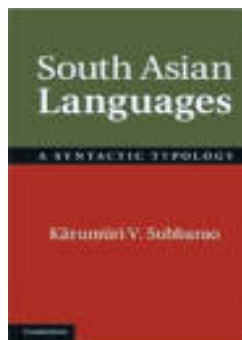# Book Reviews

South Asian Language: A Syntactic Typology.

By Kârumûri V. Subbârâo (2012).

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (400 pages)

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South Asian Languages: A Syntactic Typology by K. V. Subbârâo promises to be a very significant milestone in the linguistic exploration and study of South Asian Languages in general, and the Indian Sub-continent in particular. The book is an outcome of three decades of dedicated and focused investigation on these languages by the author using primary data. In the book, the author very closely traverses four genetically distinct language families with around sixty representative languages, all spoken in the sub-continent. It is perhaps the first of its kind with such a wide variety of data and close syntactic analysis. Languages of this region comprise four genetically distinct language families—Indo-Aryan Language Families; Dravidian Language Families; Tibeto-Burman Language Families; and Austro-Asiatic Language Families with two sub-families, Mon-Khmer and Munda. Out of these four families, the author has studied sixty languages which form a comprehensive database for a large investigation.

Drawing on the modular approach of the Government and Binding Theory in terms of Government, Binding, C-command, Control, Case, etc., the author skilfully examines these modules in the context of the subjected sixty languages from four genetically distinct language families in the Indian sub-continent, and projects these generalizations to a wider spectrum of South Asian Languages. Languages differ from each other in terms of a finite set of parameters. As Chomsky (1975) puts it, as a general principle, a language belongs to "the Universal Grammar (UG) as part of 'pre-existent' knowledge that makes learning possible (p. 118)". The volume examines the principle of South Asian Languages in terms of the UG and the parameters (variations) in syntax and morphology that make them distinct from each other. It focuses on the syntactic typology of South Asian Languages in general and a high degree of syntactic convergence in particular with special reference to the notion of 'India as a Linguistic Area' (Emeneau, 1956; Masica, 1976).

Chomsky's response (1975) to the behaviourist model triggered a fundamental shift in the linguistic paradigm with multiple implications for a theoretical explanation thereafter. Since then there has been a steady progress towards substantial accuracy in linguistic predictability and language generalizations. The Government and Binding Theory (Chomsky, 1981, 1982, 1986a, 1986b) and subsequent developments have proved to be the most effective and robust model of syntactic analysis with its modular approach. The data in the volume have been analysed in this modular approach to discuss and demonstrate syntactic nature, convergence and predictions for language contact among South Asian languages. The work identifies deviations in the syntactic properties of these languages in a theory neutral way, and tries to explain them in the theoretical construct of the Government and Binding framework. The author builds upon the seminal work by Emeneau (1956), Masica (1976), Schiffman & Shapiro (1981), and Subbarao (2007), and provides a very

comprehensive and inclusive perspective on the syntactic typology of these languages from the region. The study extends the notion of 'India as a Linguistic Area' to entire South Asia as a Linguistic Area with logical reasoning and empirical data.

All the eight chapters together provide a comprehensive idea about syntactic characteristics, typological features and distinctiveness of languages of the South Asian region in general and the Indian Sub-continent in particular. The most significant contribution of this study is that it comes as a fundamental study on a large scale, with primary data on four distinct language families spread over the region. The study brings out a number of distinctive syntactic features with elaborate theoretical analysis and close observation. The inferences drawn in the volume provide researchers with many theoretical implications to the established research findings in the field suggesting a new and inclusive expansion of the paradigm.

Finally, this volume is a tribute by the author to the discipline he has been active in for over four decades, and is handy for all researchers in the field as a ready reference with immense potential to review and examine some very pertinent issues identified, discussed and underlined about the languages and language families of the region. Undoubtedly, this volume is an academic accomplishment and remains a challenging agenda for all researchers and academicians working in this discipline.

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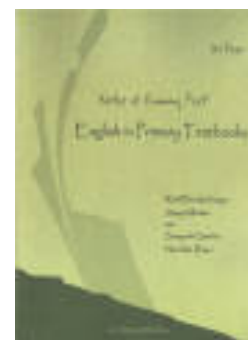
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Sur Pipa: English in Primary Textbooks

Rimli Bhattacharya & Anuja Madan with Sreyoshi Sarkar and Nivedita Basu (2012). Eklavya Publications, Bhopal

Let's Move Beyond Textbooks

It is axiomatic to equate children with noise. Left unsupervised by the teacher, the noise level in a classroom full of students can disturb lessons being conducted in