

# A Dedicated Sarcasm Construction in Kashmiri as a Feature of the South Asian Linguistic Area

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**Abstract** This paper has two parts. In the first part (§§ 2-3) we cover some of the resources that the Kashmiri sarcast draws on. In the second part (§§ 4-6) we explore a particular formulaic construction that we maintain is specifically dedicated to the expression of sarcasm, not only in Kashmiri but in most languages of the Indo-Aryan family – with the possible exception of Bangla and its neighbours. Since this construction occurs in some but not all the major Dravidian languages, it may be regarded as another feature or ‘trait’ of the South Asian Linguistic Area first adumbrated by Emeneau (1956) and further extended by Masica (1976).

**Keywords** Insincere speech. Intent. Cue. Dedicated construction. Indo-Aryan. Dravidian. Linguistic area.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Hearer-Oriented Sarcasm. – 3 Neutral Sarcasm. – 4 Hearer-Oriented versus Subject-Oriented Sarcasm. – 5 Is there a Construction Dedicated to Subject-Oriented Sarcasm? – 6 Is the Sarcasm Construction Displayed in (28) a Feature of the South Asian Linguistic Area?



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## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Sarcasm, the deliberate attempt to point out, question, or ridicule attitudes and beliefs by using words or gestures in ways that run counter to their normal meaning, is probably a universal of human society. Like all ironic discourse (itself a subcategory of insincere speech) the power of sarcasm depends on the listener's being (or becoming) aware that the speaker does not mean what is being said. Often the gap between what is said and what the participants in a conversation all know to be true is sufficient to tip off listeners. Perhaps because this pragmatic kind of sarcasm occurs so commonly, it does not usually fall within the range of phenomena that a grammarian might feel obliged to account for. For instance, while the intention of (1) in the circumstances of its utterance may indeed be sarcastic, there may or may not be any audible indicator of sarcastic intent: The hearer may have to depend on the mismatch between the literal meaning of the message and what he knows to be reality (IM = implied / intended meaning):<sup>2</sup>

- |     |              |             |                |                   |
|-----|--------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|
| (1) | <i>šābāš</i> | <i>ču-y</i> | <i>čēēnyis</i> | <i>gāṭijār-as</i> |
|     | bravo        | is-2SG.DT   | your.DAT       | wisdom-DAT        |
- ‘Congratulations on your wisdom’.  
(IM: ‘You’re not so smart as you think!’)

But there are other kinds of sarcasm in which the speaker must indicate his intent through some behavioural or linguistic cue: a lexical item (2), a special intonational contour (3), over-articulation (4), pauses (5), inappropriate formality (6), overcareful framing (7), hy-

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this paper is modelled on a paper co-authored by Hook and Kusum Jain entitled “How to be Sarcastic in Hindi-Urdu”, drafted in India during the summer of 1997 and published in 2002 in a felicitation volume for George Cardona. There is a running comparison of the modes of sarcasm in Kashmiri and Hindi-Urdu from fn. 7 onward and a comparison of dedicated sarcasm constructions in Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages in §§ 5 and 6.

<sup>2</sup> The transcription used for Kashmiri in this paper is the one worked out by Kenneth Hill and Sajad Mir in Prof. Hill's course in linguistics field methods taught at the University of Michigan in Fall, 1984. Based on a system often found in the linguistics literature on contemporary Indo-Aryan languages, it was designed to minimise the use of diacritics and special symbols. The letter {e} represents a mid (either front or central) vowel while {i} represents a high (either front or central) vowel. Fronting is determined by the presence of {y} or other palatal consonants. Palatalisation is uniformly indicated with the letter {y} (except that {j}, {čh}, {č}, and {š} are inherently palatalised); {ts} is a dental affricate; and {t}, {tʰ}, and {d} are retroflex stops. In the transcription of data from Hindi-Urdu the letter {e} always represents a mid front (never a central) vowel while {i} always represents a high front (never a central) vowel. See the list of abbreviations.

perbole (8), understatement (9), mimicry (10), inversion (11), a wink, a deadpan expression etc.:<sup>3</sup>

- |      |  |  |
|------|--|--|
| (2)  | <b>Sure</b> he'll return your books!                             | (IM: 'He won't return your books')   |
| (3)  | <b>Great!</b> (with a prenuclear drop in pitch)                  | (IM: 'Terrible!')  |
| (4)  | <b>Pretty</b> bad! (post-tonic geminate: ['prɪtti]) <sup>4</sup> | (IM: 'Extremely bad!')   |
| (5)  | <b>What... a... find!</b>  | (IM: 'This is trash!')   |
| (6)  | <b>William Winkler</b> , you clean up your room!                 | (IM: 'Billy, I'll withdraw my normal affection, if you don't clean up your room')                          |
| (7)  | What <b>seems</b> to be the problem?                             | (IM: 'You're not sick. You just think you are! Don't waste my time!')                                      |
| (8)  | He's <b>a genius!</b>  | (IM: 'He's far below average')   |
| (9)  | <b>I wouldn't bet on it.</b> <sup>5</sup>                        | (IM: 'Absolutely not!')  |
| (10) | Did <b>Wicky</b> spwain his <b>wittle wist?</b>                  | (IM: 'Ricky is a childish complainer')   |
| (11) | <b>Don't let pregnancy spoil your drug</b>                       | (The usual message is reversed with the intention of persuading drug addicts to get themselves sterilised) |

Many of these phenomena are fair game for the grammarian. An account of any linguistic cue (intonational, morphological, lexical, or syntactic) that distinguishes sarcastic from non-sarcastic utterances in a regular or predictable way falls within the jurisdiction of the grammarian. However, in our discussion of Kashmiri we will be particularly interested in lexical and constructional cues that are themselves sites of sarcasm.

Mechanisms of sarcasm can be classified by target into two groups: A. Certain expressions invoke and attack beliefs of the per-

<sup>3</sup> Haiman (1990) attempts an exhaustive taxonomy of linguistic cues to sarcastic intent. Jagannathan (1981, 338) discusses the sarcastic use among Hindi-speakers of appellations like *guru* and *xalīfā*. Cf. Taing 1984 for irony in Kashmiri literature.

<sup>4</sup> The apical stop in sarcastic *pretty* shows an affective gemination that blocks the flapped articulation normally expected for post-tonic intervocalic /t/ (thanks to Alexis Manaster-Ramer and Bill Darden for this observation). A similar gemination with displacement to the left of the tonic (using extra high pitch) is audible in the sarcastic articulation of *okay*: ['okke].

<sup>5</sup> Understatement is typical of 'dry' sarcasm. A more complex example: "On this date in 1492 Christopher Columbus signed a contract with the Spanish Crown to sail the ocean blue... in search of Asia. He did not find it" (National Public Radio's Morning Edition, 17 April 1998). This instance shows several cues of sarcastic intent: 1. Partial quoting of the children's rhyme "In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue"; 2. the extra pause between 'blue' and the phrase 'in search of Asia'; 3. the understated 'He did not find it'; 4. a prolongation - with rising pitch - of the nucleus of 'find'. The sting of this sarcasm is dilute: its targets - Columbus and his royal backers - now all safely dead - are gently twitted for their geographic illusions

son to whom they are addressed (i.e. the hearer).<sup>6</sup> B. Others impugn the presumed beliefs of some participant in the situation denoted by the utterance. When the speaker himself or herself is the target, the sarcastic intent of the utterance is usually directed to his or her previous beliefs and the sting is lightened to what may be characterised as the ironic expression of regret.

## 2 Hearer-Oriented Sarcasm

Among the cues Kashmiri speakers use to signal that beliefs of the hearer are under attack is the use of the simple past tense (aka preterite)<sup>7</sup> to denote actions that the hearer knows very well have yet to occur:

- (12) *temy dyity-iy ti tsey rety-th-as!*  
 he.ERG gave-M.PL-2SG.DT and you.ERG took.M.PL.2SG.ER-3SG.DT  
 ‘He gave (them) to you and you got (them) from him!’ (‘them’ refers to money)  
 (IM: ‘He will not give you (the money) and so of course you will not get it from him!’)

This use of the past tense for future actions provides a cue to sarcastic intent that can be reinforced with *hay* ‘indeed’ or its abbreviated affixal form *-ay*:

<sup>6</sup> Jagannathan (1981, 337) draws a further distinction between ‘sharp’ sarcasm (*tīkhā vyangy*) in which the addressee is supposed to recognise the speaker’s intent and ‘subtle’ sarcasm (*sūkṣm vyangy*) in which only hearers other than the addressee are supposed to realise that the addressee is a target.

<sup>7</sup> This sarcastic use of the past tense for future action has its Hindi-Urdu counterpart in the auxiliary use of V *čuk-* ‘have already V-ed’ which derives historically from the main verb *čuk-* ‘be finished, used up’. As an indicator of sarcasm, auxiliary *čuk-* corresponds to English cues of sarcasm like ‘sure!’ or ‘you bet!’. Its simple past (i.e. preterite) tense as in (a) [an illustration from Dasa et al.’s 1965-75] and in (b) most typically negates an act in the future:

- (a) *tum ab ā čuke!* (arthāt ‘*tum ab nahī ā-oge*’)  
 you now come already that.is you now not come-2PL.FUT.M.PL  
 ‘You’ve already come!’ (Intended meaning: ‘You will not come now.’)
- (b) *us.ke pās khā.ne ke.liye paise nahī tumhāre paise vāpas de čukā!*  
 him near eating for money not your money back give has.already  
 ‘He doesn’t have enough for food! I’m sure he’s gonna return your money!’  
 IM: *bhūl jāo: vo tumhē paise nahī dene kā (hai)!*  
 forget GO he you.DAT money not giving of is  
 ‘Forget it! He’s not about to give you your money!’

- (13) /*su hay* // *s-oy/* *āv!* *tsi gatsh-akh khwaš!*  
 /he indeed // he-indeed/ came you go-FUT.2SG happy  
 ‘He came indeed! You may rejoice!’ (IM: ‘He’s not about to come so don’t get all happy!’)
- (14) *b-ey* *gō-s* *tsi* *čhu.kh* *khōts.ān*  
 I-indeed went.M.SG-NM.1SG you are fearing  
 ‘Sure I went. You are worrying?’ (IM: ‘Don’t worry! I’m not gonna go!’)

Indeed, the particle *hay* or its affixal counterparts<sup>8</sup> are sufficient in themselves to mark sarcastic intent:

- (15) *ts-ey* *yi-kh* *tang* *kōryen* *manz*  
 you-indeed come-FUT.2SG tight girls.DAT.PL among  
 ‘You will be bored in the company of girls!’ (IM: ‘Sure you’ll be bored with all those girls around!’)

Another common cue of sarcastic intent is use of the invariant (oblique singular) form of *baḍ-* ‘big’ as an adverb of quantity: *baḍi* ‘a lot; very’ (sarcastically ‘sure; you bet!’):<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Note the sandhi: *su + hay* => *soy* ‘he indeed’; *tsi + hay* => *tsey* ‘you indeed’; *bi + hay* => *bey* ‘I indeed’.

<sup>9</sup> The Hindi-Urdu parallel to this is the use of the adverb of quantity *bar-* ‘a lot’, sometimes in its masculine singular default form *barā* (a) (Kusum Jain from Hook, Jain 2002, 364):

- (a) *vo* *baḍ-ā* *d-egī* *pāṛṭī!*  
 she big-DEF give-FUT.F.SG party(F.SG) [DEF = default = M.SG]  
 ‘Sure she’s gonna give a party!’

and sometimes as an absolutive concordant adverb agreeing in gender and number with an intransitive subject (b) or a (transitive) object (c):

- (b) *tum baḍ-e* *ā-oge* *madad kar-ne!* *jhūṭhe vāyde* *karte ho!*  
 you big-M.PL come-2.FUT help do-INF false promises make are  
 ‘Sure you’ll come to help us! You don’t keep your word.’ (Kusum Jain from Hook, Jain 2002, 364)

- (c) *vo* *baḍ-ī* *d-egā* *pāṛṭī!*  
 he big-F.SG give-3SG.FUT.M.SG party(F.SG)  
 ‘Sure he’s gonna give a party!’ (Kusum Jain from Hook, Jain 2002, 364)

- (16) *swa čha ālitsy; swa kar-yi baḍi vudyūg!*  
 she is lazy she do-3SG.FUT a.lot hurry  
 ‘She is very lazy; sure she’ll be quick!’

That the adverb *baḍi* in these examples functions as an adverb which takes the entire utterance in its scope may explain its unusual ability to occur in root clauses together with another constituent to the left of the finite verbal element without forcing the other constituent to change its position:

- (17) *ts-ey baḍi yi-kh kēṣyī bakār!*  
 you-indeed a.lot come-FUT.2SG someone.DAT assistance  
 ‘Sure you will be of assistance to someone!’

In its power to condition V-3 word order sarcastic *baḍi* should perhaps be grouped together with other sentence-operators such as the set of Wh-words. Or the particle *hay / -ay / -y* may reset the V-2 count.<sup>10</sup> Compare (18) with (19) and contrast them both with (20) where *baḍi* is not being used sarcastically:

- (18) *ts-ey baḍi khwaš gatsh-akh!*  
 you-indeed a.lot happy go-FUT.2SG  
 ‘Sure you will be happy!’

- (19) *tsi kūt khwaš gatsh-akh!*  
 you.NOM how.much happy go-FUT.2SG  
 ‘How happy you will be!’

- (20) *tsi gatsh-akh baḍi khwaš!*  
 you go-FUT.2SG a.lot happy  
 ‘You will be very happy!’

<sup>10</sup> See Hook, Koul forthcoming for examples and discussion of the role that the emphatic particle *-(a)y* ‘indeed’ may have in conditioning V-3 word order in Kashmiri root clauses.

### 3 Neutral Sarcasm

There is sarcasm of a second kind in which the speaker is not concerned with attacking or ridiculing the beliefs in particular of the hearer. Rather it is the event or situation itself that is being held up to some implicit standard that the speaker assumes his listeners subscribe to (or believes they ought to subscribe to it). The target is the subject of the clause but the focus is on the action or event predicated of the subject rather than on his or her (imputed) beliefs or attitudes. A cue to sarcasm of this sort is the use of the exclamatory particle *-ā(h)* suffixed to the first constituent of the clause:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (21) <i>šakil-ā</i> <i>čha-s!</i><br>beauty- <i>ā</i> is-3SG.DT<br>'What a beauty he / she is!' | (22) <i>čāy-ā</i> <i>čēvyi-kh!</i><br>tea- <i>ā</i> served-3PL.ER<br>'The tea they served!' |
|---|---|

If the hearer happens to be the subject then he or she becomes the target:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (23) <i>hyemith-ā</i> <i>keri-th!</i><br>courage- <i>ā</i> did-2SG.ER<br>'What courage you showed!' | (24) <i>poz-ā(h)</i> <i>čhukh</i> <i>van-ān!</i><br>truth- <i>ā</i> are.2SG      tell-ing<br>'Right!' |
|---|---|

Why are rhetorical questions recruited as a mode for delivering sarcasm? Perhaps because they have the same form as real questions, they may provide the sarcasm with desired cover: it is harder for the hearer to stop the conversation to make an explicit complaint or accusation if the speaker's words (and intentions) are ambiguous. It is, after all, the desire of the speaker to deliver a psychological blow without assuming all the risks of making an explicitly hostile remark that is the fundamental motive for using sarcasm.

### 4 Hearer-Oriented versus Subject-Oriented Sarcasm

The cues we have examined so far are used to indicate to the hearer that the speaker does not subscribe to the hearer's views (25). In (26a-b) we may observe another kind of sarcasm, one which targets not the hearer of the utterance but rather its 'subject' (usually an agent-subject or experiencer-subject). Sarcasm of this subject-oriented kind shows up when the speaker assumes that the hearer agrees. Contrast (25) with (26a-b):

- (25) *su hāv-yi baḍi panun bajar*  
 he show-FUT3sg a.lot self's greatness  
 'Sure he'll show his greatness!' [IM: 'He's not so great (as you think he is)!']
- (26a) *baḍi āv bajar hāv-an.vōl*  
 a.lot came.M.SG greatness show-er.M.SG  
 'Here comes the big cheese!' [IM: 'He is not so great (as he thinks he is)!']
- (26b) *baḍi āyi bajar hāv-an.vājinyi*  
 a.lot came.F.PL greatness show-ers.F.PL  
 'Here come the big cheeses!'  
 [IM: 'They are not so great (as they think they are)!']

In (25) the speaker is using sarcasm to undermine or ridicule the hearer's expressed or implied position that someone has great potential. Whereas in (26a) and (26b) the speaker is not attacking the views of the hearer but rather ridiculing the self-indulgent behaviour or the pretensions of the subject.

If the hearer happens to be the subject then it follows that the sarcasm is attempting to degrade her or him:

- (27) *tswapi kar! baḍi āy-akh tatyī pyeṭhi sād ben-yith*  
 silence make a.lot came.F.SG-2SG.NM there from saint become-GER  
 'Shut up! You've come from there so pure and holy!' [IM: 'You're not so holy as you think!']

## 5 Is there a Construction Dedicated to Subject-Oriented Sarcasm?

The construction in (26ab) and (27), widespread in languages spoken on the northern and western sides of India, displays a specific pattern, definable as in (28). One may speak of a 'dedicated' construction:

- (28) (subj) + *aggrandising element* (or *Wh-*) + *finite form of {come}* + mocked action, state, attitude<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On hearing some of these examples Colin Masica (pers. comm.) objected that a sarcastic construction "Here comes / a // the / big X" exists in English (and presumably in all languages). Of course, in the right situation and with the right intonation any utterance can be interpreted as sarcasm. Construction (28) as illustrated in (26)-(27) and (29)-(40) differs from speech overlain with sarcastic intonation in being special-



- (29) *khuba ā-ek-i čhe sevā gar-na!* [Nepali]  
a.lot came-PP-F.SG is.F.SG service do-INF (Netra Paudiyal, pers. comm.)  
'She's come to help!' [IM: 'She's too late to help.' or 'She's not one to help others.']
- (30) *bar-i ā-i čāvi dend-ār-i...* [Garhwali]  
big-F.SG came-F.SG key giving-NOM.AG-F.SG  
'So here she is, the big key-giver!' (Ghildiyal 1981, 49)
- (31) *vo bar-i ā-i paropakār kar.ne-vāl-i!* [Hindi-Urdu]  
big- F.SG came-F.SG help do-er-F.SG  
'Here she comes, the Good Samaritan!' (Hook, Jain 2002, 365)
- (32) *baḍḍ-i āy-i ũč-i bātā kar.ṇa-ā-i* [Bagri / Haryanavi]  
big-F.SG came.F.SG high-F.PL things do-er-F.SG  
'Here she is, the big talker (IM: the pompous ass!)' (Lakhan Gusain, personal communication)
- (33) *vaḍ-i ā-i paṛi-likhī... paṛi-likhī hai to*  
big-F.SG came.F.SG read-F.SG-written-F.SG read-F.SG-written-F.SG are then  
*is-kā mīning batā*  
this-GEN meaning tell  
'Here she is, the highly educated one. So, if you're so educated, tell me the meaning of this!' ([sharechat.com/video/MxQ8q4W?referrer=url](https://sharechat.com/video/MxQ8q4W?referrer=url))  
[Panjabi]
- (34) *vaḍ-o āyo mohabbat kar.ṇa-vār-o*  
big-M.SG came.M.SG love do-INF-ER-M.SG  
'Here he is, the great lover!' [Sindhi]  
([sindhiaadabiboard.org/Catalogue/mehran/Book25/Book\\_page7.html](https://sindhiaadabiboard.org/Catalogue/mehran/Book25/Book_page7.html))
- (35) *jā jā pāgal gayo čhe, moṭ-o āvy-o papi māg.vā-vā-i-o*  
go go crazy gone are big-M.SG came-M.SG kiss ask-er-M.SG  
*koi juv.e to šū kah.e*  
someone see then what say  
'Get away. You crazy? The big kiss-demander! What would someone say if they saw?' ([gadyasarjan.wordpress.com/2012/12/26](https://gadyasarjan.wordpress.com/2012/12/26)) [Gujarati]

used for [or dedicated to] the delivery of sarcastic intent. That is, for speakers to utter any of these examples without sarcastic intent is unlikely maybe even impossible.

- (36) *hā koṇ ālā ṭikojīrāv āmhā-lā sāṅg-ṅār-ā* [Puneri Marathi]  
 he who came-Msg nosy.parker us-DAT tell-PRESPT-Msg  
 ‘Who is this kibitzer-shmitzer to tell us (what to do)?’ (<https://www.maaybolī.com/node/26768>)
- (37) *lay āl-ā sallā de.ṅār-ā* [Wardha / Nagpuri Marathi]  
 much came-M.SG advice giver-M.SG  
 ‘Here comes the great advice giver!’ (P. Mashram and R. Mhaiskar, via Sonal Kulkarni-Joshi)
- (38) *vhəll-ĕ ayl-ā səllə div-pa-k* [Goan Konkani]  
 great-F.SG came-F.SG advice give-INF-DAT  
 ‘She’s a great one to give us advice!’ (N.F. Gaonkar and G. Mopkar, via Sonal Kulkarni-Joshi)
- (39) *pedda vatts-āḍu bādhyata gala pauruḍ.i-lāgā* [Telugu]  
 big come-PST.M.SG responsibility with citizen-like  
 ‘... as if he were a responsible citizen!’  
 \* Validity of Telugu data, glossing, and analysis confirmed by K.V. Subbarao, Peri Bhaskararao, and Shalinee Gusain.
- (40) *ava! perīyya vant(-uṭṭ)<sup>12</sup>-ā(!) eṅak-ku camaiyal collit-tar-a*  
 she bigly came-LET-F.SG me-DAT cooking teach-GIVE-INF  
*taṅak-k.ē tōcai kūṭa vār-kā teriyātu*  
 self-DAT dosa even pour-INF know-NEG  
 ‘She’s a good one to teach me how to cook. She can’t even manage to make a dosa herself!’ (This Tamil example is from Kanaka Jagannathan, via Bharati Jagannathan, personal communication)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The morpheme *-uṭṭ-* LET- is the colloquial abbreviation of *viṭṭ-*, the past tense form of vector (vi)ṭu {LET GO, RELEASE}. See Annamalai 2021, 308 ff. for detailed description of (vi)ṭu and other Tamil vectors.

<sup>13</sup> The Tamil example in (40) patterns identically to most of the Indic examples in (26a-b)-(38). However, not every Tamil speaker accepts *perīyya* in (40), preferring instead the adverb *perusā*. (Umarani Pappuswami, pers. comm.):

(a) *per-usā vant(-uṭṭ)-ā(!) eṅak-ku camaiyal collit-tar-a! taṅak-kē tōcai kūṭa vār-kā teriyātu*

## 6 Is the Sarcasm Construction Displayed in (28) a Feature of the South Asian Linguistic Area?

In all of the South Asian languages surveyed expression of sarcasm may use either a concordant form of a mocking aggrandising adjective *baṛ-* ‘big’ (Hindi, Garhwali) / *baḍḍ-* (Bagri, Haryanavi) / *vaḍ-* (Panjabi, Sindhi) / *moṭ(h)-* (Gujarati, Marathi) / *vhəll-* (Konkani); an invariant adjective *bhāri* ‘heavy’ (Bengali) / *mahā* ‘great’ (Kannada) / *pedda* ‘big’ (Telugu); an adverb *perusā* (Tamil) / *baḍi* (Kashmiri) / *khuba* (Nepali) ‘bigly, a lot’ / *lay* (Nagpuri) ‘very’; or an interrogative pronoun *koṇ* (Marathi) ‘who’. Contrastingly, the full pattern displayed in (28) is not found in Bengali (Probal Dasgupta, pers. comm.), while Kannada has what seems like an inverted form<sup>14</sup> of it (S.N. Sridhar, pers. comm.). The distribution of the templatic pattern shown in (28) across most of Indo-Aryan in a contiguous block taken together with its presence in Dravidian Telugu and Tamil accords with its being regarded as an incomplete or fragmentary feature of South Asia as a linguistic area (Masica 1976),<sup>15</sup> perhaps one yet to reach its full extent.

It remains to be seen if specialised constructions or explicit markers of sarcastic intent parallel to Kashmiri’s *baḍi yi- V-an-vōl-* (26a) are found in languages spoken outside South Asia and if so whether they are commonly used in the languages that have them.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Notice that in (a) with respect to the template in (28) finiteness and non-finiteness of forms have switched places:

- (a) *avaḷu ba-nd.u (mahā) nan-gē hēḷi-koḍ-tā-ḷe* [Kannada]  
 she come-PPART great me-DAT.EMPH tell-GIVE-NON.PST.F.3sg  
 ‘She presumes to teach me – (the big know-it-all)’. (S.N. Sridhar, personal communication)

This difference brings the Kannada construction closer to normal South Asian SOV word order. Thus, rather than constructionally, the cue to sarcastic intent must be indicated intonationally and/or by the presence of *mahā*.

<sup>15</sup> See Emeneau’s definition of a linguistic area: “an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family but showing traits in common which are found not to belong to the other members of at least one of the families” (1956, 16 fn 28).

<sup>16</sup> Does the construction in (28) share features with other kinds of insincere speech? One reason for thinking it may is that in all these languages the finite form of {come} is not in its normal clause-final position. In all of them some material follows the verb: an infinitive, a participle, or a noun phrase expressing the actions or attitudes on the reality or legitimacy of which the sarcasm casts doubt. Comparable to this displacement from the canonical clause-final position of the finite verb is the ‘move-left’ phenomenon observed in Hindi-Urdu expressions of irony, especially those involving inceptives (Hook 2011):

- (a) *lage aurō kī.tarah tum bhī ḥāplūsīkar-ne*  
 begun.2PL.M others like you too flattery do-INF  
 ‘There you go, just like the others, trying to flatter me’. (Premchand [1936] 1960, 51)

## Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ABL	ablative
AC	accusative pronominal suffix
AG	agentive
DAT	dative
DEF	default or invariant form
DT	dative pronominal suffix
EMP	emphatic particle
ER	ergative pronominal suffix
ERG	ergative
F	feminine
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
GER	gerund
IM	implied / intended meaning
INF	infinitive
M	masculine
NEG	negative
NM	nominative pronominal suffix
NOM	nominative
NON.PST	non-past
PL	plural
PPART	past participle
PRESPT	present participle
PST	past tense
SG	singular

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The leftward position of *lag-* 'begin', *ā-* 'come', and perhaps other predicates governing non-finite complements is recurrent in Hindi-Urdu dialogue and in them functions as a marker of a set of related attitudes.

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