

THE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AND THE NATIVE INDIAN ENGLISH SPEAKER

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I have tried to work on the English pronunciation of Indian Natives and also how it differs with British Received Pronunciation. The standard of pronunciation aimed is based on accepted Indian usage modified in the direction of British Received pronunciation to attain International intelligibility. English is spoken all over such a large part of the world that a number of slightly different accents are used by native speakers of the language – in the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia. English is also spoken by educated people all over the Commonwealth, and a number of 'foreign accents' have therefore come into existence, each showing certain features of the speakers' mother tongue. English as spoken by educated people in India does not differ radically from native English in grammar and vocabulary, but in pronunciation it is different from both British and American English. Even within India there are a large number of regional varieties, each different from the other in certain ways, and retaining to some extent the phonetic patterns of the Indian Language spoken in that particular region. These regional varieties of English are sometimes not even mutually intelligible. In many regions, however, there are people who have shaken off the gross features of regional accent and speak a more 'neutral' form of Indian English.

I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I have tried to work on the English pronunciation of Indian Natives and also how it differs with British Received Pronunciation. The standard of pronunciation aimed is based on accepted Indian usage modified in the direction of British Received pronunciation to attain International intelligibility. English as spoken by educated people in India does not differ radically from native English in grammar and vocabulary, but in pronunciation it is different from both British and American English. In many regions, however, there are people who have shaken off the gross features of regional accent and speak a more 'neutral' form of Indian English.

As there is such a wide range of variation in the accent (both native and non-native), it is essential that for teaching spoken English we follow a standard. One native regional accent that has gained social prestige is the Received Pronunciation of England (R.P. for short). It is the pronunciation of South-east England and is used by educated English Speakers.

II. MODEL IN A NON-NATIVE SITUATION

In many non-English-speaking countries R.P. is chosen as a model mainly for historical reasons. It is also well-documented in dictionaries and books. R.P. is generally used by BBC news readers and serves as a model for Indian news readers too.

III. BRITISH RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION (RP.)

In twenty vowels there are 12 Pure Vowels and 8 Diphthongs.

IV. VOWELS IN GENERAL INDIAN ENGLISH

Corresponding to the twenty-vowel system of British R.P., General Indian English generally has a system of 11 pure vowels and 6 vowel glides. These are:

V. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE VOWEL SYSTEMS OF BRITISH R.P. AND GENERAL INDIAN ENGLISH

The important differences between the vowel systems of British RP and General Indian English are as follows:

- (i) Indian English has only one phoneme /ə/ corresponding to R.P. /ʌ/, /ɜ:/ and /ə/
- (ii) Indian English has one phoneme /ɒ/ corresponding to R.P. /ɒ/ and /ɔ: /
- (iii) Indian English has monophthongs /e:/ and /o:/ in place of R.P. diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/
- (iv) The qualities of some of the Indian English vowels are different from those in R.P.
- (v) The distribution of vowels in Indian English sometimes differs from that in R.P. For example, in R.P. generally a weak vowel - /ə/, /ɪ/ or /ʊ/- is used in an unaccented syllable. This is not the case in Indian English, where the tendency is to use the vowel indicated by the spelling.

The various spellings¹ for this vowel are:

- i) e, accented, generally e+consonant+mute e.

	British R.P	Indian English Variant	Recommended Form
Immediate:	/i'mi:djə t/	/immi:di et ²	[I'mi:djet] ³
ei			

receive : /r I'si:v/ /rIsi:v/ /rI'si:v/

Some Assamese, Bengali, Bihari, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, and Oriya speakers in India do not always maintain the distinction between / i: / and / I / . They replace / i: / by / I / and thus cannot distinguish between pairs like the following:

/i:/	/I/		
		eat	it
		feel	fill
		field	filled
		sleep	slip

It is necessary to keep the two phenomes separate and maintain the difference of quality. It is

also necessary to give /i:/ adequate length, except when it is followed by a voiceless consonant.

In British R.P. /ɪ / is a very common vowel in unaccented syllables, but the tendency in Indian English is to use the vowel suggested by spelling.

VI. SPELLINGS

British R.P. Indian English Variant Recommended Form

i). i

bit /bɪ t/

thick /θɪ k/ /t^hɪ k/ /θɪ k/

ii) e,

begin /bɪ ˈɡɪ n/ /bɪ ɡɪ n/ /bɪ ˈɡɪ n/

iii) a, unaccented (Indian English has [e] instead of /ɪ /).

village /vɪ lɪ dʒ / /vɪ ledʒ / [vɪ ledʒ]

private /ˈpraɪ vɪ t/ /ˈpraɪ ʊet [ˈpraɪ vet]

iv) ie (Indian English has /i:/ instead of /ɪ /

carries /ˈkæri z/ /ˈkæri:z/ [ˈkariz]

Some Assamese, Bengali, Bihari, Hindi and Oriya speakers in India tend to replace /ɪ / by a closer vowel [i], particularly in accented syllables. The result is that the distinction between pairs like the following is not always maintained:

/ɪ /	/i:/
bid	bead
hills	heels
live	leave

Similarly, in the case of vowel-

Indian English /e:/

British R.P. /eɪ / } as in gate

Some Bengali, Bihari, Hindi and Punjabi speakers in India tend to replace /e:/ by /ɛ / or /ɛ :/ and thus the distinction between pairs like the following is lost:

/e:/	/ɛ /
gate	get
later	letter
main	men

It is necessary to maintain this distinction and to give the monophthong /e:/ adequate length.

VII. CONSONANTS

The distinction of Consonants between British R.P. and Indian English. I have done the research mainly on Plosives which is a significant feature of consonant.

Indian English differs from British R.P. in respect of the following:

VIII. BRITISH R.P. HAS THREE PAIRS OF PLOSIVE PHONEMES

/p,b/ bilabial

/t,d/ alveolar (In Indian English these are often retroflex [t, d]).

/k,g/ velar

/p,t,k/ are voiceless and comparatively strong called fortis; /b,d, g/ are voiced and comparatively weak- lenis

In British R.P. /p,t,k/ at the beginning of accented syllables are aspirated, that is a strong puff of breath after the release of the plosive before the next vowel begins, e.g.,

Pack [p^hæk], table [' t heɪ b], cage [k^heɪ dʒ]

This aspiration is absent in Indian English, and lack of aspiration is a frequent cause of Indian English being unintelligible to native speakers⁴. It is desirable to have some aspiration in /p,t,k/ when they occur initially in accented syllables.

In Indian English /k/ is unaspirated in all positions. It is necessary to aspirate it at the beginning of accented syllables, when talking to native English speakers; otherwise there is a possibility of confusion between pairs like cold and gold, cot and got.

IX. CONCLUSION

Thus, I believe that we need not worry about imitating the British accent completely for we are Indians and our dialect will predominate. Also it's not awkward for that's our identity but should take care to pronounce the word correctly to the extent that it does not create confusion in the mind of the listener and different letters in the word can be distinguished.

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