi) and with ideas, practices, and locations indigenous to India. Institutional contributions to the opposition are the extremely high fees charged by a limited number of English-medium schools versus the comparatively lower fees charged by Hindi-medium schools. A recurrent statement in discourse about education in Banaras is that the school types exhibiting the greatest contrast are the most expensive English-medium schools and the government-administered Hindi-medium schools where fees are nearly nil. School attendance provides a springboard for launching students and their families into dichotomous dispositions configured by language. The constituency of English-medium schools can be praised as elite or forward-looking or disparaged as overly

¹⁴ Bengali or Telegu, for example.

ambitious or unpatriotic, while the constituency of Hindi-medium schools can either be praised as patriotic (or satisfied and sober) or disparaged as backward (or symptomatic of stagnation) (LaDousa, 2002).

Though the medium divide has its roots in colonial practices, comparatively recent shifts in Banaras' political economy and school construction have served to increase the salience of the institutional divide. Many English-medium schools in Banaras were founded in the 1970s, an increase that facilitated a shift in the possibilities of their consumers' social evaluation (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). Prior to the 1970s, English-medium education was associated with elite families who could afford to attend them *and* provide their children an atmosphere for the inculcation of attributes necessary for attendance. The latter qualification always included a student's already-established competence in English (and preferably the parents' too). The construction of more English-medium schools in the 1970s made the articulation of class ambition through schooling possible. Now English is associated with schools that require high fees and enormous bribes for entry but will, nevertheless, accept students from the lowliest backgrounds. Hindi-medium going students' families and middle- to upper-class English-medium going students' families often told me that efforts of the poor to gain entry are foolish; without connections, many said, future employment would not be forthcoming.

Hindi and English (in the rubric of language-medium) are vehicles of social value to be sure, but they also provide a mechanism for the projection of linguistic behavior. People in Banaras explained to me frequently that English-medium schools are the place to learn to speak English, but that literacy skills in the same schools are quite poor. In contrast, they explained that in Hindi-medium schools, students rarely speak English, yet their writing skills in English excel. The opposition between free enterprise and government administration mediated such proclamations: teachers at English-medium schools are hired by the school itself based on the school's own selection criteria, while teachers at government-administered schools are hired based on the attainment of degrees and government placement exams. Many people described English-medium school teachers as especially motivated and reliant on their own language abilities (and sometimes disparaged them as mere housewives) and Hindi-medium teachers as too well-trained in classroom practices based on the production and correction of written language (and sometimes disparaged them as lazy or jaded). When explanations were not quite so complex, people simply explained that English-medium schoolchildren speak English and Hindi-medium schoolchildren do not.

When linguistic practice within institutions comes under consideration, the neat dichotomy of languages and the institutions by which they are named and in which they can be found somewhat blurs. Recently, anthropologists have become interested in the ways that language practices in one domain of social life can recraft, simplify, or mask those in another. Gal and Irvine call the process "semiotic erasure" and define it: "the process in which ideology, in simplifying the field of linguistic practices, renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible" (Gal and Irvine, 1995: 974). Discourse about the institutional presence of Hindi and English is particularly symptomatic of erasure. Within the classroom, for

example, pedagogical techniques change with the progression of grade-level in a uniform manner across languages and language-medium schools. The early years of schooling find teachers creating utterance-to-utterance cues for individual students to speak, as well as the whole of referential possibility; gradually the textbook mediates teacher–student interaction such that the teacher becomes a guide in the exegesis of its points to a largely silent class. Discussions of medium difference, however, continue to rest on the spoken use of English in English-medium schools and its lack in Hindi-medium schools. The changing role of the relationship between text, teacher, and students is lost on discourse that pits institutions (and their consumers) against one another for their different uses of languages (LaDousa, 2000). Those linguistic activities that do occur in schools are erased in discourse about them, entextualized in the language-based institutional divide of Hindi and English.

Only once during my stay in Banaras did I witness a specific index of an utterance in metalinguistic discourse about Hindi and English (outside, of course, of the instruction of Hindi and English in schools). One afternoon after school, I sat with two teenage girls and their mothers, having tea and chatting about neighborhood events. One of the mothers was my landlady, and her daughter attended a government-administered Hindi-medium school where the other girl’s mother was employed as a teacher. The other girl attended a privately run English-medium school requiring high tuition. The school is located on the outskirts of town, and the girl often went to meet her mother at her mother’s school.

During our afternoon chat, my landlady’s daughter’s friend corrected my landlady’s daughter several times in her use of grammatical gender and pronunciation of words in Hindi. Indeed, the entire conversation had been in Hindi, save a few words common enough in Hindi conversations such as “fees” (school tuition) and “clip” (kitchen tongs). After the visitors left, I noticed that my landlady’s daughter’s tone was quite tense with her mother, and that she was on the verge of crying. As she passed me in the hallway accessing the kitchen, I asked what could be wrong. She answered quickly, her mother staring at the floor, wringing her hands as her daughter spoke. She recounted other, past injustices perpetrated by her friend, and, as if to summarize, turned her gaze to me directly and said, “it’s not good” (*acchā nahī lagtā*). She ended her complaint with, “if she cannot speak her own language then she should go away from here” (*agar apnī bhāsā nahī ātī to yahā se jānā cāhiye*). I responded that no one had spoken in English, “but it was all in Hindi” (*lekin sab hindī mē thā*). Her answer surprised me. She had changed out of her uniform into a dress after school, but her friend, coming directly from her school, had not had time to do the same. My landlady’s daughter pulled at her dress, indicating the other girl’s uniform, and said sarcastically, “yes, she wants to speak Hindi” (*hā̃ hindī mē bolnā cāhatī hā̃*), as she stormed out. The salience of institutional encodings of language difference is so powerful that my landlady’s daughter was able to construct her friend as pretentious and unpatriotic by means of an institutional divide based in language without indexing any particular token of speech or referring to the language that was actually used.

5. Linguistic varieties in the Hindi belt (Type II)

While variable in particulars of association and value, the distinction between Hindi and English is quite salient in Banaras. Standard languages are found in standard contexts, and this tautology is at the heart of metalinguistic discourse that includes Hindi and English. While providing a realm for value contestations in which English and Hindi are the only competitive language resources, discourse about educational institutions or practices within them indexes the unacceptability of more localized linguistic varieties—a process that people around town can clearly articulate. Students, their parents, teachers, and people with little or no schooling consistently disparaged the idea that *Bhojpurī* or regional varieties of other areas (whose names emerge in the second type of metalinguistic discourse) could be taught in school or used in like contexts.

Initially frustrating for me was the seemingly boundless nomenclature for regionally delimited languages within the Hindi area versus the rather fixed designations of standard Hindi. Scholars of linguistic variation in North India have developed a model helpful for understanding the discrepancy in the use of language names in Type I and Type II discourse. Hindi is a standardized language by virtue of its use in print, use in contexts of an official or public nature, and its ability to serve as a bridge over other varieties whose competence might not be shared by all.¹⁵ Outside of these contexts and uses is the language of intimates and friends, and of the house and neighborhood.¹⁶ Region, occupation, or caste configures these varieties, region being an intermediate level of variation between the state-sanctioned standard and more local types and configurations of variation.¹⁷

¹⁵ For historical treatments of Hindi, see Dalmia (1997), King (1994), and Rai (1984). These authors also address the ways that the Sanskritization of Hindi has strengthened its identity as essentially Hindu in opposition to Urdu as essentially Muslim.

¹⁶ See Aggarwal (1997) for a critique of the idea of India as a place of stable, healthy plurilingualism.

¹⁷ These varieties are linguistically related to each other and to the standard, but specific taxonomies have provided grist for debate. The most comprehensive sociolinguistic work was that of Gumperz (1958, 1961, 1964, 1969) who proposed a three-tier system of variation for the Hindi region of North India—standard, regional, local. Scholars and North Indians alike have argued that a regional variety has served as a template for standardized Hindi. Generally, *Kharī Bolī*, a variety whose area lies north of Delhi, is said to be the source for standard Hindi. Masica cautions on formal grounds, however, that *Kharī Bolī* contains a number of features not found in standard Hindi. More convincing to Masica is that standard Hindi developed as a “dialectal composite” of the multiple languages present in the capital, each with their own history of influence, and he calls for a “careful *linguistic* analysis” of its genesis (1991: 28; italics in original). Southworth shows that metalinguistic discourse in North India locates the standard elsewhere: “In most areas, the colloquial standard is said to be based on the variety of a particular subregion of greater linguistic prestige: for the Hindi region, the prestige area is eastern Uttar Pradesh [on the opposite side of the state from Delhi] (particularly the cities of Lucknow, Allahabad, and Banaras)” (1978: 36). The difference lies in Masica’s diachronic framing of the standard in terms of formal linguistic templates, and Southworth’s synchronic framing of the standard in terms of judgements about prestige. Interestingly, both results, Delhi and eastern Uttar Pradesh, can be found in metalinguistic discourse to be presented below.

In the examples presented below, region is the primary means of identification for varieties. Perhaps one reason that region is such an important organizing feature of metalinguistic discourse is that, for many centuries, regions and their central towns in North India have been foci for distinct linguistic features and oral and literate traditions. Perhaps another reason, one that explains the importance of region in academic work especially, is that region was made a central feature in British colonial mappings of language variety. Col. G.A. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*, for example, made geographic plotting of linguistic varieties an exhaustive rationale: "Each language was a contained entity with a demarcated geographic identity—as determined from administrative headquarters" (Lelyveld, 1993: 198).¹⁸ Shapiro and Schiffman (1981) attest to the durability of Grierson's model as they argue that many of Grierson's particular claims have been contested, while the general typological thrust of his work continues to inform work on language variation in India.¹⁹

Colonial collections of and reflections upon linguistic variation in India do contain many truths about linguistic coding of power. One of Grierson's most-quoted passages, for example, anticipates the distinction between standardized and non-standardized varieties, and defines their difference in terms of power, in addition to context and form: "The literary or government language of any tract is widely different from the language actually spoken by the people. In some cases, this is only a question of dialect, but in others, the polite language learned by Europeans, and by natives who wish to converse with Europeans, is totally distinct, both in origin and construction, from that used by the same natives in their homes.... The fact is, and it is one that should be faced, that nowhere in Hindustan is the language of the village the same as the language of the court, and before a poor man can sue his neighbor in the court, he has to learn a foreign language, or trust to interpreters, who fleece him at every step" (1887, quoted in Kellogg, 1972: 68).

Ultimately and ironically, however, Grierson was in full command of sorting out "inconsistencies" between handy metalinguistic descriptions of the linguistic distributions he had been investigating and his own discovery of distributions by survey.²⁰ Many indications of Grierson's will to configure an exact fit can be found in his *Linguistic Survey of India*. One disjunction between metalinguistic typification and linguistic survey data involves the region in which Banaras is located: "Western Bhojpurī is frequently called Pūrbī, or the language of the East, par excellence. This is naturally the name given to it by the inhabitants of Western Hindōstān, but has the disadvantage of being indefinite. It is employed very loosely, and often includes languages that have nothing to do with Bhojpurī, but which are also spoken in Eastern Hindōstān. For instance, the language spoken in the east of the District of

¹⁸ Grierson's method of eliciting data, however, was not nearly so straightforward. Lelyveld writes, "In Bihar Grierson had already developed his methodology: to get some 'village Gurus,' give some model sentences in Hindi, and have them write the corresponding words in their own 'bōle' [language in their 'dialect']. They would have to be supervised by 'a couple of sharp Subinspectors of Schools'" (Lelyveld, 1993: 198).

¹⁹ See Shapiro and Schiffman (1981: 78–83) for specific inconsistencies illustrating Grierson's preferences and biases in the *Linguistic Survey of India*. See also Masica (1991) for his critique of Grierson and for an overview of other critiques.

²⁰ For other examples of colonial uses and manipulations of indigenous language, see Cohn (1997) and Raheja (1996, 1999).

Allahabad is called Pūrbī, but the specimens of it which have been sent to me are clearly those of a form of Eastern Hindī. . . . I have hence decided to abandon the term Pūrbī altogether, and to use instead the term “Western Bhojpurī,” which, while not so familiar to Natives, has the advantage of being definite, and of connoting exactly what it is wanted to express” (Grierson 1927, vol. V, II: 43).²¹

Questions of metalanguage and the “difficulties” it posed disappear in later work on language variation in India. Perhaps the increasingly defined linguistic model of geographically-based divisions and its increasingly utilized methodology, the linguistic aspects of the census, made metalinguistic discourse irrelevant or simply mistaken.²² Certain is that regionally-defined linguistic varieties have become an idiom through which political struggle and debate in North India is cast. Khubchandani (1979, 1983) shows that increases in census returns of mother-tongue designations of regional linguistic varieties rather than Hindi have occurred, indicating that they have some sociological salience and potential for encroaching on Hindi’s “official ground.” Institutional recognition of such claims, however, is not likely because the central government has crafted a well-defined distinction between “official” and “colloquial” languages.²³ Brass (1974, 1990) has shown that the central government has agreed to recognize only state boundary-associated claims to

²¹ Just prior to this quote Grierson seems to take indigenous reference to language variety more seriously: “Still further in the north-west, in Western Gorakhpur and in Basti, there are a few other divergences from the standard [*Bhojpurī*], but they are not of importance, and are mainly due to the influence of the neighbouring western variety of the dialect. Natives, who are quick to recognise any divergence of dialect, call the language of Eastern Gorakhpur Gorakhpurī, and the language of the west of that district and of Basti, Sarvariā” (1927, vol. V, II: 42–43). One might still ask, however, upon what “importance” rests, as well as the degree of importance of narrowing the definition of “Natives” in the examination of their language identification decisions. This latter matter sometimes seems really to matter. For example, Grierson notes that those coming from “Western Hindōstān” utilize “*Pūrbī*” as a language name.

²² Apte describes the process in which census officials transform answers in order to fit them into officially established categories: “Quite often a single mother tongue gets enumerated under several slightly different names. People often give names of their castes, localities, or occupations when asked about their mother tongues. The census authorities themselves have to classify and aggregate the various mother tongues under a much smaller number of languages” (1976: 142). Results of the census are compiled to provide a portrait of linguistic variability, but some results are filtered and manipulated along the way. Specifically, the census filters answers that do not correspond to region-based reckoning of non-state-recognized languages and state-recognized languages that the whole map-making rationale presupposes. The census creates a vision of linguistic diversity at the same time that it filters out and denies the multilingualism of North Indians and the plurality of language varieties’ manifestations in discursive practice. Ironically, the plurality of linguistic varieties and their social values (extant in discourse of the first and second types) is reconfigured by the census as multiple tabulated distributions of languages’ speakers. Particularly ironic is that differences established by earlier census results are consistently irksome to each new census (Khubchandani, 1983: 58–60).

²³ This is not meant to imply that regional varieties within the area associated with the standard are everywhere vehicles for political mobilization. Khubchandani gives an example in which a move away from mother tongue claims for a regional variety has occurred: “It seems that many Braj speakers now prefer to report their mother tongue as simply ‘Hindi’ without signifying their specific dialect. Those speaking a variety of standard Hindi, however, show the tendency to be specific by declaring their mother tongue ‘Khari Boli’—presumably in order to distinguish themselves from the Braj speakers, who seem to prefer the umbrella term ‘Hindi’” (1979: 187). In any case, recovery of complex processes of data manipulation from tabulated census results can only remain, by Khubchandani’s admirable admission, a presumption.

legitimacy (as in the cases of Punjabi and Hindi, Telegu and Tamil, and Gujarati and Marathi), and thereby has headed-off further “disintegration” by denying recognition of other regional varieties in the Hindi Belt.

At the same time, the government has promoted a standardized form of Hindi, mostly through the “Sanskritization” of its lexicon. This variety’s ongoing standardization for employment in government service and schools has increasingly distanced it from most of the linguistic varieties its region encompasses (Daswani (1989: 85) specifies news media and textbooks). Krishnamurti (1979) sets the number of Sanskrit-derived Hindi terms coined by the Scientific and Technical Terms Commission at a whopping 300,000, and notes that they are used, but only in institutional contexts. Attributions of motive in Sanskritization are multiple, ranging from, for example, a desire to express concepts of modern invention on a par with the ability of English (Daswani, 1989), to a desire to express ideas in a language far removed from that of the West (Sridhar, 1987). As we have seen in the first type of metalinguistic discourse in Banaras, it is this standardized Hindi whose presence is deemed appropriate in contexts in which English might be found.

The mapping of linguistic variation in the Hindi region is now well known (see Fig. 2). Banaras and its surrounds inhabit their own place in this model of language variety in the Hindi Belt in several respects. The language described to be that of locals is *Bhojpurī*, a variety with boundaries that encompass a wide area including the city of Banaras, or its sub-variety specific to Banaras, *Banārsī Bolī* (Banaras talk). *Bhojpurī* takes its name from the town of Bhojpur near the Uttar Pradesh–Bihar border, and Banaras is situated on the western edge of the *Bhojpurī* language area. Scholars have disagreed about *Bhojpurī*’s historical and formal linguistic relationship with its neighbors, but agree that *Bhojpurī* is not standard Hindi. *Bhojpurī* corresponds to *Avadhī*, west of Banaras, or *Braj Bhāṣṣā*, even further west, in that it is considered to be a regional variety, itself consisting of several sub-varieties (reflected in Fig. 2).²⁴

Scholars have proposed many models for *Bhojpurī*’s linguistic relationship with the languages that border it. For example, Grierson placed *Bhojpurī* in a category with *Maithilī* and *Magahī* and called the set *Bihārī*. He placed *Bihārī* in the purview of Bengali whose standardized form differs from Hindi’s. Masica (1991: 461) explains that this decision has been shown to be untenable; he provides a comparative overview of typological classifications of Indo-Aryan languages, and explains that the classification of the *Biharī* group with Hindi is more current and tenable than the classification of it with Bengali (Masica, 1991: 446–62). Currently, most all agree, whatever their specific typological classifications, that among *Bhojpurī*, *Maithilī*, and *Magahī*, *Bhojpurī* is least like Bengali and Oriya.

²⁴ Grierson states unambiguously in the text of his *Linguistic Survey of India* that *Bhojpurī* consists of three varieties: “the Standard, the Western, and Nagpuriā” (1927, vol. V, II: 42). The map included with the volume, however, shows four (at least). Not until later in the text does one discover that indeed, Grierson considers “the Standard” to consist of a “Northern Standard” and a “Southern Standard.” One might guess from the structure and order of divisions that appear in the text that Grierson considered the “Northern Standard” and the “Southern Standard” to be only slightly divergent from one standard, but no such standard appears in the text (in actual linguistic description) without reference to “Northern” and “Southern” qualifications.

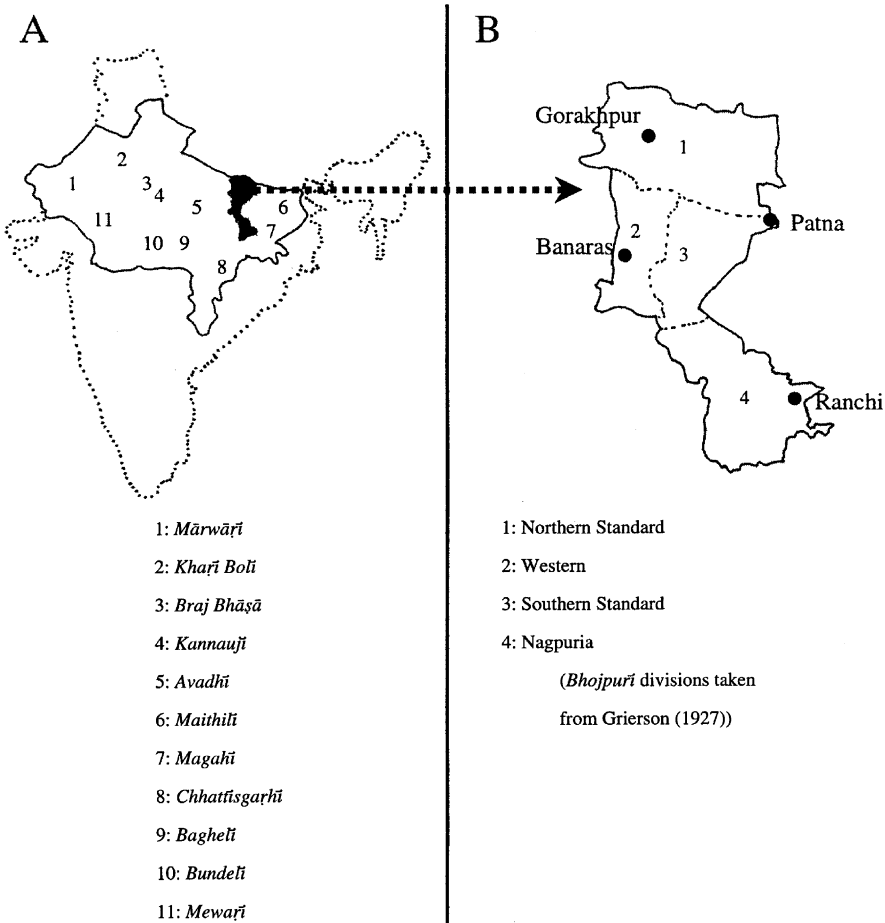


Fig. 2. (A) Approximate locations of some languages in the Hindi region of Uttar Pradesh (Bhojpurī region shaded); and (B) variation with the Bhojpurī language area.

Metalinguistic discourse in Banaras, however, configures a greater number of relationships between regionally delimited varieties and standard Hindi. In the examples below, Banaras residents describe relationships between Hindi and regional varieties to be plural and to be based on several qualities and criteria. In Type I metalinguistic discourse in Banaras, speakers juxtapose “Hindi” alone to English, whereas in Type II metalinguistic discourse examined here, speakers build complex relationships between Hindi, Hindi specified as a standardized variety, and the linguistic varieties within the Hindi Belt. Indeed, it seems as though the second type of metalinguistic discourse relies on the plurality of regional linguistic varieties to establish their relationships to each other and to Hindi. The next sections will provide some examples and a discussion.

5.1. Some examples

Example One (April 17, 1997): I went to visit a Hindi-medium school in which I had been observing class. Here, I call it the Saraswati School. The school has two sections: Upstairs is private, takes fees, and serves lower grade levels, and downstairs is government-administered, takes only nominal fees, and serves upper grade levels. I had arranged a meeting with the upstairs principal, and after being shown in by the vice-principal, we began to talk.

She started by explaining that a friend of my landlady had told her about my trip earlier in the year to Mainpuri and Etah in the western part of Uttar Pradesh. The principal explained that she had been raised in Mainpuri Town. She asked about different things I might have seen while there. Among the local characteristics to which she eventually came was language. She identified the language of the Mainpuri area as *Braj Bhāṣā*, and then explained that some call it *Kannaujī*. Her description moved between topics quickly, from Mainpuri, to regional linguistic varieties generally, to Banaras, and finally to Delhi. Some speak *Bhojpurī* in Banaras, she explained, but only out of necessity. Hindi obviates the need to speak *Bhojpurī*. Literary traditions exist mostly in *Braj Bhāṣā*, but they exist in less venerated forms in *Bhojpurī*, *Magahī*, *Maithilī*, *Avadhī*, and *Kharī Bolī*. She added that *Kannaujī* specifically lacks a literary tradition. She went on to claim Banaras to be the center for *Kharī Bolī*, though one can find it being spoken all over Uttar Pradesh. I replied with surprise that, in America, we are taught that *Kharī Bolī* originally comes from “the side of Delhi” (*dillī kī taraf se*). “That is a different matter,” (*vaha alag bāt hai*) she calmly countered. She explained that the Hindi around Delhi has been influenced far too much by Urdu, and that this specifically has prevented it from becoming the standard. She then said that the Punjabi accent makes Delhi Hindi different from standard Hindi. She drew a direct contrast between Punjabi-mixed Hindi and *Bhojpurī*-mixed Hindi and said that the *Bhojpurī* mixing makes the Hindi of Banaras the most “pure” (*shuddh*) Hindi around. Many more people in Patna speak *Bhojpurī*, but she claimed that her linguistic life there is easier than in Delhi.

Of all descriptions that I heard in the field, this woman’s model came closest to matching that offered in sociolinguistic research from the colonial period to the present for its notion of variability consisting of complex regionally-delimited linguistic identities vis-à-vis a standard. However, in its final conclusions and assessments, it differed by virtue of its particular inclusions of what variety should be defined as a particularly valued form, or even a permutation of the standard. We will see that this is a situation typical of such commentary in Banaras.

I had the following two conversations with the same person. They differ from the one recounted above, and they differ from each other. Thus, two kinds of differences exist in overtly referential metalanguage in Banaras about Hindi and regional varieties: (1) relations between linguistic varieties, and (2) renditions given by the same speaker.

Example Two (March 25, 1997): The principal of the downstairs section of the Saraswati School invited me to her house to meet her family and talk about education. A

discussion about language ensued. Though her husband, four sons, and brother-in-law were present and added side agreements, the principal did most of the talking uninterrupted. They collectively expressed strong disapproval at my suggestion that *Bhojpurī* might be taught, and went on to counter that *Bhojpurī* is Hindi—anywhere, not just in Banaras. With arm extended the principal explained that on the Mathura “side” they speak *Braj Bhāṣā* which is “traditional” (*paramparik*) Hindi. The others added *Avadhī* and its poetry. She then explained that as one moves west, Hindi becomes “difficult” (*mushkil*), but as one moves east, Hindi becomes “sweet” (*mīṭhī*).

Example Three (May 26, 1997): I returned to the house of the principal of the downstairs section of the Saraswati School. This time I asked about *Banārsī Bolī* (Banaras talk). The principal’s rendition of the linguistic situation of Banaras and its surrounds differed from her previous one in focal parameters as well as in ties made to uses in social realms. She explained that *Banārsī Bolī* is something special to Banaras and something that adds to Banaras’ distinctive identity in relation to the rest of India: In Bihar, *Bihārī* is spoken. I asked if the speakers of all of these different varieties can understand each other, and she replied affirmatively, that they are all Hindi. She explained that if one can speak Hindi then one can understand them all. I then asked if most people in Banaras speak *Banārsī Bolī*, to which she replied negatively. She added that they mostly speak *Kharī Bolī*, but, if they meet “special people” (*khās log*), they will speak *Banārsī Bolī*.

5.2. Discussion of the examples

Rather than uncover the inconsistencies across or within these examples, or compare them to linguistic taxonomies developed by scholars in order to establish that local descriptions are wrong, I take these examples to exhibit features of a particular kind of talk (Type II) about linguistic varieties in North India. Type II metalinguistic discourse in Banaras, if not consistent across or within examples, is certainly not random. First, inclusion of linguistic varieties varies across renditions, but some varieties appear consistently. While *Kannaujī*, for example, is only present in the first example, *Bhojpurī* and Hindi are present in all three. Second, speakers vary in what they find to be important or mentionable features of varieties, but a comparative stance remains constant. In the first example, literary tradition sets *Kannaujī* apart from other varieties. In the second example, *Bhojpurī*, *Braj Bhāṣā*, and *Avadhī* are mentioned, *Braj Bhāṣā* getting special mention as “traditional” but not standard. Banaras and, more specifically, the context of talk serve as the center from which two characterizations of language radiate, one east and the other west. In the third example, Bihar state serves to differentiate *Bhojpurī* there from Banaras’ variety. *Kharī Bolī* is also mentioned. In all of the examples, geographical locations situate varieties which are then evaluated in terms of understandability and acceptability.

Third, persons engaged in Type II metalinguistic discourse assert that all regional varieties are essentially Hindi. All speakers who characterized regional varieties were quick to point out that they are all Hindi. Indeed, Banaras residents equate regional

varieties and Hindi not only in overt pronouncements, e.g., “these are all Hindi” (*ye sab hindī hāĩ*), but also in the actual attribution of value attached to a particular variety, e.g., “pure, sweet Hindi” (*shuddh, mīthī hindī*). This third feature is perhaps what allows speakers to formulate variety difference along a fluid continuum (e.g., varieties in the Hindi Belt differ systematically as one moves east or west), at the same time that they assert that a particular variety is best, sweetest, most traditional, or is the origin or embodiment of Hindi.

In light of the examples of metalinguistic discourse just presented, Simon (1993) reports a surprising phenomenon. Hindi and *Banārsī Bolī*, as a sub-type of *Bhojpurī* characteristic of Banaras, both enter single stretches of discourse, whether found copresent in the confines of a sentence or clause boundary, or found between. Simon reports that the former occurs in a way that is not generally reflected upon as significant; it is a taken-for-granted feature of intimate conversation between locals. The latter can be purposeful, however, and is indicative of the potential for the co-occurrence and juxtaposition of two “codes,” *Banārsī Bolī* or *Bhojpurī*, and Hindi, to establish them as alter “semantic positions” (Hill, 1996). For example, Simon (1993) reports a conversation in which a local clothes-washer (*dhobī*) uses Hindi in a conversation otherwise conducted in *Bhojpurī* to animate the words of an employer in Delhi (who begs the washerman not to return to Banaras), in order to critique the practices of a present employer and addressee. The washerman’s tale plays on the irony that someone in calculating, financially competitive, and opportunistic Delhi might have more concern than someone in brotherly Banaras for his employee’s fate.

The potential of regional varieties within the Hindi Belt to establish, vis-à-vis standard Hindi, alter “semantic positions” is lost on Type II metalinguistic discourse. Simon (1986) herself offers two reasons. Simon’s first reason is that Banaras residents simply do not consider *Banārsī Bolī* or *Bhojpurī* to be (a) “language(s).” The second type of metalinguistic discourse, however, demonstrates that people in Banaras do talk about *Bhojpurī*, have rich notions about its qualities and values, and compare it to other varieties. Discourse that does describe regional varieties within the Hindi Belt (Type II), however, always treats them as plural, and fails to mention the simultaneous presence of regional variety and Hindi in discourse. After all, speakers consistently stated in the second type of metadiscourse that all regional varieties are Hindi.

Semiotic erasure is at work again. Difference in the second type of metalanguage organizes variety difference comparatively, across geographic spaces, and not as belonging to the linguistic repertoire of speakers. In metalinguistic description, regional varieties draw their qualities by virtue of being types of Hindi; their unacceptability in institutional contexts, or their potential to subvert expected dispositions through ironic discourse such as that reported by Simon (1993) is irrelevant because its apprehension is not made possible.

Simon’s second reason is that the census allows only one return for mother-tongue designation. The census is only one token, however, of a much more pervasive feature of metalinguistic distinctions in Banaras: the involvement of the present self or others in metalinguistic description. We now turn to that phenomenon in an effort

to explain why Banaras residents, while able to use their language of intimate communication, *Bhojpurī* or *Banārsī Bolī*, to ironic effects, “fail” to reflect on the potential of their language of intimate communication to provide an alter voice of challenge to standardized forms.

6. Embodied language (Type III)

The third type of metalinguistic discourse finds speakers engaged in role configurations absent in the first two types. In the third type of metalinguistic discourse, a participant’s discursive practice is a resource for metalinguistic description. The third type of metalinguistic discourse finds speaking subjects reflecting upon linguistic elements that someone has actually produced. The “immediacy” created by the targeting of the speaker’s utterance by the speaker’s commentary makes all the difference as to what kind of metalinguistic description can emerge.

An example of the third type of metalinguistic discourse comes from a routine visit to a government-run cloth shop. As I entered the shop, I saw two friends and they called out a greeting. We exchanged small talk about their children, health, and America. During our conversation, a third, older worker who had been listening for some time approached and asked, “Your Hindi is this good, how?” (*itnī acchī Hindī ātī hai, kaise?*). Contributing to my feeling of awkwardness, my two friends agreed and drew a distinction between “your pure Hindi” (*āpkī shuddh Hindī*) and “our broken language” (*hamārī tuṭī fuṭī bhāṣā*). They asked me, “Where did you learn Hindi?” (*hindī kahā sikhā?*). When I explained that I had learned in America they all assented with a nod and “yes, yes” (*hā, hā*). Laughing, the oldest continued, “not in Banaras!” (*banāras mē nahī*). I then asked why “broken” (*tuṭī fuṭī*) is used to describe this variety. One of my friends produced an utterance that I had serious difficulty comprehending (but I recognized it as *Bhojpurī*) and followed this by exclaiming, “it is useless, absolutely” (*bekār hai, ek dam*). My other friend gestured to him and explained that some call this “sweet” (*mīṭhī*) and some call it “useless” (*bekār*).

Speakers in conversations such as this one implicate themselves in a most immediate way, by allowing elements of their own present production of language to be open to metalinguistic description. In this third type of metalinguistic discourse, just as in the cases of the first two types, variety characterizations vary. In this conversation, the intrusion of another and his subsequent question about my own Hindi prompted self-identification (non-standard), production of an example (perhaps exaggerated for my benefit), and characterization (both positive and negative). The paradigm of linguistic difference in the third type, however, is particular in the sense that metalanguage of the third type always produces similar visions of languages and their relationships. No longer is Hindi equated with regional varieties as in the second type of metalinguistic discourse; only one variety is under consideration, one equivalent to elements of what has presently been spoken. Only one linguistic relation is possible, one based on the token’s—and its variety’s—similarity to or difference from Hindi.

Another example demonstrates that the particular encodings of linguistic difference of the third metalinguistic discursive type varied in terms of what formal features were chosen, how they were characterized as a variety-indicating feature, how they were attributed to social identities, and how they were described to be indicative of competence. I had gone to the northern sector of the city to visit a Hindi-medium school. I found myself in an area of Banaras unfamiliar to me and decided to ask an elderly man standing by the side of the road the whereabouts of the school. Instead of replying to my simple query about the location of the school, he remarked upon my production of the utterance. The following interchange took place. M represents the elderly stranger and C represents myself.²⁵

M: *āpko* *Hindī* *ātā* *hai*
 you + DAT Hindi come (masc) is
 Do you speak Hindi?

C: *hā̃* *Hindī* *ātī* *hai*
 yes Hindi come (fem) is
 Yes, I speak Hindi.

M: *ātī* *hai* *ātī* *hai* *itnī* *sāf*
 come (fem) is come (fem) is this much (fem) clean

Hindī kaise *sīkhā*
 Hindi how learned (masc)

You speak it, you speak it, how did you learn such clean/clear Hindi.

It was a short but familiar, dare I say well-worn, interchange. With his initial questions, the old man registered surprise at the prospect of a foreigner speaking Hindi. As a habit, and far from intending a correction, I offered a response in the affirmative. The old man picked up the contrasting element in our utterances immediately and he whispered the feminine form twice (*ātī hai*, *ātī hai*) in reflection before asking me how I had learned “clear” (*sāf*) Hindi, “this much” (*itnī*), also feminine, agreeing.²⁶ The old man took up the contrast between his utterance’s disregard of gender accord between “Hindi” and the verb (*ātā*, masculine and unmarked) and my utterance’s attention to it (*ātī*, feminine). Difference in gender accord indexed a characterizable variety of language and indexed our language difference.

²⁵ I have included gender and case (only dative for verb of competence in which the verb agrees with “Hindi”) only insofar as they help to illustrate how their uptake in subsequent utterances interacts with the speakers’ dispositions toward the kind of language being spoken.

²⁶ His utterance dropped the pronoun marked for the ergative case [“*āpne*,” you (pl)+ERG, for example] and retained the verb form as in his initial usage, unmarked for number or gender. A “textbook” Hindi might, for example, render the line, “How did you learn such clean/clear Hindi”:

āpne *itnī* *sāf* *Hindī* *kaise* *sīkhī*
 you (pl)+ERG this much (fem) clear Hindi how learned(fem)

Before going to Banaras, I had been warned by Hindi teachers and others that people there commonly “ignore” number and gender agreement, especially in the case of verbs involving competence.²⁷ In Delhi, while away from Banaras, I heard many explanations of why people exhibit such behavior, and Banaras and its surrounds often were specifically implicated in such explanations. When people described the language practices typical of the one exhibited by the old man in Banaras, however, their characterization did not proceed as his did: from tokens of speech presently produced. Accompanying explanations of behavior was a shift in meta-discursive type, interactional role configuration, and voice, and no longer were utterances the object of metalinguistic description. Such speakers engaged in Type II metadiscourse.

For example, I heard many times during research that lack of agreement in number and gender is particularly prevalent in the speech of those living in east of the Hindi Belt and especially in the speech of those people from Banaras and the state of Bihar. In Delhi a number of people told me that such language is an indication of laziness, uneducated status, or is just plain “boorish.” A lack of attention to number and gender in constructions utilizing verbs of competence (as well as the use of ergative case) was often contrasted in both Delhi and Banaras to “clean” (*sāf*) or “pure” (*shuddh*) Hindi influenced by Punjabi in the west. Regional varieties of Hindi (*Kharī Bolī* or, more seldomly, *Braj Bhāṣā*) were offered as specific examples. This later explanation was offered sometimes by members of the lowest class stratum who seemed nearly or totally without schooling, as well as by my linguist friends.

My conversation with the old man on the street concluded with my asking him, “which type of language do you speak?” (*kis tarah kī bhāṣā āp bolte hāī*). With a smile and a shrug of the shoulders he responded, “I am from Banaras” (*māī banāras kā hūī*). I have a hunch, but cannot confirm, that the man with whom I was speaking provided “Banaras” as a geographical location indexical of *Banārsī Bolī*, contrasting “clear Hindi” (*sāf Hindī*), his just-prior characterization of my utterance. But one certain contrast between his metalinguistic descriptions is that he used a token for me that was indexical of the standard—“clear Hindi”—and used a token for himself that was not—“Banaras.”

The speakers in the third kind of metalinguistic discourse all deal with some aspect of presently spoken language. Those of the first two types never do. In the first two metalinguistic types, indexes of present interaction are absent; speakers engaged in the first two types maintain a monologic, authoritative voice without having to enter into a dialogic relationship with the voice of an actual other. Resulting descriptions illustrate the importance of recognizing the third type: the first two types are unable to account for speakers’ descriptions of present utterances. In Type I, the use of standard Hindi is assumed. In Type II, speakers are able to maintain that all varieties within the Hindi Belt are Hindi. In Type III, however, speakers are much less willing or able to assume or maintain that the present utterance is Hindi.

²⁷ Ironically, perhaps, exactly what the old man had noticed.

7. Conclusion

My consideration of the relevance of presently spoken discourse in metalanguage reveals that productions of linguistic visions in Banaras do not utilize the same resources. Realization of this insight requires a concern with what Gal describes to be language's dual and concomitant ties to the social world: description and enactment (Gal, 1995). Which linguistic vision can emerge in metalinguistic discourse depends upon the names speakers use to describe language as well as their mode of engagement with language activity. Type I projects linguistic difference between Hindi and English into institutional contexts such that inherent in them is a choice or even a battle. Type II projects linguistic difference onto a landscape of regions whose linguistic varieties inhabit specific, sometimes systematic, relationships to each other and to Hindi. Speakers engaged in the first two types can be said to be ventriloquated by the two authoritative voices that maintain, though differently, a distinction between standardized and non-standardized languages and their contexts. Type III, in contrast, does not project authoritative, monologic representations. Type III, however, hardly offers an escape from evaluation. As soon as one contemplates speech's actual occurrence, comparison to standard Hindi ensues; language that, in other modes of representation, is a rival of English or partner amongst varieties, becomes simply "good" or "bad," "useless" or "sweet."

In conclusion, I wish to note a changing language ideology in Banaras that will likely affect the possibilities of metalinguistic reflection in the coming years. In several surveys distributed to all students present in grade levels four, six, and eight at several Hindi-medium schools, and in well over 100 informal conversations with students of the same classes that completed the surveys, students invariably explained to me that Hindi is India's national language (*rāṣṭrabhāṣā*) and to be a good Indian citizen one should speak "clear" or "pure" Hindi. My claim is not that statements like these indicate immediate language shift, that students are learning standard Hindi to the exclusion of competence in *Bhojpurī*. I witnessed many of these same students speaking in *Bhojpurī* on their arrival home. What is intriguing, however, is that some students explained to me that *Bhojpurī* is not correct, and is indicative of Banaras' backwardness. Given the rather common claim in Type II metalinguistic discourse that *Bhojpurī* is Hindi, students' claims to the contrary are new. Indeed, a few teachers bemoaned their students' love for and obsession with standardized Hindi and growing ignorance of local knowledge of which *Banārsī Bolī*, the type of *Bhojpurī* specific to Banaras, is a major ingredient. One might anticipate that in the coming years fewer people in Banaras will talk about the qualities of different regional varieties (that, in Type II metalinguistic discourse, are all Hindi). One might also anticipate that the institutionalized gap between "clear" or "pure" Hindi and "broken" or "useless" Hindi will widen and spread beyond standard Hindi's association with institutional domains. Perhaps the "sweet" quality of *Bhojpurī*, currently a possibility for those who reflect on actual utterances (in Type III metalinguistic discourse), will begin to sour.

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