CHAPTER 5

Establishing Indian English: The Results

Discussion of Results and Concluding Section

5.1 Interpretations

Section A

“What to do, we are like this only…” goes the subheading of an Asian Age article Aug 17, 03). The line is from the article titled Hindi English by David Gardner, borrowed from the Spectator. The expression ‘only’ in an Indian’s speech has acquired the status of a metaphor, as much as ‘You like it, isn’t it?, ‘I am having (sic) three brothers’ and ‘I live on your backside’. In the context of the survey on IE variants, I included the word ‘only’ to assess if my respondents, most of them English-educated cosmopolitan Indians, would accept it for the BA-II English Compulsory classroom. 50 percent of them did accept it for inclusion in the pedagogic model, close in line with Kachru’s (in Baumgardner 1995) statement, “the attitudinal conflict between indigenous and external norms is slowly being resolved in favour of localized (educated norms).” All the respondents recognize the presence of the entity called IE, because if they did not they would have rejected the Indian variants out right as did the famous writer and journalist, Khushwant Singh, who I included as a special commentator. On the other hand, the British linguist, another special commentator, accepted 50 percent of them.

The assessment of my Survey led to the following key interpretations:

- IE is not one homogenous body but has multiple variations and it cannot be accepted or rejected as a whole.
A sizeable number of respondents, a little over 50 percent of those who answered, accept Indian usages in the BA English Compulsory course.

Coinage of lexical items within the rules of SBE was accepted in near totality by the respondents, for instance bride-burning, lumpenisation, etc.

Some of the other interpretations were as follows:

- Respondents accepted maximum number of Indian lexical variants and minimum number of syntactic variants.
- Generally, the respondents were not great sticklers over missing intruding articles/prepositions, etc.
- Students were most liberal in accepting Indian usages and also the most doubtful, ie in larger numbers as compared to the other groups. In brief, they rarely rejected any items.
- Linguists were more liberal to Indian usages than teachers and journalists.
- Journalists were almost never in doubt, they either accepted or rejected the variants.

IE, like all languages, possesses a range of varieties and variants, forms and expressions which are popular as usages within the community, ie dilliwallas and peculiar to an individual, ie silk strides. While some of the variants are stigmatized, such as Uncleji, certain variants are considered normal and enjoy prestige, like bride-burning IE has freshly coined usages like shilanyas puja, which is taken as a positive growth of the variety. On the other hand it continues to suffer with the status-quo syndrome. It needs to do some load-shedding in the context of colonial lag, eg 'Honourable' chief guest and 'worthy' guests or I 'beg' to state. It can sometimes twist an idiom, 'I don't like his face'
into a third person account of 'Bush may not like the face of Mr Saddam' and get away with it. It exhibits creativity in yo-yoness and saffronspeak which is as yet at the individual level, but then that is how all varieties grow. In brief it pulsates with the energy of inventiveness, in Gardner's words (2003). It may apply a semantic shift such as in ‘tension’ (to mean pressure/ worry/ obsession/ sense of responsibility, etc), use archaic terms like ‘opine’, victorian terms like ‘countenance’ for face, and babuisms like ‘a change of guard is on the anvil’. But it also engages in creativity by code switching “within regular grammatical” constraints, says Bhatt (1996). IE certainly needs to rid itself of instances of large scale embeddings and complex sentence structures, characteristic of the educated south Asians literary style. An NRI Arundhati from Chicago while complementing the writer of an article on several fronts showed reservations on the difficulty level of words/ sentence structure and length of sentences in Outlook (April 14,03). “Much of what’s wrong with Indian writings in English is that they seem to be writing for themselves ....” she says. She advises the writer, “Use grandiose terms selectively and if you do, clarify it in parenthesis...”

On the basis of the findings, I would like to state that when recommending the inclusion of Indian variants in the classroom and formulation of an Indian model of English, no respondent suggests a complete replacement of SBE. They are all in general agreement on the combination of SBE and IE. Such a usage can already be seen in the national level Indian newspapers and magazines. Change is the only reality and has to be accepted as Mc Crum et al said in the book, The Story of English, “English is—and always has been—in a state of ungovernable change.”
Changes occur because language is inseparable from the community it is used in; the changes are utility-oriented and the variety is a product, which exists in the service of the community. The change in IE is systematic in nature.

Another significant finding to remember is that while most of the clines of variety description are hierarchy conscious, chiefly set in the 60’s-80’s period, the present day adult world tends to accept and even welcome all kinds of variations. If it was not so, IE would not be reflected in the media which is the voice of the people, for the people and by the people. It is an established truth that a number of editorial writing contributors are not regular employees of the newspapers.

IE has become well integrated in the bastions of English language in nearly all areas of operation. The best examples of IE before us are the print media and the classroom, which were once considered ‘formal’ domains. The so called formal domains have shown convergence over the last decade. The print media and the classroom have become less ‘formal’. And variations have become more acceptable in these domains.

Another point to note is in reference to subject response. The youth loves to experiment with life, with a language variety, and is the most open minded. As goes the adage, ‘the future is theirs’, we may as well accept the idea that they may promote unbridled flow of variants into English in India with many more variants occurring rapidly. Teachers, as a community, were the least emphatic in expressing opinions on the variants. They need to give this aspect a thought because the trends are towards bringing the teacher forward, in educational planning by involving them in all stages of educational operations, in fact making all educational projects teacher-driven. They need to train themselves to think more clearly about the presence of IE in the classroom. The linguists reflected well-
defined views, which they could support with arguments. The journalists as a community are never in doubt.

Section B

Pertaining to the section on excerpts in the survey conducted, some linguists and teachers have advocated the use of literary texts located in the Indian cultural setting, using the type of language used in day to day communication. Languages are not “entities with an independent existence”, they are “social constructs” that are linked to what people perform (Pakir 2000 at IAWE conference in Gupta 2001). Therefore teaching learners English embedded in British literature makes the task of teaching English many times more remote and ineffective.

Certain features inherent in classical literature “would prove counter productive in the teaching of language,” says Nagpal (in Agnihotri 1995:90.) He goes to the extent of recommending translations of vernacular literatures. Learning English is like learning a SL for the upper classes in India, but it is still a FL for the masses. Learning such a language requires affinity with the culture of the content, aesthetic and literary sensibilities, which may evolve better through the study of one’s own literature. The foreign aesthetics make learners feel like outsiders in their own region—when in the English Compulsory class.

The idea is to learn English language and not English literature, as Ramanathan discusses in some detail (in Chelliah 2001) that the practice of teaching English literature rather than English language leads to the withholding of English from the already disadvantaged in India. Language teaching brings authentic language to the classroom, literary art
assumes maturity in reference to linguistic abilities and worldly experiences. We cannot teach literary art without doubting whether or not the learner is competent enough in the language under consideration.

Additionally, the selection of a model and relevant materials should be such that it minimizes hurdles, diversions, webs and traps. This relates to the contents that carry the model. The model and its contents should attract the learners, not repel them by frightening them with their ideational and linguistic complexity. However, it is important to remember that not all newspaper materials are acceptable pieces and not all journalistic writings make great teaching tools. They need to be worked on piece by piece. They are more acceptable because they fulfill a range of expectations of a model and the conditions of its elaboration, expansion, dissemination, etc. The English Compulsory course learners represent the masses who need to learn English to communicate with the masses. So why not use a medium of mass communication which meets the maximum number of requirements, is cheap and easily accessible.

5.2 Implications

The findings indicate that the community, which deals with the English language, is prepared to accept a range of Indianisms in the classroom. The whole concept of legitimizing socio-cultural usages of the local languages in English has been generating much heat at linguistic forums and cocktail circles alike. A subject that can arouse interest in various quarters cannot be non-controversial. In that case the acceptability of the Indian variants in English cannot materialize without implications. A close look at the implications expected follows.
5.2.1 Question of Intelligibility

Linguists and teachers all over the world have projected varied opinions over mutual intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability among different varieties of English, if BE had to diversify into fragments of varieties scattered all over the world. King (1982) voices sincere concern over “English disintegrating into incomprehensible dialects”. No doubt digressions occur in native varieties too but users of SL varieties are said to lack the intuition and spontaneity shared by NL users in language growth. SL varieties are susceptible to extensive digressions since they are constantly exposed to cross-cultural and cross-linguistic situations. Moreover, they are said to grow too fast and into too many off-shoots which need to be pruned with care. Therefore, it is suggested that non-native speakers follow SBE. It is believed that a prescriptive model like SBE therefore becomes a vital need for them under such circumstances. This is where the print media steps in.

For centuries, the newspaper has served as a model for its readers. The national level dailies in India may carry Indianisms, but they are representatives of the educated IE variety which various studies have quoted as intelligible internationally (Bansal 1969, Sridhar 1989). Print media belongs to the formal domain of language use. It always maintains quality control and intelligibility watch since it has to connect with the media and the audience at the international level. While newspapers register the flux in the society, they are also said to be its stabilizing instruments, as they belong to the formal domain of language use. In that capacity, they are conservative even though they perpetuate change. Trudgill (2002:129-135) recommends the acceptance of IE as it
appears in newspapers in the classroom. A study taken up by Smith and Rafiqzad (1983) in which 1386 subjects participated discovered that:

Diversity in varieties of educated English certainly exists but international interactions in business, diplomacy, education, travel and politics basically limit this diversity to phonology and vocabulary, not grammar. Therefore even non-native variety users are intelligible across cultures provided they are educated.

This means we do not have to curb the natural growth of a variety as vibrant as IE in the fear of losing intelligibility.

Verma (1982) emphasizes that the variety used in India does not inhibit communication and is capable of clarity, complexity, power and tenderness. It is also important to remember that most Indians will not have to communicate with people outside India. And when I plead for the cause of modern English as sampled in the print media for learners of BA English Compulsory course, it is on the basis that most of them will not have to communicate with an Anglo-Saxon community or with an international audience. If they have to, such a model as suggested by me, will equip them with enough competence to keep heavily regional usages aside while they communicate with an audience such as that. What is important is that such a model will teach them to use the language fluently even if within a limited linguistic range.

5.2.2 Question of Proficiency

English also serves as a library language and teachers have expressed concern that if students do not go through the rounds of Shakespeare, Milton, Austen, etc they will be
adversely affected in their knowledge gathering activities. It is quite beyond my comprehension though as to how learners can become more competent in reading, writing and speaking by reading the Shakespearean model of English than the one carried by our reputed newspapers. I have already discussed the cline of proficiency given by Kachru in an earlier chapter. It is a scale of measuring linguistic competence at three levels, ie the higher variety, the lower variety and the intermediate variety. I believe that by taking newspaper English to the classroom we will not be giving them ‘limited’ language. The language will no doubt be simpler as compared to the range of language manoeuvrability exercised by literary texts. It will not be as rich as the language of literature in its semantic and pragmatic span. It will not be as complex in its syntactic constructions, as displayed in literary works. In that case we will be depriving this set of learners a range of opportunities of learning high-flown English. The debate here is not between a lot of English and some English. The debate here is between a lot of English and practically very little or no English. As stated earlier, at least 50 percent of the syllabus is tackled in the exams by cramming from badly written guides. With the texts sampling a modern day, living model of English in such fresh writings as those of the newspapers/ magazines, there is hope the learners will learn to use at least a certain amount of language without leaning on the guides. If we evolve a model with Indian variants and teach our BA English Compulsory students through it, it is likely they will connect with the books at once and achieve the competence associated with the level of the Intermediate variety.
5.2.3 Question of Class Distinction

All the dines, i.e., those of bilingualism, intelligibility, and proficiency are qualitative clines projecting class distinction. In other words, one's placing on the cline and on the socio-economic-educational ladder are closely associated. More often than not, a second division-passed student from a public school background gets a better job placement in comparison to his counterpart from a vernacular medium school since the English the former knows comes closer to SBE while the other person's is close to a contact variety/continuum dialect. In fact, English has created a ghetto of the bilingual elite. Kingman (1988) sees this in the context of his own country, the UK. According to him, allowing learners to be content with just the local dialect will only lead to:

- trapping students in their present social and ethnic sectors and ...  
- creating a barrier to their educational progress, their career prospects,  
- their social and geographical mobility.

In India, the deficiencies retained in competence drive learners to private teaching shops of English. What is supposed to be acquired at subsidized rates in schools/colleges is bought from the coaching academies. It is important to understand that though such a class distinction exists between the two sets of learners, it can be minimized. The way out is to introduce an indigenous contemporary model of English, which an average learner will tune to more easily. Such a model will equip the learner with communicative proficiency, with which he will be able to come somewhere in the intermediate level of proficiency. With proficiency level well suited to his job requirement such an individual will not have to compete with their counterparts of public school background on the scale
of quality of English known. What will be relevant in such contexts is fluency of expression, which the new model should be able to provide.

5.3 Recommendations

The solution, at least one of them, to such problems lies in formulating a definite pedagogic model. This requires selection of a variety or varieties and their standardization. Such a step is likely to meet opposition from the users. With democracy being the norm of life in India and language being every user's personal tool of expression, imposing prescriptive conventions amounts to trespassing in the area of "liberation linguistics" (Kachru 1990) which accords liberty to linguistic growth. The process of standardization will have to be democratic in attitude rather than dictatorial. In an attempt to put forth a pedagogic model, the selection of a variety/varieties would have to be made from among the numerous functional sub-varieties along the various clines, ie' the cline of bilingualism, the cline of proficiency, the cline of intelligibility, etc with due recognition given to the concept of "multi-identities" of English. Those occupying the upper sections of the clines, and communicate with an international audience, hardly represent a variety that is viable in the present day circumstances in India. English is no longer an elite preserve. At the other end, the lowest levels demonstrating pidgin-use need not be considered either. In the slot of the intermediate level varieties, the lower portion comprising mesolects can be overlooked too as it offers a limited range of usage and register and is quite unintelligible even intra-nationally. It is demonstrative of "semilingualism", "fossilization", "deficit linguistics", etc. That leaves out the acrolects, also referred to as educated IE, an acrolang or edulect, which does not represent any
particular region but particular classes of people, “bilinguals” if not “ambilinguals”, who
use this variety, displaying a fairly high level of competence and intelligibility, both
within and outside the country. Educated IE is no fixed variety either. It comprises sub-
varieties used by members of various classes and regions across the country and will need
to be standardized.
Standardization will involve the codification of rules. This practice lends a stamp of
acceptability to usages. Dictionaries and books defining rules and patterns of
pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary and grammar along with discoursal descriptions have
to be produced and made accessible and understandable for use to commoners.
Standardization need not “eliminate diversities”--- it has to only “control” them
(Ferguson in Das Gupta and Gumperz 1986) There is no need to attempt to “purify” IE
like the way textbook writers seem to have done in the case of Hindi in some English
medium schools (Bal Bharti, etc: NCERT Publications). That is an instance of
Sanskritized Hindi rather than ‘Living Hindi’ or Hindustani (Hindi with a fair sprinkling
of Urdu words). For a variety to become acceptable and viable in a situation where it is
learnt in schools rather than acquired from environment, the descriptions have to be
exhaustive at all levels. But in the case of IE only phonology was taken up scientifically
(Bansal 1969)—that too mainly at the segmental level. The other linguistic levels, ie
lexical, syntactic, semantic and discoursal have not been described fully, systematically,
and convincingly. Some work has been put in the lexical area by Nihalani et al (1979)
Hosali et al (1989) but an immense lot has yet to be done. A controlled use of MT
equivalents has to be prescribed. Compilation of the Kolhapur corpus (Shastri 1988) is of
significant importance and should yield worthwhile results too. In the area of style too
weather-beaten idioms and proverbs, cliches, Latinity, humble diction, bookishness, etc have to be replaced with language of the living world. In the syntactic area, a linguistic analysis of deviations has to be made to classify them under acceptable and unacceptable categories. By and large, the core grammar of IE is the same as that of SBE, and ought to be retained as it is. Erratic use of articles and prepositions resulting from simplification or generalization of rules which actually reflects deficiency in learning cannot be standardized in the name of nativization. However, as they affect the meaning value of the message just marginally, we may be more considerate towards them.

At this stage I would like to come to the specifics. My recommendations are for those learners who come with little competence at the entry level of BA. They stay almost equally incompetent at the exit level of BA. Keeping such findings in mind, it is important that we evolve a multi-model approach, thereby preparing different models for teaching English to different sets of learners. We have to make sure that every model has an inherent capacity to meet the functional demands of an adult in professional and social settings. An indigenous contemporary model of English for students of English Compulsory course that every Indian undergraduate must study will be different from the one studied by learners aspiring to pursue creative writing, MA in English, etc.

Such a model should capture the written language used in national level newspapers, magazines, short stories, essays by modern writers, scripts of documentaries, interviews, speeches, correspondence, etc. The language should be simple, fresh, imaginative not stilted or prosaic, literary or contrived. The model should neither be global, for hardly any of these students need to learn to communicate with an international audience. It can be local and at the most be glocal (Okushima 1995:2 in Yano 2001) if not local. ‘Glocal’
models are a blend of the global and local. The local model can be ushered toward the global model. Such a step can also help us tackle the malice of class-distinction arising from differences in English proficiency. It can change mindsets and foster language based equality, as students can be put on different courses based on different models, ie a model for English Compulsory/ Elective English/ Engineering students, and so on, each as respectable as the other. The diagram below depicts the concept.

Fig 7 Multi-Model Planning

Such a multi-model approach will dilute if not neutralize the association of class distinction linked with English and replace the cline of proficiency where competence is linked with socio-economic hierarchy.
As stated earlier Petzold (2003: 422-26) defines a pedagogic model as a simplified and idealized system of language used by educated speakers, which is codified in the form of dictionary and other resources. Such a model can retain the grammatical structures of SBE, ie words like *lumpenisation* can be standardized. The model should be inclusive not exclusive in attitude of certain Indian discoursal features. It should be based in the present, therefore it should rid itself of the Victorian and colonial lag, complexities, avoidable regional/ local features and resemble the variety used by the metropolitan/ cosmopolitan English-educated Indian.

Nuclear model, utilitarian model, communicative model, etc are being proposed for nations with new Englishes. An indigenous model such as the one suggested should be quite in order. There is a proposal for an approximate model, given below, for English Compulsory courses.
To bring in fresh communicative language to the classroom, mainly indigenous sources such as texts from the print media, articles from the Internet, periodicals, magazines, and
some fictional and non-fictional works can be used. They should capture language in varied settings like law, politics, art, culture, commerce, science and environment. While enriching the learner’s vocabulary, grammar and cultivating stylistic features, the model should be practised with the skills such as listening and speaking, reading (intensive and extensive) and writing (creative and functional).

To acquire communicative competence, with little exposure to English in one’s social and cultural milieu, literature hardly proves to be a good enough source. I recommend the use of newspapers for the formulation of model a and its distribution, its spread because newspapers use communicative language which is contemporary and resides in the current topics like female foeticide, coffin scam, Kumbh mela stampede, etc. They have multiple writers and views and enjoy a fabulous accessibility to and from millions of readers. Each newspaper produces about 100,000 words a day and can make itself understood fairly well. Baumgardner (1987) emphasizes the value of utilizing Pakistani newspaper English to teach grammar, since newspapers are naturally “home-grown” they reflect the national (and even regional and local) character of the language.

He suggests teaching English by asking students to change usages, the British ones into regional variants for local use and the local usages into SBE hypothesizing one is writing for the foreign audience.

5. 4 Future Research

An in-depth and extensive study of IE usages of ‘acrolects’ and their analyses will serve as a stepping stone in the standardization of IE. Care has to be taken so that idiosyncratic
features of authors, the famous and not-so-famous, are not taken in. As one can observe, IE in this context is used as an ethno-political term. For an average user, IE will become a linguistic entity only in its standardized version, comprising general behavioural linguistic patterns of the society included judiciously. In their effort to give a formal shape to an indigenous variety, linguists should not get carried away and nativize English excessively. Only the most essential features, required especially in socio-cultural aspects of life need be considered, that too if it is impossible to find NL substitutes for them. In brief, standardization should not be done just for the sake of change. The subsequent implementation of the model will serve well as the guidelines for teachers who can save this language from turning into “incomprehensible varieties” and yet take it to the masses. A handful of IE writers, even if renowned internationally, are hardly representative of the millions learning English in ordinary schools of semi-rural and rural areas.

A standardized pedagogic model will help convert “elite bilingualism” into “mass bilingualism” (Ghosh). The media will have to play a very important role in the dissemination of the standardized variety. Presenting role models through audio and video cassettes, TV and Radio programmes beside using the print media will both be a pragmatic method and an effective one too as the problem of poor role models (many government school teachers) and large classes will get taken care of. Exposure to English through mass media will help learners to acquire the language better in terms of use and usage and more easily too. A survey conducted by Aggarwal (1988:296,97) has proved this. As Kingman (1988) puts it in reference to his country in his Report that “SE is likely to increase their (learners’) career prospects”. This applies to India too. We need to
standardize IE. Intermingling of languages is natural and should be legitimized. Operations, carried out by way of purifying language in countries like France though academies and State legislatures have yielded some results although they have not been able to stop ‘fully’ the flow of English words into French. It proves that we cannot curb the nativization of English.

One needs to accept that SBE in its own way is more of a myth than reality. It is an oft-recommended model but does not have an entity in the form of a written document. Some may justify its existence in the form of books given by Wren and Martin, Nesfiled and Jesperson or the more recent, the works of Quirk, Greenbaum, et al. SBE is a self-created point of reference for the teachers/learners of English. Through the centuries this illusion has been sustained. Because the books mentioned above are just pedagogic tools, updated from time to time. And now we have new Englishes like IE, keen on establishing their own form, meaning and functions, to speak out and write about their own beliefs, views and values. In English in the World 2000, a British survey on the global scale, at least 40 percent respondents disagreed with the question that “there will be no change in the dominant Standard Variety of English”, which is a sizeable figure. Several dictionaries based on new Englishes mentioned earlier have already been prepared and some are on their way; so the question before us is, why not a dictionary of IE?

For a target group such as the one the study focuses on, ie BA English Compulsory, we can have a descriptive-cum-prescriptive model, as a descriptive pedagogic model is hardly a reality if we want to cover a sizeable population with it for pedagogic purposes. Every pedagogic model that intends to cover teaching and testing will have an angle of prescriptivity about it. However, the scope of power enjoyed by former models does not
and should not exist for a prescriptive model in the present times. The two terms, ie
prescriptive models and descriptive models, need a redefinition in the present day
context. The model (written) under consideration remains descriptive as linguists and
teachers would prepare a corpus by collecting the day to day usages from newspapers,
books, magazines, Internet, etc. It becomes prescriptive because it cannot meet hundred
percent demands of the thousands of students at the individual level. I have already
quoted Gorlach, Ryan and Giles, Mitten, Labov, etc in this context. All the variant items
collected can be passed through certain tests to measure their utility and validity for
incorporation. Wong (1983 in Tikoo 1991) proposes a seven-point scale, which can be
modified by adding fresh dimensions to it to make it authentic and more comprehensive
as a testing instrument. As it exists, it considers the following issues about the variants
prior to their incorporation:
1. Is it the result of a new ‘unEnglish’ linguistic and cultural setting?
2. Is it the result of a productive process, which marks the typical variety-specific
   features?
3. Is it systematic not idiosyncratic within the variety?
4. Does it have a language history of acculturation in a new cultural and geographic
   context?
5. Does it have use in the local educational/ administrat/ legal system?
6. Is the new nativized discourse/ style type a functionally determined register?
7. Is it the result of a linguistic vehicular for creative writing in various genres?

Certain new inquiries can be added to this checklist though further research is required in
this respect. For instance,
What is the frequency of occurrence of the item?

Is the item indispensable?

A scale will have to be set up with a four-point measurement of high, medium, low, and zero for accurate computations, analysis and evaluation of each item’s validity, utility, etc.

It is time we worked out factors such as the expenditure of time, money and other resources and took steps towards the formulation of an indigenous model incorporating our varieties/ sub-varieties. SBE cannot be allowed to continue in the English Compulsory classroom with a halo, we need to get down to our living traditions, our environment, our people and prepare a model which carries forward the beliefs of our people their systems and style and nourishes itself in the bargain.

For if we won’t, SBE will first teach us to speak and write like the western world, will addict us to their popular culture (TV, films, newspapers, etc), hook us to their goods and services and finally make us appreciate their ideology, social and political, then adopt it and absorb it. Let us teach the masses who have joined the former elite cadres of English learning through the medium they like, ie the mass media incorporating the culture they belong to, ie the popular culture.

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