Introduction: languages, contexts, and constructs

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There are multiple constructs of South Asian language contexts. The region has been characterized, in great exasperation, as a linguistic "problem area," a proverbial Tower of Babel. These metaphors apply to South Asia as a whole, to the State of India, and to each distinct region. A penetrating observer of Indian society and culture, V. S. Naipaul, portrayed this land of his ancestors as "a country of a million little mutinies." But the crises of the mutinies, reassures Naipaul, "were the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India's growth, part of its restoration" (1990: 517–18). Naipaul, of course, was not specifically thinking of the region's language conflicts, but if he were, he would not be entirely wrong. Those linguistic mutinies, the long history of the sub-continent tells us, have ultimately proved to be creative conflicts in many ways.

The Indian subcontinent comprises seven sovereign states: India (population 1,095,351,995), Pakistan (165,803,560), Bangladesh (147,365,352), Nepal (28,287,147), Sri Lanka (20,222,240), Bhutan (2,279,723), and Maldives (359,008).[1] But linguistically speaking, these political divisions cloud the exten-sive underlying – and deeply shared – chronicles of literary and sociolinguistic histories of the present seven states of the subcontinent.[2] The major language families of South Asia are Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, and Munda. The region's diversity also manifests itself in religious pluralism, representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism.

The South Asian region comprises almost 25 percent of the global population. This number, however, represents only a part of the linguistic reality of the subcontinent. In their historical and functional contexts, the South Asian languages exhibit an extended tradition of diffusion, mutual contact, and convergence.

This earlier, and ongoing, linguistic convergence (*Sprachbund*) between and among typologically distinct languages is also evident in their literatures,

[1] These figures are taken from www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/us.html

[2] In earlier linguistic and literary studies the term "India" does not necessarily refer to the present territorial and political map of post-1947 India. The concept is used in a wider sense of shared identities and linguistic histories of the region that now includes several other states.

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folk traditions, and three major linguistic impacts, those of Sanskritization, Persianization, and Englishization. These processes of convergence continue to be evident in contemporary languages in their linguistic hybridizations and fusions in every region of South Asia. These contact phenomena are evident in what may be described as linguistic "look-alikeness" in the languages of the region beyond the lexical level: the areal characteristics of the South Asian languages have been studied, discussed, and illustrated in convergence processes in grammar, phonology, discourse, and literary creativity. It is on the basis of such evidence that India/South Asia has been characterized as a linguistic, literary, and sociolinguistic area. For example, Kannada, a Dravidian language, has a long history of mutual convergence with Marathi, an Indo-Aryan language. This type of productive process is also evident in other Dravidian languages, such as Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam. There is indeed an extensive and much-discussed body of research on such convergence, termed the *Indo-Aryanization* of Dravidian languages and *Dravidianization* of Indo-Aryan languages (See, e.g. Emeneau 1956; Ferguson 1992; B. Kachru 1976; Masica 1976; Mukherjee 1981; Nadkarni 1975; Pandit 1977; Ramanujan and Masica 1969; S. N. Sridhar 1981).

The ten parts of *Language in South Asia* are very selective. They present overviews of various selected facets of the language situation in the vast subcontinent in the three areas mentioned above: linguistic, historical, and sociolinguistic. In Part 1, "Language History, Families, and Typology," Ronald E. Asher and Karumuri V. Subbarao provide a backdrop for contextualizing the histories of South Asian language families and their typological characteristics. Part 2, "Languages and Their Functions," locates selected languages in contexts of history and their domains of functions. The languages discussed are "Hindi–Urdu–Hindustani" (Yamuna Kachru), "Persian in South Asia" (S. A. H. Abidi and Ravinder Gargesh), "Major Regional Languages" (Tej K. Bhatia), "Minority Languages and Their Status" (Rakesh M. Bhatt and Ahmar Mahboob), and "Tribal Languages" (Anvita Abbi). Part 3, "Sanskrit and Traditions of Language Study," provides fresh perspectives on "Sanskrit in the South Asian Sociolinguistic Context" (Madhav Deshpande), and on the long traditions of the study and teaching of the Sanskrit language in "Traditions of Language Study in South Asia" (Ashok Aklujkar).

The three chapters in Part 4, "Multilingualism, Contact, and Convergence," address the manifestations and implications of the three core issues of South Asia's linguistic pluralism: "Contexts of Multilingualism" (E. Annamalai), "Language Contact and Convergence in South Asia" (S. N. Sridhar), and "Pidgins, Creoles, and Bazaar Hindi" (Ian Smith). In Part 5, "Orality, Literacy, and Writing Systems," Rama Kant Agnihotri focuses on "our linguistic and cultural behavior in response to changes in interactional situations," and Peter T. Daniels on South Asian writing systems of major and minor languages.

The one chapter in Part 6, Language Conflicts, (Robert B. King), addresses the most explosive, provocative, and still unresolved concerns – those of "Language Politics and Conflicts." Part 7, "Language Modernization in Kannada," again a solo chapter by S. N. Sridhar, outlines the linguistic processes, controversies, and implications of language modernization. Part 8, "Language and Discourse," brings together five distinct functional domains of language: "Language in Social and Ethnic Interaction" (Yamuna Kachru), "Language and the Legal System" (Vijay K. Bhatia and Rajesh Sharma), "Language in the Media and Advertising" (Tej K. Bhatia and Robert Baumgardner), "Language in Cinema" (Wimal Dissanayake), and "Language of Religion" (Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande).

The three chapters in Part 9, "Language and Identity," outline and illustrate the strategies applied to constructs of gender (Tamara Valentine) and to the traditionally marginalized – and generally ignored – topic of Dalit literature and language (Eleanor Zelliot). The last chapter in this section, by Rukmini Bhaya Nair, is a pioneering exploration of language and youth culture.

The concluding part, Part 10, "Languages in Diaspora," provides perspectives on selected diasporic locations of South Asian languages – their histories, their altered contexts and acculturations, and linguistic impacts of the dominant languages of the regions: Rajend Mesthrie writes about South Africa, where the relocated South Asian population is now estimated to be over one million, and Kamal K. Sridhar that of the United Kingdom and the United States with estimated populations of over two million and one-and-a-quarter million, respectively, that is, the combined South Asian population of over three-and-half million.[3]

Languages of wider functions

In this tapestry of typologically related – and unrelated – families of languages and their subvarieties that represent distinctions of caste, class, profession, religion, and region, it is, however, the network of languages of *wider communication* that cut across linguistic and geographical boundaries and facilitate communication in various pan-South Asian functions across the subcontinent.

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[3] The sources for the figures quoted here are the following:
For South Africa, Simelane, Sandie E. (2002). Note that Simelane gives figures only for Indians: 1,045,597 (2.6 percent). No mention is made of Pakistan, Bangladesh, or any other country of the region. For the UK www.movinghere.org.uk/galleries/histories/asian/origins/local1.htm, accessed July 7, 2006. For the year 2001, the population figures are India (1,028,539), Pakistan (706,752), Bangladesh (275,250), Total South Asia (2,010,541). No mention is made of Sri Lanka and other countries of the region. For the USA www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=378, accessed July 7, 2006.
  See Dixon 2006. India (1,022,552), Pakistan (223,477) [data based on US Census Bureau, 2000]. The total cited above includes minimum numbers for Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and other countries of the region.

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It is the languages of *wider functions* that link regional, ethnic, and linguistic populations of the pluralistic subcontinent. These languages are used in varying degrees of functional effectiveness and communication, in administrative, commercial, and religious contexts, and in cross-linguistic situations, and often as languages of status, power, and identity construction.

This section briefly contextualizes the role of three such languages that resulted in Sanskritization, Persianization, and Englishization of South Asian languages. The volume does not include a chapter on South Asian English. This Introduction, however, contextualizes the earlier phase of introduction of English in South Asia and provides a selected bibliographical narrative of what is now characterized as South Asian English(es), in the voices of administrators, educators, and journalists.[4]

Chapters 8 (Madhav M. Deshpande) and 9 (Ashok Aklujkar) discuss the functions that Sanskrit has performed in a variety of domains. There has been, and continues to be, a distinct impact of Sanskritization in philosophical and metaphysical discourses, rituals, and literary creativity in almost every genre in all major South Asian languages and literatures.[5] The later, gradual but marked, Persianization of South Asian languages introduced yet another dimension to the linguistic and literary contexts of South Asia, as outlined in Chapter 4 by Abidi and Gargesh.

Sanskritization

The emergence of modern South Asian languages after 1000 CE did not diminish the impact of Sanskrit. Chaitanya insightfully summarizes this ongoing impact of the language:

when the modern Indian languages began to emerge as literary vehicles, the influence of Sanskrit was in no way diminished, although there was a change in the form of that influence. (1977: 30)

The altered form of the impact of Sanskrit is characterized in the following terms: (1977: 30)

If the cultured people began to compose increasingly in the regional languages, the great majority of them derived their inspiration from the Sanskrit tradition, many of them wrote in Sanskrit also in addition to the vernacular, and the bulk of the early literature in all these languages is mostly translation of Sanskrit classics.

[4] See, for example Das 1991 for a detailed and insightful discussion on the impact of Western education on Indian literatures and literary creativity. See also B. Kachru 1994.

[5] See, for example Chaitanya 1977; Das 1991.

Sanskritization, as is well documented (1977: 30):

Powerfully influenced even the Dravidian group of languages and the texture of Telugu, Kanarese and Malayalam is today indistinguishable from that of Bengali or Marathi as far as the Sanskrit derivation of the bulk of the vocabulary is concerned.

And concerning the resistance of Tamil to Sanskritization of its written form, Chaitanya adds (1977: 30):

If Tamil resisted the Sanskritization of its alphabet, we must recall that Agastya who lived in the second century B.C. and his disciple who wrote the *Tolkappiyam*, took ample inspiration from Yaska, Panini and Indra Dutta in laying the foundations of Dravidian grammar and rhetoric.

And Chaitanya explains:

Further, the eighth century works of Jains in Tamil, like the *Sri Purana*, *Nilakesi*, *Samaya Divakara*, etc., use as highly Sanskritized a language as the Manipravalam works of Malayalam.

In conclusion, Chaitanya says:

Above all, even if the Tamil language resisted dominance by Sanskrit, the contribution of Tamilnad to Sanskrit studies has in no way been less than that of any other region. (30–1)

Persianization

The Persian language was introduced, as discussed in Chapter 4, at the time of Mahmud of Ghazni (1001–1026 CE). The implantation, spread, and impact of Persian, has been a controversial topic with a variety of constructs. The American historian Stanley Wolpert observes that the Mughuls ''spread Perso-Arabic poetry and prose with their swords of Islamic conquest and conversion'' (1991: 185). With the gradual stabilization of Mughul power, Persian became the language of courts, administration, and literary creativity in several regions of South Asia. The domination, diffusion, and social penetration of the Persian language cultivated a distinct literary and intellectual culture that left a deep impact on South Asia's major languages, literatures, and a variety of administrative and legal genres.

An illustrative case of Persianization is the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India. In Kashmir, the ancestral Sanskrit language was gradually reduced primarily to Hindu ritualistic functions. The pandits of Kashmir, with altered

political dynamics of the region, switched to Persian. The Persian language was
then established as the language of power, politics, status, and literary recog-
nition. The pandits used the medium of Persian to impart their religious, cul-
tural, and ritualistic texts, such as the *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāgvata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and
Shivpurāṇa. The Kashmiri Pandits produced their religious and ritualistic texts
in the Perso-Arabic script so that Hindus knowing Persian could read them and
not depend on the Devanagari or the now almost extinct Sharada scripts. These
included the texts of *karmakāṇda* (Hindu rituals), *jyotiṣ śāstra* (astrology), and
āyurveda (the indigenous medical system).

In her treatise, *The Way of the Swan*, Cook further elaborates this point when
she observes:[6]

> . . . the pandits [of Kashmir] composed a new Shaiva literature in Persian verse. The
> classical Persian *gazal* became the ode to Shiva, Lord of the La Makan, Spaceless Space.
> The technical vocabulary of Erfan suited their purposes perfectly, and morning prayers
> were conducted in a Persian which listening neighbors could not distinguish from songs
> of the ''Orafa.'' Whatever position they won for themselves in India when forced out of
> Kashmir by Persian-speaking invaders, the pandit emigrés continued to compose their
> Persian Shaiva odes. (1958: 8–9)

It is, therefore, understandable that the Persian classics, such as the *Mathnavi*
of Moulana Rumi, the *Shāhnāma* of Firdusi, and the *Sikandarnāma* of Nizami,
were taught in the *maktabs* (schools for Koranic instruction) which were, as the
Kashmiri scholar Pushp observes, often run by Kashmiri Pandit *akhuns* ''who
had no inhibition in popularizing Persian handbooks'' (Pushp 1996: 22).

The Persianization of Kashmir was not a unique case; it provides just one
example of the linguistic, cultural, and political impact of Persian. Chaitanya, in
contextualizing the introduction and diffusion of the Persian language in wider
Indian political and social contexts, says: ''With the consolidation of Muslim
power in North India, Persian became a formidable rival to Sanskrit for the
patronage of the Imperial court.'' And Chaitanya further reminds us:

> But we must not forget that Akbar and that ill-fated son of Shah Jahan, Dara Shikoh, were
> great patrons of Sanskrit. Bairam Khan, the Great Khan (Khan Khanan) who was the
> general of Akbar, was also a Sanskrit scholar. Further, the competition of Persian was felt
> only in the Moghul court. The culture of most of the vassal states was Hindu and every
> dynasty patronized Sanskrit. (1977: 31)

Englishization

The numbers of South Asian users of English now exceed the combined
population of the Inner Circle of English – the United States, the United

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[6] See, Cook 1958.

Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Asian continent, particularly South Asia and China, have altered the international profile of world Englishes.[7]

The location of the English language in South Asia, and its gradual, extensively argued, debated, and reconstructed diffusion, in this subcontinent is closely linked with the firm political control of various regions by what was the British Empire. The political control that lasted for over two hundred years, ending in the 1940s, did not include the end of the linguistic legacy of the Raj – the English language.

In tracing the relationship of the empire and its antecedents, it is said that the first English-knowing person to visit India may have been an emissary of Alfred the Great in 882 CE. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, he visited the subcontinent with gifts to be offered at the tomb of St. Thomas. Speculating about the antecedents of English in the subcontinent, the late Samuel Mathai, a distinguished professor of English studies in India, wonders:

. . . who first spoke English in India. When Sir Thomas Roe presented his credentials as Ambassador of James I at the court of Jehangir in Delhi in 1615, the East India company, which had been in India already for some fifteen years, had established factories at Surat and other places, and had brought the English language to the shores of India. Sir Thomas was Ambassador to the Great Moghul for three years. ([1979] 2004: v)

And Mathai observes: ''[d]uring these years there must have been a small English-speaking community in Delhi'' (ibid.).

The recorded history thus shows that significant contacts with English started in the seventeenth century, which gradually led to the maneuvering toward strategic control of various regions of the subcontinent. This mission was almost accomplished by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The process of the introduction of English was slow and much debated by the managers of the Raj, church groups, and native intellectuals, and politicians. The subsequent unprecedented functional and social penetration of the English language may be viewed in four overlapping phases: Exploration, Implementation, Diffusion, and Institutionalization. It was through these controversial and celebratory strategies that the English language acquired an unparalleled position in its social, linguistic, literary, and ideological impact on the subcontinent.

The first phase of exploration was dominated by missionary organizations, with initial support from the government, which played an important role in the debate on the future status of English in South Asia. In a study on *Promotion of*

[7] See, B. Kachru 2005, section entitled ''The heart of the matter'', pp. 205–7. See also Kachru, Kachru and Nelson 2006, pp. 90–129.

Learning in India by Early European Settlers, Narendra Nath Law summarizes the main object of the missionaries as ''the propagation of the Gospel.'' And in further elucidation, he observes that, ''they [the missionaries] were directed purely to religious education . . . through their native language which the Europeans tried to master, as also the spread of Western education among the Indians in order to enable them to appreciate better the Christian values'' (1915: 6–7).[8]

The ''missionary clause'' that was added to the Charter of the East India Company in 1698 lasted until 1765 when direct support and encouragement of the missionary activities was discontinued. There was a well-documented, violent reaction, particularly from the Clapham sect. Charles Grant (1746–1823) expressed concern about the morals of the people in the subcontinent and provided the following remedy:

The true curse of darkness is the introduction of light. The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them, would prove the best remedy for their disorders (Grant, 1831–1832: 60–1).

In 1813, it was therefore determined that:

Measures ought to be introduced as may tend to the introduction among them [the natives of the subcontinent] of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement. That in furtherance of the above objects sufficient facilities shall be afforded by law to persons desirous of going to, or remaining in India (Parliament Debate, 26).

The point of ''religious and moral education'' was further emphasized before Parliament in rather stronger words by William Wilberforce, then Foreign Secretary, when he proposed to ''exchange its [India's] dark and bloody superstition for the genial influence of Christian light and truth.'' It was through such initiatives that the missionary activities were revived. The initiatives provided additional stimulus and motivation for the teaching of English, which was already in the curriculum of the missionary schools.

In prepartition India, the phase of implementation began over one hundred and seventy years ago. It was then that Thomas Babington Macaulay's (1800–1859) controversial Minute was introduced in Parliament, on February 2, 1835. This much-debated Minute provided a blueprint for undivided India's educational strategies and policy. A debate still continues on the motives and ultimate success of Macaulay's mission of creating ''a class of persons, Indians in blood and

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[8] For details about the period of exploration, see, for example for India, Sherring 1884; Richter 1908; Law 1915; for Sri Lanka, Ruberu 1962; and for Pakistan, Rahman 1996a, Chapters 3 and 4, and 1991a, b.

colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.'' In Macaulay's view, India's native languages were ''poor and rude'' and the learning of the East was ''a little hocus-pocus about cusa-grass and the modes of absorption into the Diety'' (Bryant 1932: 56–7). This statement was made, in spite of his also often-cited arrogant confession that ''I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value.''

In presenting this Minute for approval to the Supreme Council of India, Macaulay unambiguously indicated to the Council ''his intention of resigning if they [his recommendations] were not accepted'' (ibid.: 56). The Minute received the Seal of Approval from Lord William Bentick (1774–1839) on March 7, 1835. A distinguished British educator and linguist, John Rupert Firth (1890–1960), who taught during the end of the British Raj in Lahore (now in Pakistan), held ''superficial Lord Macaulay'' responsible for ''the superficiality characteristic of Indian education'' (Firth, 1930: 210–11).

There was, one must add, also a socially active Indian group who desired ''the natives of India'' to be instructed in mathematics and sciences, led by Rammohan Roy (1772–1833), who were, as Roy says (1823: 99–101):

Filled with sanguine hopes [that] European gentlemen of talents and education would instruct the natives of India in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other useful sciences which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.

Macaulay's vision of a ''class of persons . . . English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'' that the introduction of English education was to have achieved succeeded only partially. In reality, the opinions, values, and vision that South Asian English users nurtured and presented through the English medium were not consistent with the beliefs of the architects of the Minute. The medium instead turned into ''a linguistic weapon'' that articulated *mantras* (messages) that the architects of English education did not foresee and did not put on their agenda for the language plans of the Raj.

In the linguistically pluralistic subcontinent, the English language became a mobilizing medium that was rediscovering, as it were, the subcontinent. The Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterjee reflects on this pragmatic reality of the subcontinent when he says:

There is no hope for India until the Bengali and the Panjabi understand and influence each other, and can bring their influence to bear upon the Englishman. This can be done only through the medium of English. (cited in Wolpert 1991: 187)

The history, motivations, and intended educational, ideological, and political goals in the context of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) were not much different from the Indian subcontinent (for references, see B. Kachru 1994, 2005).

Constructs of English (1854–1976)

Chatterjee's above statement was indeed just one construct of English, the medium and what it conveys. What follows is a selected bibliographical narrative of multiple voices, those of the colonizers and the colonizees, from 1837 to 1976. These many voices represent a variety of faces, attitudes, and agendas about locating the language in the subcontinent and about its South Asianization.

One of the earlier studies, by Alexander Duff (1837) of the General Assembly's Mission, Calcutta (now Kolkata), presents his vision of a "New Era of the English Language and English Literature in India." This study provides a context for understanding the colonial debates during the Raj and the linguistic turbulence that continues to surface in post-Raj South Asia.

David O. Allen (1854), a missionary of the American Board of India, provides yet another prescient view. It appears to Allen that

from the designs of Providence as developed in the course of events, that English is to be the language generally used in North America, and that in a few generations it will be vernacular over a larger part of the world and among a larger population than has ever yet used a common language ... that the English language is hereafter to exert an influence in the world far beyond any other language, ancient or modern (p. 265).

David Allen asks: "the English possessions in Southern Asia appear likely to be yet further extended. It becomes therefore an interesting question, how far are these conquests likely to extend the knowledge and use of the English language in those countries?" Allen further analyzes this question from the perspectives of "several facts" and "circumstances" (p. 265).

Nilmani Cowar (1859) discusses Macaulay's Minute of 1835. The question Cowar asked, almost a century and a half ago, continues to vibrate even now, not only in South Asia but also beyond this subcontinent: "Can English be the language of India [South Asia]?" In concluding his arguments, Cowar says: " ... whatever direction we may choose to view the subject, we cannot be persuaded to believe that the home-grown languages of India will be superseded by the English" (12).

Alexander Allardyce (1877) provides socially realistic construct of "the Anglo-Indian tongue."[9] The question he addressed in 1877 has continued to be discussed in linguistic literature about, for example, "code-mixing", and "code-switching" in South Asian English and other varieties of world Englishes. "What right, says someone, can our unnatural countrymen in India have to desecrate their mother tongue in this fashion?" Allardyce's linguistically appropriate answer is: "The mixture of English and native words, which we call

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[9] The word "Anglo-Indian" originally referred to a British person in India but "was officially adopted in 1900 to describe persons of mixed descent, then known as Eurasians" (Allen 1975: 21).