

## *Nativized Varieties of English and the Linguistic Identity: A Case of Indian English Speakers*

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The use of the English language varies considerably all over the world: as a foreign language in some places, but as a nativized and a primary second language in others. This global variation in the use and standing of English in communities and regions can impact the linguistic identity of English speakers in those places. The present study investigated the intricate role of a nativized variety of English in the linguistic identity construction of multilingual and multiliterate persons. The study, a dual case study per se, aimed at the comprehensibility of South Asian nativized varieties of English in general, and the role of English in ethnically and linguistically diverse Indian society in particular. The two participants were speakers of Indian English. The results substantiated the fact that language and identity are two closely related social factors. The English language was an integral part of the participants' linguistic identities and manifested itself in a number of ways with regard to their social identity and patterns of socialization. Thus, identities are multiple and people are capable of constructing as well as reconstructing multiple identities within and across Discourses.

**Key words: Bilingualism, Nativized varieties, Linguistic identity, Indian English, Stable Bilingualism, English in South Asia**

It is a truism that English has become an international language (Crystal, 1997; Pennycook, 1994; Trask, 2006). The international nature of the English language varies from one context to another in many different ways (Erling,

2005; Wells, 1982). For instance, in some places, English is a foreign language, whereas in others, English is nativized and has become a primary second language. The varying status of English in communities and regions raises the question of the linguistic identity of English speakers in those regions. This study investigates the role of a nativized variety of English in the formation of linguistic identities of multilingual and multiliterate individuals. The study centers on two graduate students from India, who were speakers of Indian English and were studying in the US.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Compared to other world languages, English is most widely used in social communication globally as a second/foreign language (Crystal, 1997; Halliday, 2003; Kachru, 2006; Lewis, 1993). In order to capture the status of English around the world, Kachru (1998) has used three concentric circles: inner, outer, and expanding circles. The inner circle comprises typical Anglophone countries such as the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. In the outer circle “English is used as an institutionalized additional language” and this circle includes India, Singapore, and over fifty other nations. In the outer-most expanding circle “English is used primarily as a foreign language” (p. 93), and the circle consists of Japan, China, Poland, and a number of other countries. Kachru’s representation of English through concentric circles is “widely regarded as a helpful approach” (Crystal, 1997, p. 53) and “the standard framework” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 159) in understanding the situation of English globally. Nevertheless, the three-circle model has also been critiqued for its limitations and oversimplification of the complex phenomenon of English language use globally. It is also argued that in real-world English, language users cannot be placed in these clearly demarcated and mutually exclusive circles. Thus, a modified approach has to be adopted in order to capture the complexity of English language use (e.g., Bruthiaux, 2003; Modiano, 2001; Yano, 2001).

However, these concentric circles situate the phenomenon of English language in a larger context and help one gain more comprehension of the spread of English in various parts of the world, especially the *nativization* process. The present study uses this three-circle model as a basic framework to comprehend the *nativization* of English in South Asia. The *nativization* of a nonnative language is a process that causes noticeable lexical, syntactic, and stylistic variations in a language over time, primarily, under the influence of local languages in a society (Baumgardner, 1990; Kachru, 1983; Rahman, 1990). For instance, in Asia, there are nativized varieties of English or the “localized form of English” (Canagarajah, 1999). Furthermore, Gargesh (2006) traces the nativization of English in “a long tradition of acculturation of non-native languages in South Asia” (p. 91), such as the case of Indian Persian. I will focus on Indian English as a nativized variety in this section.

While analyzing the role and status of English in post-colonial Asia, especially in the Singapore-Malaysia region, Pennycook (1994) has noted that English

is both the language of modernity and the language of decadence, the ‘first language’ (the medium of education) but not the ‘mother tongue’ (the racially assigned language), a neutral medium of communication yet the bearer of Western values, the language of equality and yet the distributor of inequality. (p. 225)

This dichotomous picture, on the one hand, shows how English in post-colonial Asia has created its own niche as an eminent and widely used code of communication (Gargesh, 2006; Patil, 2006), as well as a *neutral* medium in linguistically diverse societies. English is *neutral* in the sense that it is not considered the language of one particular ethnic group in Asia, like the Tamil and Punjabi languages are respectively to Tamils and Punjabis in South Asia. Moreover, the element of neutrality is also illustrated by the fact that English is widely accepted and used as a *lingua franca* in Asia (e.g., Kachru, 1998; Patil, 2006; Rahman, 1990). While the neutrality of English can be debated (e.g., Phillipson, 1992), it is a boon in multilingual societies rife with

linguistic conflicts, such as India and Sri Lanka. Thus, tolerant attitudes (or acceptance) towards English have permeated the identity index of its speakers, which is a set of factors that determines an individual's identity. Conversely, the perception of the English language as "a language that is in Asia, but not of Asia" (Kachru, 1998, p. 90) is also prevalent in Asian societies. Such perceptions connect English language with a colonial legacy, which terminated in 1947 in South Asia.

Historically, English was planted in South Asia by British colonizers and their forerunners. English came to this region as early as the 17th century (Crystal, 1997). Diachronically, over a period of about three centuries, the nativization process has resulted in the permeation and wider acceptability of English in South Asian linguistic cultures. Kachru (1998) argues that the nativization led South Asians to think, "Why not consider the reincarnated English in the Philippines, Singapore, and India—to offer just three examples—a part of our local pluralistic linguistic heritage? After all, English has been with us in various parts of Asia for almost 200 years" (p. 91). This general acceptance of English as a nativized variety in countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, facilitated the increasing use of English as an eminent code of social communication.

Kachru (1998) analyzes the process of the *nativization* of English outside the Anglophone world. He argues that English has attained "functional nativeness" in several regions of Asia. Functional nativeness is "determined by the *range* and *depth* of a language in a society: *Range* refers to the domains of function, and *depth* refers to the degree of social penetration of the language" (p. 92). By this account, English is functionally nativized in many parts of Asia since it is a widely used language in linguistically diverse Asian societies. For instance, English is nativized in South Asia as Indian English and Pakistani English (Baumgardner, 1990; Mehrotra, 1982; Rahman, 1990). In terms of functional domains, English is the eminent "access code" and medium in corporate trade, media, development, government, higher education, science and technology, and creative writing. Moreover, in terms of the social depth of English use, it is estimated that India today has more

than 333 million users of English (Kachru, 2006), which is “the highest number of (non-creole) English speakers in the world after the US and UK” (Jenkins, 2003, p. 132). These facts highlight the extent to which English is established as *lingua franca* in a culturally and linguistically diverse country like India.

In light of the foregoing discussion, the issue of the global recognition of nativized varieties as *standards* follows. When we extend the notion of Standard English beyond the Anglophone sphere where English traditionally and historically belongs, the acceptance of standardized and nativized varieties of English varies. For example, the acceptance of non-British English is openly debated in multilingual Asian societies (e.g., nativized varieties like Indian English in India and Pakistani English in Pakistan). In India and Pakistan, “the ideal pronunciation remains RP” and forms of indigenized English “are stigmatized” (Rahman, 1991, p. 93), especially in the elite educational intuitions and social classes. Kachru (1998) has referred to this phenomenon as “the language wars.” The questions of standard and wider acceptance of nativized varieties are relevant to the linguistic identity of the language user.

On the other hand, the issue of the recognition of nativized varieties in the Anglophone world is also important for the speakers of the nativized varieties. Norton Peirce (1995) observes that language “is understood with reference to its social meaning” (p. 13). Similarly, Lippi-Green (1997), referring to the issue of defining standard English with reference to one group, concludes that, such a move “is the ordering of social groups in terms of who has authority to determine how language is *best used*” (p. 55). She stresses that decisions about standard language are not objective and probably cannot be, especially, when made from the standpoint of one group or region. She describes this phenomenon as standard language ideology, that is, a “bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions” (p. 64).

The issues associated with a standard language ideology, which are explored by Shuck (2006), shed light on how non-White and nonnative

speakers of English are racialized in an Anglophone context. According to Shuck (2006), “the ideology of nativeness” emerges from the monolingualist model, which links nativeness in English with one group or race as well as region. Shuck (2006) identifies “the binaries” that portray the native and nonnative speakers of English in the US. The participants of the study were white, middle-class, and native US English speakers who were undergraduate students at a university. Shuck (2006) conducted a qualitative empirical study involving “52 self-selecting, first year undergraduate students” (p. 262). Shuck interviewed, with open-ended questions, each participant for one hour. The study was primarily a sociolinguistic analysis of what perception the participants held regarding native/nonnative speakers of English. The table below shows the binaries according to participants’ perceptions:

**TABLE 1**  
**Some Components of the Native/Nonnative Dichotomy**

Native Speakers	Nonnative Speakers
Are American	Are international
Are experts in English	Are novices in English
Are White or Anglo	Are non-White or non-Anglo
Are ahead/faster	Are behind/slower
Are up to speed	Hold everyone else (native speakers) back
Are compared to parents and “normal humans”	Are compared to young children, the mentally disabled or “emotionally disturbed,” and those who don’t care
Take normal classes	Take easy classes that cater to them
Have no accent or have regional ones	Have accents
Are perfectly comprehensible	Are incomprehensible
Have little or no responsibility for communicating effectively with nonnative speakers	Have full responsibility for communicating effectively with native speakers
Have no culture	Have culture

(Shuck, 2006, p. 262)

The above table presents an unimpressive view of the nonnative speakers in an Anglophone environment as surveyed by Shuck (2006). This portrayal suggests that all nonnative speakers of English are expected to be the same,

even though there is an extreme range of English language proficiency among non-White and non-US speakers of English. Although the above perception may not be widely generalizable, as a corollary we can also infer that the prevailing perception of many white Anglophone Americans does not recognize nativized varieties as standard English language varieties.

Canagarajah (2006), while focusing on the global scenario of English, emphasizes that “because English is nativized in many communities (featuring diverse norms), we cannot treat these speakers as less legitimate ‘nonnative’ English speakers” (p. 14). Probably, *nonnativeness* with reference to nativized varieties of English implicitly connotes restricting English to the traditional Anglophone countries. In a study on the identity of L2 learners, Ricento (2005) highlights the extent of non-Anglophone use of English by noting that the “vast majority of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the world today are instructed by non-native speakers (NNSs). Furthermore, English is now more commonly spoken as a second, rather than first, language by bilinguals” (p. 903). There are also ethnocentric connotations in the term *nonnativeness*. However, a discussion of the patterns and repercussions of nativized varieties’ acceptance in the Anglophone countries falls beyond the scope of this study.

Language and identity are two very closely related issues (Canagarajah, 2006; Lewis, 1993; Norton, 2000). In fact, language “is the most salient way we have of establishing and advertising our social identities” (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 5). Thus, understanding the linguistic identity of the speakers of nativized varieties of English, who speak multiple languages, is an important issue. It is pertinent to look at the identity construct first. The identity of an individual is tied together by a number of different factors such as ethnicity, place of origin, and language. Identity is like a rope composed of a number of strands, and each of them contributes to the shape and form of the rope. Identity is a unifying feature of individuals. According to Crystal (2000), “Identity is what makes the members of a community recognizably the same. It is a summation of the characteristics which make it what it is and not something else—of ‘us’ vs ‘them’” (p. 39). The primacy of language in the

determination of an individual's identity is further highlighted in Crystal's definition of the construct, "language is the primary index, or symbol, or register of identity" (p. 40).

Linguistic identities are complex and cannot be captured through common dichotomies, such as native/nonnative, proficient/limited, and Western/Oriental (Ricento, 2005). Likewise, Canagarajah (1999) posits that "identities are hybrid and multiple, and most of the world is multilingual, we must conceive of learners as having identities that often accommodate English seamlessly with other languages" (p. 14). This view suggests that learners can be speakers of multiple languages and have multiple linguistic identities, and consequently, belong to multiple groups. Against this backdrop, nativized varieties of English, such as Indian English, are part of the multiple linguistic identities of their speakers in diverse cultures.

The issue of multiple linguistic identities in diverse cultures, such as India, brings to the fore a question of situating English and vernaculars, or regional languages, within an individual's identities. Sometimes, the linguistic acclimatization of English among vernacular languages is not easy due to "painful linguistic conflict" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 2). This conflict is based on English-vernacular opposition. Multilingual individuals are faced with an ideology of local-foreign language, as Shuck (2006) has pointed out. Canagarajah (1999) mentions that

the negative and positive responses to the vernacular and English—leading either to the 'betrayal' of one language, or to the 'giving back' of both—are largely influenced by underlying differences in perspectives on power. A decision to reject English in order to be true to the vernacular (or vice versa) constitutes a specific ideological orientation. (p. 2)

Over a period of time, English has withstood the test of such an ideological orientation or "painful linguistic conflict" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 2) in South Asia that relates English with the oppressive colonial legacy and rejects the status of English as a localized language. Therefore, it is an important question as to how speakers of Indian English, who have multiple linguistic



identities, situate English along with vernaculars in a multilingual and multicultural society.

## **THE STUDY**

While considering the sociolinguistic aspects of nativized varieties of English discussed in the theoretical framework, the present study explored the issue of the linguistic identity of the Indian English speakers who were native speakers of multiple languages, and the associated questions such as the increasing role of English in the socio-academic lives of multilingual speakers, their attitudes towards Indian English while situating it along with the vernaculars, and the acceptance of nativized varieties of English in the world. Potentially, a study on these issues will contribute to the understanding of South Asian nativized varieties of English in general and the position of English in an ethnically and linguistically diverse Indian society in particular (e.g., Gargesh, 2006). Moreover, the exploration of these issues will provide insights into the “range” and the “depth” of English in the outer circle by focusing on the linguistic identities of speakers of Indian English.

The focus of the study was analyzing—but not evaluating—the role of English in participants’ linguistic identities. For this project, my preference was to enlist adult speakers of a (nativized) variety of English, specifically Indian English, who had received university level education. Therefore, the learners were likely to have formal English language literacy and would represent educated advanced level speakers of English. Moreover, the participants were also required to have had the experience of being in an Anglophone country, especially in academic settings, in order to look at the acceptance of nativized varieties of English in the inner circle countries. I focused on educational settings because a school community is likely to be better informed or exposed to world Englishes when compared to other settings. This profile of prospective participants would help the collection of

data regarding the focus of the study. The participants were likely to be native speakers of multiple languages. Luckily, I was able to find such participants who were extremely cooperative throughout this study and their cooperation facilitated my data collection.

### **Research Questions**

This study will attempt to address the following questions:

- i) What role has English played in the social and academic lives of speakers of Indian English?
- ii) What are Indian English speakers' sociolinguistic and academic attitudes toward English?
- iii) How do speakers of Indian English establish their linguistic identities?
- iv) How are speakers of Indian English accepted in an English speaking country, such as the United States?
- v) How do Indian English speakers situate English vis-à-vis the vernaculars (i.e., Hindi and Telugu in this case)?

### **Method**

Overall in its research design, this study followed a naturalistic inquiry tradition by dealing with “naturally occurring settings and groups,” and, unlike experimental research, there were no control and experimental groups as well as no treatment given to the sample (Bailey, 2005, p. 15; Nunan & Bailey, 2008). Although it is difficult to label this study with a single descriptor, the research followed a case study design (i.e., a dual case study). However, the data collection for this study lacked longitudinality due to the limitation of time for this project, which is a threat to its internal validity. Therefore, the research was an exploratory qualitative study in its design (e.g., Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Dörnyei, 2007; Pierce, 1995). The research was also influenced by Shuck's (2006) qualitative study without being its

complete replication.

In a case study, according to Nunan (1992), the researcher “observes the characteristics of an individual unit” (p. 77). The unit or case in the present study consisted of two individuals who were graduate students from India at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS), Monterey, California. “Case studies are usually *descriptive* in that they describe phenomena” (Johnson, 1992, p. 83). The study investigated the phenomenon of Indian English speakers’ linguistic identity.

The present study is based on empirical data collected through semi-structured non-nomothetic interviews with both participants, who had similar language learning experiences. The study involved two face-to-face interviews with the participants for about 35 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded, and focused on the research questions to collect data about the participants’ linguistic identities and associated aspects as speakers of a nativized variety of English. Additionally, information about participants’ scores on standardized tests was also collected to obtain an idea about their proficiency in the English language. They both had taken the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and GRE (Graduate Record Examination), and their scores on these tests supplemented the data for this study.

## **Participants**

The study involved two participants, let us call them Kumar and Shanti for the sake of anonymity and confidentiality of information, who were graduate students at MIIS. Both of them were Indian nationals and were in the US for a Master’s degree in policy studies. They were enlisted for the study through an agreement for voluntary participation. Table 2 sums up participant profiles:

**TABLE 2**  
**Demographic and English Proficiency Profiles**

Participant	Gender	Age (Years)	Languages (First)	TOEFL Score	TOEFL TWE	GRE (Verbal)	GRE (Analytical)
Kumar	Male	22	Telugu and English	297	6	710	5
Shanti	Female	29	Hindi and English	287	5.5	440	3.5

I have triangulated data about their English language proficiency by relying on their scores from the computer-based TOEFL and GRE, verbal and analytical sections, in addition to my conversations with them in English. Although the GRE is not a language proficiency test, verbal and analytical sections of the test reflect a test taker's advanced literacy in English. The subscores of GRE verbal and analytical sections have a maximum score of 800 and six respectively.

*Kumar*

Kumar was born and raised in Hyderabad, India. Hyderabad is a large metropolis with over six million people; it is the sixth largest city in India. Kumar had an urban upbringing and school education. In developing countries like India, the urban-rural divide is huge; and thus, life in a big metropolitan area is a significant factor in an individual's socialization for various reasons, such as access to better amenities, educational facilities, and job opportunities. Moreover, according to my exposure and information about India, English language use is more common and necessary for an educated person in urban India than in rural areas.

Kumar's parents were working in professional jobs in Hyderabad. He was the only child of his parents. He was sent to a private boarding school in a neighboring town. The school was one of the most prestigious educational institutions in the area. There, he was immersed in an English speaking environment from grade one. The school faculty included several British teachers who were hired to teach English language and literature. I inferred

from this background that Kumar's parents sent him to a private boarding school for two reasons: the school's quality education and English-medium environment. This scenario highlights the status of English in multilingual India, where English is accepted as another Indian language.

Kumar had a very diverse educational background. After he attended a school in India, his parents decided to send him abroad for his undergraduate education. At that point, studying in an English-speaking country was the first choice of him and his parents. So, Kumar studied at a university in Sydney, Australia. Later, he received his Master's degree from a graduate school in London, UK and then planned for his second Master's degree at MIIS in the US.

Telugu was Kumar's mother tongue and the language used at home. English was also his native language. He also had limited oral proficiency in Hindi, which he did not study formally. As noted earlier, since his early childhood, he had been living away from home most of the time, moving successfully from a boarding school to Australia, England, and then the US. He spent most of his life away from home. He communicated in English with all his friends in India and other parts of the world. However, he spoke Telugu with his parents and some other people in Hyderabad whenever he lived there. During his entire stay away from home, he rarely used Telugu except when he was in contact with his parents. After he arrived in the US, most of his communication with his parents was through emails in English. Therefore, English had become his language of communication most of the time with his parents.

A major difference between both of Kumar's native languages (i.e., Telugu and English) was that he received English literacy from a prestigious school, but had no formal teaching in Telugu. As a consequence, he could not read or write in Telugu whereas he was remarkably proficient in English writing. According to him, even his spoken proficiency in Telugu was not compatible with native speakers of Telugu in India. I could not test him in Telugu due to my unfamiliarity with this language. According to Kumar's linguistic profile, it appeared that English overshadowed Telugu in his life and his choice of

English over Telugu was obviously supported by the fact that all his formal education was in English. Another reason for this low proficiency in Telugu was probably infrequent use of the language during the past decade of his life. Kumar mentioned that he consciously chose English as his first language and identity marker. Furthermore, his spoken English had features of British English, especially the phonological pattern of /r/, which is usually not pronounced if followed by a consonant or it occurs at the end of a word. Kumar considered himself a native speaker of Indian English.

Kumar had a very brief work experience. He worked with a think tank in London for a few months. While studying in the US, he worked part-time with the Center for Non-Proliferation Studies at MIIS. After completion of his education, he planned to work as a policy specialist with a think tank or an international organization somewhere in the world.

### *Shanti*

Shanti had an interesting social background. She was born in Benin City, a multicultural town in Nigeria, where her parents were working in professional jobs. Her father was an engineer and her mother a psychologist. She completed her basic education in an English speaking environment in Benin City. The language spoken at her home was predominantly Hindi, but outside the home she always spoke English. In this way, Hindi and English developed side by side in her early upbringing and school education. Nevertheless, a major difference in her acquisition pattern of both languages was that she received formal literacy in English whereas Hindi was not taught to her formally. Consequently, by the end of her elementary school education, she was literate in English but not in Hindi. As a child, she attended a Nigerian school until grade six. During that time she was taught French and Edo, a local language, as additional languages. English was a major language of communication and the medium of instruction. Later, her parents moved to Lagos, in Nigeria, where she was enrolled in an Indian school. Hindi was also taught as a language at that school. There, she became literate in Hindi for the

first time, long after English.

Shanti was multilingual: a native speaker of Hindi and English with some proficiency in French and Edo. She had always communicated with her only sibling, a brother, in English since their childhood. The preference of English as code of communication between them was their mutual choice in spite of the fact that Hindi was also their first language. Shanti's family was very conscious about their native culture despite being in a foreign country. They preferred to live in an Indian neighborhood in Benin City and Lagos where linguistically and culturally they had maintained an Indian environment. Thus, Shanti was never out of a Hindi speaking Indian culture during her early socialization. However, in that environment, English and Hindi coexisted as two equally acceptable codes. Her family regularly visited relatives and friends in Lucknow, India. Later, Shanti was sent to Lucknow to attend a senior high school. One of the motives for her education in Lucknow was to immerse her in Indian society and to help her develop stronger bonds with her ancestral place and extended family. She easily adjusted in Lucknow culturally as well as linguistically. She found Nigerian and Indian English very similar as both were offspring of British English during the colonial rule. For instance, school textbooks and even nursery rhymes were the similar at both places.

After high school, Shanti continued her education in Lucknow and earned a Bachelor's degree in science from a local college. Those schools had a mixed medium of instruction, English and Hindi. The written medium was essentially English but spoken discourse fluctuated between both languages. Later, she went to London, UK and completed a Master's degree in political science. She returned to India to start a professional career in Mumbai, a major metropolis in India. In the workplace, English was a predominant medium of communication. Her job also involved field visits in rural India where few people knew English. Thus, the presence of English in India also went along urban-rural lines. After working for a few years in India, Shanti planned to specialize in policy studies at a graduate school in the US. For her future job following her graduation, Shanti showed no preference for a

specific location or service sector; rather, she considered the nature of the job and the employing organization to be important factors for her career. She expressed readiness to work anywhere in the world.

She is married to an Indian man, an engineer by profession, and plans to educate her children in Hindi and English, thus continuing the legacy of two native languages. She was quite clear about her ethnic and linguistic identity as a speaker of Hindi and English. She values both her international exposure and education. In addition to being a native speaker of English and Hindi, she is a second language learner of two more languages.

### **Procedure**

The research plan was first piloted with one participant (i.e., Kumar). Following the piloting, the present study was configured on the basis of the experience and observations from the first interview and qualitative data. Materials and procedures (especially, prompts and probes) for this study were tailored in keeping with the analysis of the pilot project. Finally, the present study was comprised of the qualitative data collected through two detailed interviews, data analysis, and transcription of the selected interview data. Transcription conventions are appended.

The qualitative data was collected from a semi-structured, detailed interview (i.e., “the qualitative interview,” Richards, 2003) with each participant, which concentrated on the five research questions outlined in the earlier section. The questions focused on the participants’ detailed biographical profile and linguistic background, the role of English in their social and academic lives, their sociolinguistic attitudes toward English, construction of their linguistic identities, coexistence of English and the vernaculars (i.e., Hindi and Telugu), and their acceptance/recognition as native speakers of Indian English in an Anglophone country. These questions were used as a guide, which were followed by several *wh-questions* according to the research focus. The interview excerpts, interspersed in the next section, are reported following the transcription conventions by



Seedhouse (2004).

The interviews with both participants were conducted about one week apart according to their availability. In the pre-interview briefing, the participants were informed about the objectives and the structure of the interview and the study. The participants' permission to use the interview data for analysis in this study was obtained. The interviews were punctuated with prompts while seeking *the particular* (Richards, 2003) information and responses related to the interview objectives in sufficient detail. Since the interviews were the principal source of data for this study, I tried to ensure that those interviews were conducted in "naturally occurring environments" (Johnson, 1992, p. 144). This measure generally was possible due to my good acquaintance with Kumar and Shanti over one year through the school, and it was easy to keep the interview a naturally occurring speech event. In fact, both of them were extremely cooperative in arranging the interview with me and sharing their standpoints and experiences in the English language. Moreover, due to cultural and linguistic proximity, I had some useful insights into the participants' background, which also facilitated data analysis and interpretation.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

(Data analysis and results are organized according to the five research questions, and the excerpts from the interview data, pertinent to each research question, are interpolated throughout this section.)

### **What Role has English Played in the Social and Academic lives of Speakers of Indian English?**

In order to answer this question, the data about the presence of the English language in participants' lives needs to be considered first. Kumar and Shanti stated that they had learned English along with Telugu and Hindi in their

childhood respectively, and had used English as a medium of communication ever since. They viewed the presence of English in their lives as follows (especially, its role in their education and social lives):

Kumar: Ok Ok (4) I got English in my childhood yes even before school (2) and ummm my parents spoke with me in English ! ok some sort of English at home later it was (2) the boarding school I just told you (2) um English became a compulsory language well (2) I WILL say from dawn to dusk in the class in our hostel we (2) ALWAYS talked in English in the campus um um that was special about the school

As mentioned earlier in Shanti's profile, she was born in Benin City, Nigeria where she also spent her childhood. She explains about the presence of English in her life:

Shanti: um (2) English learning started even before (2) my elementary school ( ) um well I knew English um um but not like Hindi ok (3) I had no problem in my elementary school um um umm an English medium school in Benin\_\_

and she further clarified whether her Benin City neighborhood had an Indian population:

Shanti: Yeah many Indians (4) were in that area

Interviewer: Ok (3) what was ? the common language of social interaction in your neighborhood (2) with people on the street um in shops\_\_

Shanti: mostly it was ENGLISH (3) but with some people umm some close family friends who knew Hindi umm we sometimes spoke Hindi but you know ummmm we also used English but other than those situations umm I always ( ) interact in English!

Data showed that both of the participants had quite similar patterns for language(s) learning, which can be divided into two phases: pre-school and

post-school (or after school started). During the pre-school phase, they learned Telugu and Hindi first at their “mother’s/father’s knee” (Davies, 2003). That means their first language learning took place naturally (i.e., without any formal instruction). At the same time, they were introduced to basic lexical and syntactical structures of English, which also took place without any formal instruction. Both of the participants told me that English was present in their lives from their early childhood. Both sets of parents were proficient in English and helped them learn it at that time. Mapping out Telugu/Hindi and English learning processes with precision during the participants’ pre-school childhood was a difficult task. In educated Indian families, parents typically use basic English expressions with children, though in a limited way compared to their first language use. Thus, it can be inferred from the participants’ first language learning patterns that prior to school age, they had acquired a basic (maybe limited) proficiency in English in addition to their linguistic proficiency in Telugu/Hindi.

Around the age of five, Kumar and Shanti entered elementary schools where they received formal literacy in English but not in Telugu and Hindi. Kumar never had literacy in Telugu whereas Shanti studied basic Hindi for only two years in high school. Shanti could read and write Hindi with impediment. The role of English as a communication code in the social and academic lives of the participants followed two prominent patterns. First, they learned English during their pre-school period at home but English was not the primary code of communication with their parents, relatives, and friends during that time. Second, in the next few years, they used more English as a school communication code than Telugu and Hindi. Kumar’s boarding school was completely Anglophone. Consequently, English became the primary code for him and Telugu was relegated to secondary status. Shanti’s situation was somewhat different because English was the primary code in her school and with her playmates but Hindi was the primary code at home. Thus, English and Hindi were both primary codes in different realms. However, English was used more (or exclusively) for being the medium of her education.

In the participants' adult life, the role of English further intensified and it became a primary code of communication in their social, academic, and workplace communication.

Kumar: I interacted with my teachers um friends in English in school ! and college (3) English has been a medium in my education throughout my academics um (2) I never had any other language in my education um even during all my education in INDIA ummm ( ) I read and write in English talk with friends family and acquaintances (2) BUT I can speak Telugu very well (3) there are people um in my hometown ! I speak with them in Telugu ok I will say (2) in my early childhood before school (2) Telugu was a home language

In Shanti's case:

Shanti: Oh ya ( ) I received education on four ya four continents (2) Ok all my education until today (3) ok was in English um my school college ! and professional training and education ( ) well this was a wonderful ( ) due to English I had NO problem in my education everywhere

To sum up, English remained the primary communication code in the participants' social and academic lives. Although the participants were bilingual (English and Telugu/Hindi), English played a major role in their social communication and education. Telugu/Hindi had quite limited application in their lives. In the case of Kumar, Telugu was used only in a few situations whenever he interacted with a small group of people in his hometown, and since his boarding school education, English also became his home language. Shanti had a somewhat wider use of Hindi as compared to Kumar's Telugu, especially in her family and in some social circles. The start of school education was probably a turning point in the participants' language learning history, more so in the case of Kumar. At that point, their formal instruction in English started and its role increased as a medium of communication compared with Telugu/Hindi. Thus, the English language

played a fundamental role in the participants' social and academic lives.

### **What are Indian English Speakers' Sociolinguistic and Academic Attitudes Toward English?**

Kumar and Shanti considered English their first language with its essential or inevitable role in their lives. Davies (2003) examines the question of being a native speaker from linguistic, psycholinguistic, and communicative perspectives. He argues, "the native speaker may be a native speaker of more than one L1, as long as the acquisition process starts early and necessarily pre-puberty" (p. 207). To have dual or multiple first languages, thus, is natural if the language acquisition starts during the childhood age (Birdsong, 1992; Halliday, 1978). As mentioned in the earlier section, Kumar and Shanti started learning dual L1s (i.e., Telugu/Hindi and English) in their early childhood period and employed those languages as a means of social communication and education.

Kumar, who was raised in India, showed a positive attitude towards English as a code of social communication:

Kumar: I have no problem um with English in India (2) and:: I feel very positive about it it's just that I don't have a kind of knowledge about other languages as opposed to English ? it's language I KNOW BEST and: umm um it is the language that I use in interacting with people and ah a the language in which I feel perfectly comfortable ! even in non-English speaking environment. Generally I'm comfortable with English! Yes

Shanti maintained the significance of English and her positive attitude towards it:

Shanti: Yes I use English most of the time ! um it is fine to learn English ! it's good um to use English (3) I am Indian ? Hindi is also my language English and Hindi:: are my FIRST languages (2) ok ok it is good ummm everyone is

learning English in schools in India (3) yes ( ) that is a need in our society um  
um we live in a very multicultural country \_\_\_\_

Kumar and Shanti showed acceptance of English not only in their personal lives but in a larger context, that is, multilingual and multicultural Indian society. They highlighted the *essential role* of English in the country. The participants also underscored the status of English in India as a widespread language, which is accepted by the people as the language of social communication and a language that belongs to them.

The participants were content with English as a medium of instruction in their education and believed that English had brought good to them and provided a wider access to the educational and professional development opportunities on an international scale. Kumar and Shanti realized the essential role of English in their academic career despite being speakers of other languages and considered English a language of social cohesion for the Indian society.

Kumar: Beyond that (3) it has helped me communicate better and ah a of course it also because you know ! it gives you other opportunities just not in India (1) but in other parts of the world (2) to study abroad and kind of things (2) in that sense it has brought a lot of benefits to me a ah and:: it is a sort of a common language that binds all Indians (1) they live in a multilingual country so that helps

Shanti viewed the sociolinguistic position of English as follows:

Shanti: Well (1) but everyone knows that um English is a common language in INDIA and um in the world (2) we can speak to everyone all over the world ( ) ok (2) only English can help us in international education jobs diplomacy etc. ? um umm um we we cannot be global or local without English (3) you know in India also ( ) English links all Indian people in in south and north (2) my parents taught me English in my childhood (3) um um that was a big help

where ever I lived in Asia, Africa, Europe (3) um I cannot even work in India without English um um English is a must language in India (2) ok

Data showed that the participants' sociolinguistic and academic attitudes toward English were positive, that is, they had a feeling of ownership and acceptance for Indian English. Furthermore, they expressed preferential attitudes toward Indian English as the language in the social and academic realms of their lives.

### **How do Speakers of Indian English Establish their Linguistic Identities?**

The above analysis indicated that the participants showed a sense of ownership for English, something related to their lives. However, the question of how to establish the linguistic identity of Indian English speakers is an inherently intricate one. The participants unequivocally named English as their first language in response to the questions about their languages and their first language(s).

Kumar: Umm (1) I am a native speaker of Indian English I would say that \_\_

According to Shanti:

Shanti: Well (2) I grew up speaking English that was my everyday language at my school at whatever (3) yeah English is my language and (3) Hindi !

In addition to being native speakers of Indian English, Kumar was also a Telugu-speaking southerner, and Shanti was a Hindi-speaking northerner. Thus, being multilingual (or bilingual) native speakers of English as well as Telugu/Hindi, they had multiple linguistic identities.

It seems pertinent to visit the description of a native speaker of a language and the social and psychological factors involved in being one. While

expanding the description of a native speaker beyond temporal dimensions, Davies (2003) encompasses the essential characteristics of a native speaker. The characteristics include learning the language in childhood, being fluent and spontaneous in language production, being able to write creatively, and having the ability to translate and interpret into his or her L1. Kumar and Shanti had Hindi/Telugu in tandem with English in their socialization process from childhood. English functioned optimally in situations where they needed a particular code to communicate. They were successful in accomplishing a wide range of communicative functions through English with natural ease and convenience. Furthermore, their positive sociolinguistic and academic attitudes towards English were part of their diverse cultural and linguistic heritage. Kumar said, "I don't have a kind of knowledge about other languages as opposed to English. It's language I know best," and "After my graduation [bachelor's degree], I was writing op-eds for English dailies [part-time], it was nice to see my analysis and opinion published." Similarly, Shanti mentioned, "I write English and Hindi my first languages...in all forms I fill in...university forms, employment applications, government, immigration forms," and "In Mumbai office, we always used English...Hindi only during my field visits to villages in some remote rural areas." This was the language use pattern in Shanti's professional position after her education in the UK.

Indian English as the participants' first language, thus, largely formed their linguistic identity. Indian English had a fundamental role in their identity formation and as an identity marker. The following excerpts portray their linguistic identity conception:

Interviewer: Ok (2) then how do you FEEL about English in India (1) is it ? your own language or do you think it is a foreign language ( ) you have acquired. Do you feel distant from your own culture to be um (.) an English-speaking individual in India

Kumar: No (1) o no I don't feel distant from my local culture (2) I am perfectly comfortable with English because I speak it well (3) yes it a a sometimes



creates an impression that I am sort of alien um distant from local culture

And

Kumar: I think all educated Indians speak English ! we can't say our Indian English is a foreign language (2) not at all ! (2) we use English:: everywhere in the country um among Indians It is a major language of India \_\_\_\_

In spite of her Nigerian background, Shanti had a strong sense of Indian identity and of her ethnic origin in India:

Interviewer: Ok umm till:: the age of umm 19 you had never been ? to India  
Shanti: Oh no no:: we used to go to India EVERY YEAR (3) to meet our relatives. Yeah (3) but we lived in Nigeria (4) and at that time (3) I was both umm a Nigerian and and also an Indian yeah (5).

She underlined additional aspects of her identity to substantiate her claim:

Shanti: As I said ! (3) my personality um my identity as an Indian woman:: is incomplete ! without um English um ummm I cannot survive (4) without it (2) Ok you can see ! I would not have been well (3) that I'm now um without:: English (3) my NIGERIAN background is important (3) but I am Indian national (2) a brown-skinned haha haha:: educated native speaker of English and Hindi !

Data from the present study highlight the fact that the participants perceived Indian English as being embedded in the society they were members of and thus, an integral part of their linguistic identity. As demonstrated earlier (under research question one), Kumar and Shanti acquired English as part of their linguistic inheritance. From this standpoint, English was naturally woven into the multilingual social fabric of India in which the participants were members.

The essential role of a common/link language cannot be overemphasized in a multilingual society. The participants identified English as a link language in India, and, thus, English unified them. Furthermore, English was a dominant characteristic of their identity as multilingual Indians (Kumar had English/Telugu as L1s and a basic oral proficiency in Hindi; Shanti had English/Hindi as L1s and some proficiency in French and Edo).

English as a nativized variety (e.g., Kachru, 1998; Rahman, 1990) was essentially Indian English, which was a primary code of intracultural communication within ethnically diverse India. Kumar viewed Indian English as “a common language that binds all Indians...in a multilingual country that helps,” and “a language that is everywhere in India, more common than Hindi I suppose.” Shanti believed that “we can’t be global or local without English. You know in India, English links all Indian people in south and north.” Moreover, there was “never a problem with English in India. Why that should be? This [English] is an important language of India.”

Thus, the speakers of Indian English consider it a part of their linguistic identities. Indian English performs an important national function, that is, uniting people in India through a common language. Data also suggested a harmonious relationship among languages within the Indian linguistic landscape where English is not in conflict with any other regional language. Each language has its own sphere of operation set by the social and cultural demands. This chemistry of languages helped to establish the role of English in the formation of identity in the participants.

### **How are Speakers of Indian English Accepted in an English Speaking Country Such as the United States?**

While looking at the issue of Indian English, the question of the acceptance of Indian English speakers in an English-speaking country like the US is quite intriguing. The participants lived in Anglophone countries including the UK, Australia, and the US for higher education and work. In their experience, Kumar and Shanti did not feel that they were accepted

outright in the Anglophone countries as native speakers of a variety of English (i.e., Indian English).

Kumar: Yeah ah to some extent ? they did [consider me a nonnative speaker of English] but generally they treated me as a native speaker due to my language proficiency in English yeah

In response to a similar question, Shanti replied:

Shanti: ...they don't think umm um a woman coming from India umm is a native English speaker ( ) but yeah we have umm umm different English it is more like British English

Indian English as a variety and its native speakers were not established realities in the participants' experience during their education in the US, but their high proficiency in English helped them to be considered proficient speakers of English by their peers at the school. Kumar and Shanti were required by the school to take the TOEFL, in spite of their claim to be native speakers of English in their admission application. During their study, the school considered them ESL learners like many other non-Anglophone and non-American students.

Kumar: Yes (2) um I HAD to take ah um TOEFL exam (3) that was a requirement for my admission at universities in the US ! um Only the candidates umm from countries like Australia, the UK, Canada um are (2) exempted from:: English language testing requirements (3) yes

Shanti added:

Shanti: Ok ok umm um I lived in the UK and (3) for my education in (3) London and (3) now in America (3) in a graduate school I was asked to take TOEFL (3) that is the way the system is here

After their arrival at the school, Kumar mentioned that, “I didn’t enroll in an ESL course...well, that was recommended...ESL course was not necessary for me I think.” Similarly, Shanti also considered that, “...ESL intensive course was not a requirement, but generally good for international students...No, I didn’t register for the ESL course.” They believed that because they possessed a native English proficiency, an ESL course at the school was not relevant to them, which generally most of the international students opt for.

The acceptance issue of the speakers of nativized varieties of English was probably not straightforward for people like Kumar and Shanti. However, they were complacent about their linguistic adjustment in Anglophone environments. They found this adjustment or discourse appropriation easy and felt that they were at an advantage compared with other international students in their school due to their superior English language skills.

Kumar: Intelligibility:: was not an issue (2) um during my entire stay in the UK, Australia, (2) and um at present in the US (3) um Well ! I HAD sometimes I’d problem communicating with people around me (3) in Australia ummm and the US people speak different English dialects ( ) but um um it was not much in the UK ... (2) Ok but I was comfortable ! overall (2) my English is very good I must say (2) that helps me

Shanti also had a similar experience in the Anglophone world:

Shanti: um actually I never had a serious problem talking to people or understanding them here (3) but sometimes:: yes (2) I face intelligibly problem with colleagues ( ) when I was new here ! um but it was Ok everywhere ... my English is pretty good ! enough (2) umm that is a plus

Probably, Kumar and Shanti did not confront a significant intelligibility problem during their stay in Anglophone countries, especially in the UK due to the influence of British English upon Indian English. However, both of

them faced occasional problems of being unintelligible mostly to the speakers of US and Australian English. Data corroborated that the participants found Indian English closer to British English due to phonological and lexical convergence. According to Shanti, “[Indian English is] different English it’s more like British English,” and the likewise, Kumar said, “people say here, I’ve kinda British accent.”

### **How do Indian English Speakers Situate English vis-à-vis the Vernaculars?**

Being multilingual speakers, a question naturally arises as to how Kumar and Shanti situated English vis-à-vis their vernaculars, Telugu and Hindi. This issue is closely tied to their linguistic identity. They were multiple-language users who came from a very diverse society.

Interviewer: Ok um now when you see several dozen languages um umm REGIONAL languages ( ) and English (2) in India ! ok (3) um on the other hand (.) English is your primary code of communication (3) how will you situate English in India um along with other languages?

Kumar: Well English I believe ! is among Indian languages (3) spoken by the people allover India (3) right um English is a common language in India and....other languages belong to regions:: or states ! um all languages have their specific roles (3) people speak them according to the situation (2) and needs\_\_

He further mentioned:

Kumar: As I said (3) um English is a link language and ! a major language I would say for education business and industry (4) I speak both English and Telugu (3)... that is perfectly okay... I like BOTH languages and if get a chance (3) I would learn other Indian languages um ! that is the richness of our culture::

To a related question, Shanti responded:

Shanti: Ok (2) but that is ! not a problem (2) we have all languages umm English and Hindi are two major languages (3) people also speak other small languages ? but English is part of our national culture (5) we use um English when we travel or work in different states in India (3) and for official communication:: (4) sometimes we use Hindi and English ! side by side \_\_\_\_

She also clarified:

Shanti: ...we live in a very multicultural country (4) different ! races, religions, and languages...this is working well

In fact, multilingualism is embedded in Kumar and Shanti's linguistic identity and culture. The pattern of situating English vis-à-vis the vernaculars is related to the following two spheres of their Indian identity:

- *Regional India*: This includes various ethnic/cultural regions, which form subcultures.
- *National India*: India as a nation with common characteristics of *Indianness* across the subcultures and regions.

The participants had membership in subcultures through their vernaculars and in national (or even international) culture through English. However, their subcultures and national culture were not linguistically mutually exclusive. For instance, in regional India, English was also used in social communication in addition to the vernaculars.

Situating English vis-à-vis the vernaculars, the participants' did not consider English a threat to the vernaculars or vice versa, and there was no conflict involved. Although English was the primary language for the participants, they also used the vernaculars in their communication. Therefore, both English and the vernaculars constituted the participants'

linguistic identities.

Kumar: that:: aaa I don't believe that can happen ! both [English and Telugu] can coexist ! but that um does not imply that local language like the one I speak will suddenly disappear (2) because you know ! there are millions of speakers. I would not say it would DISAPPEAR but it is quite possible that English would dominate

According to Shanti:

Shanti: No:: um there ! is no linguistic conflict between English and Hindi or other languages (3) ALL the languages have um their own importance in our society ? (2) and um also in my life (5) I'm a bilingual (3) to some extent multilingual ok Hindi ! is part of my life and identity (4) similarly in our society (3) local languages and English are functioning WELL (3) I never hear people fighting for English or Hindi \_\_\_

Moreover, the participants realized the significance of both English and the vernacular in India, and they wanted to transfer this *stable multilingualism* to the coming generations:

Interviewer: Ok a ah let's:: say how will you (2) ummm you pass on English to your posterity (1) you think is it important to learn English

Kumar: If they are in India (1) they would have to learn English ? but at the same time ( ) aa I will encourage them to learn our local languages (2) it depends upon their interest yeah: but I would not insist

Similarly, Shanti had a stronger emphasis on learning local languages:

Shanti: Yes (2) ! of course our languages are our HERITAGE (4) um I'll certainly yes ( ) encourage our coming generations (2) to be good bilinguals ! umm I mean English and Hindi speakers (2) ! even other Indian languages \_\_\_

Therefore, the participants' views about English and the vernaculars did not originate in any immediate need to learn a foreign language in India or apparent material benefits associated with multilingualism; rather, the positive attitude (or *acceptance*) toward multilingualism was part of their socialization and linguistic identity.

## DISCUSSION

The major discovery in the study was how the English language was situated in the participants' linguistic identities. Initially, I considered the participants to be ESL speakers, because English is a second language and a nativized variety of British English in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Kachru, 1983; Rahman, 1990). Following the pilot project for this study with Kumar, I realized that he described himself as a native speaker of Indian English and it was part of his linguistic identity. This was a significant finding worth further exploration. Kumar and Shanti were multilingual, or more specifically bilingual, native speakers of Telugu and English as well as Hindi and English respectively. Thus, they were multilingual and multiliterate individuals (i.e., Shanti learned Hindi at school. Kumar did not receive formal instruction in Telugu, but had a very basic literacy in Telugu).

This post-pilot study discovery further raised two questions: firstly, how do we identify a native speaker of English? Secondly, what are the patterns of language use of multilingual individuals in their social lives? These questions are quite complex and I experienced the inherent intricacy of the subject during the study, which also led me to realize how reductionist and ethnocentric descriptors such as "native" can be. Nevertheless, devising a comprehensive substitute of this term seems equally convoluted. The following discussion attempts to seek out answers to these complex questions.

Kumar and Shanti belonged to a country with several dozen languages. Kumar came from south India and Shanti belonged to north India. They were



from two entirely different ethno-linguistic groups in India. If we try to identify them through their vernaculars, they were totally different people. Both of them were completely unfamiliar with each other's vernaculars (i.e., Telugu and Hindi). Although Hindi is a major national and official language in India, Kumar had attained only rudimentary oral proficiency in Hindi. In contrast, Telugu was wholly alien to Shanti. If ever both of the compatriots were to communicate with each other, the most preferable lingua franca would be English, that is, the Indian English variety.

A nativized variety of English can play a significant role as a link or common language in multilingual societies. The case study supported the fact that Indian English as a nativized variety was the instrument of *intracultural* communication like the inner circle varieties of English. In fact, Indian English has a very well-defined role within the linguistic diversity of India and, consequently, a profound impact on the identity formation of its first-language speakers. In the case of Kumar, a pattern emerged in his linguistic profile: low Telugu proficiency, which was limited to oracy vis-à-vis native proficiency and literacy in English. Perhaps, he had (re)constructed his linguistic identity as an English speaking individual in India. However, Telugu was also a constituent of his bilingual linguistic identity. Shanti, on the other hand, strived to maintain bilingual native speaker's proficiency because of her strong Hindi-associated identity. Furthermore, the participants' bilingual identity was not "a site of struggle" (Pierce, 1995, p. 14), their sense of ownership of both languages (English and Hindi/Telugu) rather showed the stable *multilingualism* in their personalities. The study also highlighted a bond between linguistic identity and the *nativization* of English in South Asia.

Social identities are complex, especially in a multilingual culture. The participants came from a recognizably similar community from a macro-level perspective, which shared common characteristics. Thus, the linguistic identity of an Indian could also entail English as an integral element of the identity construct along with the vernaculars. Of those common characteristics of the identity, as could be seen in the case of Kumar and

Shanti, Indian English was not only a common currency between them in terms of a linguistic code, but also as a signifier of their sociocultural milieus. Moreover, as Crystal (2000) emphasizes, “There are good grounds for conceiving the natural condition of the human being to be multilingual” (p. 45).

Regarding the question of *standardness*, “If British English, Singapore English or indeed English as a International Language can also be standard languages, then it makes sense to regard a speaker of one of those codes as a native speaker” (Davies, 2003, p. 214). Similarly, Finegan (2004) also argues that “no single variety of English can be called *the* standard” (p. 16). Therefore, to be more precise, Kumar and Shanti were native speakers of Indian English. As a standard nativized variety, Indian English fulfilled similar functions like other varieties of English (e.g., US English, Australian English, and the like) did in the social communication in a particular culture.

Finally, the study underscores a challenge that multilingual individuals face. In a perfect world, multilingual/bilingual native speakers maintain their native proficiency in L1s. In reality, linguistic attrition is a threat to all multilingual individuals. Kumar particularly suffered from attrition in Telugu. He, however, could manage with Telugu in social communication. His use of Telugu gradually declined in his personal and social communication after he was enrolled in the boarding school and eventually his long stay in Anglophone countries. Shanti withstood attrition in Hindi perhaps because her parents were very conscious of their ethno-linguistic identity through Hindi as well. Her education in India and marriage with a Hindi-speaking Indian helped her maintain Hindi as a predominantly home language. Conversely, Kumar and Shanti seemed to face no threat of attrition to their English because it had remained their language of education, office, and formal communication.

### **Limitations and Implications**

The features of the case study point to various limitations and implications.

The study relies on empirical data collected through two semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Thus, data was limited to the responses of the two participants. Consequently, the results have limited generalizability (i.e., external validity). This limitation is particularly relevant to the research question, *How are speakers of Indian English accepted in an English speaking country, such as the United States?* An answer to this question with reference to this study might be quite limited, because a comprehensive response would require additional data from a different population. External validity remains an inherent limitation with a case study design (even a dual case study). Therefore, all answers to the research questions discussed in this study are limited only to the responses of the two participants.

Furthermore, the participants in this study might not represent the typical educated Indian population due to various factors. Shanti was born and raised up to middle school outside of India (i.e., Nigeria), and Kumar was educated in a boarding school in India and later lived abroad for an extended period (i.e., Australia, the UK, and the US). In fact, India is the world's second most populous country, immensely diverse with hundreds of ethnic groups and languages. It is nearly impossible to declare any one or two individuals or groups as representative of average Indians. Nevertheless, I believe both participants are likely to represent a large number of people in India who have similar ethno-linguistic and social profiles.

Shanti and Kumar were Indian nationals and speakers of Indian English. Both of the participants had lived a major part of their lives in India, had very strong ties with India, had families living in India, and above all, identified themselves as being speakers of Indian English. Although Kumar was educated in Australia, the UK, and the US, he still spoke Indian English, which I observed during my acquaintance with him. In spite of the fact that Shanti spent her childhood in Nigeria, she always lived in an Indian community, her parents spoke Indian English, she was educated at Indian schools or Nigerian schools with Indian teachers, and rarely had close interactions with local Nigerian people. Thus, I considered the participants speakers of Indian English, who constructed their identity through Indian

English. This view is also supported by Davies's (2003) description of a native speaker. The essential characteristics of a native speaker include learning the language in childhood (at "mother's/father's knee"), demonstrating a wide range of communicative ability by dint of fluent and spontaneous discourse, being able to write creatively, and having the ability to translate and interpret into his or her L1 (Davies, 2003). This seems to be a comprehensive description of a native speaker. Thus, Kumar and Shanti had Hindi/Telugu in tandem with English as their L1s. However, the definition of a native speaker is an elusive construct, and it is defined in a number of ways.

The study sheds light on the status of English in the outer circle countries, such as India, in terms of *range* and *depth* of English in multilingual Indian society. Moreover, the study shows how limited a view it would be if we confine English only to the inner circle countries. English has a very significant role as a *lingua franca* in multilingual South Asian societies. Perhaps the most important implication that the study suggests is how nativized varieties of English, such as Indian English, are part of an individual's identity index, which needs recognition in academic settings, especially in Anglophone countries.

## CONCLUSION

Language and identity are two closely related factors (Jenkins, 2006; Norton, 2000). Perhaps, identities are multiple and people are capable of constructing as well as reconstructing several different identities within and across Discourses. The ethno-linguistic identity of speakers of nativized English could be traced through the presence of English as a constituent of multilingual India. Although the study was not intended to generalize the inferences to the population, the study has provided insights into the role of English in the sociocultural lives of the native speakers of Indian English, their attitudes towards English, their linguistic identities, their acceptance in Western Anglophone countries, and their view of English vis-à-vis the

vernaculars. In fact, the issue of identity and a sense of ownership of English among the speakers of nativized varieties of English, such as Indian English, needs more research.

The English language was more than a language for the participants with regard to their social identity and socialization. The case supported Canagarajah's (1999) assertion about post-colonial English in India that "the English language has become too deeply rooted in their [Indians'] soil, and in their consciousness, to be considered 'alien'" (p. 1). English was not only perceived as a common linguistic code in Indian society but also an integral component of the participants' identity.

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## APPENDIX

### Transcription conventions used in the paper

(3)	Interval between utterances (in seconds)
(.)	Very short untimed pause
<u>word</u>	Speaker emphasis
e:r the::	Lengthening of the preceding sound
—	Abrupt cutoff
?	Rising intonation, not, necessarily a question
!	Animated or emphatic tone
CAPITALS	Especially loud sounds relative to surrounding talk
()	A stretch of unclear or intelligible speech

*Adapted from Seedhouse (2004)*