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The Discursive Malleability of an Identity: A Dialogic Approach to Language “Medium” Schooling in North India

This article employs a dialogic approach, in the parlance of Bakhtin, to explore the ways in which a school’s “medium,” its primary language of instruction, has become a major category of identity in North India. Many people describe themselves and others by invoking attendance at either a Hindi- or English-medium school. The first task of this article is to account for what Bakhtin calls “centripetal forces” that enable people at different positions in terms of class or school experience to use a common duality of Hindi-versus English-medium and its attendant social resonances. The second task is to account for the abilities of a teacher to question the inevitability of the medium divide and to radically reframe what is important about schooling. Her abilities derive, in part, from her experiences with schools, attesting to Bakhtin’s insight that centripetal forces in language are never total, and that centrifugal forces arise from complex engagements with institutions. [identity, institutions, Hindi, English, Banaras]

This article investigates the ways in which a school’s language “medium,” the primary language of classroom instruction, has become a major category of identity in Hindi-speaking North India. It does so in order to identify some resistances to and sources of the category’s malleability in social practice. Short vignettes from my fieldwork in Banaras, a city in the region, demonstrate that language medium distinctions are hardly confined to schooling, but emerge in conversation to typify people through complex trajectories of identity. A young schoolgirl, curious about the new foreigner at recess, bashfully replies that yes, Hindi is India’s national language and it is good to go to a Hindi-medium school. Just after the departure of evening guests, one of whom was dressed in her English-medium school uniform, my landlady laughingly quips that her own daughter’s Hindi-medium school charges a mere rupee and a half per month. A family man who sends the bulk of his salary home to his wife and daughter tells me that he made the right decision to leave them in Delhi. He explains that he has just eavesdropped on his neighbor’s daughter’s English tutorial in which she could not speak English free of Hindi. When I interject that she attends a Hindi-medium school and that his daughter could attend an English-medium school in Banaras, he retorts that no English-medium school in town can inculcate the ability to speak English free of Hindi.

Taken collectively, these vignettes confirm recent anthropological insights about identity. For example, they give evidence that people deploy widely known categories

from particular, unequal positions (Mendoza-Denton 2002); that the situation in which a category is used shapes its meanings and potential for relevance in other situations (Bucholtz and Hall 2004); and that the categories themselves presuppose others, connecting multiple dimensions of context (Kroskrity 2001). Some scholars have asked how the two constituting aspects of identity—the deployment of identity categories in moments of interaction, on the one hand, and their distribution across moments of use, on the other—might be conceptualized dialectically (Silverstein 1996).¹ James Collins and Richard Blot insist, “The debate between those who emphasize discourse and fluid identity construction versus those who emphasize society and constraints on identity need not be polarized” (2003:106). In order to bring together the interactional and sociohistorical aspects of “medium” in North India, I use Bakhtin’s notion of dialogicality. Bakhtin was well aware that language requires interlocutors as well as identifiable social personae. But he was unsatisfied with an approach that, in describing identities, records the deployment of existence of social personae in different contexts of use. Mediating the two elements is his notion of “voice.” Speakers “borrow” (Hanks 1996) or “rent” (Wortham 2003) language from others such that any occasion of discourse involves relationships between voices (Bakhtin 1981:279).

Yet, Bakhtin realized that not all language lends itself with the same ease to what others might do with it. A “monologic” voice compels its users to take up a particular point of view (Bakhtin 1984). Bakhtin notes that discursive dynamics are at work in monologic voicing, though they might be hard to detect: “No one hinders this word, no one argues with it” (1981:276). About such discursive dynamics, Webb Keane writes, “To 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). “Dialogic” voicing, in contrast, is that in which contestation between points of view exists. In this article, I conceptualize the burden of a dialogic approach as the ability to identify what Bakhtin calls the “centripetal” forces in language that make monologic voices possible, such that “centrifugal” forces, embodied by dialogic contestation between voices, might be identified and appreciated.

Bakhtin writes that centripetal forces are those “working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization” (1981:271). The uses of “medium” in the vignettes above give evidence that centripetal forces have been at work. They reveal a phenomenon by which many people in the Hindi-speaking region of North India equate Hindi-medium schools with the Indian nation or government. In opposition, many people equate English-medium schools with private ownership as well as with an alternative to what the government has to offer. In order to account for the centripetal pull on discursive dynamics illustrated by uses of the “medium” divide, I explore the relationship between political-economic and social shifts in the wake of economic liberalization in India begun in the 1980s. Many scholars have noted that economic liberalization facilitated an explosion in middle-class membership, however tenuous. The salience of “medium” difference has increased among people in the diverse middle classes. In turn, their concerns about “medium” distinctions have increasingly differentiated them from people in other socioeconomic positions. People who belong to the middle classes envision a world in which a choice between education in Hindi or in English matters to a child’s future. “Medium” thus has become a convenient and compelling means of making evaluative judgments about others or oneself in Banaras and has come to represent a choice between two possible trajectories for the life of the child, the family, or the nation.

I offer an excerpt of a taped conversation between Gauri Bohra, a middle-class working mother, and me in order to demonstrate the ways that she uses the language medium divide to construct the identity of her child and imagine possibilities for her child’s future. The example illustrates the part played by the language medium divide in the ways that “people are forced to situate themselves relative to what they are saying as being a particular kind of socially recognizable person” (Koven 1998:413).

Bakhtin's notion of centrifugal forces prompts me to ask whether all people use "medium" in the same way, presupposing the ideological salience of Hindi and English. My answer is that some people, as a result of their experiences with schooling, are able to bring to bear voices in such a way that they throw into relief more monologic constructions of medium.² In order to explore such dynamics, I present excerpts from a taped interview I conducted with Madhu Khatri, a teacher. During the interview she deploys multiple voices, emergent from her past experiences with schooling, toward the production of complex "laminated identities" (Goffman 1981).³ I explore the discursive devices by which she is able to bring to bear these voices in such a way that they radically reframe what is important about medium. She begins by deploying the voice of a parent, creating a vision of medium difference much like that accounted for by centripetal forces. Therein, a division between Hindi and English structures school difference as well as the difference between those people involved. However, the language medium divide so important in her first moment of talk fades as she juxtaposes her present difficulties in the classroom to the ease of her days as a student. And finally, she deploys voices made possible by another set of institutional experiences, the routine interactions in which she has been engaged as a teacher in the classroom. Arrangements and consequences of medium difference emerge that are utterly unlike those shaped by centripetal forces.

By exploring the dynamics of voice fostered by the divide between Hindi- and English-medium schooling, this article conceptualizes the relationship between institutions and identities as powerfully connected, yet hardly uncontested. Debra Spitulnik points out that, "It is only recently . . . that scholars have focused their gaze below the level of the overall ideological function and effect of institutions to look more closely at how *specific practices* within institutions give value to different languages and to different ways of using language" (1998:165). This article foregrounds the ways that some people are able to draw upon their experiences with such institutional practices to undermine the inevitability of a link between the institution and identity so easily invoked elsewhere. Considered dialectically, an institution serves as an organizing node of identity at the same time that it makes possible the very experiences with which some people are able to question the inevitability of the institution's organization. Put in the rubric of a dialogic approach, centripetal forces in Indian society have brought together Hindi- and English-medium schools in a mutually productive opposition at the same time that the schools have involved some people in practices that allow them to exert centrifugal force on the mutually exclusive dichotomy of language and institution.

Social Contours of Schooling in Banaras

Banaras, a city of approximately 2 million, is located on the eastern border of the state of Uttar Pradesh in the Hindi-speaking region of North India. Banaras has acquired a unique, international reputation for its riverfront along the Ganges where sacred Hindu sites and practices draw millions of pilgrims and tourists yearly. From the perspective of my own research focus on schooling, however, Banaras resembles the neighboring cities of Allahabad, Gorakhpur, and Patna in that the cities provide their residents similar school types. From October 1996 to October 1997, I attended classes from Monday through Friday, talked to principals, teachers, and students during breaks, and contacted teachers and students for discussions elsewhere at a number of schools whose differences reflect the diversity of schools in the city. Schools in which I spent extensive amounts of time include a school for girls serving grade levels nine through twelve where fees are subsidized by the government and classes are conducted in Hindi; a coeducational school serving all precollege grade levels in which fees are among the highest in Banaras and classes are conducted in English; a coeducational school serving grades one through eight in which fees are moderate and classes conducted in Hindi; a "convent" school whose reputation is derived from the colonial English-medium boarding

school model in which fees are relatively high and classes are conducted in English; an Islamic madrasa for boys for which fees are relatively low and in which classes are conducted in Urdu; a school for boys run by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an organization with complex ties to the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in which classes are conducted in Hindi; and, finally, several schools run by volunteers whose goal is to provide hours, supplies, and locations that make schooling a possibility for the disadvantaged, wherein classes are conducted in Hindi.

In order to explain how, among these schools, Hindi- and English-medium schools form an especially salient opposition in North India, I trace some ways in which they (as a group) have articulated with class transitions occurring in Indian society and then, in the next section, I show how these articulations have been bifurcated by language ideology. The rise of a new set of class positions in Indian society has increased the salience of schooling as a resource for class membership and mobility. After early manifestations in the mid- and late 1980s, economic liberalization of the Indian economy accelerated in the years just before the period of my field research with Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's government's policies of the early 1990s. The ethnographic descriptions herein represent what could be called the early effects of liberalization, including the facilitation of the articulation of middle-class lifestyles, often through the media's "encouragement of consumerist desires" (Mankekar 1999:9). Indeed, the growth and increased visibility of the middle classes was one of liberalization's early effects: "If the tenets of Nehruvian development could be captured by symbols of dams and mass-based factories, the markers of Rajiv Gandhi's [mid-1980s] shifted to the possibility of commodities that would tap into the tastes and consumption practices of the urban middle classes" (Fernandes 2001:152). Lise McKean describes the early effects of liberalization more generally: "During the late 1980s the government's economic policies promoted the growth of the private sector, industrialization geared to urban middle-class consumers, and the reduction of transfer payments from rich to poor organized by the state" (1996:11).

The emerging middle classes were and are anything but homogeneous, and the label links multiple, disparate groups in its modes of membership and display (K. Kumar 1998:1394). Some include "urban professionals and managerial groups, commercial and entrepreneurial classes, white- and blue-collar employees as well as substantial rural landowners and farmers" (Chakravarty and Gooptu 2000:91). Education has increasingly involved the child in the family's struggle for class mobility, raising the stakes for performance in school, especially in exams. Purnima Mankekar notes such tension in the precarious position of those whose desires and aspirations have been informed by liberalization: "All it would take is a layoff, a bad debt, or a failed examination on the part of one of their children, and many of them would slide right back into poverty" (1999:9).

School types that represent a desire for entrance to or upward mobility within the middle classes do not include all schools. In other words, education is by no means confined to those whose aspirations have been shaped by liberalization. On the one hand, from the vantage of some schools, Banaras looks like a provincial place indeed. Select convent and boarding schools, nationally and some internationally known, have, since the colonial period, fostered the cosmopolitanism of elites. Sanjay Srivastava writes that the Doon School located in Dehradun, several hundred kilometers from Banaras, has cultivated its own sense of being modern through the notion that "'uncivilized' existence is *elsewhere*" (1998:198).⁴ No school of national (much less international) stature exists in Banaras. Furthermore, many residents told me that a student who had attended schools in Banaras for any length of time would have little chance of ever being admitted to the Doon School.

On the other hand are types of schools in Banaras that fail to play a part in fantasies of class mobility. Nita Kumar (2001) reflects on her conversations with students from the Muslim weaver community attending Jamia Hamidia Rizvia, a school organized around sectarian divisions in Islam.⁵ Students there hold dear the craft of

weaving, the ideology of freedom, identification with local neighborhoods, and discussions of occurrences inside their lanes. Left out of their pedagogy is the officially sanctioned history of the nation, a subject of school board–administered exams. Indeed, few schools with overt religious ties had managed to have their syllabi approved by a school board. A glaring exception is the “convent” schools in Banaras that have played an especially important part in the development of the language medium divide discussed in the next section.

Also excluded from pedagogy that enables students to compete for credentials in the form of school board–administered exams are schools that belong to what is called the “non-formal education” (NFE) sector.⁶ Some of these schools are run by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but, more commonly, they are run by local volunteers. I routinely visited several schools that were located on a roof or in a courtyard of a house bordering an especially large slum. A middle-aged or older woman would teach basic literacy and mathematics to children who lived in the slum and whose families could not afford fees, uniforms, supplies, and, in some cases, the relatively long school hours during which a child’s time could not be spared.

“In between” the Doon School on the one hand and Jamia Hamidia Rizvia and NFE schools on the other is a cluster of school types to which people in Banaras’s middle classes send their children. Bureaucratically, these schools resemble the elite boarding school because their syllabi have been approved by one of several school boards.⁷ The social positionings of their students, however, are particular. Such families lack a cosmopolitan disposition including fluency in English and national connections required for attendance at schools of national renown such as the Doon school. Yet, such families desire a secular education—preparing the child for a series of examinations—that the madrasa and NFE school cannot provide. Schools with an approved syllabus oriented to examination—but not elite—have played an especially important part in liberalization’s reverberations in Banaras and across North India. Nita Kumar explains:

The community and class background of these children, as befits a “mainstream” group, has not been discussed at any length. They are from a class that forms “the backbone of the nation,” that wants liberal education and secure “service” jobs for its sons, marriages into service families for its daughters and now maybe careers as well, if in proper establishments. [2001:270]

Such children come from families wherein at least one person has an occupation such as merchant, doctor, teacher, or petty bureaucrat or makes a living by collecting rent from landholdings.

Schooling can provide a conduit for desires of the poor to provide their children the means to get a job that, they hope, will allow for class mobility. Though not in the majority, many students in schools with a syllabus approved by a school board are the children of people whose occupations include rickshaw drivers, construction laborers, and petty merchants. Parents or other relatives sacrifice much of their pay for uniforms, books, supplies, fees, and special tutoring sessions whose cost is exorbitant and whose necessity for passing exams is assumed. Sometimes children from families for whom schooling is a dire sacrifice and often debt-incurring venture do succeed. Ironic, perhaps, is that many teachers from schools, largely women, were from lower caste and class backgrounds and had used their education to attain a class-raising occupation. That the majority of teachers employed by the schools in which I conducted fieldwork were women makes sense given that teaching is generally considered “proper” work, in the parlance of Nita Kumar quoted above, for a woman outside of the home.⁸ The term “madam,” for example, is used to address all female teachers, married and unmarried alike, and sometimes to refer to teachers generally.⁹ By and large, however, children from lower caste and class backgrounds suffer incredible attrition (K. Kumar 1998). Children from Scheduled castes and tribes—the lowest possibilities—are sometimes targeted and shamed by pedagogical materials themselves (K. Kumar 1989:59–77).

Schooling and "Medium": Hindi versus English

Many school boards exist in India that, after approval of a school's "syllabus," or course offerings and content, administer the school's exams. Each state, for example, has a board. In the city of Banaras, many schools are affiliated with the Uttar Pradesh Board, or, in local parlance, the "UP" Board, located in nearby Allahabad. There are, in addition, numerous boards with which other types of schools are affiliated. These boards must meet government standards but they are administered separately, and the schools affiliated with them are private.

Whereas school board affiliation connects school attendance and class membership and mobility, language "medium" bifurcates institutions with a complex set of distinctions that correspond only loosely and unevenly with school boards. Judith Irvine and Susan Gal's notion of "fractal recursivity," "the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level," is helpful in explaining the way that board differences frame medium differences without corresponding to them (2000:38; cf. Gal and Irvine 1995). UP Board affiliation provides each student with a fee subsidy such that fees are nearly negligible. Furthermore, schools affiliated with the UP Board teach through the "medium" of Hindi.¹⁰ There are Hindi-medium schools that are affiliated with private boards, yet the most expensive schools in Banaras are English-medium. The opposition of cheap versus expensive corresponds to the opposition of government-subsidized versus fees-taking that, in turn, corresponds to the opposition of Hindi versus English. Thus, an ideological dichotomy has emerged whereby "Hindi-medium" indexes the government and Indian nation and "English-medium" indexes private ownership and entrepreneurial success.

Many people with whom I spoke about schooling in Banaras explained that there has been a massive rise in the number of English-medium schools in the city during the last two or three decades. A common way in which people dramatized the rise was to use their own homes as a locus and point out the new English-medium schools that had cropped up around them. Consistently, people mentioned one school by name as being the most successful at drawing students and gaining prestige. What I call the Seacrest School has been offering classroom instruction in English since its founding in 1972. In the Seacrest School's early years class was held in the principal's living room, in which she taught a handful of students from the surrounding neighborhood.¹¹ The principal's family bought a building in the late 1970s and enrollment skyrocketed to over one thousand students. Seacrest attained affiliation with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), based in Delhi, adding to the school's reputation as a certified English-medium institution and contributing to its rising enrollment. New buildings were purchased such that, by the mid-1990s, the school had four branches with a total of nearly ten thousand students. The original principal's husband's brothers' wives served as the branch principals, and the family was widely regarded to be among the newest of Banaras's most wealthy.¹² Some people who mentioned the Seacrest school by name explained that it now can contend with what I call the St. Joseph's school, an English-medium school founded during the colonial period by a Christian church. Seacrest's ability to contend with St. Joseph's attests to liberalization's reverberations through class dynamics.

The growth in construction and patronage of English-medium schools is ideologically complex. Rajeswari Rajan (1992:14–15) gives three reasons that English would be the most attractive language for pan-Indian educational investment. First, English is a "link" language not dominant in any region of the country but rather used for administration potentially anywhere. Second, it does not threaten non-Hindi-speaking regions the way Hindi does—in Tamil Nadu, for example, where Tamil is the state's standard language and threat of Hindi's imposition has, in the past, led to violent action (cf. Ramaswamy 1997). And third, it is the language of the elite.¹³

Within the Hindi-speaking area of the North, "the role of language and language ideologies in the imagining of nations" is complex, yet oppositional (Philips

1998:221). Thus, the two mediums offer different types of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977, 1991). For example, people in the middle classes attend Hindi-medium schools too, but the ideological underpinnings of their attendance are specific and complexly informed by different and sometimes overlapping historical developments in Hindi's use in political or religious movements. One of the most significant political movements in India in the decade prior to my fieldwork was the rise in popularity of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), especially among urban upper-caste people. The BJP used several political developments at both the national and state levels to extend its popularity among the middle classes. At the national level, for example, Prime Minister V. P. Singh of the Janata Dal government recommended in 1990 that the ten-year-old Mandal Commission's suggestion that 27 percent of government posts go to members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) be implemented. The category included a large number of moderately prosperous farmers such as Jats and Yadavs in Banaras's state of Uttar Pradesh as well as in surrounding states. Around the same time, at the state level, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, initiated a campaign called *Angrezī Haṭāo* ('eradicate English') that required all government correspondence in the state to be conducted in Hindi (Sonntag 1996; Zurbuchen 1992). The populist move was meant to appeal to those people suffering from the state's high rate of unemployment and lacking access to English required by especially desirable jobs. The BJP worked upon the fears of upper-caste, middle-class people who felt threatened by reservations for OBCs, and the party condemned the political moves of Mulayam Singh Yadav, not for their anti-English rhetoric but rather for their indication of what dangerous effects could result from the movement of members of OBCs—like Chief Minister Yadav—into positions of political power (Hansen 1999).

Indeed, the Hindu fundamentalist BJP shared with Mulayam Singh Yadav an investment in Hindi for its political cachet. When understood in its ideological specificity, however, the Hindu fundamentalist support of Hindi differed from Yadav's populist call against English. During their rise in popularity, Hindu fundamentalist politics resonated with what Richard Fox (1990) calls the "Hindian," a coinage that combines "Hindi" and "Indian." The Hindian, Fox argues, was a category of person that emerged during the 1980s in the "Hindi Belt," the large multistate region of North and Central India, whose fears included a common set of issues. Hindians were drawn together by their resentment over remittances Muslims had been sending home from the Gulf States, their disdain for Urdu as an alien language brought by Muslim invaders, and their resentment of English as the language of independent India's rulers branded by the BJP as "pseudo-secular," that is, unmindful of India's essential *Hindutva* ('Hinduness'). Beth Simon explains that "the Hindi National Language Movement . . . seeks to establish a *shuddh* ('pure') Hindi divested of all Perso-Arabic influence, that is, a Hindi consciously developed to be as unlike Urdu as possible" (2003:152).¹⁴ The Hindian, Fox argues, had a preference for "pure" (*shuddh*) Hindi, the same form that the BJP and its allies, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), had been routinely using in muscular religious and political displays. The BJP's brand of internal xenophobia and its use of a form of Hindi in distancing others no doubt helped the BJP appeal to increasing numbers of Hindians and expand beyond its traditional upper-caste base.¹⁵

Though these various political events and shifts hardly obey a common logic, they do point to the increasingly salient ideological differentiation of Hindi and English. While English-medium education derives much of its cachet from its orientation outward, providing pan-national and international connections and possibilities, Hindi-medium education derives its nationalistic, community-affirming ethos from the idea that Hindi is the "national language" (*rāṣṭrabhāṣā*) or Indians' 'mother language' (*mātrabhāṣā*) (LaDousa 2002, 2004). Many people attending Hindi-medium schools or sending children to them cast English-medium as a moral opponent. Such people explained that attendance at an English-medium school indicates a lack of 'satisfaction' (*santuṣṭi*) with life in Banaras and a desire to go elsewhere, leaving one's family

behind. For those particularly vulnerable to economic calamity—especially those in the lower reaches of the emerging middle classes—Hindi lends a sense of belonging and security.

Discursive Evidence of Centripetal Forces: What a Student Will Have to Do

In the rest of this article, I turn to instances of discourse to consider the ways that the institutional and language-ideological oppositions traced above serve—or fail to serve—as a resource with which to organize representations of pasts and futures of self and others. An audiotaped conversation on March 11, 1997, with Gauri Bohra, a secretary in a government office during the period of my field research, demonstrates that she found the issue of language medium crucial to considerations of her five-year-old daughter's future success. Gauri had just reported that her husband's post in an interstate bank would be transferred to Delhi. This would leave Gauri and her husband just two months to find a place to live and a school for their daughter to attend in a distant city in which neither had relatives or friends. Gauri noted, however, that a hidden bonus awaited them amid such irritations: Any English-medium school in Delhi would be superior to the best that Banaras could offer (LaDousa 2005).

One gets the sense from Gauri's explanation that English-medium education is a foregone conclusion for her daughter regardless of where she might reside. She achieves this sense of inevitability by setting a goal, the study of science, and explaining how a choice between Hindi- and English-medium at the very beginning of her daughter's schooling will nearly determine the feasibility of the goal's achievement.¹⁶

- 01 Ga: like if she [Gauri's daughter] opts for science then she'll have to do it
 02 in English, so it will be very different for a girl who has been studying
 03 all in Hindi-medium to standard twelve, and then switch over to English.
 04 and, uh, of course, for further studies she will need, I mean, she'll need
 05 to know English. and if they're not used to, if it is not from the very begin-
 ning,
 06 if they are not used to a medium, then a medium is forced on them at the
 higher,
 07 when they get more mature. and then a complex develops. I have seen that
 kind
 08 of, I mean if they are not keeping up with the other students
 09 and if they are not following what is being taught in class

Gauri invokes several issues of widespread salience in Banaras and across the Hindi belt, even for those who have never attended school: the prestige of the science curriculum (or 'line' [*lāyri*] in the rubric of preuniversity education) vis-à-vis that of commerce and arts, the need to begin studies in English at the earliest age possible, and, finally, the "complex" that can develop in the student who moves suddenly from Hindi- to English-medium. Gauri is able to argue that her daughter's future belongs with the English- and not the Hindi-medium school because her studies will eventually be spent in an English-medium institution. Vaidehi Ramanathan describes the "complex" to be typical of many students who had attended Gujarati-medium schools before enrolling in her (English-medium) college in the western state of Gujarat:

I have witnessed first hand the kinds of problems that several of my VM [vernacular-medium] friends (Gujarati, in the present case) encountered in English at the tertiary level. Some were constantly on the verge of dropping out because they found English classes too difficult. Many felt enormous pressure to perform in examinations and would even go to great lengths to get 'leaked' examination questions prior to the examination date in order to prepare responses to them. [2005:8]

Students struck with the "complex" exhibit signs that they feel unprepared and uneasy, and inferior to counterparts who have experience in English-medium schools.

The development of a “complex,” according to parents like Gauri, could embody a risk taken by a parent who sent her or his child to a Hindi-medium school.¹⁷

In her next few statements, Gauri acknowledges that a successful switch from Hindi- to English-medium is possible, yet unlikely.

- 10 Ga: there are some students who do Hindi-medium until grade twelve
 11 but they are very adaptive and they learn it fast and they adapt. It's fine.
 12 but if their mental level is not that high and they don't adapt quickly
 13 then this sort of complex develops into a child

In her final synopsis, Gauri adopts a common way of describing school choices and success by focusing on the individual's innate desires and capacity. Rather than linking the child's favorite subjects to past experiences, people in Banaras generally attribute strength in school subjects such as math, English, physics, or singing to derive from the child's individual ‘interest’ (*inṭraṣṭ*). When I would ask what contributed to the success of some students over others, people repeatedly told me that success is due to a student's ‘talent’ (*ṭailant*). It quickly became apparent that talk about a child's “interest” was itself contingent on the child's possessing “talent”; no one talked about a child's interest being relevant unless the child had made high marks in class and, more importantly, had distinguished her or himself in school board exams. In lines 12 and 13, Gauri uses a similar construction of individuality to describe the existence of a “complex,” but with a logic opposite to that of claims of “talent.” A “complex” is the result of failure to participate successfully in the status quo.

After reading Gauri's statements about her daughter's future, it might come as a surprise to learn that Gauri's own precollege education was spent in Hindi-medium schools exclusively. Her schooling history demonstrates that attendance in Hindi-medium schools does not exclude people from the upper reaches of the middle classes. It also demonstrates, given Gauri's fluency in English, that attendance in Hindi-medium schools does not prevent people from attaining competence in English. In the parlance of Gauri's explanations about her daughter's future schooling, attendance at Hindi-medium schools did not, in Gauri's case, lead to a “complex.” Elsewhere in the interview, she explained that her father had been a professor of mathematics at Banaras Hindu University, and daily he had Gauri read and discuss the headlines of an English-language newspaper. She explained that because of her father's care and concern, she was well prepared for the transition to English that university attendance entails. Indeed, one of the requirements for her job was the degree in accounting she earned only after leaving the Hindi-medium school. It would seem that the centripetal force of the medium divide and the attendant risks of a development of a “complex” led Gauri to exclude her own successful path to competence in English in favor of a choice between institutions when considering her daughter's future.

Discursive Evidence of Centrifugal Forces: The Malleability of Medium

I now turn to an interview I conducted with a teacher during the afternoon of June 22, 1997. Madhu Khatri had come to pay a visit for several weeks in order to comfort her younger sister, my landlady, who was seriously ill. She had made the eight-hour bus trip north from her home in Rewa, a small town in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Her two nieces, daughters of my landlady, told me that she was a biology teacher and that she was curious about my research.

Madhu began by explaining that she had been teaching for 18 years in a Hindi-medium intercollege, a school for the final two years (levels 11 and 12) of a student's preuniversity schooling. Her comments resonated with the division between English- and Hindi-medium schools in complex ways. For example, she spent several minutes talking about her own educational history, explaining that after attending a Hindi-medium government school, she completed a BSc (bachelor of science)

degree before going on to attain an MSc (master of science) in biology. While the inspiration for so much schooling came from her “interest,” or passion for biology, she talked immediately afterward about the necessity of having educational credentials when applying for a job in “service,” or government employment.¹⁸

If Gauri Bohra can be taken as an example of someone who finds in the language-medium divide a helpful means to envision her daughter’s future (and bracket the relevance of her own past experiences to that future), Madhu Khatri provides an example of someone who disrupts connections between language and language-medium and, in so doing, problematizes the convenience offered by medium divisions for representations of her world. Two moments in our interview, separated by approximately two minutes in which Madhu talks to her niece who has come to the room to offer tea, bring issues of voice to bear on the ways that people discursively engage social constructs like the language-medium divide. Asif Agha points out, “The typifiability of *voices* (whether as “individual” or “social”) presupposes the perceivability of *voicing contrasts*, or the differentiability of one voice from another” (2005:39). Further complicating the issue of voice, Agha explains, is that the participants can engage voices in different semiotic modalities. Both issues must be considered to understand the way in which Madhu is able to reconfigure what is problematic about schooling in the transition between the first and second moments of discourse presented below. For example, Madhu inhabits radically different social identities (parent vs. teacher), includes different actors (parents and children vs. teacher and students), brings life to those actors and their opinions differently (direct quotes vs. Madhu’s descriptions), situates the described scene differently (in the present vs. in the past), and focuses the two moments with different problems (medium vs. technical vocabulary).

By demonstrating the ways that the two moments differ, I argue that Madhu, by virtue of her long-term involvement in parenting *and* practices of schooling, has at her disposal the ability to construct, in her first moment, a “voicing contrast” that stages a disposition to the issue of language-medium similar to that of Gauri Bohra, and, in her second moment, a “voicing contrast” that radically decouples the issues of language and language-medium as invoked in her first moment. The voices, those of teachers and students, operative in the second moment of discourse are unlikely to emerge in the discourses of those, such as Gauri, who do not share Madhu’s teaching practices. In short, the institution of schooling provides the potential for centrifugal forces to question other people’s taken for granted use of the Hindi- and English-medium division.

It is to the first moment that I now turn. In the transcript, “C” represents myself and “M” represents Madhu Khatri.

“Hey, these are useless”

14 C: *jī. aur, māī ne sunā ki ye angrezī bolne wāle skūlz krez hāī*

yes. and, I have heard that, these English-speaking schools are a craze

15 *yā ye faisān hāī*

or a fashion

16 M: *hā, vahī to batā rahe hāī ham, na*

yes, I am saying exactly that, no?

17 *ki vaha krez hai aur, vaha ek kāmpleks banā huā hai*

that it is a craze and, it has given birth to a complex

18 *jo baccē īnglīs mīdīam mē parhte hāī,*

those children who study in English,

19 *ve hindī mīdīamwāle baccō ko bilkul aisā samajhte hāī*

understand exactly thus about the Hindi-medium children

20 *ki “are, ye to bekār hāī”*

that “hey, these are useless.”¹⁹

21 *unke gārđianz bhī, thorā sā neglekt karte hāī*

their guardians too, neglect a little bit

- 22 *ki "ye to hindī mādīam ke bacce hāī"*
that "these are Hindi-medium children."
- 23 *ham log khud ghar mē dekhte hāī,*
we see in our own home,
- 24 *ki "are, ye to hindī mādīam mē parhte hāī"*
that "hey, these study in Hindi-medium"

In order to understand the ways in which Madhu creates a world in which everyone disparages Hindi-medium children, it is necessary to introduce a few seminal ideas and their reverberations in studies of interaction. Such work understands representations of the self and others to be multiplex and to be emergent within interactions. Erving Goffman, for example, exposes the inadequacy of focusing on "the isolated sentence tossed (like a football) by an anonymous Speaker, whose qualifications for play are specified only as 'competence,' to an even more anonymous Hearer who supposedly catches it" (Irvine 1996:131). Goffman complicates the notion of Speaker by proposing multiple interactional roles that might be operative in an utterance. For example, Goffman (1981) notes a distinction between the participant who makes an utterance (Animator) and the party, present or not, who is responsible for the position represented by the utterance (Principal). The distinction can have consequences for the ways that participants engage social personae or, in the rubric of this article, voices.²⁰

For example, whereas Gauri describes the "craze" and "complex" to inhabit English-medium and Hindi-medium students, respectively, Madhu is able to configure perspective on the issue to correspond to that of different sets of social actors. Thus, she is able to produce the utterances of another as if she were that other. In order to do so, Madhu momentarily departs the role Michèle Koven calls "author" that "indicates autobiographical continuity between herself as an author and herself as a narrated protagonist" (2002:178). In the excerpts from the previous section, "author" is the role that Gauri has inhabited to attest to the historical details of her own competence in English and her knowledge of the "complex" suffered by Hindi-medium students who enter an English-medium environment, as well as the role with which she maintains the referential difference between herself, such students, her daughter, and her father. Earlier in our conversation, prior to lines 16–24, Madhu has inhabited the same role to narrate the historical details of her own attendance at school and her emerging career as a teacher. In lines 16–24, however, Madhu inhabits a role that Michèle Koven calls "character" in which Madhu speaks as if she is someone else, "reenacting their purported thoughts, speech, and other deeds" (2002:188). Quoted speech is a particularly effective device for inhabiting the role of character as "direct quotations reproduce the reported speech as a fixed and authentic entity, clearly separate from the reporting context" (Lee 1997:279). Margaret Trawick invokes the notion of boundaries in order to link reported speech to the deployment of alter voices—what Koven calls the role of character:

To the extent that the author distances his own voice from the voices of his characters, "hard and fast boundaries" will be forged demarcating reported speech from its embedding context. As the distance is reduced, such boundaries dissolve. [1988:202]

Madhu speaks, in turn, as English-medium children, parents of Hindi-medium children, and, finally, people in her own household.

There are several features of Madhu's discourse that facilitate her shifts in role. Madhu enters the perspective of different characters in a way described by Benjamin Lee (1997) in that a verb frames represented speech; a vocative, 'hey' (*are*), indexes the attention of another (from the perspective of another)—further distancing the quoted utterance from the teacher's speaking stance (Urban 1989); and referential indexes within reported speech are oriented from within the character's, and not the current speaker's, point of view. On this last point, notice how the way of referring to the Hindi-medium children remains constant among the changing represented

characters, all done with the proximate form of the third person plural (*ye*) (vs. *ve*, the non-proximate form). The Hindi-medium children are experientially near to all of the various represented characters. This enhances the distance between the teacher's authorial voice in her embedding utterances and the character's voices in the quoted utterances.²¹

The maintenance of boundaries between author and character in Madhu's discourse highlights the changes in perspective from which quoted speech is uttered. The first occurrence of quoted speech comes from English-medium children—according to the medium dichotomy, the quoted characters most different from Madhu (who teaches in a Hindi-medium school). The second occurrence comes from guardians of Hindi-medium children, a group to which Madhu belongs. The final occurrence is anchored within Madhu's speaking perspective, made explicit by the first person plural "we." The origins of the quoted utterances move inward, such that by the third quote, members of the teacher's own family speak the quote.²² Taken by itself, the third quoted utterance is neutral in its evaluation ("hey, these study in Hindi-medium"). However, taken in relation to the first quoted utterance ("hey, these are useless") and the framing of the second ("neglect"), the third hints that simply noting that children are studying in a Hindi-medium school is disparaging in and of itself. The denigrating quoted speech moves "inward," and the similar messages that Madhu launches via multiple character roles gain a sense of inevitability.

The linguistic component that accomplishes the negative evaluation also moves "inward," understood through Bakhtin's notion of voicing (see Figure 1). In lines 18–20, the character accomplishes the negative evaluation. In lines 21–2, the framing verb does, indicating a hybrid relationship between the character's speech and Madhu's uptake of the role of character. Finally, in lines 23–4, the quoted utterance remains similar in form to the preceding ones, but now is spoken by Madhu as author ("we")—in other words, by the teacher's currently speaking self. The similar utterances become a palpable symptom demonstrating the pervasiveness of the complex.

Koven asserts, "Characters may be made to come alive as locally imaginable types of people, speaking in ways that contrast with the interlocutor's style" (2004:484). Indeed, approximately an hour after the excerpts presented here, Madhu inhabited the role of author and revealed that she does not personally agree that Hindi-medium students are "useless": 'It's not true that Hindi-medium children are dull. They are good' (*sahī nahī hai ki hindī māḍīamwāle bacce ḍal hāī. ve acche hāī*). Rather than provide a platform for the representation of her own opinions, Madhu's use of characters in the excerpt above creates a universal refrain, so pervasive that there exists the possibility that it might be uttered in her own home. The significance of Madhu's animation of characters to the issue of voice cannot be appreciated until the next excerpt wherein Madhu invokes a different set of personae and engages them in a different configuration of the roles "author" and "character." In so doing, Madhu is able to destabilize the inevitability embodied in her just-prior parallel animations of characters.

| | Character | Framing Verb | Quoted Utterance |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Lines 18–20 | English-medium children | Understand | "Hey, these are useless" |
| Lines 21–22 | Hindi-medium guardians | <i>Neglect</i> | "These are Hindi-medium children" |
| Lines 23–24 | We | See | "Hey, these study in Hindi-medium" |

Figure 1

Madhu's deployment of characters, from those sociologically distant from her narrating self to those close, with disparaging element in italics. Arrows indicate the changing position of the disparaging element.

Approximately two minutes pass while my landlady's daughter, Madhu's niece, offers us tea. She leaves the room and Madhu and I resume.

"Then it was really great"

25 M: *ab ham log kā to hindī mīḍiam skūl hai*

now ours is a Hindi-medium school

26 *is liye ham log ko sab kuch hindī...*

therefore everything to us [is in] Hindi . . .

27 *balki, ham logō ne jab parhā*

moreover, when we studied

28 *to. bhale hī ham logō ne hindī mīḍiam mē parhe*

then. it was really great that we studied in Hindi-medium

29 *lekin bī es sī em es sī kī jo buks thī ve sab īnglīs mē miltī thī.*

but BSC and MSC books those were all in English.

30 *ham logō ne likhe bhī pūrā māne,*

and we wrote too and could do it all,

31 *ham logō kē mīḍiam mē īnglīs rahatā thā*

English was in our medium

Striking about this second turn in comparison to the first is that Madhu frames action temporally. Indeed, the first word is the temporal marker 'now' (*ab*). In the first turn, in contrast, all activity takes place in the present; the past only establishes entities' existence in the present, as in "it [English-medium education] has given birth to a complex" in line 17. Whereas quoted utterances provide Madhu a device for establishing perspective in her first turn, a contrast between the present and the past frames alter perspectives in this turn. She begins in the present in lines 25 and 26 but does not complete her utterance with a verb. On line 27 she begins again, but this time in the past. Only later will the significance of the switch in tense become apparent, as it emerges as part of the poetic structure of Madhu's discourse.

After reframing her comments abruptly on line 27 with "moreover," Madhu presents a state of affairs not possible in her first moment. What seems unthinkable in the present—that one might feel good about studying in a Hindi-medium school—was unremarkable in the past. She asserts that when she was a Hindi-medium student, the books that she used contained English. Furthermore, she had competency in English. Both of these assertions disrupt the stark divide between linguistic affiliations of institutions that structures Madhu's first moment. One cannot be sure just how she would have finished her abandoned utterance, but certain is that lines 27 through 31 establish that languages and institutions interpenetrated in the past, whereas lines 25 and 26 mirror the boundaries of Madhu's first moment about the present.

32 *ab ājkal yaha itnī zyādā shuddh hindī ā gayī hai*

now these days there is this Hindi that is too pure

33 *jo sabhī logō ko samajh mē nahī ātī*

that no one understands.

34 *ab bacce usī ko pasand karte hāī.*

now children like it.

35 *unko īnglīs ṭarm ham batāenge to unko samajh mē nahī āyegā*

if we tell them the English term they will not understand it

36 *kyōki āj jo buks āyī hāī mārkaṭ mē. ve bilkul pyūr hindī...*

because now the books that are in the market. they [are in] pure Hindi . . .

37 *to ve usī ko zyādā acchā samajhte hāī*

so they really prefer that

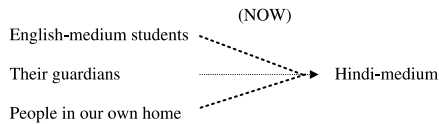
38 *unko ek ḍar hai "īnglīs kathin hogī, īnglīs kathin hogī"*

they fear "English will be difficult, English will be difficult"

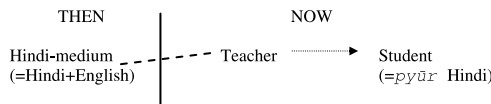
- 39 *jābtak ve yaha samajhte hāi. “īnglīs ke tarmś zyādā āsān hāi,*
until they understand this. “English terms are easier,
 40 *ek kiśī bhī cīz ke liye ek hī wārḍ hogī,*
for any one thing there is only one word,
 41 *hīndī mē to das wārḍś usī cīz ke milenge”.*
as for Hindi there are ten words for it.”
 42 *lekin ve bacce nahī samajhte hāi.*
but those children do not understand.
 43 *unko lagtā hai, “īnglīs kā shabd agar batāyā maīḍam ne*
they think, “if the teacher used an English word
 44 *māne bahut kaṭhin hogā”*
it must be very difficult”

With a shift from the past to the present, Madhu manages to identify a culprit responsible for the difference between herself as a student and current students (see Figure 2). With the return to the present on line 32, Madhu introduces a new element, ‘this Hindi that is too pure’ (*yaha itnī zyādā shuddh hīndī*). *Shuddh* Hindi refers to Hindi lexical items that are derived from Sanskrit. Madhu is not invoking *shuddh* Hindi’s ability to distinguish Hindi from Urdu and index a parallel religious distinction between Hinduism and Islam. Rather, on line 36, Madhu makes explicit that she is talking about a more specific, institutionally bound type, Hindi words found in textbooks. The term that she uses for the variety shifts too, from “*shuddh*” on line 32 to “*pyūr*” on line 36. The shift in terms, coupled with the use of “*buks*” and “*mārkaṭ*,” mirrors the referential shift from Sanskritized Hindi to a variety used in schools. *Pyūr* Hindi refers to a lexicon that contains over 300 thousand terms developed by the Scientific and Technical Terms Commission of the Government of India (Krishnamurti 1979). Scholars have attributed complementary motives to the government’s desire to forge a scientific lexicon for Hindi. On the one hand, C. J. Daswani (1989) explains that the government desires an indigenous language equipped with the ability to match English in the scientific realm. On the other hand, S. N. Sridhar (1987) attributes the development of the lexicon to the government’s

First Moment (lines 16–24)



Second Moment (lines 27–44)



- Key: discursive moment
 temporal distinction
 existence across temporal distinction
 source of problem

Figure 2
 Madhu’s reconstruction of the “complex” and of what is problematic about language medium.

wish to develop a technical language to distance itself from the possibility of English's influence.

In addition to mirroring her shift from talking about Sanskritized Hindi to Hindi developed for use in school texts (and other scientific endeavors), Madhu's use of English lexical items seems to instantiate her claim that she attended a Hindi-medium school wherein English was used. This notion is reinforced by her shift from the use of "*ṭarm*" on line 35, "*ṭarms*" on line 39, and "*wārd*" on lines 40 and 41 to "*shabd*" on line 42. Her switch from "*ṭarm*," "*ṭarms*," and "*wārd*" to "*shabd*" mirrors a shift to speaking from the perspective of students studying in Hindi-medium schools today (versus students studying in Hindi-medium schools when she was a student).

Madhu's overall focus shifts from distinctions between Hindi- and English-medium to the language affiliation of verbal practice within the Hindi-medium classroom. Language difference serves to differentiate teachers ("we") who use English from their students ("they") who prefer the use of "*pyūr*" Hindi. Throughout lines 25 to 37, Madhu consistently inhabits the role of "author" in Koven's framework. In other words, Madhu's present speaking self is among the people referred to by the use of "we," while current students are referred to by the use of "they." The language preferences of "we" versus those of "they" give lines 34–37 poetic force. Consistently, teachers cannot communicate with students because the students prefer "*pyūr* Hindi" and fear English. The juxtaposition of "we" versus "they" locked in unsuccessful communication invokes non-referential aspects of voicing dynamics. Though never explicitly stated, lines 34–44 recall the classroom wherein interaction between the teacher and students is highly orchestrated. Typically in the classroom, the teacher poses a question to a student of her or his choice or to a student who has raised her or his hand. The student stands, presents the answer, and sits when given permission by the teacher.

Fascinating is that Madhu leaves the role of author on lines 38–41, representing, in turn, a student's nervous self-talk, and the message that could assuage such fear. Madhu says quickly, "English will be difficult, English will be difficult," the repetition mimicking someone silently talking to themselves. The repeated phrase embodies the "complex" felt by Hindi-medium students. But here the "complex" is found in the Hindi-medium school itself rather than in an alien and frightening English-language environment. After stepping into the role of character to represent the nervousness of a student faced with an English word, Madhu explicitly steps out of the role on line 39 by referring once again to the students as "they." The role she steps into, however, is ambiguous. One is left wondering who is responsible for the statements on lines 39–41: "English terms are easier, for any one thing there is only one word, as for Hindi there are ten words for it."

Madhu builds different depictions of the past and present through her multiplex engagements with schooling. Shaping her disparaging, multi-charactered portrait of Hindi-medium students is the cachet of English-medium schooling, the growth of which has been facilitated by the Indian government's policies of economic liberalization. Enabling the radical shift from a focus on medium as a linguistic institution to a focus on language used in the classroom is Madhu's move from speaking as different characters to bringing to bear her own institutionally inflected experiences as student and teacher. Thus, Madhu's experiences with schooling are involved in her discourse in a dual manner. On the one hand, the government's changing economic policies have reconstituted Madhu's (and her children's) social position vis-à-vis English-medium education as well as the language she uses in the classroom. On the other, the school has involved Madhu in a range of practices, from hearing disparaging gossip about Hindi-medium students, to routines of classroom interaction.

One must beware of understanding Madhu's discourse to be straightforward "resistance" to schooling or to the government's policies, or of interpreting her construction of the past as nationalist sentimentality (Ahearn 2001). Many teachers in Hindi-medium schools expressed to me their frustration with the unfamiliar language that the government had designed for introduction in schools and pined

for the time when they were students. They did not use language to align themselves with any parallel relation between language and national (or antinational) sentiment so much as to note that states of affairs were once otherwise. Careful attention to the discursive details of Madhu's "solution" to the impasse between her students and herself, started on line 39, can avoid an alignment of her disposition with resistance. Note that the condition for alleviating what plagues Madhu's interaction with students—that students understand that "English terms are easier"—is spoken as an authorless pronouncement. In the midst of statements that are carefully anchored by "we" and "they," and statements (on line 38 and 43–4) made explicitly from the point of view of students, Madhu's statement on line 39 is anchored solely by "this." In contrast to surrounding discourse, the statement's authorship is obscure at the same time that its message is contradictory to educational policy. One possibility is that the unauthored utterance is very much like a lesson—easy for the teacher to produce but difficult for the students to learn given the popularity of *pyūr* Hindi and the students' fear of English.

I also want to stress that my argument is not that teachers such as Madhu Khatri are more knowledgeable than others about the history of the state's educational policies by virtue of their employment in its educational institutions. Indeed, when I asked Madhu about the introduction of "*pyūr* Hindi" words in classrooms, she responded, "I don't know where they get them, whether they search in the Sanskrit dictionary or if they are in the Hindi one too, God only knows how they get them, they are very difficult mister" (*patā nahī kahā se nikālte hāī, sanskrit dikśanerī se dūrḥthe yā hindī ke bhī rahate hāī, usī se dūrḥkar nikālte hāī, bhagvān jāne kaise nikālte hāī, bahut kaṭhīn hote hāī jī*). Rather, my argument is that Madhu Khatri's location both in a world of language-based school distinctions the social reverberations of which have altered radically and in a classroom in which she has been a student and a teacher has shaped the means by which she envisions relationships between the present and the past. In short, her life achieves parallax with those of others via the dialogic relationships between present and past emergent in our conversation. This is made possible by both sociohistorical shifts in the saliency of the Hindi- and English-medium divide and differences between the experiences of people like Gauri and people like Madhu with the institution during those sociohistorical shifts. Madhu's ability to reconfigure the relationship between the language-medium divide and its usefulness in imaginations of one's and others' pasts, presents, and futures embodies Bakhtin's notion that centripetal forces are never complete.

Conclusion

In this article I have identified centripetal forces that have been at work in Banaras by exploring the ways that schooling intersects, informs, and shapes political economic difference selectively. Schools must acquire state administration of their syllabi if they are to offer the possibility of class mobility. As a result, many schools cannot offer state-sanctioned educational credentials and do not participate as stakes in pursuits of class mobility. Furthermore, some Hindi-medium schools are subsidized by the state, making them quite inexpensive, compared to a handful of English-medium schools that are the most costly schools to be found. Out of this institutional difference emerges a duality that overshadows exceptions, such as private Hindi-medium schools that charge fees and English-medium schools that are roughly as expensive as their Hindi-medium counterparts. The dualistic category of medium is productive in the sense that what Hindi (medium) is, English (medium) is not, and vice versa.

Medium as an identity resonates complexly in the lives of people in Banaras. Yet the duality can survive complex contextual uses, attesting to its centripetal force. For example, many people, especially those whose experiences include Hindi-medium schools, lampoon the participation of the poor in English-medium institutions. One could argue that such critics uncover the fact that schools cannot, in and of

themselves, generate success—ironic, perhaps, in the case of English-medium schools whose cachet is the offer of economic and spatial mobility. Yet, such assertions of incompatibility reinforce the connection between class prestige and English-medium (and the lack of such a connection with Hindi-medium). Fascinating about the case of Gauri Bohra, the secretary brought up in Hindi-medium schools but educated in English for the completion of a job-getting university degree, is that she excludes the just-narrated circumstances of her own childhood when discussing her daughter's educational future. Medium distinctions can shape reflections on lives so powerfully that they can overshadow aspects of the past mentioned previously in the same conversation.

In comparison to these monologic voicings, Madhu Khatri's discourse about schools gives evidence that centrifugal forces can be brought to bear to question the inevitability of medium and recast what is problematic for social personae. Such centrifugal forces seem not to emanate from a single source but rather to rise in the intersection between Madhu's experiences with schooling (to which most others do not have access) and her deployment of voices in discursive activity. Attesting to Madhu's ability to bring centrifugal forces to bear on constructions of medium is her initial totalizing projection of multiple perspectives onto Hindi-medium students (see Figure 1). Yet, Madhu borrows the discursive routine of the classroom to reframe the culprit for the difficulties faced by Hindi-medium students. To these difficulties, Madhu juxtaposes her own student days in which the presence or absence of languages was an unreliable demarcation of language medium.

The new structuring of voices that emerges contrasts with Madhu's earlier totalizing portrayal of Hindi-medium students because she develops different alignments between her speaking self and the characters she animates. A change in the dynamics of voicing coincides with a change in what is problematic about schooling (and language). Whereas earlier, the very designation "Hindi-medium student" brings derision, later, a certain type of language seduces schoolchildren. With this transition, Madhu redirects the importance of the medium divide from its oppositional qualities (after demonstrating just how inevitable it might seem). She displaces a focus on medium with a focus on language and replaces a generalized world of impressions with the interactional routines of the classroom.

Notes

Acknowledgments. Research on which this article is based was made possible by the National Science Foundation and Connecticut State University. I would like to thank audiences to whom I presented preliminary versions at the meetings of the American Ethnological Society in Montreal, Quebec (May 5, 2001) and the American Anthropological Association in New Orleans, Louisiana (November 23, 2002), especially Rudolf Gaudio and Aurolyn Luykx. A conversation with Sarah Lamb gave birth to the idea of the article and Susan Paulson gave the manuscript especially incisive critique. My thanks also go to Asif Agha for choosing three incredibly careful, stimulating, and disciplinarily diverse reviewers whose comments led to many improvements. My mother's art, metalsmithing, inspired the idea for the title. This article is dedicated to the memory of Madhu Thandan, a government school teacher whose dedication and humility taught me so much.

1. Stanton Wortham (2003), for example, points out that Dorothy Holland and Jean Lave (2001) ably describe the "thickening" of identity over time but do not specify how identities "thicken" in discursive interaction.

2. Readers will notice that my landlady's comment in the opening excerpts comparing the girls' schools is ironic in that it pokes fun at the high cost of the visitor's school. However, I do not consider her comment to be the sign of centrifugal forces in the same way as I do my conversation with the teacher presented much later. Unlike the teacher, my landlady presupposes and re-creates hard-and-fast medium distinctions in her quip.

3. See Wilce (1998a:249) for an approach using the notion with ethnographic work in Bangladesh, and Wilce (1998b:34–43) for an application of the notion of voice to long-debated notions of the self in South Asia.

4. Sanjay Srivastava continues with his description of the practices of the civilized at the school:

the “secular” morning assembly, student interaction which emulates life in the contractual space of the metropolis which does not inquire after the caste of its citizens, and the constant effort to establish the “scientific temper” as the defining ethic of the post-colonized nation state [1998:198].

5. These schools use literate materials written in Nastaliq script that marks them as schools wherein Urdu is used. Thus, they are not part of a much larger category of schools called “Hindi-medium” wherein Devanagari is used.

6. Rebecca Klenk (2003) describes women’s memories of participation in Lakshmi Ashram, a Gandhian pedagogical institution in the North Indian state of Uttaranchal, that has facilitated the realization of nonnormative gendered subjectivities. In retrospect, some of the women regret not having received a board-certified diploma, believing that the lack of such credentials had barred them from opportunities.

7. All of these school types differ from schools in the “non-formal education” (NFE) sector.

8. For descriptions of gendered antagonism between education and marriage, especially as girls approach higher grade-levels, see Gold (2002), Seymour (1999, 2002), and Wadley (1994).

9. Indeed, upon my first few visits to one school, a number of students in the first level referred to me as “madam.” A teacher nearby corrected them, instructing them to call me “sir.”

10. In 1986 the federal government passed the National Educational Policy that proposed a Navodaya school would be built in each district of the nation. The rationale was that competitive English-language institutions would be available at no cost to rural areas (K. Kumar 1991). Both Krishna Kumar (1991) and Gauri Viswanathan (1992) express skepticism about the schools’ democratic goals by pointing out the Navodaya system’s neoliberal emphasis on skill and merit at the expense of social equality.

11. See N. Kumar (1994) for a fascinating discussion of the role of women in the creation of several schools in Banaras, and N. Kumar (2000) for a broader history of schooling in Banaras.

12. While the school was certainly among the most reputable in Banaras, many of those people whose lives had included more metropolitan experiences or educations in cities like Lucknow or Delhi explained to me that their children would never attend Seacrest. It could not provide the monolingual atmosphere in English available in classrooms at “top” schools located far from Banaras. Thus, Seacrest catered to Banaras’s upwardly mobile middle classes and not to its elite.

13. The ideological reverberation of English in India is the subject of an immense body of scholarship. Selected examples include Aggarwal (1988), Annamalai (2001), Brass (1990), J. Das Gupta (1970), P. Das Gupta (1993), Dua (1994), Joshi (1994), Pattanayak (1987), and Sonntag (2000).

14. For Hindi’s increasing ideological separation from Urdu, see K. Kumar (1990, 1993), Lelyveld (1993), Al. Rai (2001), and Am. Rai (1984).

15. After the period of my fieldwork, the BJP would form a government twice (once for a few weeks only) and would pursue an increasingly bifurcated rhetoric of national strength and liberalization.

16. Transcription Notations:

- , short pause (less than one second)
- . long pause (longer than one second)
- ... speech slowing, followed by a new start
- speech with quickened tempo
- carefully enunciated speech with slowed tempo
- “ ” quoted or modeled speech
- [] author’s assumption of meaning

17. During fieldwork in Delhi in the summer of 2004, I noticed that “institutes” had come to use the existence of the notion of a “complex” to set up shop. Whereas in 1996–7, “coaching” or tutoring was a common means of a student to improve her or his marks in school exams, in 2004, language training institutes advertised that attendees can “increase confidence” and “reduce embarrassment” in speaking English. Two of the lower-class men with whom I was conducting research in Delhi were from Banaras and told me that such institutes had become common there, though not so ubiquitous as in Delhi.

18. She remarked that it is nearly impossible to get a job teaching in a government-administered school. In contrast, jobs in private schools do not require graduate degrees and are much easier to attain.

19. *Bekār* can also mean 'unemployed'.

20. For example, in the interview transcribed above, Madhu (line 16) makes explicit that I have failed to understand her as an already realized Animator and Principal for the utterances that I animate (lines 14 and 15).

21. Hanks's (2005) assertion that deictics must be considered to be semiotically complex and multifunctional is salient here.

22. Our prior utterances are also engaged in a dialogic fashion, of course. Note the teacher's "I am saying exactly that, no?" (line 16). Whereas in lines 14 and 15 I report what I have heard without distance from my speaking self, in line 16 the teacher invites me to imagine that she has already complicated my authorial stance. My argument is simply that the dialogicality in lines 18–24 is of a distinct kind, emergent within the teacher's moment of discourse.

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