

<u>Workshop ID :</u>	55
<u>Workshop Duration :</u>	Workshop - 1.5 Days
<u>Workshop Title :</u>	Language in the Indian/South Asian diaspora
<u>Workshop Leader :</u>	Rajend Mesthrie, University of Cape Town and Sonal Kulkarni-Joshi Deccan College, Pune

Mesthrie (2008) identified three foci of Indian diasporas: an early historical diaspora mainly in South East Asia and East Africa; a diaspora in the era of colonization, slavery and indenture; and a post-colonial economic diaspora. These are labelled first, second and third diasporas, even though they are not as clear-cut as indicated by these labels. Africa is a suitable venue for such a workshop. The second diaspora element exists in the importation of slaves by the Dutch from the 16th CE into Cape Town, with speakers of Bengali and Tamil being prominently present in the historical record, together with slaves from Indonesia, Malagasy and to a lesser extent from within Africa. The second diaspora is also well represented in the form of large numbers of indentured workers being imported in the British period (19th CE), with residual speakers of Tamil, Telugu, Bhojpuri-Hindi and Urdu still to be found in KwaZulu-Natal. In the neighbouring island of Mauritius slaves of South Indian origin were part of the founding of the colony as dockworkers and artisans; later indentured workers were brought in to work the sugar cane plantations, after slavery from Africa was prohibited from the 1830s onwards. People of Indian ancestry form a demographic majority on the island today. Indentured workers of Panjabi descent in colonial British East Africa formed the workforce that built the East African railways; earlier the first railway in Africa had been built with a Mauritian Indian and Creole labour force in Durban.

The second diaspora has been fairly well documented, but many gaps remain. One of these is the acculturation of South Indians (speaking Dravidian languages) to French, Creole and other languages in the Caribbean. Even less is known about the (socio-)linguistics of the contemporary third diaspora. Here the main language is Gujarati, well represented in the UK, USA, Europe and Africa. It is still spoken in East Africa, especially Kenya, showing some acculturation to Kiswahili (Shah 2014). It was also the language of *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi's long-standing newspaper in Durban. Because of this, South African may be seminal in the development of the genre of political prose in Gujarati.

The workshop invites contributions on both historical aspects of diaspora relating to language as well as contemporary empirically-based studies of maintenance and shift. Papers which deal concretely with language contact and change data in the context of migration will be particularly welcome. As 'India' is a varied historical term, it will be interpreted broadly as pre-partition India (including Pakistani and Bangladeshi studies), as well as South Asia more broadly (Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar etc). Diasporas within India/South Asia (e.g. Kashmiri outside Kashmir) will also be considered. Finally, Creole and English (French etc.) in the Indian diaspora will be included, but not as a dominant sub-theme.

Selected References:

Mesthrie, R. 1992. *Language in Indenture: A Sociolinguistics History of Bhojpuri-Hindi in South Africa*. London: Routledge.

- 2008. South Asian languages in the Indian diaspora. In B.B. Kachru, Y. Kachru & S.N. Sridhar (eds.) *Language in South Asia*. CUP.

Shah, S. 2014. Shah, Sheena (2014). Identity and belonging: The case of the Gujarati diaspora community in England, Singapore and South Africa. In Anjoom Mukadam and Sharmina Mawani (eds.), *Globalisation, Diaspora and Belonging: Exploring Transnationalism and Gujarati Identity*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 145-165.

Siegel, J. 1993. *Language Contact in a Plantation Environment - A Sociolinguistic History of Fiji*. CUP.

Sridhar, K. K. 2008. South Asia diaspora in Europe and the USA. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru & S. N. Sridhar (eds.) *Language in South Asia*. CUP.

