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Colloquial Hindi

The Complete Course
for Beginners

Tej K. Bhatia

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**In memory of
my mother, Shrimati Krishna Wanti Bhatia
and
my father, Shri Parma Nand Bhatia**

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Preface

Since the publication of this book over a decade ago, it has undergone several reprints. Nothing is more gratifying for an author than to hear from his/her readers. I consider myself privileged to be the beneficiary of my readers' reactions, suggestions, compliments and wish-lists which poured in from a highly diverse cross-section of readers around the globe. This encouraged me to create a revised and expanded version of the book. Based on the input that I have received, I know it is not the ideal solution to the multitudes of topics (ranging from the treatment of the Hindi script, grammatical details and cross-cultural insights) that one wishes to address; however, it is a modest step toward that goal.

Many changes have occurred since the first publication of the book. India is fast becoming a major global power. The dynamics of communicative situations further call for changes to reflect new situations and realities. Readers will find the following new changes and additions in this book:

- Facts and figures have been updated.
- The section dealing with the script has been beefed up considerably.
- Dialogues and prose texts integrate the Roman as well as the Devanagari in a way that reflects a mutually-feeding relationship between the two. As one of the anonymous reviewers of the book rightly noted, the execution of the Devanagari version of conversations and prose texts was cumbersome in the first edition. This limitation has been addressed.
- Roman is a non-syllabic script whereas Devanagari is syllabic. Whenever relevant, the complementary strengths of the two writing systems are exploited, particularly in explanations of grammar.
- While the new guidelines issued by the Government of India have been followed throughout the book (e.g. the letter **ᵓᵃ**; preference for *e* instead of *ye* in words such as **cāḥie**; not separating the postpositions with the pronouns), readers are also exposed to

variation (e.g. two ways of writing the third person singular, polite imperative forms and the past tense).

- Whenever relevant, the content has been modernized.
- New topics of cross-cultural communication have been introduced in the cultural notes (e.g. how to say ‘no’ in socially sensitive situations, linguistic attitudes and hyper-politeness, etiquettes of gift-giving).
- Another innovation is the Online Resource Guide and the Internet links.
- Old errors and misprints have been corrected.

In spite of this, I am acutely aware that this work is not free from limitations. Therefore, I would be grateful for any comments, criticisms or suggestions that perceptive scholars may have on this book. Please send them to me at the following address: Linguistic Studies Program, 312 HBC, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York-13244-1160, USA or send an email to: tkbhatia@syr.edu.

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I am especially indebted to Sophie Oliver, Senior Editor, Language Learning, for agreeing to consider and produce the new and revised version of this book and for her commendable patience and encouragement. I am equally indebted to three anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful input.

I have contracted many debts in the process of writing this book and its earlier edition. I am also grateful to my teachers and colleagues, Yamuna and Braj Kachru who have taught me and influenced me since my graduate school. I am also indebted to my friends and colleagues Rajeshwari Pandharipande, James W. Gair, Hans Hock, Meena and S.N. Sridhar, Rakesh Bhatt, Rajesh Kumar, William C. Ritchie, Jaklin Kornfilt, Jennifer L. Smith, Vasu Reganathan, Afroz Taj, Amer Bridger, Cassidy Perraeault and Dr Mangat R. Bhardwaj, the author of the companion volume on Punjabi, for their valuable discussions on matters of Hindi teaching and linguistics. Finally, I also owe my thanks to Dr P.R. Mehandiratta (Director General, American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi) and to my colleagues at the South Asia Center, Ann Gold, Jishnu Shankar and Susan Wadley, for their comments, support and encouragement.

My mother passed away before the first edition of this book became a reality. This has left a permanent vacuum in my life. My family migrated from the North West Frontier province close to the Pakistan and Afghanistan border, so Hindi was my mother's third language and according to the value system of that time she never had any formal schooling. During the writing of this book I remembered how at the insistence of her children she learned to sign her name in Hindi instead of using a thumb print as a signature. It is still a mystery to me how and when she learned to read the *Gita* in Hindi. I had thought there would still be a lot of time for us and that these questions were not urgent. I was wrong. This work is especially dedicated to her memory.

I owe special thanks to my wife, Shobha, for her encouragement and support and to my daughter, Kanika, and my son, Ankit, who first inspired me to write this book so that they could learn Hindi. My special thanks are also due to my niece, Nandita. No words can express my deepest appreciation of my brothers in India for their constant support during my entire career.

The pictures produced in this book were taken by the author as part of the ongoing collaborative project, Hindi OnLine, between Syracuse University and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Texas at Austin. The project is funded by a grant from the South Asia Research Center (SALRC), the University of Chicago and the US Department of Education. I gratefully acknowledge the support of Dr Steven M. Poulos, Director, SALRC, for making this work possible.

My heartfelt thanks are also due to: Professor Omkar Koul for his technical assistance in the preparation of the manuscript and his perceptive comments; and to the College of Arts and Sciences' Dean Cathryn R. Newton, Associate Dean Dr Gerold Greenberg and Dr Ben Ware, Vice President, Research and Computing, for their support of this work.

भूमिका b^humikā

Introduction

A word to the learner

Welcome to *Colloquial Hindi*. Very often at social get-togethers in the West, I am asked with utmost sincerity whether or not I speak Hindu. Although I have no difficulty in understanding the real intent of the question, unwittingly I find myself in an embarrassing situation. This is particularly true if this inquiry happens to come directly from my host. You see, *Hindu* is the name of the predominant religion in India and Nepal; *Hindi* is the name of the language that is the *lingua franca* of South Asia.

About the language

Hindi is a modern Indo-Aryan language spoken in South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Nepal) and also in other countries outside Asia (Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji, Surinam, Guyana, South Africa and other countries). Approximately eight hundred million people speak Hindi, as either a first (480 million) or second language. It is the second most widely spoken language in the world. Along with English, it is the official language of India. In addition, it is the state language of Bihar, Chattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jarkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Also, I should point out that Hindi is the language of Agra (the city of the Taj Mahal).

Hindi, which is a descendant of the Sanskrit language, is not strictly the name of any chief dialect of the area but is an adjective, Persian in origin, meaning Indian. Historically, it was synonymous with Hindui, Hindawi, Rexta and Rexti. The terms Urdu and Hindustani are also used to refer to this language. All these labels

denote a mixed speech spoken around the area of Delhi, North India, which gained currency during the twelfth and thirteenth century as a contact language between the Arabs, Afghans, Persian and Turks, and native residents.

Hindi is written in the Devanagari script which is ranked as the most scientific writing system among the existing writing systems of the world. The Devanagari script is written from left to right and is a descendant of the Brahmi script which was well established in India before 500 BC. The script is phonetic in nature and there is a fairly regular correspondence between the letters and their pronunciation. For more details see the section on the Hindi writing system and pronunciation.

The literary history of Hindi goes back to the twelfth century. Some notable literary figures of Hindi are Kabir, Surdas and Tulsidas. The two notable linguistic features of the language are as follows: (1) Hindi still retains the original Indo-European (1500 BC) distinction between aspirated and unaspirated consonants which results in a four-way contrast as shown by the following examples: *kāl*, 'time', *k^hāl*, 'skin', *gāl*, 'cheek' and *g^hāl*, 'to put into'; (2) it has the feature of retroflexion in its consonant inventory, cf. *Tāl*, 'to put off' and *tāl*, 'pond'. The retroflex consonant is transcribed as the capital **T**. For more details see the section on the Hindi writing system and pronunciation.

Hindi has an approximately three-century-old, well-attested and rich grammatical tradition of its own. It is a by-product of the colonial era and was born shortly after the arrival of Europeans in India. For a detailed treatment of this topic in general and the grammatical tradition in particular, see Bhatia (1987).

About this book

This book is designed as a complete first-year language course, keeping in mind the proficiency guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the European Language Community. Every attempt is made to optimize this goal by integrating the linguistic content with the culture of South Asia in general and India in particular. In fact, while teaching the language I have attempted to answer those questions that are often asked about the culture of India.

In my professional life I have often witnessed the fact that the teaching of non-Western languages, including Hindi, is more

challenging in the West than the teaching of Western languages. If you have experienced any of the following problems, this book will enable you to achieve the goals described above:

- You sweat at the mere thought of learning a foreign language and/or foreign script.
- You think Hindi is a very difficult language to learn, so why try?
- You have some serious business, research interests or not-so-serious interests (such as travel) in India but you have been led to believe that everybody in India speaks English.
- You have learned Hindi from tools and settings which make native speakers laugh secretly or openly at your language use.
- India is culturally and linguistically so distant from the West that one cannot help but shy away from it.
- You haven't heard of Bollywood movies.
- You consider French the only language fit for romance.

If you subscribe to one or all of the above, you are in for a surprise. First, you might discover in the process of learning the language that learning about Hindi is learning about one's own roots. The only difference is that European migration to India is perhaps the oldest of all migrations from Europe, or vice versa as shown by recent DNA research. For this reason, you will still find some striking similarities between Hindi and English. For example, the Hindi word for English 'name' is **nām**. The list goes on and on. The important thing to know is that Hindi belongs to the Indo-European language family and is similar to English in a number of ways. Learning to note these similarities will make the process of learning this language full of pleasant surprises.

The book is grounded in the *current theories of language acquisition, learnability and language use*. Unlike other books (even some of the latest ones), it never loses sight of the social-psychological aspects of language use. In this book, I have not attempted to act like a protector or saviour of language by engaging in linguistic prescriptivism and puritanism. What you will find in this book is how Hindi speakers use Hindi and communicate with each other in meaningful ways. No attempt is made to translate the English word artificially into Hindi if Hindi speakers treat the English word like any other Hindi word. I was outraged when I noticed in a widely circulated course on Hindi in which the waiter asks his customers for their order, the word 'order' translated using the same verb as

the English ‘obey my order!’ For more details see the section entitled ‘English Prohibition?’ in Unit 2.

Beware . . .

These prescriptivist tendencies defeat the real goal of learning a language in order to communicate with native speakers. Even some of the latest books on Hindi suffer from such problems and unwittingly do a disservice to their learners because of their authors’ lack of familiarity with the social–psychological dimensions of language use. I came across some examples in one of the most recent books on Hindi which teaches learners how to introduce themselves to native speakers. The sentences are grammatically correct but the author(s) fail to take into account the invisible dimension of the phenomenon of ‘turn taking’. For example, it is acceptable for English speakers to introduce themselves with a string of two clauses following the word ‘Hi’ (e.g. ‘Hi, my name is John and what is yours?’). However, the Hindi speaker will pause after the Hindi equivalent of ‘Hi’ and wait for the listener to respond with a greeting, and only after that will the Hindi speaker perform the task of telling his name and asking about his listener’s name. The failure to teach learners about ‘turn taking’ through naturalistic conversations makes them run the risk of being seen as ‘pushy’ or ‘impatient’ by native speakers. This book is particularly aware of such ‘non-linguistic’ or invisible dimensions of language use. Therefore, this book never loses sight of *cross-cultural communication* while teaching *linguistic communication*.

This book deals with the four main linguistic skills:

	<i>receptive</i>	<i>productive</i>
<i>Aural–oral</i>	listening comprehension	speaking comprehension
<i>Visual</i>	reading comprehension	writing comprehension

These skills are introduced in a manner consistent with the insights of modern Chomskyan linguistics. The learners are exposed to rules and discovery procedures, similar to those employed by native speakers, which enable them to generate an infinite number of sentences in their native language. Not only that, these rules enable native

speakers to generate new sentences they have never encountered before (see Bhatia and Ritchie 2006 for details). This is the conceptual framework, combined with my twenty-five years of classroom experience, which has gone into the makeup of this book. Unlike other phrasebooks which emphasize parroting sentences without gaining insight into the linguistic system, this book emphasizes and serves as a catalyst to promote linguistic creativity and optimization. This goal is achieved in a simple and unpretentious way avoiding system overload.

How this book is organized

This book attempts to accommodate two types of learners: (1) those who want to learn the language through the Hindi script called the Devanagari script; and (2) those who wish to learn the language in a relatively short period of time without the aid of the Devanagari writing system (henceforth, Hindi script). Such pragmatic considerations are an important feature of this book.

The book begins with Hindi script and pronunciation. The main body deals with ten conversational units which consist of the following parts: (1) vocabulary; (2) dialogues with English translation; (3) notes detailing pronunciation, grammar and usage relating to the unit; and (4) exercises. The dialogues with ‘Tell me why?’ and humour columns together with the notes explicitly deal with those aspects of Indian culture about which I am most often asked. The vocabulary or the new words used in the dialogues are given in English and Devanagari script. You may wish to consult the vocabulary sections while doing exercises.

The grammar summary gives an overview of the Hindi grammatical tradition with full paradigms. This section complements the section ‘Notes and grammar’ given in each lesson.

The vocabulary section gives all the Hindi words used in the dialogues. The words are listed alphabetically both in Hindi and English. The basic vocabulary section classifies Hindi words into different semantic groups.

How to use this book

This book focuses on two types of track: (1) for those learners who want to adopt the English script path; and (2) for those who want

to learn the Hindi script. Although learning Hindi script is highly recommended, if you decide to choose the first track, you can bypass the lessons on the writing system. For every learner, on both tracks, the lesson on the 'Hindi writing system and pronunciation' is a must and familiarity with the salient phonetic features of Hindi together with the 'Transcription table' is imperative. Please make sure that you learn the transcription of conversations, which differs from media convention. As shown in the transcription table, media convention is often broad and unsystematic. Examples of pronunciation are also recorded on the audio. The exercises with the audio icon are recorded on the audio. If you wish, you can refer to the listening exercises transcripts at the end of the book.

If you are on the Hindi script track, you should start from script unit 1: you will learn Devanagari script in its printed as well as its handwritten form. Conversations and keys are given in Roman as well as in Hindi script. While working on the script units, you can make a start on the conversation units. There is an added incentive to consult the script units: their exercise sections give some of the most common expressions any visitor to India may need. They deal with situations such as customs and immigration, baggage, reading weather charts, making reservations, sending mail, gift-giving, annoying and cautionary settings, shopping, food, entertainment and renting.

Naturally, you will need to memorize the vocabulary. The notes sections give you help on pronunciation, grammar and usage. Reading and learning these notes will stimulate your linguistic creativity.

The reference grammar goes hand in hand with the grammatical notes given at the end of each dialogue. Answers to the exercises can be found in the key to exercises, in both Hindi and English scripts.

Icons used in this book

Icons are used throughout this book for several reasons, the most important of which is to draw attention to those sections that require careful reading.

Audio Symbol



This symbol means that the corresponding exercise requires the use of the audio that accompanies this course.

Magic Key



Information next to this icon is critical for creativity and is worth memorizing.

Sherlock Holmes



This icon appears next to important examples of regular usage, the understanding of which is a primary source of creativity for the native speakers.

Remember



This icon reminds you of material covered earlier.

Caution



The material marked by this icon deserves special attention. It warns you about common mistakes and sources of misunderstanding.

Web links



For additional practice or materials, web links are provided.

The other icons used in the book are thematic in nature and should prove self-explanatory.

Where to go from here

Of course, I do not pretend to teach you everything that needs to be known about Hindi. Language learning can be a life-long venture if you set your goals very high. Your next step is to look for books offering the intermediate and advanced Hindi courses listed at the end of the book. I give this information to alleviate the misconception, quite widespread in the West, that there is a lack of intermediate and advanced-level courses in Asian and African languages. There is no shortage of material, in print or on the web, at these levels. The only difficulty you might face is that this material will invariably be in Hindi script. If that poses a problem for you, there are still many ways you can continue to sharpen your linguistic skills, the most important of which is Hindi films. India is the world's largest producer of films which are widely accessible in the East and

the West on video and DVD. To develop a taste for Hindi films is most important in taking you to advanced Hindi language learning.

Readers will find the following web resources useful. Please remember, however, that the links may not always be active and that the content may change. The following links were active at the time of writing:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/indiangallery/hin11.htm>
http://www.ncsu.edu/project/hindi_lessons/

Due to limitations of space, detailed descriptions of monuments such as the Taj Mahal could not be included in this book; for the sight and sounds of Indian monuments, lessons 2 and 9 from the www.ncsu.edu website are particularly recommended.

For intermediate and advance readings, the following sites deserve attention:

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/hindi/video/>
http://lrrc3.sas.upenn.edu/hindi_unicode/
<http://philae.sas.upenn.edu/Hindi/hindi.html>
<http://munshi-premchand.blogspot.com/>
<http://www.abhivyakti-hindi.org/>
<http://www.anubhuti-hindi.org/>

Newspaper and media sites:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/hindi/>
<http://www.naidunia.com/>

Collection of Indian Newspaper sites:

<http://www.indiapress.org/index.php/Hindi/400x60>

Best wishes.

Reference

- Bhatia, Tej K. 1987. *A History of the Hindi Grammatical Tradition*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Bhatia, Tej K. and William C. Ritchie. 2006. *Handbook of Bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

हिन्दी लेखन और उच्चारण

hindī lek^han aur

uccāraN

Hindi writing system and pronunciation

Introduction (Audio 1:2)

This chapter briefly outlines the salient properties of Devanagari script and Hindi pronunciation. Hindi is written in Devanagari script. Even if you are not learning the script, this chapter is indispensable because you need to know the pronunciation values of the Roman/English letters used in the conversational units. Also, one or two unfamiliar symbols are drawn from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The transcription scheme followed here is widely used in the teaching of Hindi and in Hindi language, literature and linguistics. As I have said, the best way to learn Hindi is to learn the script as well. However, if this is not possible due to consideration of time, you will still need to refer to the transcription table until you have mastered the letters and their pronunciation value.

Listen to and repeat the pronunciation of Hindi vowels and consonants together with their minimal pairs, recorded on the audio accompanying this book.

Devanagari script

A number of languages are written in Devanagari script. Besides Hindi, Nepali, Marathi and Sanskrit are also written in this script. Other languages such as Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati use a slight variation of this script. This means that roughly *half of humanity* use

either this script or its close variant which follows the same underlying organizational system.

All scripts of Indic origin, including Devanagari script, are descendants of the Brahmi script which was well established some time before 500 BC in India. These scripts are considered the most scientific among the existing writing systems of the world for a number of reasons. (1) The arrangement and classification of the letters or symbols follow a system based on physiological or phonetic principles, namely the point and manner of articulation. Other writing systems, including the Roman system, employ arbitrary, random criteria to arrange and categorize the letters. (2) Each letter represents one sound only (at least in most cases). For example, in English the [k] sound can be represented by the letters **k**, **q**, **c** and **ch**. This does not happen in Devanagari. Because of its scientific and phonetic nature, this script has become the foundation of modern speech science and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA.) The IPA is basically the romanized version of Devanagari script. As a result there is fairly regular correspondence between script and pronunciation. In other words, the words are pronounced as they are written, and that is good news for our learners.

Devanagari script is written from left to right and from the top of the page down, like Roman script. It does not distinguish between upper-case and the lower-case letters. It is syllabic in nature, i.e. every consonant letter/symbol represents the consonant plus the inherent vowel अ **a**. The pronunciation of the inherent vowel is the major exception to the rule of correspondence between script and pronunciation. These exceptions are detailed in script unit 1 and script unit 4. Other minor exceptions are indicated by angular brackets < > with the words listed in the vocabulary of each unit.

Below you will find Hindi vowel and consonant charts. In Devanagari vowels and consonants are listed separately because they involve distinct articulations.

Hindi vowels

Independent forms

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	ऋ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	ē	o	au	ri

Dependent forms: following a consonant

ø	।	ि	ी	ु	ू	े	ै	ो	ौ	ॄ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	ē	o	au	ri

Notes on Hindi vowels

Hindi vowels do not distinguish between capital and non-capital. However, they do distinguish between independent and dependent forms. The independent forms are often called ‘the main’ or ‘full’ vowels, whereas the corresponding dependent forms are called ‘matra’ vowels and are connected to the preceding consonant.

Nasalization

In the production of a nasal vowel, a vowel is pronounced through the mouth and the nose at the same time. Using either the symbol $\tilde{}$ or $\dot{}$ with the vowel indicates nasalization in Hindi. Long vowels are usually nasalized in Hindi. In our transcription, the tilde symbol $\tilde{}$ is used to indicate vowel nasalization, as in

औँ	ã	ऊँ	ũ	ऐँ	ẽ
----	---	----	---	----	---

The symbol $\dot{}$ is used to indicate vowel nasalization when any stroke of the vowel crosses the top horizontal line, as in ऐँ.

Diphthongs

ऐँ ϵ and औँ au are pronounced as $a + i$ and $a + u$ in the Eastern variety of Hindi, but are pronounced as single vowels in Standard Hindi. They receive diphthongal pronunciation only if they are followed by y and w/v , respectively.

ऋ ri does not occur in Hindi. It is used in the writing of a handful of words which are borrowed by Hindi from Sanskrit.

Hindi consonants

	<i>Voiceless unaspirated</i>	<i>Voiceless aspirated</i>	<i>Voiced unaspirated</i>	<i>Voiced aspirated</i>	<i>Nasal</i>
<i>k-group</i>	क ka	ख k^ha	ग ga	घ g^ha	ङ ṅa
<i>c-group</i>	च ca	छ c^ha	ज ja	झ j^ha	ञ ña
<i>T-group</i>	ट Ta	ठ T^ha	ड Da	ढ D^ha	ण Na
<i>t-group</i>	त ta	थ t^ha	द da	ध d^ha	न na
<i>p-group</i>	प pa	फ P^ha	ब ba	भ b^ha	म ma
<i>Others</i>	य ya	र ra	ल la	व wa/va	श sha
	ष SHa	स sa	ह ha		
	ड़ Ra	ढ़ R^ha			

Sanskrit letters used infrequently: क्ष **ksha** त्र **tra** ज्ञ **gya**

Notes on Hindi consonants

The first five groups of consonants are called stops because they are pronounced by stopping outgoing air from the mouth. The fifth column of these five groups of consonants is called nasal because the air is released through the nose while it is stopped from the mouth. The nasal consonants of the first two groups, i.e. ङ **ṅa** and ञ **ña** are *never* used in their syllabic form in Hindi, so you will not find them in this book. They are included here because they are part of the traditional Devanagari consonant chart.

Place of articulation

All consonants arranged within each of the five groups share the same place of articulation, as described below:

क-वर्ग *k-group*

These consonants are also called ‘velar’ because the back of the tongue touches the back of the soft palate, called the velum. They are similar to the English *k* and *g*.

क	ख	ग	घ	ङ
ka	k ^h a	ga	g ^h a	ŋa

च-वर्ग *c-group*

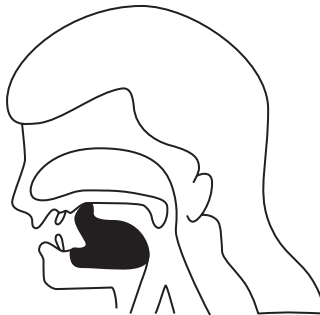
These sounds are the closest equivalent to the English sound **ch** in ‘church.’ The main body of the tongue touches the hard palate in the articulation of these sounds.

च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
ca	c ^h a	ja	j ^h a	ña

ट-वर्ग *T-group* (the ‘capital T group’)

ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
Ta	T ^h a	Da	D ^h a	Na

These consonants represent the most colourful features of the languages of the Indian subcontinent. They are also called ‘retroflex’ consonants. There is no equivalent of these sounds in English. In the articulation of these sounds, the tip of the tongue is curled back and the *underside* of the tongue touches the hard palate. The following diagram can help in the production of these sounds:



Note that ङ *R* and ढ *R^h* are also pronounced with the same point of articulation.

त-वर्ग *t-group*

The tip of the tongue touches the back of the teeth, and not the gum ridge behind the teeth as is the case in the pronunciation of the English **t** or **d**.

त	थ	द	ध	न
ta	t ^h a	da	d ^h a	na

Study the following diagrams carefully in order to distinguish Hindi *t-group* of sounds from the English *t-group* of sounds.



English



Hindi

प-वर्ग *p-group*

These sounds are similar to English **p** or **b** sounds. They are pronounced by closing or nearly closing the lips.

प	फ	ब	भ	म
pa	p ^h a	ba	b ^h a	ma

Manner of articulation

All columns in the five groups involve the same *manner of articulation*.

Voiceless unaspirated

क	च	ट	त	प
ka	ca	Ta	ta	pa

These sounds are like the English **k** (as in 'skin' but not as in 'kin'), **p** (as in 'spin' but not as in 'pin'). In 'kin' and 'pin', the English sounds **k** and **p** are slightly aspirated, i.e. they are followed by a slight 'puff of air'. In order to pronounce the corresponding Hindi **k** and **p**, you need to reduce the flow of breath.

Voiceless aspirated

ख	छ	ट	थ	फ
k ^h a	c ^h a	T ^h a	t ^h a	p ^h a

The superscripted ^h means that these sounds are pronounced with a strong 'puff of air'. All you have to do is to increase the air flow slightly in the pronunciation of the English **k** and **p** sounds.

Voiced unaspirated

ग	ज	ड	द	ब
ga	ja	Da	da	ba

In the production of these sounds the vocal cords vibrate and produce a buzzing sound, like that of a bee. You should have no difficulty producing these sounds as they are like English **g** and **b**.

Voiced aspirated (breathy voiced)

If you pronounce voiced unaspirated consonants with a 'puff of air', you will produce voiced aspirated sounds. The superscripted ^h indicates the presence of the 'puff of air'. If this seems difficult, try pronouncing the voiced unaspirated consonants with an *h* (as in *hog-hog*). If you pronounce the words fast enough, you will obtain the voiced aspirate *g^h* at the end of the first break between the two words.

घ	झ	ढ	ध	भ
g ^h a	j ^h a	D ^h a	d ^h a	b ^h a

Nasal

ङ	ञ	ण	न	म
ṅa	ña	Na	na	ma

These sounds are similar to English nasal consonants such as **n** and **m**. The velar and palatal nasals are similar to the nasal consonants in the English words 'king' and 'bunch', respectively.

य-ह वर्ग **Other consonants (miscellaneous)**

The following consonants grouped together as 'others' are very similar to English sounds, so do not call for detailed phonetic description. The English transcription is sufficient to give you information about their pronunciation.

य	र	ल	व	श	स	ह
ya	ra	la	wa/va	sha	sa	ha

As mentioned above, the following two consonants are pronounced with a curled tongue. However, the underside of the tongue is flapped forward quickly, touching the hard palate slightly, instead of articulating the stop with the hard palate. ढ **R^ha** is the aspirated counterpart of ड **Ra**.

ड	ढ
Ra	R ^h a

Sanskrit letters

The following four consonants are from Sanskrit. They do not exist in Hindi except in the handful of words borrowed from Sanskrit.

ष SHa	क्ष ksha	त्र tra	ज्ञ gya
-------	----------	---------	---------

ष **SHa** is pronounced like श **sha**, and the other three letters represent consonant clusters in Hindi.

Borrowed Perso-Arabic and English sounds

By placing a dot under the following five consonant symbols, the five Perso-Arabic sounds are represented:

फ	ज़	ख़	क़	ग़
fa	za	xa	qa	Ga

Out of these five, the first two are used quite frequently in Hindi. The reason for this is that **fa** and **za** are also found in English. The

other three consonants are usually pronounced as **k^ha**, **ka** and **ga**, respectively. Even the first two sounds **fa** and **za** can be pronounced as **p^ha** and **ja**, respectively.

It should be noted that English alveolar sounds **t** and **d** are usually perceived and written as **T** and **D**, respectively. So the **t** and **d** in the proper name ‘Todd’ are written with the letters ट and ड, respectively.

Pronunciation practice

Minimal pair practice (Audio 1:3)

Vowels

Oral vowels

Vowel	Pronunciation cue (English near-equivalent)	Hindi words
अ	a about	कल kal yesterday/tomorrow
आ	ā father	काल kāl time, tense
इ	i sit	दिन din day
ई	ī seat	दीन dīn poor
उ	u book	कुल kul total, family
ऊ	ū boot, loot	कूल kūl shore
ए	e late, date (without a glide)	हे he hey
ऐ	ε bet	है he is
ओ	o boat (without a glide)	ओर or side, towards
औ	au bought	और aur and

Nasalized vowels ^{◌̃}

Nasalized vowels (long)	Hindi words
आँ	माँ mā̃ mother
इँ	कहीं kahī̃ somewhere
ऊँ	हूँ hū̃ am
ऎ	मैं mē̃ in
ॐ	मैं mē̃ I
ऑ	गोंद gōd̃ gum
औँ	चौंक cāūk̃ be alarmed, be startled

Minimal pair practice: words with oral and nasalized vowels

<i>Oral vowels</i>			<i>Nasalized vowels</i>				
आ	ā	कहा kaḥā	said (m.sg)	आँ	ā̃	कहाँ kaḥā̃	where
ई	ī	कही kaḥī	said (f.sg)	ईँ	ī̃	कहीं kaḥī̃	somewhere
ऊ	ū	पूछ pūc^h	ask	ऊँ	ū̃	पूँछ pū̃c^h	a tail
ए	e	ले le	take	एँ	ē̃	लें lē̃	take (optative)
ऐ	ē	है ḥe	is	ऐँ	ē̃	हैं ḥē̃	are
ओ	o	गोद god	the lap	ओँ	ō̃	गोंद gō̃d	gum
औ	au	चौक cauk	a crossing	औँ	āū̃	चौँक cāū̃k	be alarmed, be startled

Consonants (Audio 1:4)

Listen to the recording and repeat the words.



Remember, the contrasts shown below are very critical in Hindi. Failing to maintain such contrasts will result in a breakdown of communication. If you want to ask for food, खाना **k^hānā** failing to aspirate will result in saying काना **kānā** and you will end up asking for a one-eyed person. Similarly, if you do not distinguish the *T*-group of consonants from the *t*-group of consonants, rather than asking for रोटी **roṭī**, ‘bread’, you will end up reporting that the girl is crying (i.e. रोती **roṭī**).

Minimal pair practice: words with unvoiced unaspirated stops and unvoiced aspirated stops

<i>Unvoiced unaspirated</i>			<i>Unvoiced aspirated</i>				
क	ka	काल kāl	time	ख	k^ha	खाल k^hāl	skin
च	ca	चल cal	walk	छ	c^ha	छल c^hal	cheat
ट	Ta	टाल Tāl	postpone	ठ	T^ha	ठाल T^hāl	sit idle
त	ta	तान tān	tune	थ	t^ha	थाल t^hāl	plate
प	pa	पल pal	moment	फ	p^ha	फल p^hal	fruit

Minimal pair practice: words with voiced unaspirated stops and voiced aspirated stops

<i>Voiced unaspirated</i>			<i>Voiced aspirated</i>		
ग ga	गा gā	sing	घ g^ha	घा g^hā	the fourth letter of the <i>k</i> -series
ज ja	जल jal	water	झ j^ha	झल j^hal	fan
ड Da	डाल Dāl	a branch	ढ D^ha	ढाल D^hāl	shield
द da	दान dān	charity	ध d^ha	धान d^hān	paddy
ब ba	बाल bāl	hair	भ b^ha	भाल b^hāl	forehead

Minimal pair practice: words with unvoiced aspirated stops and voiced aspirated stops

<i>Unvoiced aspirated</i>			<i>Voiced aspirated</i>		
ख k^ha	खाना k^hānā	food	घ g^ha	घाना g^hānā	Ghana, the name of a country
छ c^ha	छल c^hal	cheat	झ j^ha	झल j^hal	fan
ठ T^ha	ठक T^hak	tapping sound	ढ D^ha	ढक D^hak	cover
थ t^ha	थान t^hān	roll of cloth	ध d^ha	धान d^hān	paddy
फ p^ha	फूल p^hūl	flower	भ b^ha	भूल b^hūl	mistake

Minimal pair practice: words with the *T*-group (retroflex) stops and the *t*-group (dental) stops

<i>ट-वर्ग T-group</i>			<i>त-वर्ग t-group</i>		
ट Ta	टाल Tāl	postpone	त ta	ताल tāl	pond
ढ T^ha	ढक T^hak	tapping (sound)	थ t^ha	थक t^hak	be tired
ड Da	डाल Dāl	branch	द da	दाल dāl	lentil
ढ D^ha	ढक D^hak	cover	ध d^ha	धक d^hak	palpitation, excitement

Listen to the following:

Nasal consonants

<i>Nasal consonant</i>	<i>Hindi word</i>
ङ ṅa	अंग aṅg body, limb
ञ ña	अंजू añjū female name
ण Ṇa	बाण bāṆ arrow
न na	नान nān bread
म ma	मान mān respect

Other consonants

Listen to the following words:

<i>Consonant</i>	<i>Hindi word</i>
य ya	यार yār friend
र ra	राजा rājā king
ल la	लाल lāl red
व wa/va	वार vār an attack
श sha	शाल shāl shawl
स sa	साल sāl year
ह ha	हाल hāl condition, state

Minimal pair practice: words with **r**, **R** and **R^h**

<i>Consonant</i>	<i>Hindi word</i>
र ra	पर par on, at
ड़ Ra	पड़ paR lie, fall
ढ़ R^ha	पढ़ paR^h read, study

Borrowed consonants

फ़ ज़ ख़ क़ ग़
fa **za** **xa** **qa** **Ga**

As pointed out earlier, these consonants were not present in Hindi originally. Many speakers of Hindi still substitute the closest corresponding Hindi consonant for them, as shown below:

फ	fa	becomes	फ	p^ha
ज़	za	becomes	ज	ja
ख़	xa	becomes	ख	k^ha
क़	qa	becomes	क	ka
ग़	Ga	becomes	ग	ga

In other words, the dots are added to the native symbols to represent the borrowed sounds.

Now listen to the two possible pronunciations of the following words.

<i>Consonant Word</i>			<i>Consonant Word</i>			
फ	fa	फ़ीस fīs	tuition, fee	फ	p^ha	फ़ीस p^hīs
ज़	za	ज़रा zarā	just, a little	ज	ja	ज़रा jarā
ख़	xa	ख़रीद xarīd	buy	ख	k^ha	ख़रीद k^harīd
क़	qa	क़लम qalam	pen	क	ka	क़लम kalam
ग़	Ga	ग़रीब Garīb	poor	ग	ga	ग़रीब garīb

Syllables, stress and intonation: see Script Unit 5.

Punctuation marks

With the exception of the full stop, which is represented by the sign ।, Hindi uses the same punctuation marks as English. For abbreviation purposes, a small circle • is used after the first syllable. For example, पं• stands for Pandit. Sometimes the sign ~ is used over the vowel आ ā to represent the English sound o, as in जॉन 'John' and यॉर्क 'York'.

Numerals

१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९	०
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0

If you do not have the recording, either skip the following section or seek the assistance of a native speaker.



अभ्यास ab^hyās Exercises

Exercise 1 (Audio 1:5)

Listen to each group of three words and circle the word that is different.

	A	B	C
	कर	खर	कर
<i>Example:</i> you hear	kar	k ^h ar	kar
Answer:		B	

- 1 A B C
- 2 A B C
- 3 A B C
- 4 A B C
- 5 A B C

Exercise 2 (Audio 1:6)

Listen to each group of four words and circle the aspirated words.

	A	B	C	D
	कर	खर	गर	घर
<i>Example:</i> you hear:	kar	k ^h ar	gar	g ^h ar
Answer:		B, D		

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

Exercise 3 (Audio 1:7)

Listen to pairs of words contrasting the *T*-group (retroflex) and the *t*-group of consonants.

A	B
टिक Tik	तिक tik

After each pair has been pronounced, you will hear either 'A' or 'B' again. Underline the word that you hear this time.

Example: you hear टिक **Tik**, then underline **Tik**.

1	ताक	tāk	टाक	Tāk
2	थक	tʰak	ठक	Tʰak
3	दाग	dāg	डाग	Dāg
4	धक	dʰak	ढक	Dʰak
5	पर	par	पड़	paR
6	सर	sar	सड़	saR
7	करी	karī	कड़ी	kaRʰī
8	थीक	tʰīk	ठीक	Tʰīk

Exercise 4 (Audio 1:8)

Listen to pairs of words with contrasting vowel sounds.

<i>A</i>		<i>B</i>	
दिन	dīn	दीन	dīn

After each pair has been pronounced, you will hear either 'A' or 'B' again. Underline the word that you hear this time.

Example: you hear दीन **dīn**, then underline **dīn**.

	<i>A</i>		<i>B</i>	
1	काल	kāl	कल	kal
2	दिन	dīn	दीन	dīn
3	मिल	mil	मील	mīl
4	चुक	cuk	चूक	cūk
5	मेल	mel	मैल	mēl
6	सेर	ser	सैर	sēr
7	विन	bin	वीन	bīn
8	वाल	bāl	वल	bal

Transcription table

If you wish to learn Hindi principally via the Roman/English path or if you are used to seeing Hindi words in the English or Bollywood media, you might find the transcription of Hindi words a little odd or unfamiliar at first. However, a quick glance will reveal that media transcription is usually very broad, ambiguous and inconsistent. English–Hindi bilinguals/native speakers can cope with such transcription because they know the target word. Foreign learners do not have this advantage.

It is imperative that learners make themselves familiar with the scientific transcription used in this book – SALT, the transcription system widely used in South Asian language and literature. Such familiarity is critical to avoiding mishaps in communication and to increase learning efficiency: see the section entitled ‘Hindi writing system and pronunciation’ for details. The table below provides you with a convenient source of reference for Hindi sounds.

<i>Letter (Devanagari)</i>	<i>SALT (South Asian Language Transcription)</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>As in English words</i>
<i>Vowels</i>			
अ	a	uh/a	about
आ	ā	aa/ah/a	father
इ	i	ie	sit
ई	ī	ee	seat
उ	u	u	book
ऊ	ū	oo/u	boot, loot
ए	e	ay/e	late, date (without a glide)
ऐ	ε (ai)	ai/aye	bet
ओ	o	o	boat (without a glide)
औ	au	au	bought
Nasal vowels	(e.g. ā̃, ī̃, ē̃, ū̃ . . .); see ‘Hindi writing system and pronunciation’	vowel + n/m	