Abstract

This study has been undertaken in the context of the growing interest in the study of non-native Englishes. It attempts to describe the characteristic features of some written varieties of educated Indian English and examines some of the processes involved in the development of Indian English.

Part I of this dissertation begins with a discussion of the current linguistic scene which makes a study of this kind a valid undertaking. It also presents a sociolinguistic perspective on Indian English and discusses broadly the status of English in India today, the functions it performs in the multilingual situation of the country, and the nature of the changes it has undergone, and is likely to undergo, as a transplanted variety in a different culture. A survey of some earlier studies of Indian English in the areas of phonology, lexis and syntax has been attempted in Chapter III.

In Part II of this dissertation we present an analysis of the syntactic, lexical and stylistic features including those of cohesion found in a sample of written texts. Our sample consists of articles from 'The Illustrated Weekly of
India' and 'Letters to the Editor' from various newspapers with a circulation at the national and regional levels. This corpus, running to a total of approximately 3,60,000 words, represents 3 subvarieties of educated Indian Written English. The sources from which this corpus is gathered ensure that it is fairly representative of all parts of the country.

Treating Indian English as a continuum or a cline along which a number of varieties exist from those approximating native varieties to those which are pidgin-like, we have isolated 3 arbitrary points between the central and the ambilingual ones, each represented by a section of the corpus selected for our analysis. We hypothesized that since the 3 points on the cline we are examining represent 3 different levels of competence, the incidence of Indianisms should increase as we move lower down the cline. The primary objective of our investigation was to discover what some of these features of IE are whose incidence increases as we move down the cline and to examine whether the differences between the different varieties is merely quantitative or is qualitative as well.

Our investigation of the written varieties of English used by educated Indian bilinguals reveals that a larger proportion of deviations in IE occur in the areas of lexis,
collocation, style/register and cohesion taken together than in the area of syntax. A statistical summary of our findings shows that the total number of deviations is 3236. Of these, deviations in syntax are 1520, and those in lexis, collocation, style/register and cohesion put together are 1716. Of the total number of 1520 syntactic deviations, those with respect to articles, prepositions, tense, modals and N+N type constructions alone amount to 1158. Deviations in the remaining syntactic categories put together number only 362. This confirms our hypothesis that at this level, Indian English does not differ markedly from native varieties of written English with respect to the central grammatical system. The major syntactic differences occur only in certain restricted areas.

With respect to syntactic as well as non-syntactic deviations an overall pattern emerges in that a large number of features show a noticeably higher incidence of deviation in section III, than in section I, thus indicating that as we move to points lower down the cline the difference seems to be by and large quantitative in nature. However, the incidence of deviations due to the absence of cohesion, due to awkwardness of expression and clumsy syntax in section III of our corpus make for a qualitative difference as well.
Furthermore, an examination of the possible sources of deviations leading to the development of this variety reveals that it is a product of the combined processes of $L_1$ interference, sociolinguistic factors and certain psycholinguistic processes underlying second language learning, the last mentioned being more prominent and widespread in their influence. In fact, our study leads us to conclude that while $L_1$ interference is perhaps the most obvious factor in the beginning stages of learning a second language - particularly its phonology - and that while a sizeable proportion of lexical and collocational innovations can be traced to socio-cultural factors, at the level we are describing IE, a large part of the total number of deviations, both in lexis and grammar, can be ascribed to intra-lingual interference, and to processes of second-language acquisition. Our study thus demonstrates that an approach which combines insights from linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics is necessary in order to arrive at a proper understanding of a second language variety such as Indian English.