UNIT 2 GLOBAL ENGLISH AND INDIAN ENGLISH

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

To understand:

- language variation: dialect, accent and style; a neutral accent,
- the idea of standard English, and British and American models of English,
- attitudes to language: purity and tolerance, and
- characteristics of Indian English, and using English in a multilingual context.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Many of us think that there is a single object called "English", which we must learn. But there are actually many varieties of English, as there are of any language. We know that there are formal and informal varieties of a language. We may speak of a "standard" variety as one which is accepted as educated and cultured usage, and taught in schools.

English is actually spoken in a variety of ways all across the world, and indeed, whithin the U.K. as well. No two people speak in precisely the same way. What is important for international communication is that our "accent" should be as "neutral" as possible: it should not have obvious regional characteristics or personal idiosyncrasies. When we speak English, we should not sould as if we are speaking Hindi, or Tamil, or Japanese!

What model of standard English shouls we follow? There are two international models: British, and American. These are two varieties of the same langauge, with

some well-known differences, but with much, much more in common. Indian English is also now being recognized as a vareity of English. It has many characteristic words of its own, that are sometimes separately listed in learners' dictionaries. The grammar of Indian English is largely that of British English.

We can have a "purist" attitude to language, which always tries to be "correct", of we can adopt a "permissive" attitude, which believes that a language belongs to whoever speaks it, and what they naturally say is all right. In formal situation, for example, we do not mix words from the other languages we know into the English we speak. But informally, all over the world, many multilingual speakers of English do mix their own languages up with English. This is called "code-mixing", and is seen as a sopurce of creativity in langauge use.

> Whether you are a foreigner or a native, the first thing I must impress on you is that ...no two British subjects speak exactly alike.
>
> – George Bernard Shaw (1856-1951), British playwright and social and political commentator, in a recording he made for the Linguaphone Institute

2.2 DIALECT, ACCENT AND STYLE

We have understood from the previous unit that language is not an indivisible whole. Language changes over time and across space. One variety of language may differ from another in three ways:

i. pronunciation,

ii. vocabulary, or

iii. grammar.

If a variety of language differs from another in all three ways, we call it a *dialect*.

But the most common difference among the varieties of a language is the first one: pronunciation, or the way we speak it. Such a difference, in pronunciation only, is called an *accent*.

Accent is the most obvious and visible quality of our language use. We can readily tell British from American speakers of English by their accent. In India we can tell whether a person is a speaker of Punjabi, Bangla, Marathi, Malayalam or Tamil, from their accent in English! Let us see what Bernard Shaw, whom we quoted at the beginning of this unit, tells us about his experiences as a member of a committee of "educated persons whose speech (is) correct and refined". This was a committee that the BBC, the British Broadcasting Corporation, had established "for the purpose of deciding how the utterances ... should be pronounced" on air in order to be "a model of correct speech". The committee included a playwright – Shaw himself, an actor, and a Poet Laureate.

Shaw tells us that even on this committee, there were different accents: "The simplest and commonest words in any language are 'yes' and 'no'. But no two members of the committee pronounce them exactly alike".

It is true that no two people speak in an identical way. Human beings are not robots produced in a factory, or clones produced in a laboratory. Our speech reflects our individuality. Yet all of us do wish to be understood by one another, and to understand one another. (Linguists call this "being intelligible" to one another.) So Shaw continues:

"... every member pronounces them [the words 'yes' and 'no'] in such a way that they would not only be intelligible in every English-speaking country, but would stamp the speaker as a cultivated person as distinguished from an ignorant and illiterate one".

Are you now saying, "Well: that is good enough for me: that is how I desire to speak", as Shaw thinks you will?

How are you to speak in an "intelligible and cultivated" way? In order to do that, you have to understand what Standard English is, and think of possible models of speech for you to follow. But first, we need to understand one more idea.

We have now understood what a dialect is, and an accent. We must now understand that there are different styles in language. Some of you may already know that we can say the same thing in different ways depending on where we speak, and who we speak to. This is easy to see in the words we choose for our thoughts. Let's take an example.

I'm fagged out. *I'm very tired.* *I'm exhausted.*

These are three ways of saying very nearly the same thing. The first, "I'm fagged out", is labeled "informal" in the dictionary, because it uses colloquial words or slang. Such a style is suitable for use only within a close social group, such as friends. (Many Indian users of English may not even know this expression, because we do not use it; it is typical colloquial British English.) The second, "I'm very tired", uses ordinary words that are formal enough to be acceptable – they are not slang – but informal enough to be used even by a child. In contrast, the third uses a more formal, learned or educated word, "exhausted", that a young child may not know. (Unless the child is someone like Lord Macaulay, who at the age of eight is reported to have told an aunt – who had spilt hot tea on him – that "the agony is now abated"!)

Now just as we choose our words according to the style of interaction – very informal or in-group, slightly more formal in an everyday sense, or very formal – we also choose, or make differences in, the way we speak. Let's listen to Shaw again, speaking in the recording for the Linguaphone Institute:

"I am at present speaking to an audience of many thousands ... If I were to speak to you as carelessly as I speak to my wife at home, this record would be useless; and if I were to speak to my wife at home as carefully as I am speaking to you, she would think I was going mad."

√ Check Your Progress 1

1. What is a 'dialect'?

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2. A difference only in pronunciation is known as an..............................

3. In what way, according to Bernard Shaw, did the distinguished members of the BBC committee speak? Did they speak exactly like one another?

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Activity

Listen to people speaking among themselves, on the streets or on buses, in English. Listen to the English spoken on different channels on the radio or television. Note down five words or expressions or ways of speaking that you think could be used only on the streets or buses, or only on radio and television (a more formal domain).

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2.2.1 A Neutral Accent

We shall discuss some ways in which careful speech differs from casual speech again later, in the blocks on Speaking English. Here we can think about careful and casual speech in another way. Suppose a speaker of Tamil, Japanese or Hindi (etc.) is speaking *in English* to another speaker of Tamil, Japanese or Hindi (etc.). Then since both the speaker and the listener share the same accent, they will understand each other easily, without difficulty. But if you want to speak in English to a person with a different accent – a person from some other language group than your own – then the more "neutral" your own accent in English is, the better you will be understood. That is why nowadays we speak of "accent neutralization" in training in spoken English for the information technology industry. We don't expect everyone to mimic the way the British royal family speaks; but if we want all kinds of people to understand us, – people whom we do not know, or who speak very different languages than us, – we cannot speak English just as we please.

Most discussions on what model of English is appropriate for India centre on the pronunciation; and the criterion for an acceptable pronunciation has to be intelligibility, or understandability. The popular British linguist David Crystal has articulated the commonsensical wisdom in this matter, which many of us have been practicing. This is the idea that we all have a command of three sorts of accents. In this "tri-dialectal" model, speakers would move smoothly from a regional dialect (such as Punjabi English or Tamil English), to a national dialect (Indian English), to an international dialect, as required. To see that this is not impossible, think for a moment of the variety of accents we can understand! Many people with a marked regional accent can understand English as spoken by television presenters on national channels. They can also understand non-Indian speakers – not only in news and current affairs programmes, but also in sports commentary. Listening to speakers from a variety of circles, and listening to many such speakers of English, is the best way to sensitize our ear and "pick up" a neutral way of speaking.

> Through television, international travel, and telecommunications in today's world, we frequently find ourselves in front of, face-to-face with, or voice-to-voice with people from different language backgrounds, people with different values, and people with different speech styles.
>
> – *Gail Robinson,* Culturally diverse speech styles

The success of young Indians at call centre jobs shows that "accent training" is a matter of unlearning obvious regionalisms and arriving at a neutral speech style. It is also a matter of learning to slow down our rate of speech, speaking to a rhythm, and articulating with clarity. These are factors that improve speech in any language – in fact, many of us have to learn to speak our own languages pleasantly and with clarity!

As for the sounds of English, themselves, spoken "Indian English" has been described as having some pan-Indian characteristics such as long vowels instead of diphthongs,

and retroflex consonants instead of alveolar ones. Many more characteristics of "Indian English" (as we have said) reflect the various mother tongues of the speakers. The less obvious and obtrusive these mother-tongue characteristics are, the more acceptable the pronunciation of the other tongue.

Ö **Check Your Progress 2**

4. What is a "neutral accent" in English? How can you acquire it?

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Sing it, don't say it

While working at a welder at a plant, I met Art, an Englishman whose accent sometimes made it hard to decipher what he was saying. Another memorable characteristic of his was that he liked to sing while he worked, in a voice as clear as a bell.

One day in the lunchroom, where things could get pretty noisy, Art was trying to tell us something he obviously thought was important, but nobody could understand him. In frustration I said, "Art, for heaven's sake, just sing it".

He did, and we understood every word.

– Jack Kruhlak

2.3 STANDARD ENGLISH — A MODEL: BRITISH, OR AMERICAN ?

The standard variety of a language emerges out of the political and economic influence of its users. Parisian French and Bangalore-Mysore Kannada are considered the standard varieties of those languages because Paris and Mysore were the centres of the king and the aristocracy. Notice that this is similar to the way English became an international language, because of the political and economic power of English-speaking countries.

"Standard English may be simply considered as that dialect most often spoken by educated members of society; it is the form usually employed in writing, and is generally used by the media", says John Edwards, a linguist. Standard English, he says, is also the form of the language used and promoted in schools (in Britain and the United States, the schools iron out the differences between the various regional dialects that the children speak in their homes).

For us in India, in the written mode, British English has functioned as a model of standard English in our schools. Spoken English, we know, varies considerably even from person to person; we have said that our aim should be at a neutral, intelligible accent that bears the stamp of our individuality. But written language, we saw in the last unit, has always been much less subject to change. It has been the preserve of scholars and grammarians. Written language has traditionally been in a more formal, careful, considered style (although that is changing now in emails, perhaps). So for written language we do feel the need for a standard; and because of the historical accident of our having been part of the British Empire, we have adopted British English as our model.

The other model for standard English in the world is American English, which is the model in the Philippines, for example. There is an interesting story in David Graddol's report *The Future of English* about how a Singaporean newspaper chose its business partner on the basis of whether they had British English or American English as their model. In 1994, the Singapore newspaper *Straits Times* established a sub-editing office in Sydney, Australia, connected by a fibre-optic line to Singapore. Journalists file their stories in Singapore; the page layout and sub-editing is done is Sydney, on-line, and the paper is printed back in Singapore. This is of course an instance of the globalization of the media industry. But what is of interest to us here is why this Singapore newspaper chose Sydney, Australia for its sub-editing office.

The newspaper originally considered three countries: India, Australia, and the Philippines. (These countries are in time zones adjacent to Singapore; this is important for a newspaper, which has deadlines to meet.) "In considering the Philippines", the Sydney bureau chief tells Graddol, "we realized that they spoke American English and because the *Straits Times* is a British English newspaper we felt that the language, spelling and turns of phrase were not suitable for the *Straits Times*". India, in their estimation, provided "the people with the language skills and journalistic experience" that Australia did, but "the Indian infrastructure and technology wasn't that up to date – Australia's telecommunications facilities were much better". So this is an interesting example of how the choice of British English or American English as the standard variety in a country can influence a business decision!

As the story above suggests, we in India follow the British English model in our education system, just as we drive on the left of the road (Americans drive on the right, as you know). But with the growth of careers in information technology, more young people are adopting an Americanized way of speaking, and spelling as well. Fortunately, as we shall see below, these two varieties of English are not very different, so it is possible to know both. In a later unit we shall return to the differences between British and American English. Just like an optimist and a pessimist describe a half-filled glass of water (the optimist says the glass is half-full, the pessimist says it is half-empty!), so also with British and American English: we can either consider them very close to each other and choose not to worry what we say, or we can be very particular about the differences between them, as in the story above about the Singaporean newspaper.

√ Check Your Progress 3

5. What is Standard English?

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6. What are the two models for Standard English, and which one do we teach?

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7. Why did a newspaper in Singapore prefer Australia to India, and India to the Philippines, for its offshore subediting work?

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2.4 BRITISH ENGLISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

These two varieties of English are indeed distinguished mainly by their spelling and their "turns of phrase", as the Singaporean newspaper puts it (that is, the kinds of expressions and idiomatic language they use). (They of course differ in their pronunciation; where the British English standard is known as the "Queen's English" or "BBC English" or "public school English", the Americans speak of "Network English" as their standard.)

As far as grammar is concerned, there are very few differences today in the grammar of Standard British and Standard American English. Even the handful of such differences are dying out, because of the constant interaction across the Atlantic in all media: not only print, radio and television, but the Internet and the telephone. But here are some examples of the grammatical differences between these varieties. Look at these pairs of sentences: which sounds better to you?

Have you no sense at all?
Don't you have any sense at all?

Let's not do that.
Don't let's do that.

The first sentence in the pair represents British English, the second, American English.

What language varieties differ most often in – next to pronunciation – is vocabulary, or the words that they use. We can tell American from British English because of these words, for example:

elevator	lift	sidewalk	pavement

The first word in each pair is American English; the second, British English.

In the case of American English, there was also a conscious attempt to reform English spelling, and this is one aspect of our writing that we do have to pay particular attention to. (If you use a computer word-processing programme to compose or type out your work, as I do, its automatic spell-check facility may underline in red the British spellings you type in, or it may even just turn them into American spelling!)

A priest who was an educationist and vocational counsellor tells us about his five-year period of study in America: "I really did try for almost two years not to become Americanized. I started watching my spelling ... I felt that if I returned to India spelling centre as c-e-n-t-e-r or counsellor as c-o-u-n-s-e-l-o-r, my people in India would think that I did not have a proper education ..." But then a teacher, returning to him an assignment on psychology that he had submitted, told the whole class: "Remember that counselor is spelled with only one 'l'." The priest jokes: "I decided that if I wanted to improve my grade I had to go American in my spelling.

Today, I am thoroughly mixed up about my spelling and can never tell whether *butter* is spelled with one 't' or two!"

Here is what he tells us about the gradual Americanization of his speech. "I also tried to resist the American way of speaking English. Just as some people in India think there is only one way of spelling, their way, they tend also to think there is only one way of speaking English. If I went back to my teaching or counseling speaking like an American, they would wonder what was wrong with me. So I tried not to pick up the American way of talking. But last year an Indian said, "Why do you keep repeating 'You know?' 'You know?' when you talk. It turns me off". I had picked up something without knowing it."

Resistance to the new and the unfamiliar, unconscious assimilation, and finally the freedom of a balanced perspective that accepts that each of us can learn from the other – these are the stages that this priest went through in his encounter with American English; and these indeed are the stages that all of us go through when we encounter something new. (You can read the full article "Caught in a cultural cross-fire" by Reverend Peter Lourdes in the October 1987 issue of *SPAN*.)

The development of a distinct form of American English in the 19th century has been called the biggest change in English since the time of Shakespeare. The history of English shows rapid changes in the language until the time of Shakespeare. This is because the technology of print was invented only about a hundred years before Shakespeare. The invention of print was followed by a period of stability and standardization of the language. Before printing, there wasn't even a single standard form of spelling for English. Printing led to a slowing down of the kind of natural changes that had earlier been taking place in spoken English. English written before 1100 looks like a foreign language to us; even the English of Chaucer, in the 14th century, has to be modernized for us to understand it. But Shakespearean English is not so far from modern English, because printing standardized the language and protected it from change.

But in the nineteenth century, changes once again set in, in the English spoken in America. The distance between England and America was so great that contact between the two groups of English speakers became limited; and the processes of language change began once again. These were again reversed in the 20th century because of the radio, movies and television, and air travel. Today, "although there are differences in vocabulary and spelling, readers might not easily distinguish an English from an American newspaper report," says Kevin Finneran.

Activity

Look at a national newspaper that prints news stories from many other sources all over the world. At the end of the news story you will find mentioned its source, that is, the newspaper that the story was first printed in. You might find articles sourced from the New York Times or the Guardian of Britain, for example.

Read two such articles and see if you can say whether they were taken from a British newspaper, or an American one. Look also for books and magazines published in Britain and in America. Can you make out a difference in the language?

√ **Check Your Progress 4**

8. Choose the right answer: British and American English differ least in (i) grammar (ii) spelling (iii) vocabulary (iv) pronunciation.

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2.5 PRESCRIPTIVE AND PERMISSIVE ATTITUDES TO LANGUAGE

If we compare Kevin Finneran's comment with the concern shown by the Singapore *Straits Times* to maintain a British English character for their newspaper, we see that there are two attitudes to Standard English, and to the need for a model. These attitudes may be called "prescriptive" or "purist", and "permissive". The prescriptive attitude emphasizes the need to use the language correctly, elegantly and consistently, and is very particular about spelling, pronunciation, and the way words are chosen – they must be chosen with care not only to express our meaning as precisely as possible, but to conform to a particular style. Dictionary-makers, book publishers and newspaper editors, media personnel and teachers, all feel that they are "the gatekeepers" for language – they feel responsible for how language is used. They often are concerned to maintain the "purity" of a language against outside influences. In the case of English, they make sure that the standard of usage they adopt is consistently either British or American.

The permissive attitude stresses that language belongs to its users, and is constantly shifting. In the case of English, it sees no reason why local communities of English users should not have their own standards: "Why should Nigerians care whether, if Nigerian English has forms like He is not on seat, or Master, they are looking for you and these are perfectly acceptable in the Nigerian context, they are unacceptable and unintelligible to native speakers of English?" asks a Nigerian scholar, Adetugbo, asserting that national intelligibility should have priority over international acceptability. Quoting him, Sidney Greenbaum, the director of the Survey of English Usage, University College, London (and the author of such publications as *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* and the *Oxford Companion to the English Language*), agrees: "In practice, variability is not a major impediment to international communication in English. Those who want to communicate accommodate to each other's variations. ... As there is in Britain and other first-language countries, there is a continuum of competence in the use of English in India and elsewhere in South Asia." This idea of "a continuum of competence" in English, in Britain no less than in India, brings us back to a point we made in the last unit. Instead of speaking of native and non-native varieties of English or speakers of English, it may be better to speak of proficient and not-so-proficient speakers of a standard variety of English.

2.6 INDIAN ENGLISH AND SOUTH ASIAN ENGLISH

It is now generally recognized that South Asia is among the three largest English-using regions in the world, the other two being the United States and the United Kingdom.

– Braj B. Kachru, in the Series Editor's Preface to *South Asian English*

We have said that of the three ways in which language varieties may differ – pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar – the most widespread and common

differences are in pronunciation. Next to pronunciation, the most common differences between language varieties are in vocabulary.

2.6.1 Borrowing

Languages have always had a give-and-take of vocabulary, and it is indeed a strength of English that it has borrowed words from many languages – *kindergarten* from German, or *sovereign* from French, for example. From the languages of our subcontinent such words have entered English as *bandicoot* (from Telugu *pandikokku*). Other languages, in turn, have borrowed words from English. Words for transport such as *bus*, *plane* and *car*, words connected with literacy, schooling and media such as *book*, *pen*, *paper*, *class*, *board*, *radio* and *T.V.*, words used in sports such as *goal*, *ball*, *bat*, *run*, *wicket* and *team*, are now so interwoven with our own languages that they are used even by illiterate people in remote locations. A study of tribal children in Orissa estimated that they knew a hundred such words of English!

More recently, global English is seen in such words and phrases as *pikunikku* (Japanese), *telewizja* (Polish), *ein Image Problem* and *das Cash-Flow* (German), *il software* (Italian), and *les refueling stops* during a *weekend break* (French).

2.6.2 Code-Mixing and Code-Switching

In the last few examples you may have noticed an interesting pattern: a word from the borrowing language – *ein*, *das*, *il*, *les* – is used along with an English word or words. We have said that in many parts of the world, English is used in a bilingual or a multilingual context. Thus these mixed phrases – German and English, Italian and English, French and English – are a result of language use by speakers who know both these languages. This use of more than one language in a single message (a sentence, or a phrase) is called *code-mixing*.

We do not yet know exactly how the human brain stores separate languages. But we do know that if necessary, a multilingual speaker can speak in only *one* of his or her languages; the other languages can be "switched off", so to speak. This is certainly the case when we read or listen to just one of the languages we know, or speak it in formal contexts – in contexts where the prescriptive or purist approach to language takes over. But in informal contexts such as conversation, we seem to be able to mix our languages up, and how we do this is a topic of study among linguists. Not only do we use words from one language while we're speaking in another, as in the examples above, or in an utterance like "*Arre bhai*, let's have some *chai*". We seem to make puns across languages.

Read these jokes – do they make you smile? Then you must be using the words, the grammars, and even the sounds of two languages to understand them. (That's why the jokes need to be explained if you don't know the other language in them!)

☺ What did one banana say to another?
Akela huun mein.
[In Hindi, *Akela* means 'alone,' and a *kela* is a banana.]

☺ What did two peas in a pod say to each other?
Mutter, mutter.
[Peas are called *matar* in Hindi.]

☺ Why did the Tamil cow eat the door?
It said 'pull.'
[*pul* is the Tamil word for grass.]

☺ Give me a word with one G and four Ts.
Originality.
[Tamil *oru*=one; *nal*=four, so '*oru* G, *nal* T.']

☺ Customer: Sardarji, Lipton di cha. [Lipton's tea]

Shopkeeper: Badshao, tennu e to mennu bi e.[lipton: to embrace, in Punjabi; chah: desire][If you want to hug, so do I.]

You can find many such examples in advertisements and in school children's games.

When I was at school, we would ask an adult to read the following:

BBG TPO IPI UPO

Were you able to read it? "Bibiji, tea piyoo; I pii aaii, you piyoo!"
['Madam, drink tea; I've had some, you have some!']

Knowing and using two languages, then, has its own potential for creativity. In most bilingual or multilingual contexts, people "mix codes" or "switch codes" (they switch from one language to another) in ways that intuitively seem right to them, but are difficult to describe or to write rules for. We see this happening on some of our television channels, although the purists protest against it. Why does this happen?

In social interaction, English may have connotations of superior status or formality, and our own other languages, of inferior status or intimacy. Speakers may switch between languages as a negotiation of their relationship. David Graddol gives the example of a young job-seeker in Nairobi: the young man begins the interaction in English, but the manager insists on using Swahili, perhaps to suggest that the young man is not "good enough" to use English. You may have noticed or experienced a similar use of English to assert official or social superiority in our own context. On the other hand, English may be seen as too formal or distant a language for some contexts, and a switch may occur to a language other than English: "We will have to file for an exemption in that case. Don't worry, *beta, sab Thiik ho jayeega*."

√ **Check Your Progress 5**

9. Give examples from your own experience of

(i) words from English borrowed into Hindi

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(ii) code-mixing and code-switching in conversation. Describe the contexts in which the code-mixing and code-switching occurred.

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2.7 AN INDIAN ENGLISH VOCABULARY

We have now been using English in our country as a language of our own for more than half a century after the departure of the British. As we use this language to express our own meanings, enough words have entered it for even dictionary

makers to notice! The current editions of dictionaries such as the Oxford Advanced Learner's carry a supplement of words found in Indian English, "essential to an understanding of English as it is spoken and written in India". The Preface to this supplement suggests that the words in it fall into different groups:

i) words from Indian languages, to describe Indian objects, ideas, customs, etc. (such as *chillum* (a part of the hookah), *karma, pheri, pradakshina*);

ii) words current in British English but used in different senses in India (such as *chaste* to describe a language (*chaste Urdu*), to mean a 'pure, formal' kind of language, or *auspicious* to mean favourable according to astrology, rather than merely showing general signs of future success);

iii) words from Indian languages for which standard English words also exist (*bandar* 'monkey', *god-man* 'a holy man')

iv) usages and idioms peculiar to Indian English, though the words as such are found in British or American English as well (a *pyjama* in India can be worn with a kurta during the day or even on formal occasions, but in British English *pyjamas* are worn to sleep in; *pin-drop silence* (to mean it was so quiet you could *hear a pin drop*); to *burst*, *burn* or *explode* crackers (instead of to *light* them or *set* them *off*); *to make a long story short* (British English has *to cut a long story short*).

Some of the words and phrases in the Indian English supplement are not accepted in our schools yet, and the dictionary indicates this by labeling these "non-standard usage." The widespread practice of asking "What's your *good* name?", for example, is perceived to be unacceptable by many Indian speakers of English.

Indian English largely shares its "grammar" with British English. As many linguists have pointed out, syntax, or the way sentences are put together, acts as a common bond among communities that differ in their speech and vocabulary. Yet there are some areas where differences in grammar do occur, which have been studied. Among these are: the use of the articles *a*, *an* and *the*; the use of tenses, and negation. Scholars have pointed out that we say "one" instead of "a"; so we tend to say *One post office is there*...instead of *There's a post office there.* That example also shows that we use the word "there" in "presentational sentences" in our own way – at the end of the sentence rather than at the beginning: "*And this week, Sports Day will be there*" (= ... this week, we have Sports Day) ; or "*Many problems are still there*" (= There still are many problems). We also use the word *only* in a typical Indian way: *I gave the book to him only, Ram only will sing*.

One team of scholars identified characteristic Indian English usage mainly in two areas: collocations or "word friends," and the use of prepositions. What are "word friends"? Let's take an example. Educated Indian speakers of English in Delhi, in a research study, accepted this sentence as correct:

This tea is too light for me.

But British English would speak of *weak* tea, not *light* tea. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary tells us that *weak* is a word used "of liquids", to mean "containing a high proportion of water", and the example it cites is *weak tea*!

You might find it interesting and instructive to compare the other uses of the two words *weak* and *light* as adjectives, given in this dictionary. Notice that *light* in British or American usage can be used to describe a liquid – but only an alcoholic liquid!

weak

not physically strong: *weak legs*
likely to break: *a weak bridge*
of character: not firm: *a weak leader*
not financially strong: *a weak currency*
not functioning properly: *a weak heart*
of a low standard: *a weak team*
not convincing: *a weak argument*
not easily seen or heard: *a weak light/sound/signal*
not enthusiastic: *a weak smile*

light

easy to lift or move: *a light bag*
gentle, delicate: *a light tap, light pressure*
not tiring: *light exercise*
not needing close attention: *light reading*
easy to bear: *a light sentence*
not intense: *light showers of rain*
not thick or dense: *light traffic, a light mist*
(of sleep) not deep: *a light sleeper*
(of food) easy to digest: *a light pudding*
(of meals) small in quantity: *a light snack*
(of food) easy to digest: *a light pudding*
(of drinks) low in alcohol: *a light beer*

Educated Indian speakers in Delhi also accepted the sentence

We tried to spot out the filmstars.

The verb in standard corresponding British English is *spot*, not *spot out*. The verb *spot out* seems to have been coined by analogy with verbs like *find out, break out* or *look out*.

Again, the word *botheration* (*I am sorry for the botheration I caused you*) is found only in the English used in India.

√ **Check Your Progress 6**

10. Give three examples each of how *weak* and *light* are used as adjectives, with their meanings. Use these phrases in sentences of your own.

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11. Look up these three words in the dictionary: *programme, program,* and *fiber*. Find out if the spellings are British or American, and find out if the words *program* and *programme* are both used in both varieties, but with a change of meaning.

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2.8 LET US SUM UP

One variety of language may differ from another in pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar. A variety of language that differs in all three ways is a *dialect*. A difference in pronunciation only is called an *accent*.

- There are different styles in language – very informal or in-group, slightly more formal in an everyday sense, or very formal.
- When you speak in English to a person with a different accent, the more "neutral" your own accent in English is, the better you will be understood. The criterion for an acceptable pronunciation is intelligibility, or understandability.
- "Accent training" is unlearning obvious regionalisms and arriving at a neutral speech style. It is also learning to slow down our rate of speech, speaking to a rhythm, and articulating with clarity.
- The standard variety of a language emerges out of the political and economic influence of its users. Standard English is the dialect spoken by educated members of society, usually employed in writing, and generally used by the media. It is also the form of the language used and promoted in schools.
- British English is the model of standard English in our schools. The other model for standard English in the world is American English.
- These two varieties of English are not very different, so you can know both. These differ mainly in spelling and their "turns of phrase" (the kinds of expressions and idiomatic language they use). They of course differ in pronunciation.
- There are two attitudes to Standard English, and to the need for a model. These attitudes may be called "prescriptive" or "purist", and "permissive".
- Languages have always had a give-and-take of vocabulary. It is a strength of English that it has borrowed words from many languages.
- Sometimes a word from the borrowing language – *ein*, *das*, *il*, *les* – is used along with an English word or words. This use of more than one language in a single message (a sentence, or a phrase) is called *code-mixing*.
- A multilingual speaker can speak in only *one* of his/her languages, but in informal contexts such as conversation, we seem to "switch on" more than one language.
- Dictionaries such as the *Oxford Advanced Learner's* now carry a supplement of words found in Indian English, "essential to an understanding of English as it is spoken and written in India".
- Some of the words and phrases in the Indian English supplement are not accepted in our schools yet, and are labeled "non-standard usage".
- Indian English largely shares its "grammar" with British English. Characteristic Indian English usage occurs mainly in two areas: collocations or "word friends", and the use of prepositions.

2.9 FURTHER READING

Peter Lourdes, "Caught in a cultural cross-fire", *SPAN*, October 1987, pp. 12-14.

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Advanced Learner's Dictionary Fifth Edition (ed. Jonathan Crowther), 1996. Oxford University Press.

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Kachru, Braj B. *The Indianization of English.* 1983. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. A dialect is a variety of language that is different from another variety of that language in three respects: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.

2. accent

3. The members of the committee of educated and well-known persons, set up by the BBC to determine how utterances should be pronounced over the radio in order to be a model of correct speech, did not all speak exactly like one another. But they did speak in such a way that they would be understood (or be intelligible) in every English-speaking country; moreover, they spoke in a way that would show that they were educated and cultivated, and not ignorant and illiterate.

4. "Accent training" is a matter of unlearning obvious regionalisms and arriving at a neutral speech style. Many characteristics of "Indian English" reflect the various mother tongues of the speakers. The more obvious and obtrusive these mother-tongue characteristics are, the less acceptable or "neutral" the pronunciation of English will be.

   A speaker of Tamil, Japanese or Hindi speaking to another speaker of Tamil, Japanese or Hindi, will share the same accent *in English*. But when we speak in English to a person with a different accent – a person from some other language group than our own – then the more "neutral" our accent in English is, the better we will be understood.

   We all have a command of three sorts of accents: regional (such as in Punjabi English or Tamil English), national (Indian English), and international. We can understand a variety of accents. People with a regional accent can understand the English spoken by television presenters on national channels. They can also understand non-Indian speakers of English in news and current affairs programmes or in sports commentary.

   Listening to speakers from a variety of circles, and listening to many such speakers of English, is the best way to sensitize our ear and "pick up" a neutral way of speaking. We can also slow down our rate of speech, speak to a rhythm, and articulate with clarity. Spoken "Indian English" has some characteristics such as long vowels instead of diphthongs, and retroflex consonants instead of alveolar ones. These sounds may not prevent intelligibility, or understandability, if we speak slower and with rhythm.

5. Standard English is that dialect most often spoken by educated members of society; it is the form usually employed in writing, and is generally used by the media. It is also the form of the language used and promoted in schools.

6. British English has functioned as a model of standard English in the world. The

other model for standard English in the world is American English, which is the model in the Philippines, for example. We in India follow the British English model in our education system, in the written mode.

7. The Singapore newspaper follows British English, whereas the Philippines have adopted American English as their model. Hence India, which follows the model of British English in its spelling and expression, was felt to be more acceptable. But Australia was superior to India in its technology and telecommunication facilities.

8. (i) grammar

9. Please give your own examples.

10. Please give your own examples and sentences.

11. Please find out the answers from a dictionary.