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A note on English and modern Sanskrit

HANS HENRICH HOCK*

Sanskrit stands alone among the ancient Indo-European prestige languages by surviving as a spoken language to the present day. Not only has it outlasted Greek and Latin, it has outlived its own (near-) descendants, except, of course, the modern Indo-Aryan languages. At the same time, Sanskrit generally is not learned as a native language. Until recently, it was acquired in traditional schools and was used as a scholarly lingua franca throughout India. As I note elsewhere [e.g. Hock (1988, in press)], in this use Sanskrit has in recent years undergone considerable attrition. However, its written use continues unabated. Moreover, numerous groups throughout India are trying not only to revive spoken Sanskrit, but to make it a pan-Indian NATIONAL language. The most active among these groups now are the Hindu Seva Pratishthanam (centered in Bangalore, with affiliates throughout the south) and the Sanskrita Pracara Samitih (Puri, with affiliates throughout the north). Both of these were established by former students of Tirupati Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, one of the few institutions that has retained Sanskrit as its medium of instruction, even in such modern fields as pedagogy.

In order to be used in the context of modern India, Sanskrit, just like the modern regional Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages, has had to undergo a significant amount of MODERNIZATION,[1] largely on the model of English.

Now, as is well known, the other languages of India (with the exception of Tamil and Urdu) have largely been drawing on Sanskrit lexical and morphological resources to modernize their lexicon through ADAPTATIONS in the form of calques and loan shifts[2] [cf. Dhamotharan (1975), Kachru (1979), Y. Kachru (1989), the contributions in Krishnamurti and Mukherji (1984), Sridhar (1988), and the references cited in those publications].

While the morphemes in these calques and loan shifts are clearly Sanskrit, their semantics generally can be understood only in terms of English or the sources (mainly Latin and Greek) from which English derives its technical vocabulary. Well-known examples are expressions such as Hindi *dūr(a)-bhāṣ(a)* and Marathi *dūr(a)-vāṇī* which calque the etymological meaning or English *tele-phone,* viz. 'far-speech'. Neologisms like Hindi *ārambh* and *samāroh* 'ceremony, festive occasion' are even more telling. The corresponding Sanskrit words *ārambha* and *samāroha* have the meanings 'setting about, undertaking, beginning' and 'ascending, mounting, riding upon, beginning', respectively. In either case the semantic development to 'ceremony' is, as far as I know, without precedent in Sanskrit. It can be understood only in terms of English, where 'beginning' is quasi-synonymous with 'commencement' in its central meaning, and where the latter has a special use in the expression *commencement (exercises/ceremony)* which can be reinterpreted as designating a ceremony or festive occasion in general.

While often referred to as Sanskritization [e.g. Y. Kachru (1989)], this process may perhaps be more accurately referred to as COVERT ENGLISHIZATION, since, as observed, the semantics of the neologisms are English, not Sanskrit.

*Department of Linguistics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 4088 Foreign Languages Building, 707 South Mathews Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801, USA.

Moreover, different regional languages may go different ways in the process of covert Englishization, even in the Hindi-speaking area; cf. Central-Government, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, *aṅkit mūlya* 'face value' vs Rajasthan *pratyakṣa mūlya* (beside *ankit mūlya*), and Madhya Pradesh *aṅkit arhā* (beside *aṅkit mūlya* and *pratyakṣa mūlya*) [cf. Y. Kachru (1989: 159)]. Similar differentiations are found elsewhere. Sridhar (1988), for instance, notes that Sanskrit *upanyāsa* is used in Hindi to refer to a novel, while in Kannada it designates a lecture. (The Sanskrit meanings range from 'putting down' to 'mention, statement, suggestion'.) Similarly, he notes that Sanskrit *nāmakaraṇa* 'name-giving ceremony' has been drawn on in Kannada to calque English *nomination*. In Hindi, the same term has been used as a calque of *nomenclature*. Note further the regional difference (mentioned earlier) between Hindi *dūr(a)-bhāṣ(a)* and Marthi *dūr(a)-vāṇī* 'telephone'.

In addition, of course, there has been a fair amount of ADOPTION[3] of English words, such as Hindi *fon/phon* 'telephone', *rikśā* 'ricksha(w)' (ultimately from Japanese), or *rel(-gāṛi)* 'railway train' (lit. 'rail vehicle'), etc.

Finally, as especially noted in Y. Kachru (1989), languages like Hindi have undergone a considerable amount of Englishization in their rhetoric and syntax.

In contradistinction to the modern languages, Sanskrit does not have another language to fall back on for lexical modernization. Traditionally, it would have drawn mainly on its own, internal resources for this purpose, often with considerable semantic shifts and specializations; cf., for example, *hetu* 'causer = agent that causes another agent to perform an action in Pāṇinian grammar' vs *hetu* 'cause, motive, reason' elsewhere, *vṛddhi* 'grammatical substitution of *ā, ai, au* for basic *a, ṛ, i, u* (whether long or short)', *guṇa* 'grammatical substitution of *a, e, o* for the same segments' vs *vṛddhi* 'growth, etc.', and *guṇa* 'quality, etc.' elsewhere.

In addition, Sanskrit would have occasionally adopted foreign words, such as *kendra* 'center' (from Greek), sometimes with popular etymology leading to more successful nativization, as in *kramela* 'camel', with the expected *kam-* → *kram-* on the model of *kram* 'to stride, etc.'.

And while the general phenomenon of South Asian convergence may have led to changes in Sanskrit syntax and rhetoric [for example, cf. Emeneau (1954, 1956, 1980); but see also Hock (1975, 1984), and elsewhere], there does not seem to be any evidence for the fairly quick and radical changes in syntax and rhetoric demonstrated for Hindi by Y. Kachru (1989).

Sanskrit differs from the modern regional languages in another important aspect: many of the discourse areas in which the latter require 'modernization' do not call for modernization in Sanskrit. The problem is that, in discussions of the modern regional languages, the term 'modernization' conveys two rather distinct connotations. One is to create the vocabulary and expressions needed for the language to function in the modern technological world. This process actually is required for all languages, whether spoken in the 'Western', so-called 'developed' world (cf., for example, recent English coinages like *super computer* and *compact disk*, or acronyms like *CD RAM*), or in countries like India which until fairly recently were dominated by outside colonial powers that imposed their own languages and placed severe restrictions on the use of the indigenous languages. The only difference is one of degree, in that languages of the latter type, in addition to coining terms for new objects and ideas, tend to have to 'catch up' with Western languages in developing appropriate terminology to deal with modern concepts. From this perspective, Sanskrit is no different from the other languages of South Asia.

The term 'modernization', however, conveys another idea, namely that of the development of special registers for administration, science, technology, etc. In this regard, Sanskrit differs considerably from most of the other South Asian languages, in that it has been a language of administration, scientific inquiry, etc. for millennia and, in that capacity, has been a constant source for the development of such registers in most of the regional languages. It is this status as the traditional intellectual and scientific language of India—in addition, of course, to the fact that Sanskrit, unlike English, is an indigenous, INDIAN language—which motivates the fact that the majority of the modern regional languages engage in covert Englishization by drawing on Sanskrit lexical and morphological resources.

Finally, although taking in foreign elements throughout its history, Sanskrit is notorious for its general tradition of PURISM which favors calques and loan shifts over adoptions, and which may in part be responsible for the 'Sanskritization' of the word for 'camel' as *kramela* (see above).

Given the differences between Sanskrit and the modern regional languages the Sanskrit reaction to English might be expected to be quite different. There are in fact some indications that purism is still alive, leading to calques and loan shifts apparently not found in the modern regional languages, such as *lohapathayānam* or *agnirathayānam,* lit. 'iron-road-vehicle' or 'fire-chariot-vehicle', for English *railway train,* or *oṣṇajalam,* lit. 'warm water/liquid', for *tea.*

However, where the modern regional languages have adopted English words, such adaptations tend to remain limited to individual pandits and their students.[4] In such cases, modern Sanskrit instead tends to adopt the same terms as the modern regional languages. Thus, the usual expressions for 'train' and 'tea' are *rela-yānam* and *cāyam,* respectively. The latter word reflects an older and regional English variant that gave rise to Hindi *cāy,* etc.; the former is, of course, partly nativized, by adding *-yānam* 'vehicle' to the adopted form *rela* 'rail'. In some cases, the use of these adopted terms may lead to amusing ambiguities in Sanskrit. For instance, George Cardona informs me that his guru once asked him *kim āmerikāyām* [rikšāh̃^{a}] *vartante?* 'Are there [rikšās] in America?' When Cardona replied that there were indeed bears (Sanskrit *ṛksās* [rikšah̃^{a}]) in places like the Rocky Mountains, his guru said that he was not interested in bears, he wanted to know about [rikšāh̃^{a}] = [rikšā]-vehicles.

Now, words of the type *rela(-yānam), cāyam,* and *rikṣā* may look like direct adoptions from English. However, in the majority of cases—probably including the ones just cited—the adoption instead seems to be MEDIATED through the modern regional languages. This accounts not only for the fact just alluded to that Sanskrit tends to adopt those words that are adopted in the regional languages. It also helps explain certain peculiarities in the phonetic (or graphic) shape and the structure of the borrowings.

For instance, the structure of Sanskrit *rela-yānam* closely mirrors that of Hindi *rel-gāṛi,* with adoption of the FIRST component *rel(a)* from English *rail,* but use of a native word for the *second* element, *-yānam* or *-gāṛi.* Moreover, the final *a* of Sanskrit *rela* seems to owe its existence to the way its Hindi counterpart is written, namely as रेल *rela:* had the borrowing been made directly from English into Sanskrit it would more likely have been rendered as रेल् *rel,* without final (inherent) *a.* In Hindi, by contrast, the written rendition as *rela* is motivated by the well-known fact that final written *a* is not usually pronounced; *rela* is thus pronounced [re:l].

One of the most striking examples of the extent to which Sanskrit adoptions of English words are mediated through adoptions in the regional language(s) is the following. In a letter last year, my guru asked for a *kaimaram* for his nephew. For many months I was entirely mystified by this word, trying to find a reading for it along the lines of expressions like *kaimarthyam* 'inquiry into the reason for something' (from *kimartham* 'for what reason?'), but not succeeding. Finally I realized that *kaimaram* (कैमरम्) is a Sanskritization of the Hindi adoption of English *camera* as *kaimarā* (कैमरा). Now, in Hindi, the choice of the transcription कै *kai* makes sense, since the most common standard pronunciation of this graphic symbol would be [kæ]. In contrast, the Sanskrit pronunciation of कै is [kai]. Had the word been adopted directly into Sanskrit, it would instead have been written *kemaram.*

Actually, the word for camera is an instance where, I believe, most speakers of modern Sanskrit might prefer a calque, *chāyā-citra-yantram* 'photo apparatus' (lit. 'shadow-picture machine').[5] There is thus some evidence for purism even today. Note that this evidence requires stating the relationship between Sanskrit and regional-language adoption more precisely. If Sanskrit prefers an adopted term, the regional language generally does so, too. However, it would not be correct to claim that regional-language adoption always corresponds to adoption in Sanskrit as well.

Further evidence for purism comes in a tendency to subject adoptions made in the regional languages to folk-etymological quasi-nativization in Sanskrit, comparable to the developments responsible for classical Sanskrit *kramela* 'camel'. For instance, corresponding to the Hindi adoption of the English words *German* and *Germany,* viz. *jarman* and *jarmanī,* Sanskrit speakers tend to use the terms *śarmaṇ(a)-* and *śarmaṇī,* by popular etymology of *śarman-,* a common family name of brahmins (cf. the Anglicized version, *Sharma*). As in the case of other folk etymologies, most speakers firmly believe that the terms are semantically appropriate, since (supposedly) 'Germans have a long tradition of Sanskrit study indicating that they are really (wayward) brahmins by ancestry'.

Even in such cases of purism, however, the adoption giving rise to the puristic folk etymology appears to have been mediated through one of the regional languages, rather than being based directly on English.

Further evidence for MEDIATED Englishization comes from the area of calques and loan shifts. True, as examples like *chāyā-citra-yantram* 'camera' or *lohapathayānam* 'railway train' show, there are examples of adaptations apparently without parallel in the regional language (but compare note 5) and therefore independent of that language. However, there are many more examples where differences in adaptation between the regional languages are more or less exactly matched by regionally defined differences within Sanskrit. Thus, the type Hindi *dūr(a)-bhāṣ(a)* and Marathi *dūr(a)-vāṇī* 'telephone' is mirrored by Sanskrit *dūra-bhāṣḥ* in the Hindi-speaking area and *dūra-vāṇī* in the Marathi area. Now, as noted earlier, *dūr(a)-bhāṣ(a)* and *dūr(a)-vāṇī* are calques of English *telephone,* etymologically 'far-speech', based on Sanskrit elements. While Hindi and Marathi agree in translating *tele-* 'far' as *dūr(a)-,* they differ on *-phone,* with Hindi choosing a derivative of Sanskrit *bhāṣā* 'speech' and Marathi *vāṇī* 'speech'. The difference between 'Hindi Sanskrit' *dūra-bhāṣaḥ* and 'Marathi Sanskrit' *dūra-vāṇī,* then, is due to the fact that the neologisms created from Sanskrit compoments, but more or less independently within Hindi and within Marathi, have been REIMPORTED, as it were, from these regional languages into the Sanskrit of the respective region.

There is, in fact, a strong general tendency toward such a reimportation into Sanskrit of Sanskrit-based words create in the regional languages as calques or loan shifts of English words. Interestingly, this tendency is not limited to the area of 'modernization', where such a development is easily understandable. It is found especially in the areas of administration, politics, official festivals, etc., where, as noted earlier, Sanskrit had a long tradition of usage and where therefore there is no need for the creation of new vocabulary.

Thus, in the Hindi-speaking area, the terms *ārambha* and *samāroha* 'ceremony, festive occasion' (cf. above) are commonly used in 'officialese' Sanskrit, instead of such traditional and more idiomatic Sanskrit words as *utsava.* Compare the title of a publication (1978–1979) of the Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Academy, Lucknow: *Saṁskṛta-sāhityapuraskāravitaraṇa-SAMĀROHAḤ* 'Sanskrit literature prize distribution ceremony'. In fact, in addition to the (Hindi-based) reimportation *samāroha,* this title contains at least one other reimportation from Hindi, namely *puraskāra* in the sense of 'prize'. (The traditional meanings of the Sanskrit word include 'honoring' and 'distinction', but not 'prize'. The latter meaning would traditionally be conveyed by expressions like *pāritoṣika* or *ratna.*)

Similarly, regionally different innovations such as 'novel' or 'lecture' for *upanyāsa* (Sanskrit 'putting down . . ., statement, etc.') or *nāmakaraṇa* 'nomination' or 'nomenclature' (cf. above) tend to be reimported into Sanskrit with these meanings, even though, in most cases, Sanskrit had traditional and more idiomatic expressions to convey such meanings, such as *ābhāṣaṇa* or *prapāṭha* for 'lecture', *niyojana* for 'nomination', and *paribhāṣā(saṁgraha)* for 'nomenclature'. [Though the literary genre of the novel is without precedent in traditional Sanskrit literature, expressions such as *kathā(prabandha),* suggested by Mulgaokar (1936), are much more idomatic than *upanyāsa.*]

While such 'unnecessary' and unidiomatic expressions are frowned upon by most traditional pandits, their use appears to be spreading, especially in 'officialese' registers. (These 'officialese' and 'political' areas, of course, are the same areas in which Sanskrit-based neologisms abound in the regional languages as well.) Moreover, the massiveness of these generally unnecessary reimportations and the manner in which they are used in context creates a rhetorical style quite different from traditional Sanskrit and much more similar to the Englishization of Hindi syntax and rhetoric observed by Y. Kachru (1989).

An example of such usage is the beginning sentence (cited below) of the foreword of the above-mentioned publication *Saṁskṛta-sāhityapuraskāravitaraṇa-samārohaḥ.* This sentence is a nearly perfect syntactic calque of the first sentence in the 'officialese-Hindi' version of the same foreword (whose rhetoric in turn exhibits at least some degree of Englishization).

Sanskrit	uttarapradeśe	samskṛtabhāṣāyāḥ	sāhityasya ca
Hindi	uttar pradeś mem	saṁskṛt bhāṣā	evam sāhitya ke
	in Utta Pradesh	of the Sanskrit language	and literature
Sanskrit	pracāra-prasārahetoḥ	uttarapradeśarājyaśāsanena	
Hindi	pracār prasār ke liye	u. pra. śāsan ne	
	for the promotion	by the Uttar Pradesh government	
Sanskrit	śāsanādeśa[-]saṁkhyā 1049/cāra/-7 (1) 76		
Hindi	apne śāsanādeś saṁkhyā 1049/cār/-7 (1) 76		
	(its) government order number 1049/four/-7 (1) 76		
Sanskrit	dināṁka 31-12-76 dvārā		
	dināṁk 31-12-76 dvārā		
	'by means of . . . on the date of 31/12/76		
Sanskrit	uttarapradeśasaṁskṛta[-]akādamī nāmnī samsthā		
Hindi	saṁskṛt akādamī		
	(establishment called Uttar Pradesh) Sanskrit Academy		
Sanskrit	sthāpitā		
Hindi	kī sthāpanā kī		
	was established		

'For the purpose of the promotion of Sanskrit language and literature in Uttar Pradesh, the Government of Uttar Pradesh by means of government order No. 1049/four/-7 (1) 76 dated 31 December 76 established the Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Academy.'

The most egregious element of non-Sanskrit usage here is the passage

śāsanādeśa[-]saṁkhyā 1049/cāra/-7 (1) 76 dināṁka 31-12-76
gov.order number four date
dvārā
by.

First, the writer of the Sanskrit foreword did not even bother to render the *cār(a)* 'four' of Hindi into Sanskrit *catvāri,* but simply transplanted it into the Sanskrit text. Secondly, the whole expression is unidiomatic, reflecting officialese Hindi style, which in turn is based on officialese English. A more idiomatic Sanskrit rendition would have been something like the following.

1049/catvāri/-7 (1) 76 itisaṁkhyāvatā
four quot.marker-number-having (Instr. sg. m.)
31-12-76 (iti) dināṁkaviracitena
(quot.) date-composed (Instr. sg. m.)
śāsanādeśena
gov. order (Instr. sg. m.)
. . . by means of the government order (with the) number
1049/four/-7 (1) 76, composed on the date of 31-12-76 . . .'

Such massive reimportation of Sanskrit-based neologisms, combined with at least partially Englishized rhetoric and syntax, is not limited to government proclamations. It can be found in other, less official—but politically oriented—texts. I personally became aware of this when trying to read and understand the editor's foreword to Vol. 3, No. 3 of the Sanskrit journal *Ajasrā,* published in January 1980 in Lucknow. Although most contributions to the journal were in fairly idiomatic, traditional Sanskrit, the foreword, congratulating Indira Gandhi on her reelection after the 'Emergency', turned out to be exceedingly difficult to understand, in spite of the fact that its general subject matter was well known to me. When I asked my guru for an explanation, he told me that if I were to consult a Hindi–English dictionary, not a Sanskrit one, I would understand the text, but that it was not good Sanskrit. I followed his advice and was able to interpret the text. And I have no reason to quarrel with his evaluation of the quality of the foreword's Sanskrit.

Instead of quoting extensively from this text (and others like it), which would essentially duplicate the extended example cited above, let me conclude with a few remarks concerning the effects on Sanskrit of the covert and mediated Englishization illustrated in this paper.

One obvious effect has already been mentioned. This is the fact that the excessive reimportation of Sanskrit-based adaptations of the regional languages and the very lapidary, officialese rhetoric illustrated above are frowned upon by most pandits. And, as far as I have been able to observe, most fluent and good speakers of Sanskrit do not express themselves in this style.

However, a slightly less lapidary, officialese rhetoric is heard daily on the Sanskrit broadcasts of All India Radio or 'Akashvani'. And these broadcasts are enjoyed by large numbers of non-Sanskrit speakers who find the Sanskrit employed easy to understand. This intelligibility appears to result from the fact that the key terms and the constructions used are just about word-for-word glosses of the Hindi newscasts. Familiarity with 'newscast Hindi' thus makes it possible to understand the essential message of the Sanskrit newscasts without really having to know Sanskrit grammar.

Because non-Sanskrit speakers enjoy them, many pandits react favorably to the Akashvani Sanskrit newscasts, hoping that they will increase people's interest in Sanskrit and motivate

them to learn the language. Moreover, since the newscasts are heard throughout India, the Sanskrit used in them might be expected to have a unifying effect on Sanskrit and thus aid in the efforts to make Sanskrit the national link language.

However, many other pandits are quite unimpressed with the quality of Akashvani Sanskrit. This is especially true in the south, where the Sanskrit used on All India Radio is considered to be overly influenced by Hindi, not only in the choice of neologisms, but also in terms of syntax and style.

The excessive, Hindi 'regionalism' of Akashvani Sanskrit points to a more general problem arising from covert Englishization. As noted earlier, covert Englishization in Sanskrit is in most cases mediated through a regional language. And as also observed, different regional languages may choose different Sanskrit-based expressions to calque English terms. The consequence is that covert Englishization mediated through the regional languages greatly increases regional differentiation in Sanskrit.[6] Add to this the fact that there are a great variety of more idiosyncratic, puristic attempts at adapting English vocabulary and the fact that these tend to be confined to individual pandits and their immediate followers, and the differentiation of Sanskrit becomes even greater.

Now, developments of this sort are perhaps not surprising. Witness the lexical differentiation in native varieties of English, such as British and American English (e.g. British *flat* 'apartment' vs American *flat* 'flat tire'), to which must be added the differences brought about by the ever-increasing indigenization of the non-native varieties of English, treated in many of Braj Kachru's influential publications (e.g. 1982, 1986, 1989) and, following him, in the works of many others. Interestingly, however, the standard varieties of English, whether native or non-native, show little divergence in their syntax. [Differences that are cited, for example, in Lowenberg (1990), are quite minor and concern the syntax of individual words or collocations.]

In Sanskrit, however, the lexical differences go along with a number of major syntactic differences and/or preferences between northern and southern varities of Sanskrit. (Note that these differentiations by and large cannot be attributed to English influence.) As I show in Hock (1990), if a number of these different patterns co-occur in the same sentence, mutual intelligibility may be severely affected.

Even this differentiation may, of course, be considered a natural consequence of indigenization or regionalization. And as Braj Kachru has done persuasively for English (e.g. 1982, 1986, 1989), it might be argued that such differentiation should be considered something positive, rather than an unfortunate case of 'deviation'. In the case of Sanskrit, however, the expectation of most persons using the language or trying to learn it is that it can serve not just for regional communication (for which the regional language is perfectly adequate), but as a pan-Indian NATIONAL language, a viable alternative to English and Hindi, which, unlike English, is an indigenous, INDIAN language and, unlike Hindi but like English, is not the native language of any sizable group and thus has to be learned equally by ALL members of Indian society. Obviously, for this purpose, i.e. for making Sanskrit the common national language of all India, excessive regionalization leading to serious breakdowns in communications would be counterproductive.

It remains to be seen to what extent the regionalization of Sanskrit can be overcome, or—even more important—whether the attempt to maintain Sanskrit as a spoken language, or to make it the national language, will succeed. In this connection, however, the covert Englishization of Sanskrit, mediated through Sanskrit-based regionally different adaptations of English terms, is of considerable significance.

NOTES

1. As will be seen further below, the term 'modernization' covers at least two different types of development. Sanskrit differs from the modern regional languages in requiring modernization mainly in the narrow sense, of making the language suitable for use in modern contexts. As a traditional language of scholarship, administration, etc., it requires little expansion to be usable as a vehicle for administrative, scientific, etc. discourse.
2. For these adaptive nativization processes, see Hock (1986) with references.
3. I use this term in the sense of Hock (1986) to refer to lexical borrowing without morphological/lexical nativization.
4. Nakamura (1973: 27) cites a few highly idiosyncratic examples, such as *agnirathagamāgamavirāmasthānam* 'railway station', lit. 'fire-chariot-going-coming-stopping station', which he attributes to the 'late Shri Raghuvira'. Although he does not state so explicitly, these terms seem to be intended as caricatures of the overly puristic attempts of individual pandits at recreating English terms entirely by Sanskrit means.
5. The word *chāyā-citra* is attested in Hindi as well. Bulke (1971) gives 'silhouette' as its only meaning; but Verma and Sahai (1977) list the word, after *phoṭo/foṭo,* as the Hindi equivalent of *photograph.* Perhaps, then, this part of the word is not an independent innovation of Sanskrit. For *camera,* on the other hand, even Verma and Sahai have *kaimarā* as the only non-periphrastic Hindi equivalent.
6. Some additional lexical differences, beside the ones mentioned earlier, are noted in Aralikatti (1989: 215). See *ibid.* (p. 216) for the occasional use of unassimilated, adopted English terms, such as *functional grammar.*

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