

Book Review

Usha Jain. *Advanced Hindi Grammar*. Berkeley, CA: Center for South Asian Studies. 2007.

Reviewed by Dr. Naseem Hines, *Harvard University*

Usha Jain's *Advanced Hindi Grammar* smoothly moves an upper intermediate level student to the advanced level of Hindi language learning. The author, Usha Jain, introduces her book as "a follow up" to her hugely successful *Introduction to Hindi Grammar*, designed for students who have no background in Hindi language learning to the intermediate level. Both the above mentioned books are available from the Centers for South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California at Berkeley. Like its predecessor, *Advanced Hindi Grammar* also boasts of grammar explanations and model sentences coupled with exercises to facilitate practice of key grammar structures.

Each unit begins with the explanation of a grammatical point. This is followed by examples that show the appropriate context where the construction in question may be suitably used. This is followed by several sets of exercises. These exercises not only offer the student an opportunity to practice grammar introduced in that Unit but also show the appropriate formal and informal contexts in which that grammatical construction may be used. The vocabulary is selected carefully to offer the student a window to the Hindi language as it is used in real life situations.

The book is divided into 25 chapters. The chapters are principally designed as a bridge leading a student from the chapters of the *Introduction to Hindi Grammar* to the *Advanced Hindi Grammar*. For example, Chapter 6 on postpositions is basically a spring board from Chapter 7 of *Introduction to Hindi Grammar*. The chapter reviews a number of simple and compound postpositions introduced in the first book. However, it goes deeper into the subject and introduces new combinations, their meanings, and usages. The grammatical explanations are followed by model sentences taken from a variety of social contexts that elucidate the proper usage of the compound postpositions introduced in this chapter. Similarly, Chapter 15 of the *Advanced Hindi Grammar* on reflexive forms refers to the grammar covered in Chapter 20 of *Introduction to Hindi Grammar* and goes into additional expressions of reflexive forms. Thus, every effort is made to make the transition from the intermediate to the Advance levels a smooth process.

Because in the *Advanced Hindi Grammar* the units follow the same familiar format as used in the *Introduction to Hindi Grammar*, students feel comfortable and their learning process remains connected. Among the chapters on new grammar, noteworthy are the chapters on passive voice, compound verbs, detailed treatment of the verb 'lagnā' and affixes. The example sentences continue to be the strength of the book and the sets of exercises make this a very teacher and student friendly grammar book.

The teachers, nevertheless, must keep in mind that using this book exclusively will not be a well rounded approach to language pedagogy because the exercises are limited to sentence-level mechanical drills (transformation & substitution) and grammar-translation sentences. Jain's grammar books are not communicative and allow limited opportunities for creating with the language. What is meant by this is that most of the drills present a model to the students that they must follow. Hence there is not much scope for students to take risks and make mistakes through imaginative responses. Also, there is little opportunity for students to exercise what they have learned in a given unit, say for example, describing a picture, or reading a passage and or paraphrasing a passage using the learned grammar. This book overlooks the point that grammar can be taught and learned in a "communicative" fashion by including "authentic" examples and open-ended exercises involving "real-life" tasks.

Usha Jain, however, clearly states in the introduction of her *Advanced Hindi Grammar* that the

book is most beneficial when used along with advanced level Hindi language teaching materials selected by the teachers. This essentially means, first, that the book is especially appropriate for those students who have had grammar training to at least upper intermediate level. Secondly, the book does not stand as the resource book alone, and must be used in combination with a variety of audio-visual as well as literary reading materials that are specifically selected to dovetail with each of the grammar units in the book.

On one hand, this offers a great freedom to the language teacher, but conversely, teachers have to research for appropriate companion materials. This task can be enormously time consuming for teachers - and all of us who are working in the field of language teaching know it very well. But, I think, ultimately this could be considered a positive point and an asset of *Advanced Hindi Grammar*, because most of us want to enjoy some freedom in selecting teaching materials of our own choice, in part to save us from the boredom of having to deal with identical materials every year. It is fun to continue to bring new materials to the class according to the learners' interest and to update and fine-tune a course.

The biggest strength of this book is that it has been field tested extensively in Hindi classrooms before being published in book form. Today, a number of educational institutions are using it as one of their intermediate level Hindi language learning resources.