

## Book Reviews

**Modern Hindi Grammar** by Omkar N. Koul. Hyattsville: Dunwoody Press, 2008. Pp. +318. US \$45.

The *Modern Hindi Grammar* written by Omkar N. Koul is a new grammar about the Hindi language. It focuses especially on the modern language used in present India. Hindi is spoken by more than four million people, mostly in India. However, it is also used outside India as the Indian diaspora is especially abundant in countries like UK and US. Hindi also has its place in linguistic research, as some of its features are extremely interesting from a linguistic point of view. It represents the eastern branch of the Indo-European languages: although clearly related with the European languages, it differs in many respects. For example, Hindi is known as the only Indo-European language where the ergative structure appears. Despite the mass of speakers and its importance in linguistic research, Hindi is still a quite 'exotic' language, and good material to learn the language is scarce and hard to find. This new book *Modern Hindi Grammar* is an attempt to fill this gap.

The *Modern Hindi Grammar* is in the first place intended to be a pedagogical grammar. It will be of use for Indian migrants who want to revive their language, as well as by foreign linguists who are interested to learn the language for a scholarly purpose. It might even be useful for the tourist in India, for all those who take a keen interest in this widely spoken language.

Hindi has been extensively studied especially in formal linguistics (e.g. Kachru 2006), but a simple elucidating grammar is an effort warmly welcomed by the students of Hindi as a foreign language. In the introduction of the grammar this educational purpose has been clearly pointed out. The grammar is intended for pedagogical goals but the author hopes at the same time that it will reach more people than only the students of the language. The introduction further offers an overview of earlier works on Hindi, for the student who wants to do further research on one particular aspect of the language. It also gives a short overview of facts about the language, its area and speakers, dialects, characteristics and status. Reference is also made to Urdu. The introduction is kept brief and does not give needless information. The emphasis is clearly on the language and its grammar.

The grammar has a clear, traditional structure. After the introduction, the several areas of linguistics are treated: phonology, morphology, syntax and finally lexicon. All the sections are extensively subdivided so that it is easy to find one particular item.

The phonology chapter starts with the segmental phonological units and it ends on the morphophonemic level. The morphology chapter treats the nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, particles and connectives respectively. The grammar

gives many examples of contemporary Hindi, which leads to great comfort for the students who wish to broaden their knowledge of Hindi literature and to speak Hindi. Especially in the chapter dealing with syntax, examples are of importance to illustrate the theory and enhance the over all comprehensibility. In this grammar, every syntactic issue has been illustrated by an example. The chapter about syntax is also of adequate length; in contrast with some earlier pedagogical grammars the important syntactic area of a language is extensively treated. The syntactical issues run from the structure of phrases over to the structure of clauses and to structure of the sentence level. The sentence level is particularly well treated. Negation, interrogatives, equatives, comparisons and coordination are only few of the topics treated under syntax. The last section is a lexicon of various topics. It offers a basic vocabulary to make conversation possible, with a list of words for body parts, food, habits etc. The Hindi words are given in Roman phonetic script and in Devanagari throughout the book.

In short, the grammar adjusts to the needs of a language learner and thus fulfills its promise from the introduction. Examples taken from the recent language abundantly illustrate this grammar and as they are all taken from modern spoken Hindi they distinguish this grammar from earlier textbooks, where the language is sometimes archaic and very formal. The grammar uses generally known concepts of grammar, without adding too much formal or complicated terminology. The terminology that appears in it is also adequately explained. Definitions of specific concepts such as the ‘noun phrase’, ‘reflexive’ etc are given. Therefore, it is very much useful for a language student.

This new Modern Hindi Grammar can be recommended for everyone who is interested in Hindi or who wants to learn it. It is a comprehensive work that is easily accessible and effective by its large amount of illustrative examples taken from the modern spoken language.

## References

- Kachru, Yamuna. 2006. *Hindi*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.  
 Kellong, S.H. 1876. *A grammar of the Hindi language*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
 McGregor, R.S.1995 (3). *Outline of Hindi grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Saartje Verbeke**

Ghent University-Research Foundation Flanders