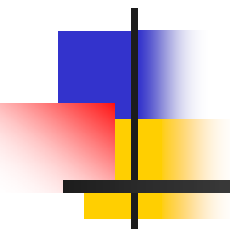


Indian English



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Outlines

- History and Sociocultural Setting
- Salient Structural Properties
- Discourse Features
- Acceptability and Intelligibility
- Non-Verbal System
- Tips for Cross-cultural Communication



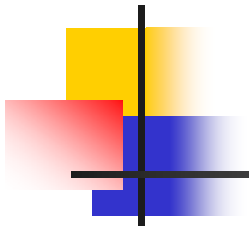
History

- *Colonial Era and English*
- The introduction of English to the Indian linguistic landscape opened with the dawn of the British colonial era, English began to develop roots in Indian education.
- A blueprint for India's educational policy was laid down in Lord Macaulay's *Minute* (Feb. 2, 1835). Macaulay's stated the mission for the British Raj to create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect."



Macaulay's Attitudes toward Indian Languages and Educational Policy

- "I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value...I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalist themselves. I have never found one amongst them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."



English After the Independence of India (1947--)

- Mahatama Gandhi: Advocacy of Hindi as the national language
- Post-Independence attitudes toward English
- Neutral Language and Not a colonial language



English: Carrying the Indian Experience

- English had to change if it had to carry the Indian psyche and sociocultural experience in a meaningful way
- It had to become one of the languages of India.



Raja Rao's on Indian English

- “After language, the next problem is that of Style. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our Indian expression...We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumble and run on”
- Raja Rao was not alone in pleading the Indian variety of English



Indian English: Deviation vs. "errors"

- Indian expression makes Indian English deviate from American or British English. Exactly in the same fashion as American English is not a clone of British English.
- **Caution:** *Indian is different from British or American English.*
- Differences cannot be labeled as "errors"
- On the contrary, they are ***"innovations"*** enriching English in terms of creating its global appeal



Indian Attitude toward Indian English

- They consider their English as the “correct” English best suited to the Indian setting
- They do not want to clone or parrot either British or American English
- Interesting note: Even if some Indian might report that “they speak British English,” it is more accurate expression of their harmonious relationship with British than a faithful report



Variation and Self-Reporting

- Like any other language, a variety of Englishes are spoken in India, but there is a national standard English
- Some Indians report and do in fact speak “British English” but they are as rare “Bostonial Brahmins” in America. Rare and dwindling race.
- Moreover, behind their backs most Indian poke fun at such speakers.
- Speakers who clone British accent are usually perceived as “pompous” “full of air”



Range of Variation

- English usage in India ranges from more or less uniform (national variety) to mutually unintelligible varieties
- Remember, India is a vast country with 19 officially recognized regional languages
- Hindi (the third most widely spoken language in the world) and English are the two national and link languages of India

Majority Speaks Indian English:

Question of Norms, Acceptance and Appropriateness

- Educated Norms: (Shaw in Smith, 1981:119-120)
- Variety of English presently spoken by educated speakers in India?
- British: 27.4%; American: 3.2%; Australian:0%; Indian 50.6%
- **Projection**: the number in favor of Indian English are increasing, not decreasing



What English Indians Should Learn?

- Survey: 825 Bachelor of Arts Seniors enrolled in English
- Rank Ordering:
 - Indian English 47.4 %
 - British English: 28.5%
 - American 12 %
 - Australian: 0.3%



Linguistic Security

- Unlike the speakers of French in Quebec, Canada
- Unlike the speakers of Spanish in Central and South America
- Unlike Japan or Chinese
- Indians consider their English as “good” and “proper”
- They are happy, satisfied, and feel good about their English!



Speakers of English?

- No fool-proof reliable number
- Since English is a prestige language in India, even an Indian would not like to admit that he/she does not speak English
- This attitude is very different (say from Japan).
- Whatever the exact number is. It is certainly more than the number native speakers of English in the US and Britain
- Indian Census: 1991 Census: 178,598 mother tongue (MT) speakers



Intelligibility of Indian English

- Empirical evidence shows that in North American Indian English is more readily understood than even the BBC or British varieties.
- Professor Kachru, a world authority on World Englishes informed me in a personal communication that when a BBC correspondent came to interview University of Illinois, most of graduate and undergraduates did not understand his questions and accent.
- My own experience further support Professor Kachru's observation



Intelligibility Surveys

- Bansal (1969): 73% intelligibility rate with speakers of RP
- Smith and Rafiqzad 1979. 82% intelligibility rate by the speakers of US English



Indian Accent

- “You have an accent”: Unconscious and social reflection of bias and power relationship
- Translation: You are different from me and I am better than you
- Who does not have an accent?

Correct: If one have physiological disability (mute)



Phonetic and Phonological Features

- Lack of aspiration in the word-initial position:
cat [k] but not [kh]
- Kanpur
- Reason: 4-way phonemic contrast
 - kan* 'ear': unvoiced unaspirated velar
 - khan* 'donkey': Unvoiced aspirated velar
 - gan* 'song': voiced aspirated velar
 - ghan* 'put into': voiced aspirate velar



Retroflexion

- Alveolar Consonants: t, d → Retroflex consonant
 - October 'month'
 - September
 - December



Lack of Interdental

- Thank you
- That

Some Fricatives are replaced by bilabials

- Fail



Pronunciation: Close to Written Form

- Segment or syllable deletion in Native Spoken varieties
 - Toronto
 - King
 - Niagara Falls



Different Stress and Intonation System

- Engineer
- Development

- Rhythm: based on Long and short syllable rather than stressed, and not stressed syllable
- Syllable-time language with 'sing-song' characteristics



Grammar

- Reduplication: small small favor
- Countability of Non-Counts
 - Furnitures, luggages
- Addition of Prepositions/particles
 - Everyone is dismissing off my proposal



Discourse Style

- Indirect

Outraging the Modesty of Girls = *Rape

- "Directness in presenting the point, very little stylistic ornamentation, and emphasis on the information content" not prerequisite; (Kachru)



Discourse Style: Cross-Cultural Communication

- Subrahmaniam observes, "alliterations, similes and metaphors are abound in the ordinary descriptive passages in our languages...we are fascinated by embellished expressions...we equate objectivity and matter-of-factness with dullness,"



How to say 'yes'

- *Question-Answering System*

Hasn't the president left for Nairobi?

- *Native English System*

- Yes, he has left for Nairobi

- No, he hasn't left for Nairobi.

- *Indian System*

- Yes, he hasn't left for Nairobi

- No, he has left for Nairobi.



Non-verbal vs. Verbal 'yes'

- Right to left head movement
- More agreement more movement
- Verbal 'yes' does not mean agreement or endorsement; but 'back channel'
 - Translation=I am listening to you



Kinship and Hospitality

- Brother or sister: A vender might call his/her female customer—sister (not any reference to kinship)
- Joint family system: extended family 'brothers' and 'sisters'
- "Jennifer, eat properly"; reference to quantity; *no reference to table manners.



English Mixed with Indian Languages

- Greetings:
namaste, how are you?
- Handshake: Optional but avoid handshake with women



Conclusions

- Indian English is a colorful varieties which is different from either British or American English.
- High degree of intelligibility
- Transmission of English
- Indian English will continues to assert on the global scenes—a major player in global communication



Test your knowledge of Global English

- Parties: you drink 'punch'
- Black Tie dinners: men wear 'kamarband'
- Shampoo
- Pundits (experts ← Indian caste system)
- Mantra