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Norms and Pedagogical Models with Special Reference to Indian English

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Introduction

The idea of a norm can be a very complex and confusing entity for students of language and linguistics. According to Andreasson (1994), the golden rule of modern linguistics is that the ‘native speaker is always right’. This does not sound convincing in reality because the native speakers of a particular language do not share exactly the same code all the time and if “for the linguist all codes are equal . . . it is not true socio-linguistically” (Davies, 1995, p. 53). Bamgbose (1998) has defined a language norm as a “standard language form or practice that serves as a reference point for other language forms or practices” (p. 2). He talks about three types of norms, namely, code norms, feature norms, and behavioural norms. Code norms, according to Bamgbose, refer to the standard form or variety of a language or a language from a group of languages which is used for all official and other formal purposes. Feature norms refer to the distinct features of a language vis-à-vis its phonology, morphology, and syntax, along with the rules that dictate the production and use of the language. Behavioural norms refer to the patterns of behavior while interacting with others and the manner in which one interprets and interacts with other users of the language. According to Bamgbose, although nativization is regarded as predominantly linguistic, this cannot be the whole picture because pragmatic and creative nativization are also equally important. While linguistic nativization comes under feature norms, pragmatic and creative nativizations are parts of behavioral norms. Since a non-native variety of English is defined by the non-native behavioural norm, a reference to native behavioural norms in determining the appropriateness of non-native usage is entirely useless (Bamgbose, 1998, p. 2). In dealing with the issue of norms in English classrooms belonging to Kachru’s (1985) Outer Circle and Emerging Circle nations, the fact that has to be kept in mind is, there is a distinct difference between the code that is taught as the correct form in class and the code that the learners encounter in the real world.

According to Kachru and Nelson (2006), a pedagogical norm refers to the model that the students are to be taught, and to the particular variety of English that will provide a proficiency scale against which their performance can be measured. In the context of English in the classrooms of South Asian nations, which includes India, Kachru and Nelson (2006) have observed that “the linguists and language teachers have remained indifferent to the South Asian sociolinguistic realities in so far as the issues of identity are concerned” (p. 195). The reason behind this is the persistence with the linguistic and pedagogical paradigms imported from the UK and the USA. In India and other South Asian nations, although endonormative varieties of English have emerged which have greater relevance in their respective sociolinguistic contexts, pedagogical paradigms are still based on Standard British English or Standard

American English. This has given rise to a chasm between the set pedagogical norm and the learning outcome (Kachru & Nelson, 2006, p. 163).

The Domains of Use of English in India

As Pingali (2009) wrote, “English is used primarily in the domains of education, administration, law, mass media, science and technology” (p. 5). It is also the language of communication in trade and commerce. In India, “since indigenous education systems are no longer used for dissemination of knowledge in India and Western standards act as the determinants, English is the language used in various branches of higher education in India including engineering, medicine and law” (Pingali, 2009, p. 5). Bhatia (1987) has established that English usage in India is no longer confined to the urban educated class but has spread to the remote suburban parts of the country. His view is based on a survey of 1200 advertisements where most of the products either have English names or Indian terms code-mixed with English names. “Gargo Motors,” “Vimal Suitings,” and “Singh Garage” are examples of such code-mixing (Bhatia, 1987, p. 40). Therefore, English occupies a higher position in relation to the other native languages and hence is regarded as a language of power and prestige in the Indian sociolinguistic landscape.

Indian English and Pedagogical Norms in India

Due to its prolonged coexistence with numerous Indian languages in a multilingual setup in India, a distinct variety of English, called Indian English, with its own lexical, morphosyntactical, phonological, and stylistic features has emerged. In other words, through acculturation, English has been nativized in the Indian socio-linguistic atmosphere. This nativization has been interpreted by Kachru (2005) through his idea of Functional Nativization. While tracing the nativization of English worldwide and the subsequent emergence of a number of varieties of English, Kachru discusses two processes of nativization namely, Genetic Nativization and Functional Nativization. In the case of countries like India, where English has been transplanted from Britain, the nativeness that we find is Functional Nativeness. Kachru (2005) opines that the functional parameters are determined by the ‘Range’ and ‘Depth’ of a language in a society, writing that “the domains of function are referred to by ‘Range’ while ‘Depth’ refers to the degree of social penetration of the language” (p. 12). The functional nativization is reiterated by the fact that we find coinages and innovations while using English in the Indian context especially in the writings of fiction, poetry, textbooks, newspaper articles, and essays to suit the local needs of expression and understanding (Goswami, 2006, p. 34).

However, an external standard still sets the norms for English usage in countries like India through reference to its grammar, dictionaries, or pronunciation manuals. In the case of India, it is Standard British English. In Indian pedagogy, Standard British English sets the norms although the language is used under a typically Indian context and by Indian speakers of English. In the Indian education system, the quality of education has been directly linked with proficiency in English (Goswami, 2006, p. 41). English must form a part of a person’s linguistic repertoire if he/she is to be regarded as an educated Indian. In the modern socio-political and economic contexts, English is regarded as the language of progress, modernization, and the door towards socio-economic and professional benefits. In Outer Circle nations like India, English is used in complex socio-linguistic circumstances and therefore there exists a very high degree of variability. The variability includes linguistic forms which are hybrid (English modified by contact with indigenous languages) or nonstandard (English not accepted as socially adequate in formal circumstances). In spoken and informal contexts, we find functional variations of the language signifying the speaker’s social status or the situation in which the language is being used. However, the question of norm setting arises in the contexts which require the use of a formal linguistic norm which can be regarded as a standard variety. Schneider (2007), in *Post Colonial English: Varieties around the world*, opines that “the notion of ‘Standard English’ is commonly taken to refer to such a norm,

usually understood to designate a non-regional vocabulary core and the grammar of the written language” (p. 17). Bamgbose (1998) states that “in pronunciation, although no international norm has been set, the standard British variety (RP) acts as the norm since British English in particular still serves as a reference point and is generally more prestigious than the nativized variety. Whether RP is what the majority of a population really speak, is not taken into consideration here” (p. 6). Norm orientation in countries like India regarding the use of English in formal contexts is vital. In teaching English in India, a norm has to be set regarding which linguistic form can be regarded as acceptable or should be the target in education and speech production. In this regard, we have two distinctly opposite opinions among linguists. Because of the duality of opinion between the descriptive and theoretical linguists on one hand and the conservatives on the other, the argument that all language varieties are functionally adequate in their respective contexts and internally well-structured has until now not been accepted by political decision makers who still regard British English as the norm to be followed. As suggested by Kachru (2005), it would make sense to establish the careful usage of the educated members of a society as the target and as an indigenous language norm.

It is believed that Standard British English is the high variety of English to be used in all formal communication activities, while Indian English and its varieties constitute the ‘low variety’ to be used only for informal interaction (Goswami, 2006, p. 41). However, such an idea about a ‘high variety’ and ‘low variety’ is debatable because Indian English has already been established as a variety quite different from Standard British English or American English. It has its own lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactical features which makes it quite different from Standard British English or American English (Pingali, 2009, p. 15). As Kachru (2005) wrote,

The differences in the varieties of English in the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle have raised concerns regarding the notion of nativeness. Traditionally, this has been the main ground for the distinction between the two circles where it has been stated that only native speakers fully command a language and have proper intuitions on its structural properties (nativeness here refers to genetic nativeness). (pp. 4-5)

This raises the issue of ‘norms of correctness’. In Outer Circle nations like India, socio-linguistically complex situations mark English usage, and hence we find a high degree of variation. In spoken and informal contexts, we find functional variations of the language signifying the speaker’s social status or the situation in which the language is being used. “Thus, questions of pedagogical model and what it is that is being learned—UK, US or local English—have been much debated” (Kachru & Nelson, 2006, p. 82).

“The basic fact that we have to keep in mind here is, English is taught and learnt by users for whom English is the second language. They are not the traditional natives unaffected by the language contact situation in the country,” wrote Kachru and Nelson (2006, p. 89). Even the most educated and elite class in India use only a type of Indian English which, as per Kachru’s (1985, 1992) cline of bilingualism, can be termed the acrolectal variety. This is also the Standard Indian English that Pingali (2009) refers to and which comes closest to the Standard British English. Below them come the speakers of the mesolectal type of Indian English who have adequate competence in a couple of registers of Indian English and are located somewhere in the middle of the cline. The Basilectal type comes at the bottom point of the cline and is comprised of speakers who cannot be regarded as proficient in the use of the language. Linguists in recent times have come up with comprehensive and authentic documents on the basic differences between Indian English and British/American English. The identity of Indian English through its differences in Phonetics & Phonology, Morphosyntax, Lexis, and Discourse from British English have been clearly shown by Pingali (2009) in *Indian English* and by Kachru and Nelson (2006) in *World Englishes in Asian Contexts*. English in India exists along with Hindi and a number of other regional languages. This coexistence with other native languages has inadvertently led to a language contact situation resulting in the emergence of an indigenised form of English. Indian English, thus, is a variety of

English that was influenced by the contact of English with Indian languages. “The use of the language according to local needs and conventions has affected the grammatical structure as well as other aspects of the language like its syntax, pronunciation, morphology” (Schneider, 2007, p. 21). As Pingali (2009) has pointed out, in phonology, Standard Indian English has the long vowels /e:/ and /o:/ which cannot be found in RP where diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ are used instead. While Standard British English (RP) has five long vowels, Standard Indian English has seven (Pingali, 2009, p. 25). Moreover, in words ending in ‘ng’, both the letters are pronounced in Standard Indian English whereas in RP the sole sound /ŋ/ represents the two letters. So far as syntax is concerned, Standard Indian English mostly conforms to RP. However, there are some significant differences. Mukherjee and Hoffman (2006) state that these differences are more commonly noticeable in the verb complement structures. For example, verbs like advise, gift, present, provide, and supply are used as ditransitive verbs in Standard Indian English with the following sentence structure: verb + noun phrase (indirect object) + noun phrase (direct object) e.g. ‘Raghu gifted Maya a book’. In standard British English, none of these verbs are used in such sentence structures. Moreover, there is a tendency in Indian English to add the particle ‘off’ to intensify the verbs. For example, while ‘marry off’ in Standard British English is used in types of sentences like ‘She was married off to Delhi’, in Indian English, the additional sense of the particle ‘off’ is ‘to do’. In the case of both standard and non-standard Indian English, adverbials and any other added information in a sentence are placed at the beginning of the sentence. In Standard British English, they come at the end. Hence, sentence patterns like ‘Recently, we came to know about his demise’ and ‘That I already know’ are used in Indian English (Pingali, 2009, p. 48). Reduplication is another distinct feature of Indian English which is used to stress upon the quality of the item described. ‘There are small-small holes in the dress’ is an example of reduplication. ‘I need two-three more minutes’ is an example of reduplication involving numbers. In the case of idioms, Indian English has its own constructs, which are basically literal translations of local idioms. ‘He will eat my brain’ for ‘He will harangue me’ is a perfect example idiom of Indian English. Code-switching is an aspect of Indian English that exists in a multilingual scenario. It is “quite common in advertisements, songs, film dialogues, gossip columns in newspapers and magazines, chat shows on radio and television and on various billboards and in everyday speech” (Pingali, 2009, p. 63). Although Indian English lexis is mostly similar to British English, there are many lexical items which resemble American English. For example, items like ‘stove’, ‘pharmacy’, ‘hardware store’ and ‘faculty’ are used instead of ‘cooker’, ‘chemist’, ‘ironmonger’, and ‘staff’ respectively. There are also lexical items that are completely different from British or American English. For example, brinjal for eggplant/aubergine, lady’s finger for okra, and wine shop for off license/liquor store are examples of such variations. Moreover, lexical items like bandh, crore, henna, gherao, hartal etc. are part of Indian English vocabulary (Pingali, 2009, p. 73). Indian English lexis abounds in compounds which can be categorized as noun-noun (N-N) and adjective-noun (A-N) compounding. Black money, table fan, auto-rickshaw, pass percentage and hill station are some examples of NN compounds, whereas joining report, gazetted officer, tall claim, and creamy layer are examples of AN compounds. Hybridization is also an important aspect of Indian English. Hybridized compounds with one word from a local language and the other from English are very common in Indian English. Hindipop, iftaar party, baba suit, lathi charge, disco bhangra, mutton dopiyaza are some examples of hybrid constructs. As Pingali (2009) points out, coinage of words through affixation is a common phenomenon in Standard Indian English. Affixes like super-, mega-, and -ite in words like superhit, megamovie, Delhite are quite common. Abbreviations like PT, AC, OBC, NRI, and clippings like maths, hydel, generification like Maggi, Godrej etc. abound in Indian English. There are also indeterminate novel constructs like mixie. Redundancy is another feature of Indian English discourse. Words like spicy hot and rewind back are used in Standard Indian English (Pingali, 2009, p. 84). Hence, the “use of English in various contexts manifests in varied genres, conventions of politeness, code-mixing and switching, and new canons of literary creativity—all the resources of multilingual, multicultural contexts are now part of the heritage of world Englishes” (Schneider, 2007, p. 21). Therefore, using an Indian English variety as the norm in the Indian context and pedagogy is definitely a relevant idea that needs to be looked into.

Survey of Acceptability of Indian English in Formal Domains: The Methodology

The acceptability factor is the ultimate test of acceptance of an innovation. As Bamgbose (1998) wrote, “once accepted, an innovation can have a reasonable life span, subject to the normal processes of language change” (p. 6). Keeping this factor in mind, the researcher conducted an attitudinal survey among 100 subjects who were extensive users of the English language. They were comprised of journalists of national newspapers in English, linguists, university and college teachers of English, and university students of English. The subjects were chosen with the contention that they represented the demographic group of English users who fit Bamgbose’s (1998, p. 6) observation that the more knowledgeable the people who use an innovation, the less likelihood of it being considered an error. They could also be regarded as the initiators of Indian variants. The journalists of national newspapers in English have molded public opinion and mirrored their attitudes for centuries, and the printed word has acted as the standard form (Kaushik, 2011, p. 143). Efforts were made to ensure an equal number of male and female respondents between the age groups of 20-29 years, 30-45 years, and 46-60 years old. The selection of the subjects from various age groups was important to lend authenticity to the study since there was the probability of the older groups having a more conservative outlook towards innovations than the younger age groups. In formulating a model for Indian pedagogy, the fact that needs to be kept in mind is that besides teaching the orthography, lexis, morphology, and syntax of a language, “the models should serve local needs and their content should, generally speaking, be wedded to the sociolinguistic, socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic environment of the learners” (Kaushik, 2011, p. 143). The survey was carried out through the subjects’ response to a questionnaire comprising the following questions:

1. How do you perceive the Indianized variety of English having its own distinctive phonetic, lexical, and grammatical features?
2. Which of the following would you like to consider as your model: Received Pronunciation (Standard English in Britain), General American English or Standard Indian English?
3. Would you prefer the use of Indian English as the model in schools and pedagogy as a whole instead of the present Standard British English?

The first question was included to judge the awareness of the respondents about Indian English as a distinct indigenized variety. The second question would enable the researcher to measure their preference of a variety of English and the third question was meant to elicit their response to the idea of a pedagogical model based on Indian English. Some of the participants’ responses to the questions are given here:

Response to Q1: Perception of Indian English

- (1) The Indian standard English has already established its own identity. It will continue to develop like any other language. The Indianized variety of English must suit the needs of English speakers (users) in India.
- (2) Indian English is already a standard variety, recognized by the educated people of the country and elsewhere. This is largely modelled on the British variety, and letting it be as it is today should be just fine.
- (3) I’d gone through several Indian poems and stories written in the indianized form of English and I feel that it is nice and easy to understand getting with the emotions and thoughts of the writer. However, the British form is kind of constant.
- (4) Apart from phonetic variations other features do not and should not exist.

Responses 1 and 2 revealed the respondents' awareness and recognition of the existence of an indigenised variety of English. However, as is evident from response 3, many respondents, while recognizing the existence of Indian English, did not regard it on par with Standard British English. In response 4, the respondents not only felt that Indian English had not been codified, but they also did not want any codification. What is suggested through this statement is the fact that although Indian English usage is fine for informal/conversational purposes, so far as the formal domains are concerned, Standard British English should be used because it is a stable variety. But the responses as a whole revealed awareness on the part of the majority of the respondents about the existence of an Indian variety of English with its own phonological, lexical, and grammatical features.

Response to Q 2: Choosing a Pedagogical Model

- (1) So far as I am concerned, (you like to consider as your model) I would consider the RP as my model. But I must hasten to add in the same breath that I have the deepest regard for users/speakers of the Standard Indian English.
- (2) I'll definitely go with the Indian English. Because, we're born and brought up in India and it's always easy to understand the Indian accent.
- (3) I would prefer Standard Indian English, because the RP version is present only in few selected areas and I do not like the general American form.

From Standard British English, General American English, and Standard Indian English, when the respondents were asked to choose their preferred model, 56.25% opted for Standard Indian English, while 43.75% chose Standard British English. Although most respondents simply stated the name of their preferred option, some provided reasons behind their choice of a model. Some respondents preferred Standard British English because they were not aware of the fact that Standard Indian English was codified and it had its own grammar. This lack of knowledge on the growth of this indigenous variety is one of the reasons why some respondents chose the British model. The fact that the endonormative stabilization of Indian English has occurred is evident from the majority of the respondents' choice of an indigenous model.

Response to Q 3: Changing Pedagogical Model

When asked whether they would prefer replacing the present Standard British English with Standard Indian English as the pedagogical model in India, 50% of respondents replied in the affirmative, while 50% replied in the negative. Most respondents answered with a 'yes' or 'no'. However, some provided more detailed reasons for their choices including the following:

- (1) I'll prefer the use of British English as the model in school. As we need to improve the quality of English we use in our verbal and written communication as well as most of the students nowadays are going abroad for studies and jobs. If we train them with the most sophisticated and widely used version of the language it will definitely help them communicate with confidence.
- (2) Yes, I would but with some reservations. What I want to say is that Indian Standard English shouldn't have any Tamil variety or Punjabi variety or so on.
- (3) Yes, school students can understand Indian English better.

Interestingly, while some respondents preferred Standard Indian English as their model, they did not approve it as a pedagogical model. This again is a reflection on the diglossic situation where Standard British English is treated by some as the 'high' language to be used in all formal domains while Indian English is the low variety which is suited for informal communication.

Implications

The findings from my study have the following implications:

Most people who are closely associated with the English language actually prefer using those features of English that are contextually more suitable. Hence most of them prefer Indian English.

The users of English no longer have a conservative approach towards its usage when it comes to more formal aspects of the language. Most of them have come to acknowledge the existence of Standard Indian English, which is their preferred model. They have realized that the indigenised Standard Indian English is more relevant in the Indian sociolinguistic context than the Standard British English which still forms the benchmark, as far as pedagogical norms are concerned. Moreover, half of the respondents were not averse to the idea of a pedagogical model based on Standard Indian English.

The importance and indispensability of English in specific domains such as education, employment, and administration were recognised by the users of the language. However, English can function only within specific domains in a multilingual setup.

Recommendations

To improve the acceptability of Indian English and thus pave the way for its recognition as a variety which is on par with any other variety of English, it needs to be codified through dictionaries and grammar books. As Bamgbose (1998) has stated, “as long as non-native English norms remain uncoded, they cannot become a point of reference for usage and acceptance” (p. 5). Since codification is an extremely long process, the onus lies with the people who are closely related to the English language in India to take steps for the codification of Standard Indian English. This may take place through the writing of grammar books and dictionaries which the learners can refer to thereby paving the way for the acceptance of this indigenised form of English as a variety of English. Moreover, the awareness of Indian English among its users should be enhanced through vigorous discourse and debates. University and college teachers, students of English, linguists, and journalists can play significant roles in this regard by organising lectures, debates, discussions, seminars, and also through articles written in newspapers and discussions on television. More texts in Indian English should be included in Indian school and college syllabuses. Since a plethora of Indian writings in English already exists and the number is growing all the time, it is no longer difficult to prescribe them in school and college syllabuses.

Conclusion

From this study, it has become clear that although most users of English accept the existence of an Indian variety of English and have no problem with its usage in informal conversations, when it comes to the usage under formal or pedagogical contexts, almost half the number advocate Standard British English as the norm. This is unsurprising in the specific language situation of India. When a language is learnt as a second or a foreign language, the focus on ‘correctness’ is much greater than when the language under consideration is the native language. There are features that are Indian in Standard Indian English, but usually native varieties become the benchmark for correctness. Since there is no written grammar for Indian English, in case of doubt, an English grammar is consulted (Pingali, 2009, p. 40).

For Indian English to be regarded as suitable enough a model for Indian pedagogy, it needs to be acceptable for the people closely associated with the language. Since Indian English has already been codified as far as its phonology, lexis, morphosyntax, and discourse are concerned, the chances of its

acceptability have also grown manifold.

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