CHAPTER II

THE
PHONOLOGY
OF
INDIAN ENGLISH
It is a commonplace observation that India is a country of continental dimensions with a rich variety of languages and cultures. Describing the Indianization of a foreign language, Kachru observes:

'The linguistically and culturally pluralistic Indian subcontinent provides two primary cases of language acculturation which involve the Indianization of foreign languages. In chronological terms, the first case is that of a Persian language, and the second, that of English. The result of such acculturation is the development of two distinct non-native Indian varieties of these two languages, termed Indian Persian and Indian English. These terms are used both in geographical sense and in a linguistic sense'.

1
We are not concerned here with the discussion of Indian Persian but the analogy of Indian English with Indian Persian is important to understand the process of Indianization of a foreign language. The linguistic characteristics of Indian English are evident in the sound system or the phonology of language, as they are evident at all levels as well. As we have mentioned in the earlier chapter, English was transplanted in a multilingual society where every important language in India has a rich tradition of literature dating back to very remote times. During a long period of interaction the process of Indianization went on. But it is not a uniform process with homogeneous pan-Indian characteristic acceptable all over the country and intelligible to various language communities. Indianization of English at various levels bears the mark of the influence of the Indian languages. With the result of many varieties of Indian English, particularly in the spoken form, may be said to have emerged. Each variety of Indian English is influenced by a major language of the region and its sound system. But the plurality of English varieties is often referred to in lighter vein. There are as many varieties of Indian
English as there are languages. We have already made a passing reference to Hinglish (The English of the Hindi speakers), the Benglish (The English of the Bengali speakers), Tamlish (The English of the Tamil speakers) and so on and on. Since several varieties of English spoken, linguists and phoneticians talk of the mutual intelligibility of English among various language communities. It is generally presumed that the English spoken by a Tamilian or a Malayali is not completely intelligible to English knowing Hindi or Bengali speaker. Further it is also said that English spoken in India is not intelligible to the native speakers of English, because its regional language bound variations. At this point it would be relevant for us to dwell upon the problem of intelligibility of Indian English, before we proceed further to describe its phonology.

INTELLIGIBILITY OF INDIAN ENGLISH :-

Discussing the problem of intelligibility of Indian English, Kachru makes two questions,1) whether
Indian English is intelligible to Indians all over the country. Whether it is intelligible to educated native speakers of English from America or England. Bansal comments:

'Indian English as spoken by educated people in India does not differ radically from native English in grammar and vocabulary. But in pronunciation it is very different from either British or American English, and even within India there are a large number of regional varieties, each different from others in certain ways and retaining to some extent the phonetic patterns of the Indian language spoken in that particular region'.

Kachru answers his first question that if can be claimed that standard or educated Indian English has pan Indian intelligibility although his English reveals some regional characteristics of his mother tongue. He answers the second question by saying that Indian English is intelligible to native speakers of English to a varied degree.
Bansal in his 'Study of Intelligibility of Indian English' conducts tests for measuring intelligibility between three varieties of speakers of English. 1) Indian English speakers and native speakers and the Received Pronunciation 2) Indian English speakers and other non-native speakers of English like Germans and Nigerians. 3) Indian English speakers and other Indian speakers. The conclusion of the study is tabulated as below.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Highest%</th>
<th>Lowest%</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Indian English &amp; R.P speakers (group)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Indian English &amp; R.P speakers (cline of intelligibility)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indian English &amp; American English speakers</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Indian English &amp; German speakers</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Indian English speakers &amp; Nigerians</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There have been a considerable number of studies on phonetics and phonology of South Asian English. These studies are mainly about the regional varieties of South Asian English where the L1 of the speaker is treated on a point of reference. Bansal made one of the earliest attempts to describe the phonology of Indian English.

The phonological deviations of Indian English are determined by the phonetic and phonological structures of L1 or the mother tongue of the speaker. These deviations are on the segmental and suprasegmental phonemes. In a multilingual society like India, it is not easy to arrive
at a common phonological system of pan Indian English. Every learner of English approximates the sounds of L2 to the nearest convenient sound of L1. The following is an attempt to find some common features at the phonological and phonetic levels. In spite of the regional diversities of Indian English determined by L1, it is postulated that there are some common core phonological features which serve as unifying force and which give a measure of intelligibility to Indian learners of English. Considering the geographical size of the country and the large number of mother tongues involved, such common core phonological features may be described as phonological mini-universals. In describing the phonology of Indian English, the measure of distance between Indian and British Englishes is more often implied than explicitly stated.

THE VOWELS OF INDIAN ENGLISH :-

Indian English vowels obviously determined by the mother tongues of the speakers. It is natural that there is a wide variation from one language community to
another, and within the same language community, from one region to another. In spite of such divergencies Indian English can be said to have a fairly uniform pattern. Bansal isolates 11 vowels and 6 diphthongs in the English spoken by educated Indians. The British standard English has 12 vowels and 9 diphthongs. However, our present study isolates the following vowel system of Indian English.

1. /i:/ --- front, close, long vowel. It is easily pronounced by speakers of all Indian languages. Examples,

   i:t  (eat)
   si:t  (seat)
   fi:  (fee)
   mi:t  (meat)
   t i:f  (chief), etc.

2. /i/ === front, close, short vowel (slightly less front and less closed than No.1). This is available in many Indian languages and therefore it is easily pronounced by Indian speakers wherever it urs in English. Examples,


3. /e:/

This is a front, half close and half open long vowel. This is not available in British English. Since it is available in most Indian languages it is frequently heard in Indian English as in the following words.

- ate  (e:kt)
- ape  (aːp)
- ale  (eːl)
- gate (gæt)
- say  (seɪ)
- pay  (peɪ)
- tray (træ), etc.
4. /e/  
This is a front, half close and half open short vowel. The British English variety is slightly more open than the Indian variety which almost the short version of No.3. However, there are different allophonic variations of this sound in various regions of India.

edible (edibl)
bed  (bed)
met  (met)
set  (set)
pen  (pen) etc.

5. /æ/  
a front, nearly open vowel. This is not available in any Indian language. But most Indians manage to pronounce it with reasonable degree of correctness although it differs from one linguistic group to another.

axe  (æks)
ant  (ænt)
action (ækʃən)
6. /a :/

- an open, between front and back, long vowel. This is available in most Indian languages and is therefore pronounced correctly in Indian English.

- actor (əkˈtər)
- mad (mæd)
- cat (kæt) etc.

7. /ɔ:/

- This is a back, between half close and half open, long vowel. This is available in some Indian languages. This is not available in British English. Indian English sound is substitute of an English diphthong ɔu. This is available in Indian English in the following words.
oh (oʊ) 
home (hoʊm) 
road (roʊd) 
roll (roʊl) 
cold (koʊld) 
go (goʊ) 
so (soʊ) 
know (noʊ) etc.

8. /u/ back, nearly closed, short vowel. Available in many Indian languages and therefore it is easy to pronounce in Indian English.

book (bʊk) 
cook (kʊk) 

9. /uː/ back, nearly close, long vowel. Available in many Indian languages and therefore it is easy to pronounce in Indian English.
rule (ruːl)
wool (wʊl)
shoe (ʃuː)

10. /ə/ short, central vowel. This is not available in Indian languages. In Indian English it is used as a substitute for and : indiscriminately.
along (ə/əː) 
method (meθəd)
surprise (səˈpraɪz)
mother (ˈmʌðə)

These vowels can be shown on the conventional vowel diagram as given below.

DIPHTHONGS :-

Standard English has, according to Daniel Jones, 9 diphthongs or vowel glides. Indian English has only 6 diphthongs and they are:

1. /ai/ -- a closing diphthong which starts with /a/ and tapers off towards /i/. This is available in Indian
languages and is therefore a common sound in Indian English. Examples,

I (ai)
island (ailand)
bite (bail)
might (mail)
by (bai)
sky (skei)
try (trai)
cry (krai)

2. /au/ -- This is a closing diphthong. It starts with /a/ and glides towards /u/. This is available in many Indian languages and it is therefore a common sound in Indian English. Examples,

out (aul)
owl (aul)
house (haus)
cow (kaau)
how (haau)
3. /ɔi/  -- This begins with 'ɔ', which is not available in Indian English vowels and ends with /i/. This is pronounced in different allophonic variations in Indian English. Examples,

- oil (ɔɪl)
- ointment (ɔɪntment)
- boil (boɪl)
- soil (sɔɪl)
- toil (tɔɪl)
- boy (boɪ)

4. /iə/  -- This is a centering diphthong starting with /i/ and glides towards /ə/.

- ear (ɛə)
- fear (fiə)
- cheer (ʧiə)
- here (hiə)
- near (niə)
- sheer (ʃiə)
5. /æə/ — This is another centering diphthong. It starts with /æ/ and glides towards /ʊː/. Examples,

- air (æə)
- air port (æəpɔ:t)
- fair (feə)
- chair (tʃeə)

6. /uə/ — This begins with a back close vowel /u/ and glides towards central vowel /ə/. Examples,

- poor (pʊə)
- tourist (tʊərɪst)
- pure (pjuə)
- tour (tʊə)

The important deviations between the R.P. of British English and Indian English are as follows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Indian English has</th>
<th>In place of British R.P</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>e:</td>
<td>ei</td>
<td>fate (fe:t) gate (ge:t)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>o:</td>
<td>ou</td>
<td>home (ho:m) rode (ro:d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>η, θ:</td>
<td>bus (bus) bird (bird)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>a:</td>
<td>œ, ɔ:</td>
<td>god (gə:d) gaurd (gə:rd)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INDIAN ENGLISH CONSONANTS**

Consonants in British English are 24 in number. Most of these consonants are available in Indian English because they are by and large, available in many Indian languages. But in each language these consonants are pronounced differently according to its sound system. Indian English has 23 consonants. The following is their description with illustrative words.
1. /p/  -- Voiceless, unaspirated, bilabial, plosive. This is nearly like the British English sound but the difference is, in British English it is aspirated in the initial position while an average Indian English speaker does not aspirate it. Example,

pill (/pɪl/)  
apart (/ɑːpɔːt/)  
lip (/lɪp/)  

2. /b/  -- voiced, bilabial, plosive. The Indian English sound is exactly similar to the British counterpart. Example,

bill (/bɪl/)  
harbour (/ˈhæbə/)  
bulb (/bʌlb/)  

3. /th/  -- voiceless, aspirated, dental, plosive. This is a very common sound
in Indian languages. In Indian English this serves as a substitute of voiceless dental fricative /θ/ of British English. Example,

thin  (θhin)  
three  (θhri:)  
nothing  (ŋθhiŋ)  

4. /dh/ — voiced, dental, plosive in Indian English. The British English counterpart is voiced, dental, fricative /ð/. Examples,

then  (ðhên)  
breathe  (ðhi:ðh)  
other  (ʌðhə)  

5. /t/ — Voiceless, unaspirated alveolar plosive in Indian English. Since many Indian languages have a retroflex variety of this sound, in Indian English it is sometimes used as a retroflex. In British
English it is a voiceless, alveolar plosive aspirated in the initial position of the word. Examples,

- taught (tɔːt)
- matter (mætə)
- pat (pæt)

6. /d/ -- voiced, alveolar, plosive. Like /t/, it is sometimes pronounced as retroflex sound in Indian English. Examples,

- deed (diːd)
- old (ould)
- had (hæd)

7. /k/ -- voiceless, unaspirated velar plosive. In British English it is aspirated in the initial position. Examples,

- king (kɪŋ)
- scholar (skələr)
- talk (tɔk)
8. /g/  -- voiced velar plosive as in British English. Examples,
   go  ( ɡou )
   egg cup  ( eg knɨ )
   big  (  bɨɹ )

9. /t/  -- voiceless, palato-alveolar affricate, as it is in British English. Examples,
   Church  ( tjɨf )
   watch chain  ( wɔtʃ cɨrn )

10. /dʒ/  -- voiced, palato-alveolar affricate as it is in British English. Examples,
   judge  ( dʒ n dʒ )
   major  ( mei dʒ ɨ )

11. /ʃ/  -- voiceless, labio-dental, fricative as in British English. Its correct pronunciation in Indian English
depends upon the degree of correctness with which the sound is acquired. Average Indian students of English pronounce it as /ph/ because the sound is not available in most Indian languages. Examples,

foot (fut)
safe (sef)
diphthong (difəŋ)

12. /s/ -- voiceless, alveolar fricative as in British English. This is often pronounced as by some of the learners of Indian English. Examples,

acid (aсид)
seas (סי:ס)

13. /z/ -- voiced alveolar fricative as in British English. This is not available in many Indian languages
and so some Indian learners of English pronounce it as /dʒ/ or as its alveolar articulation /dʒ/.

Examples,

Zeal (z iːl) 
Choose (tʃjuːz) 
muslin (ˈmʌslɪn)

14. /ʃ/ -- voicless, alveolar fricative as in British English. But some Indian learners of English cannot distinguish between this sound and /s/ sound. Examples:–

shape (ʃeɪp) 
cushion (ˈkʌʃən) 
fashion (ˈfæʃən) 
fish (fɪʃ) 
rush (rʌʃ)

15. /ʒ/ -- A voiced alveolar fricative. It is exactly like /z/ in its manner and place of articulation. This is
not available in most Indian languages. Many Indian English learners confuse it with either z or with dʒ. Examples,

measure (mɛʒə)
pleasure (pleʒə)
garage (ɡərɑːʒ)

16. / h / -- voiced, glottal, fricative. In British English, however, it is mostly a voiceless sound. Examples,

who (huː)
heat (hɛt)
had (hæd)
behind (bɪhæɪnd)
perhaps (pəˈhɑːps)

17. / m / -- voiced, bilabial, nasal as in British English. It is one of the commonest sounds in Indian languages and therefore easy for
Indian students of English to pronounce. Examples,

- mail (mæl)
- milk (mɪlk)
- lamp (lamp)
- grammar (græmər)
- blame (blæm)
- dam (dæm)
- harm (hɑːm)

18. /n/ -- voiced, alveolar, nasal. Like 'm'

data common sound in Indian languages, English and Indian English. Examples,

- new (nju)
- nut (nʌt)
- pencil (pensil)
- canal (kənəl)
- rent (rent)
- paint (pɛint)
- sign (sain)
- chain (tʃein)
- pain (pɛin)
19. /ɨ/ — voiced, velar, nasal as in British English. Although it is difficult to pronounce it in isolation, many Indian students of English pronounce it with near correctness in the company of other sounds in a word. Examples:

- sing (sɪŋ) 
- king (kiŋ) 
- English (iŋɡliʃ) 
- ink (ɪŋk) 
- bank (bæŋk) 

20. /l/ — voiced, alveolar, lateral. In British English there are several shades of this sound. But in Indian English the allophonic variations of this sound are not heard (neutral l, dark l), only clear l variety is used. Examples:

- leave (li:v) 
- bell (bel)
little  ( lɪtɪl )
police  ( pəˈliːs )
delay  ( dɪˈleɪ )
call  ( kɔːl )
dull  ( dʌl )

21. /v/ -- This is not like British sound /v/ or /w/. On the contrary it replaces both the sounds. The Indian English sound is a voiced labiodental frictionless continuant. This is available wherever British /v/ and /w/ are used. Examples,

Walk  ( wɔːk )
what  ( wɔːt )
water  ( wɔːtə )
weak  ( wɛk )
van  ( væn )
vote  ( vɔːt )
very  ( ˈveri )
verb  ( ˈvɜːb )
22. /r/  -- In English R.P, this is a voiced alveolar, fricative. It has several varieties like linking r, instrusive r and in certain positions of the word it is not pronounced. In Indian English variety it is a voiced, post alveolar, frictionless continuant with no allophonic variations as found in R.P and pronounced in all positions in the word. Examples,

red (red)
hearing (hœraɪŋ)
brethren (breθrn)

23. /j/  -- voiced, palatal, semivowel as in British English, Examples,

yard  /joːd/
young /juŋ/  
yellow /jelou/
universe /juːnɪvəs/
DISTRIBUTION OF CONSONANTS

The distribution of consonants in Indian English differs to a remarkable extent from the distribution available in British R.P.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO</th>
<th>SUBSTITUTION</th>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>PRONUNCIATION</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R.P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>missed</td>
<td>mist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>asked</td>
<td>a:skt</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>laughed</td>
<td>la:ft</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>backed</td>
<td>b:skt</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>faced</td>
<td>feist</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wrapped</td>
<td>m:pt</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>of</td>
<td>a:v</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>have</td>
<td>h:z:v</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>never</td>
<td>n:e:v</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>way</td>
<td>w:ei</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>away</td>
<td>z:wei</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>midwife</td>
<td>mid w:af</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wife</td>
<td>w:af</td>
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<td>#</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>RP</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>think</td>
<td>əɪŋk</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/θ/ for R.P/θ/</td>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>məθaɪŋ</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>this</td>
<td>əθs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/dθ/ for R.P/θ/</td>
<td>that</td>
<td>əθt</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>those</td>
<td>əθəʊz</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>breathe</td>
<td>əθriə</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>conservative</td>
<td>ˈkənsəˌvətɪv</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/z/ for R.P.</td>
<td>purpose</td>
<td>pəˈzəs</td>
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<td>/s/</td>
<td></td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>gods</td>
<td>ɡədz</td>
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<td>/s/ for R.P/z/</td>
<td>toys</td>
<td>ˈtoʊs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in inflectional</td>
<td>boys</td>
<td>ˈbəʊz</td>
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<td></td>
<td>suffixes where</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td>ˈɡɜlz</td>
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<td>the suffix is</td>
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<td>preceded by</td>
<td>a voiced sound</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>mutton</td>
<td>ˈmʌtn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>/æn/ for the</td>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>ˈmɪltn</td>
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<td></td>
<td>syllabic /n/</td>
<td>sudden</td>
<td>ˈsʌndən</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in R.P</td>
<td>person</td>
<td>ˈpɜrson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>apple</td>
<td>ˈæpl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/æ/ for the</td>
<td>metal</td>
<td>ˈmetl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syllabic /l/</td>
<td>kettle</td>
<td>ˈkɛltl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in R.P</td>
<td>travel</td>
<td>ˈtrævl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Indian English</td>
<td>roses</td>
<td>ˈroʊzəz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/es/ in place</td>
<td>searches</td>
<td>ˈsɛtʃəz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of RP /iz/ in</td>
<td>misses</td>
<td>ˈmɪzəz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suffixes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Other Phonetic Characteristics of Indian English

a) Consonant clusters:

Some Indian learners of English find it difficult to pronounce initial and final clusters like St, Sp, SK, Sl. They either break the cluster into independent consonants with an intervening vowel between them or use an intrusive 'i' before the initial cluster. This, however, is not a pan Indian characteristic, but it confines to those who have acquired a lower level of proficiency in Spoken English.

School - ischool (sku:l-isku:l)
School - sachool (sku:l-saku:l)

b) Elision of Syllables:

Elision is an omission of certain syllables within a word. In this process some sounds are elided making the sounds on either side of the elided ones come into immediate neighbourhood. This happens generally in rapid speech. But this is one of the important sources of unintelligibility of Indian English to R.P and other varieties of English speakers. Some of the examples are:
English is a stress timed language whereas Indian languages are syllable timed languages. Coming under the influence of a syllable timed characteristic of Indian languages, Indian English has acquired a distinct rhythm based on arranging long and short syllables in place of stressed and unstressed syllables. The wrong placement of stress is one of the sources of unintelligibility of Indian English. Some of the examples of Indian English stress pattern are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>R.P.</th>
<th>Indian English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>'kæriktə</td>
<td>kə'riktə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortnight</td>
<td>fɔːt'naɪt</td>
<td>fɔːt'naɪt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hesitate</td>
<td>həzɪ'tet</td>
<td>həzɪ'tet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manage</td>
<td>mænɪdʒ</td>
<td>mænɪdʒ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>record</td>
<td>rɪ'kɔːd</td>
<td>rɪ'kɔːd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Please give me a cup of coffee (I.E. pattern)
   Please give me a cup of coffee (R.P. pattern)

4. I know what you mean (I.E. pattern)
   I know what you mean (R.P. pattern)

5. What are you talking about? (I.E. pattern)
   What are you talking about? (R.P. pattern)

The stress marked words in these sentences indicate the nucleus of the utterance which differs in Indian English from R.P.

Like several varieties of English spoken or learnt in different parts of the world, the Indian variety has its own distinct phonological system. There are deviations in pronunciations from R.P. However, the phonological system described above is not the same in all the language groups. It is an extracted form isolated from various regional varieties of English spoken in different parts of India by different groups. What we have suggested above should indicate the broad pattern. The details
may change. It must be mentioned here that the Indian English described above is the English of average Indian whose level of proficiency has not grown beyond certain level. Those who have had English education in English medium schools and public schools in India or abroad attain a much higher level of proficiency. Their English does not fall under the category of Indian English described in this chapter. As an average Indian learner of English rises on the scale of proficiency the degree of unintelligibility of his English gets reduced. In positive terms as his English rises on the scale of proficiency it becomes more and more intelligible to fellow Indians who speak other languages, those who learn English as second language, as well as the native speakers of English.
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