PART I

General Introduction
Needs, Aims & Objects
Methods
1.1 Importance of English in India today

It is well known that English is spoken and used as an important language of communication in many parts of the world. It is an important international language and a language in which a very large number of books on recent advances in the fields of science and technology have been written. It is a language which is widely used in international conferences and gatherings. The non-aligned nations' meet held in Delhi in March, 1983 was conducted, by and large, in English: a big majority of the speakers who took part in the proceedings spoke in English although they came from vastly different language backgrounds.

In India, English continues to occupy a position of great respectability even now, more than 37 years after the departure of the British. It has certainly come to stay as an important means of communication in the country, initial opposition to it in the first flush of patriotism soon after the attainment of independence notwithstanding. It is a medium of instruction and examination in almost all the higher seats of learning in the country. It continues to enjoy a special prestige and status, too. Although it no longer enjoys the official patronage and
status it used to enjoy in the pre-independence era, it nevertheless continues to occupy a position of importance at the national level. In fact, along with Hindi, the national language, English has come to stay as a link language in the entire length and breadth of the country. A big bulk of the official correspondence between the Central and the State governments is carried on in both the languages at the same time. Not only that, in the National Programme over the television, the announcer invariably translates every Hindi word of her announcements into English. Whenever there is a national or international sports competition or a national celebration, the running commentary from the All India Radio is relayed simultaneously in Hindi and English.

As things stand today, English has a lot of snob value attached to it in India. This is probably so because it has been the language of the rulers of this country for more than 200 years. Although nobody would openly talk of the snob value attached to this language (and some may even denounce the use of English as 'unpatriotic', 'slavish' and defeatist'), everyone accepts this reality in private. A man having a good command of written and spoken English is looked upon as well-bred and better educated than others. This, in turn, accounts for English enjoying a better status as far as job, career and matrimonial prospects are concerned. No one aspiring for high positions can
afford to show disregard to this language. In contrast, the regional languages introduced recently as media of examination and viva voce test in the All India Civil Services examination have not found much favour with the examinees.

English continues to be a language of instruction even at the school level in a large number of institutions, especially in the South. It has, therefore, become politically imperative to continue to uphold its status in the interest of integration of the country. No national government at the Centre can afford to do without English or ever think of imposing Hindi, or any other language, on those who like to use English, or those who have been using it for generations. English has, therefore, come to stay not only as a social necessity and a link language, but also as a political imperative. And this position is not likely to change in the near future.

In the recent years, India has come to attain an important position in the eyes of the world. It has become an important spokesman of the Third World countries and a leader of the non-aligned movement. Even amongst the countries of South-east Asia, and the neighbouring areas, India is fast assuming the role of leadership. In keeping with that role, India has been helping several other countries in their development programmes by deputing its teachers, doctors, engineers and other technically trained
personnel. All such personnel have to be proficient in English because this is the only international language intelligible to a relatively large number of students and other educated people in most of such countries. Therefore, in order to continue to play such useful role at the international level, English has to be retained in India, not only as a subject of study, but also as a medium of instruction.

Such overgrowing importance of English (both spoken and written) is also evident in an ever-increasing demand for English-medium schools in the country. Only recently, the D.A.V. Central Organization, which used to be one of the greatest and staunchest protagonists of Hindi and opponents of English in India, announced its decision to open more than two hundred English-medium Public Schools in the country. Some of these schools have already started functioning.* Such schools are fast coming up under the patronage of hundreds of local, state-level or national, social and religious, private or public organizations, not only in big cities, but also in many far-flung villages of the country. In fact, for any school to be acceptable to the people, it has to be, in nine cases out of ten, an English medium school. The establishment of such schools is further going to enhance the importance of English in the country.

With the increasing importance of English in the country, the spoken medium in this language has also, understandably, come to attain a special position on the national as well as the international scenes. Mention has already been made of the use and utility of spoken English in national and international conferences and over the A.I.R. and the Doordarshan network, of its status and social prestige, and of the employment and matrimonial prospects that go with it. Apart from all this, when people from one region in India meet those from other regions, especially when people from the north, east or west meet those from the south, they usually converse and communicate in English, mostly out of necessity. This phenomenon is always evident in All India Conferences, all-party meets and various national gatherings and functions. Spoken English, thus, serves as a common link between the people of different regions of the country, where different regional languages are spoken.

Not only that. When people from India go abroad (which many often do in these days of high-speed travel and aviation, mutual dependability in matters of trade, education and scientific know-how), they are called upon to converse and communicate in English. Even today, English continues to be the language more in use than any other language in the world.
Furthermore, a very large number of Panjabis have settled in the U.K. and many other English-speaking countries. When these people come to India to meet their relatives, their sons and daughters speak English. In such situations, their cousins in India are found to suffer from a sort of inferiority complex when they find that they are not able to converse in English or to do so with a proper accent. This has also given rise to an increasing demand for a reasonably good standard of spoken English in our schools in India.

It is because of the several factors enumerated above that spoken English has also assumed a great importance in the country.

1.2 Standard of spoken English

The pronunciation of English varies from place to place. It is bound to be so with any language spoken over so wide an area. American English is, for example, fairly different from British English or Australian English. Even in England itself, people in different regions speak English differently. Same is the case in India. India is a vast country with several states spread over a very large area. Different states have different regional languages. The impact of these regional languages (e.g. Panjabi, Rajasthani, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali, etc.) is clearly visible in the English spoken in different
states. English spoken in Panjab, for example, is different from the English spoken in Maharashtra or Andhra Pradesh or Kerala. When people of different states happen to meet and converse with each other, such differences stand in the way of intelligibility. Such a situation proves, at times, a serious hurdle in the way of national integration, especially in those cases where another link language might not be available either. Here are some examples of different pronunciations of the same word in different states:

(i) Take, for example, the word 'only'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'O:nlI'</td>
<td>Panjab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'vO:nI'</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Take the word 'three'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'thI:'</td>
<td>Panjab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Sri:'</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples can be multiplied. Pronunciation of the same word in different ways definitely stands in the way of mutual intelligibility and hinders the process of social and cultural unity and harmony. It is for this reason that some Indian scholars at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, have been trying to bring about some uniformity in spoken English in India in respect of vowels and consonants, and their distribution,
word-accent, sentence stress and rhythm, and intonation, by evolving a standard variety, to be known as General Indian English (G.I.E.). These attempts are, however, at the initial stages only. The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in its various courses meant for teachers of English in the country, has only been trying to introduce the idea, but it has not received much acceptability so far. No dictionary or other standard works have so far been published to set any acceptable standards. Indeed, even opposition to the idea of GIE has already started in some quarters. Inter-state rivalries and vested interests are standing in the way of evolution of any standard Indian variety of English. As such, educated speakers and teachers of English still continue to look for some British model.

Thus in the absence of any standard Indian model, the British model R.P. (Received Pronunciation of England) has been receiving a much greater support to be accepted as a model for this country. In fact, even the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages has been propagating, by and large, RP in its lessons on Phonetics and Spoken English throughout the country (although a brief reference continues to be made to GIE). In all the higher seats of learning in India, RP is looked upon as standard pronunciation. Again, it is RP that the English news readers over the All India Radio and the Doordarshan try to approximate.
Now, although RP does not enjoy the same status and recognition in England today as it did earlier, it continues to have a certain degree of social prestige attached to it. It continues, for example, to be looked upon as the 'best' accent, or the 'educated' accent even today. Although it is no longer the accent of a particular region in England today, it is, nonetheless, the accent of privilege and prestige, of status and class (even nobody makes such claims loudly). It would be pertinent to mention here what David Abercrombie has to advise about the choice of the British model to be adopted by foreign learners:

"There would be little point in a foreigner learning any accent of England except RP: its great prestige within the country, and the social disadvantages of others, make it an obvious choice."*

It may also be pertinent to mention here that in respect of word accent, even the protagonists of GIE continue to accept RP as a model.

These are the considerations that have led the present project also to select RP as the point of reference for phonetic and phonological comparisons.

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