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LEVERAGING INDIA'S LINGUISTIC CAPABILITIES WORLDWIDE: A SURVEY OF EMERGING RESEARCH NEEDS

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"We cannot write like the English. We should not.

We can write only as Indians" (Raja Rao, 1938).

INTRODUCTION: A LINGUISTIC COMPARISON OF INDIA VS THE WEST

There is little doubt that technological innovation-- the Internet, in particular, has given India greater visibility, not merely on account of increased outsourcing, but because of the success multilingualism has enjoyed in this highly complex multilingual society, as well as the growth of the Indian business sector. Technology has also widened the scope of linguistic research in India; that is, given birth to additional research opportunities. Nevertheless, the research of contemporary (Indian) linguists based in India is minimally known outside India. This needs to be remedied through more cross-cultural engagements. Moreover, Western publications (predominantly in English) tend to enjoy a more global reach. The majority require use of American academic English and the linear writing style, making globalization roughly equivalent to "America's global reach." With this in mind, the following *research questions are* investigated here:

What can language specialists in India learn from linguists in the West, and vice versa?

What are some of the challenges Indian linguists face inside and outside India?

What are some emerging research areas that should interest linguists in India and abroad?

What are some viable avenues for cross-border research and mutual sociolinguistic exchange? In other words, what role could Indian institutions and language/linguistic organizations play in increasing India's participation in linguistic research worldwide?

What are some benefits to linguists in the international community of access to the linguistic diversity and the ongoing and future research in India?

 Seventy years ago, when Raja Rao (1938) made the observation quoted at the beginning of this paper, he was referring to a linguistic hybrid, what we linguists call an indigenized language or a variety of World Englishes, and specifically what Braj Kachru (1983, 2005) terms *Indian English.* Indians have indeed kneaded and rolled out regionally flavored English which is distinctly Indian, and spiced by the many languages and cultures that make up India. Fortunately, creative writers like Raja Rao, Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukherjee, and countless others have made generous use of this dialect in their works. In the process, they have artfully mixed and switched between Indian languages and Indian English. Code-switching and code-mixing then serve as vital literary strategies for these intellectuals. Yet, concerns about English proficiency in India are on the rise while national recognition of the existence and widespread use of *Indian English* is lacking.

In a cover story that appeared in the Oct. 14, 2008 issue of *Express India*, for instance, the Chairperson of the National Knowledge Commission, Sam Pitroda apparently "stressed on the need for children to know English in order to be a global player." To an outsider, the phrasal verb "stressed on" used in this publication (vs. the non-phrasal American equivalent "stressed") is evidence of a different dialect of English, namely, Indian English (IE) or what some term "Hinglish" (see Unnithan, 2008). Yet, rather than recognize the existence of IE and acknowledge that Indians have modified British English, Indian politicians continue to lament so-called falling English standards and insist that "English should be taught from standard one in all the schools."[1] The impact of this single-language policy on India's national and regional languages - that have continued to flourish alongside English - has yet to be determined. Moreover, the kind of English that should be taught in Indian schools is a critical matter that is generally overlooked, suggesting that many Indians conceive of English as a monolithic language.

Sociolinguists know that no language is exactly the same in different contexts (e.g., cultural, geographic) and that success and/or proficiency depend on the context in

which a language is learned and/or used, and the uses to which a language is put. So one of the challenges India currently faces is maintaining its multilinguistic and multicultural identity while opening itself up further to outsourcing, international investment, and more active participation in the international arena. The latter require Indians to make themselves more marketable. Learning to communicate in the same language (i.e., the same English) as ones global partners are, after all, necessary for success, and who is in a better position to offer such trainings than linguists in India?

With India's growing international presence, and a number of international linguistics conferences being hosted by Indian institutions (such as the University of Kashmir and Deccan College, Pane in 2008), as well as the inauguration of journals like the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics* (published by the University of Kashmir), and the invaluable support of the CIIL, India is well on its way to a more competitive level in the international linguistics arena. Nevertheless, given India's inherent and infinite linguistic richness, much more could be accomplished by her linguists. India's linguists must, therefore attempt to tap the nation's language talent and skills more systematically.

Aside from its colorful and resourceful mela(nge) of cultural diversity: a product of India's unique linguistic diversity, India has much to offer. It is perhaps the most highly complex multilingual society worldwide. Characterized by what Raja Rao (1938) terms "instinctively bilingual" communication styles, as opposed to the predominantly monolingual tradition of the Western world, code-mixing, code-switching and other forms of speech and language accommodation come naturally to most Indians, including children as young as two who can be heard artfully and swiftly switching between languages, and even translating for their peers and adults without adult assistance. Yet, it is ironic that despite India's success at mastering and sustaining perhaps the largest number of languages - of any nation worldwide - and India's success in the area of language planning and policy (see Annamalai, Jernudd, and Rubin, 1986; Das Gupta, 1970), the least multilingual nations in the world (namely, the U.S. and the UK) account for the lion's share of research in language acquisition, bilingualism and sociolinguistics. Also, only a few longitudinal and ethnographic studies of language use in India - including successful early and adult second and/or "foreign" language acquisition - have been reported and/or the findings disseminated internationally. Incidentally, sociolinguistics is not the only area of linguistics in which India lags behind. There are other areas of language study, as this paper will attempt to illustrate and remedy, so linguists in India have quite a bit of catching up to do.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. Firstly, it aims to identify discrepancies between Western (specifically U.S. and European) and Indian linguistic traditions and research contributions. Secondly, it reports on observed differences between U.S. and Indian communication styles - an area critical to success in our increasingly global world - and finally, it offers recommendations for increased communication or shared understanding between Indian and international business partners, and outlines directions for future language research.

WHERE LIE INDIA'S LINGUISTIC STRENGTHS? THEORETICAL OR APPLIED LINGUISTICS?

At the 30th All India Conference on Linguistics (AICL)[2] held at a premier post-graduate institution dedicated to the study of linguistics and archeology, namely Deccan College, Pane in November 2008, the relatively fewer applied linguistics sessions were clear evidence of India's primary focus on theoretical issues. Only fifty-five of the 141 sessions (including four primarily theoretical plenary sessions) were in applied linguistics. The fact that not a single paper (other than the author's) made mention of Indian English or Hinglish, and that a single session focused on pragmatics and discourse analysis, and only two on language teaching - critical aspects of applied linguistics - is further evidence of Indian linguists' pre-occupation with theoretical linguistics. While the Central Indian Institute of Linguistics (CIIL) is to be commended for publishing readers and other texts in over 65 lesser known Indian languages, including "tribal languages" like Ao, Kuvi, Mao Naga, Mising, and Purki, it is ironic that Indian linguistics is not a more visible field of study, and that Indian linguists other than Panini and linguists based outside India have proposed relatively few theories and frameworks of linguistic analysis, and that primary texts on Indian English and South Asian languages are published outside India (see Kachru, 1983, 1986, 2005; Kachru and Sridhar 2008; Bolton and Kachru, 2006; Mehrotra, 1998; Bhatia, 2007, 1996; Pandharipande, 1997). As it stands, Indian linguistics is closely aligned with Paninian linguistics or classical studies - essentially historical linguistics. In the case of Indian textbooks on second language learning (see the catalogue of the CIIL 2008), the absence of a focus on timely and field-tested approaches (i.e., pedagogy) is also a noticeable gap. Local (Indian) research and publications in these areas, and in other areas, including the English (es) in use in India and the surrounding vicinity are, therefore, very much in order.

Who could deny the linguistic foundations laid by the Indian linguist, Panini? Nevertheless, since Panini's pioneering efforts and his systematic linguistic analysis which laid the groundwork for much of linguistic theory as we know it today (including phonetics and syntax), the research of relatively few linguists (e.g.,

Mohanty, 1994, Annamalai, 1986) based in India is known abroad, leading one to wonder whether linguistic programs in India tend to emphasize the research of Western linguists. How else do we explain why, in the international arena, linguistics is dominated by the work of mostly Western scholars, many of whom are fluent in a single language? A cursory review of major periods of linguistic theory, including structuralism and early Generativism (i.e., US-dominated Chomskian linguistics) points at the research contributions of predominantly European and American scholars, including Ferdinand de Saussure, John Lyons, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Daniel Jones, Michael Halliday, Charles Hockett, David Crystal, William Labov, Basil Bernstein, Ellen Bialystok, Susan Schecter, Lydia White, Ulla Connor, and Noam Chomsky, to name a few. In short, mostly Western linguists - incidentally, mostly men - come to mind. This might be attributed in part to issues of access in international venues which tend to be biased in favor of the linear writing style (see Cannagarajah, 2002).[3] While it stands to reason that Indian linguists should concentrate on local language issues, including researching and preserving the multiple languages of India, and on revitalizing rapidly endangered tribal languages - a priority for the CIIL,for instance - Indian linguists would do well to share their research in international publications, as well, and to recognize the value of devising new frameworks of linguistics and of assessing their value for multilingual contexts - not merely for language revitalization, but for a variety of other purposes, as well.

WHAT ELSE CAN LINGUISTICS DO FOR INDIA? APPLYING LINGUISTICS IN INDIA

Interestingly, the vast majority of internationally recognized applied linguists are based outside India. This, in itself, is quite telling. Indian linguists must, therefore, endeavor to be more active and innovative researchers. Interestingly, in a random poll of 10 graduate students studying linguistics at Indian universities, conducted during the 2008 AICL, nine participants (90%) found language teaching and discourse analysis to be outside of the realm of linguistics.

Until we recognize the multiple applications of our discipline - both theoretical and applied linguistics - to everyday exchanges (including conversations, e-mail exchanges, letters, literature, and more), we will never quite realize the practical value of linguistics, or our full potential as linguists. In short, linguistics has immense interdisciplinary value and, as more and more Westerners are coming to recognize, more and more fields are lending themselves to insightful linguistic analysis, including forensic law (i.e., via accent identification), and AIDs/HIV prevention research. In the case of the latter, linguistic taxonomies and field methods (e.g., ethnographic research and linguistically appropriate survey design) are critical as well as of immense value in ensuring systematicity in outreach, reporting, and in AIDs/HIV

prevention. For the innovative linguist - who thinks outside the box - India is full of linguistic gemstones.

Differences in the oral and written communications of Indians - in English and other languages - comprise another area that could benefit from careful linguistic research (specifically discourse analysis) in India. Today, we can expect to communicate more in writing, particularly given the fact that e-mail, text messaging, and other forms of e-communication are generally more accessible, as well as more time and cost-efficient than face-to-face communication, phone contact, and even traditional snail mail. In short, given that technology is both a globalizer and a vital medium for increased cross-cultural and cross-regional contact (see Aggarwal, 2007), maximal use of technology necessitates two skills, namely: i) global or versatile writing skills, and ii) cross-cultural know-how, including familiarity with other World Englishes (Kachru, 1996; 2006). In order to minimize conflict while enjoying a competitive edge, we must familiarize ourselves with our global partners' communication styles, particularly with their writing styles and preferences.

The absence of a comprehensive and global focus on culturally variable writing styles is, in fact, a major shortcoming of business trainings offered in India. John Doucette, CIO of United Technologies, a top outsourcing-to-India veteran since "back when you didn't want to be doing this" observes that:

> "Successful outsourcing to India is still difficult. While the market has matured, telecommunications have improved and *English fluency in India has flourished, challenges still remain*. Cultural issues creep in . . . ." (Overby, 2003) [emphasis added]

Arguably the obstacles stem not so much from insufficient fluency in English as from differences in English usage, including most Indians' unfamiliarity with the cultural nuances of American English. Clear communication necessitates shared understanding, and comprehensible language lies at the heart of successful exchanges of any kind, being a prerequisite for effective instruction and learning. Researching and improving communication in professional writing across geographic and cultural contexts should, therefore, be a top priority for India, and for Indian linguists, in particular.

Yet, even today, in Indian institutions of higher education, as well as in corporate training facilities and programs across India, insufficient attention is paid to professional writing as a genre.[4] This includes outlining, drafting, and carefully revising all forms of written correspondence, including e-mail, reports, proposals, and

even letters, resumes, and other documents sent to businesses and organizations. Such a focus is critical to India's success, given India's pivotal role in the world of (e) business, in the capacity of a top outsourcee and a growing economic power. After all, accurately encoding and decoding speech and writing, or effectively communicating one's intent and interpreting another's — across cultural boundaries — is a critical skill today, and Indian linguists are in the best position to quickly convey this message nationwide and to help institute writing instruction — in English Departments and across the curriculum.

In short, although English has become an international language, we can expect our English dialect needs to vary from time to time, and even within a specified time frame. Familiarity with more than one World English, including non-Western varieties is critical to our success, and highly advantageous. Given that culture is reflected in language, familiarity with the major language(s) of the key players involved is an added plus. Fortunately, learning languages comes relatively easily to Indians. Learning the nuances of English — as it is used and understood by others, in particular r— is however, not as easy. This is, therefore, one area in which Indian linguists can assist.

Today, alongside multilingual skills, familiarity with World Englishes, including Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle varieties of English (Kachru 1986, 2005) is essential to India's and other nations' success in an increasingly global marketplace. Linguists in India could organize workshops and conferences on the distinctive features of World English's (see Unnithan. 2008; Kortmann and Schneider, 2008) and strategic language use (i.e., code-mixing) for corporate employees and the general public. This endeavor requires the dedication and involvement of socially responsible linguists.

ON OVER-MA'AMING AND THE BENEFITS OF KNOWING MORE THAN ONE ENGLISH

"It's frustrating communicating with Indians!" observes Amit Kapadia, Director of a US-based non-profit organization, the UNForgotten (www.unforgottenfund.org) which recently initiated two community-based projects in Western India. Although Mr. Kapadia was born in India and understands Hindi and Gujarati and even spent over a year there —once as an engineering student at IIT — he finds what he describes as "Indian over-aggression and obsequious behavior" to be "simply annoying" and "insincere" (personal communication, 2008). "Like most Americans, I don't like being hounded. I need my freedom of choice," he continued. "Yes I like my space — not necessarily physical in this case. I need some time to arrive at my own decision. I don't need someone telling me — and in this case, *badgering me* to quickly

do what *they* want. What's the point of being bullied? Frankly, rather than enticing me, the language most Indians use is a total turn off." " Most corporate employees based in India harass you to death, and their customer service skills are practically non-existent. When we talk on the phone, I feel as though I'm constantly getting yelled at, and via e-mail, I might as well be talking to a lawyer — their words and sentences are lengthy, wordy, and unreal! Also, you never really know what you're getting into and what they want in return," he continued. For instance, some Indian banks say "checks are payable at par." I don't even know what that means. What's the difference between a check and a demand draft? You can't even understand the fine print — much less the bold type! It's shocking how non-communicative Indians can be."

In addition to learning about others' preferred communication styles and familiarizing corporate employees and others with culturally distinctive features, Indian linguists have an obligation to inform the international community about Indians' communication preferences — both oral and written. Only then can cross-cultural miscommunication and under-communication be averted or minimized. Since speech and writing are culturally situated (see Jeyaraj, 2005), perceptions of effective communication do vary. Researching and improving communicability in professional writing across geographic and cultural contexts should, therefore, be a top priority for India, and for Indian linguists, in particular.

Given the two-way nature of professional communication, it would seem that that a cross-linguistic and cross-culturally applicable framework of writing could borrow strands from conversation analysis (see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974), and other relevant frameworks of discourse analysis. In short, analyses of writing across cultures and languages, is another area in which Indian linguists could add much value.

To date, insufficient research has been conducted on cross-cultural writing styles beyond superficial lexical and organizational differences (see Kaplan, 1966; Connor, 1996; Kachru, 2006). Moreover, texts on business communication tend to be lacking in the area of outsourcing and specifically, as regards South Asian business communication practices (see Locker, 2006; Thill and Bovee, 2007). This glaring gap could easily be filled by linguists in the region. As such, the distinctiveness of Indian professional communication - specifically Indian Business writing (IBW, hereafter) remains to be established (see Pandey, 2008). This is one area that is ripe for linguistic investigation in India.

Arguably, the absence of publications on IBW is further evidence of India's dependence on Western linguistic canons, namely, Standard British English and, more recently - and as a direct result of corporate US outsourcing, American English. Yet,

most Indians' knowledge of American professional communication is relatively limited, as only those who have lived in the U.S. or undergone accent neutralization and communication training (usually sponsored by US corporations) are familiar with American small talk and with other commonly employed US expressions and with the linear, U.S. mode of writing.

Yet, unlike what Locker (2006) proposes, the chronological 'Tooling' model of writing is unlikely to guarantee success in all parts of the world, as Boiarsky (1989) demonstrates. Similarly, "International English," a term many business communication textbooks use to refer to a brand of English that is supposedly most widely understood is relatively vague and insufficient. It is, therefore, just as unlikely to guarantee seamless cross-cultural communication. This formal variety of English appears to most, closely resemble Standard British English in word choice, sentence structure, and in other respects, including the format of the date (i.e., the day followed by the month), and as regards stylistic considerations, including minimal use of idioms and contractions. Yet, use of this variety alone will not ensure seamless understanding with U.S. clients and others.

Not surprisingly, many Indians end up mixing semantically conflicting features of British, Indian, and American English in their writing, with the result that their communication is potentially hazardous in business negotiations. How so? All too often, Indian employees of US businesses begin by addressing US clients as "Sir" or Ma'am," in line with respectful British English discourse. Nevertheless, they generally continue to intersperse these honorific terms throughout the conversation — and sometimes, too, in written exchanges — ultimately distancing their partners and inadvertently establishing a hierarchy instead of an informal rapport-consolidating and egalitarian exchange which is more likely to appeal to US clients. In short, many Indians have a tendency to over-"Ma'am" and over-Sir clients, so their use of honorifics could end up annoying US customers. In short, the well-intentioned salutation "Ma'am" could potentially offend many Americans who might view it as rude, or as a sign of an irritable, sarcastic, or ageist speaker/writer. The result is that many Indians come across as insincere and needlessly subservient — both evidence of underhanded brown-nosing techniques in the U.S. We must understand that our word choice and organizational style (i.e., sequencing of ideas) could communicate different messages to different audiences, not all of which are intended.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

When one compares the widely publicized linear American professional writing style to the relatively unknown IBW style, the importance of investigating IBW becomes evident. Given that successful business/ professional communication entails strategic

language use, a linguistic framework - one that zones in on variable units of language — particularly one that is applicable to cross-culturally variable writing is very much in order. Identifying Indian politeness markers (see Patil, 1994) and reader-writer expectations in culturally distinct corporate environments would be an important first step in devising such a framework, and discourse analysis is likely to be invaluable in this endeavor.

In the U.S., since the establishment of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (also known as the 4Cs), for instance, writing instruction came to the forefront. By the 60s, argumentative writing had become a vital and "respectable object of inquiry" (Connor, 1989: 59). The Modern Language Association (MLA) and the National Council for the Teaching of English (NCTE) further supplemented the pioneer efforts of the CCCC. A host of journals devoted to writing instruction soon flooded the U.S. academic sphere, attesting to the importance of writing in the American context. They included *College Composition and Communication, Written Communication, Rhetoric Review, Journal of Basic Writing,* and more recently, the *Journal of Business Communication,* and the *Journal of Second Language Writing,* as well as a plethora of online journals devoted to success in instruction and mastery of process-based argumentative writing.

In contrast, writing is still a relatively neglected area in India where a literature-centered English language curriculum and product-based writing are more the norm than the exception. At most public institutions — in cities from Mumbai to Valsad, Gujarat —dated texts published by Oxford University Press are still in use. *The Grammar Tree* (Vols. 1-12) and the British-literature-focused *Prose Reader* (with specific volumes for different grade levels) are examples. Volume 7, for instance, opens with an excerpt from a 1925 British publication, at the end of which students are asked to select the closest equivalents for many antiquated terms and expressions that are totally alien to India.

With adequate (socio) linguistic awareness (i.e., sociolinguistic campaigns), school administrators, and teachers might be persuaded to use more timely and culturally applicable resources, resulting in a more hands-on education. Moreover, with cross-cultural writing skills, individuals would increase their chances of being hired by international organizations and of being published in refereed journals and other venues outside India — which tend to be biased in favor of writing that is chronologically structured. This is the format considered "logical" and organized to most American readers.

Even when the texts used in English classes in India are more culturally inclusive and include excerpts from selected Indian authors, the focus is still primarily on reading comprehension and grammar. Writing, when required, tends to center around

narrative themes, such as events in literary excerpts, or narrative accounts of holidays or festivities. Peer editing and revising are practically unheard of and minimally encouraged. In fact, in an informal poll conducted at the 2008 AICL, the overwhelming majority (99%) of respondents (N = 110) responded "No" in response to the following three questions:

1. Have you ever taken a writing class?

2. Have you ever taught a writing class?

3. Have you heard of the term "peer-editing," or been invited to revise a rough draft?

This pilot study attests to the minimal emphasis placed on writing - in English and in other languages - in India. This situation must be remedied for the following reasons:

1. In our global world, for India to maintain a competitive edge, writing skills must be advanced. Indians must learn to tailor their writing to different audiences, particularly since writing is the primary means by which we communicate across cultures (via e-mail, for instance)

2. Writing promotes critical thinking, and we must endeavor to steer away from a purely theory-centered and rote or memorization-oriented learning and instructional style to a more analytic, application-oriented education. Writing is both a necessary ingredient and a primary vehicle in this endeavor, since it both mirrors and entails reflection or analysis.

3. Writing skills are emphasized in the West, so India would do well to make herself more globally accessible and competitive.

In a follow-up pilot study, the following two questions were asked to a randomly selected group of 110 American students and 110 Indian students, in the U.S. and India respectively. Participants' responses reflect culturally variable interpretations of success in professional communication. The former were all undergraduates specializing in business at Morgan State University's Earl Graves' School of Business, and all 110 had taken a required course on Business Communication. The latter group (the same group polled earlier) consisted of 11 undergraduates and 99 graduate students studying linguistics at one of four institutions in India, namely, Benares

Hindu University, Delhi University, Calcutta University, and Deccan College, Pune. [None of the Indian respondents had had a course in Business Communication]

1. What in your view are the two to three most important ingredients for success in professional communication?

2. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being least important and 5 the most, rate the importance of following criteria in professional communication: clarity/organization (i.e., the main point is stated quickly and clearly, and reiterated in a linear logical fashion), politeness/goodwill, completeness (all of the reader's/listener's questions are addressed), brevity, ethicality, and accuracy/correctness.

The American students unanimously identified *goodwill* (i.e., a positive image of the speaker/writer and of their organization) and *brevity* as chief ingredients and rated them most highly (followed by ethicality, completeness, and accuracy/correctness, in that order). In contrast, in response to the first question, the majority of the Indian respondents (85%) identified *respect* as the single most important ingredient for success in professional communication. Others (9%) identified *trust*, "assurance provision" or "promising to do one's best" (4%), and "confidence" (1%) as key ingredients. As regards the second question, 84% rated brevity the highest, followed by politeness/goodwill, and accuracy/correctness, in that order. These culturally divergent views are quite revealing and necessitate (empirical and large-scale) study.

In response to the first research question posed at the start of this article, first, linguists in India must recognize that they have some of the richest and most multilingual data sources at their disposal, and that much more could be gained if a concerted effort were made to investigate language in use in different arenas of Indian life, including the home, the school, the work place, and the wider community. In addition to language planning and policy making, an area in which the CIIL plays a pivotal role - it would also help to gauge attitudes towards different language varieties by different groups in India — to better aide in language planning, among other goals. Such research would benefit linguistic research worldwide. Given that the least multilingual nations in the world (namely, the U.S. and the UK) account for the lion's share of research in language acquisition, bilingualism and sociolinguistics, then it is clear that Indian linguists have a lot of catching up to do. Second, India's linguists could be more socially responsible (see Wolfram, 1997), and learn to market their skills outside linguistics departments. Third, they must focus on disseminating our research internationally, in refereed venues, as well as in convening and initiating internationally reputable research exchanges - such as conferences and, cross-cultural faculty and student exchange programs or e-collaborations, and publications. To date, the vast majority of international journals of linguistics are located in the

West, most notably in the U.S. and U.K. Similarly, major publishers of linguistic textbooks are predominantly U.S. or UK-based with, of course, branches in Delhi or Mumbai. At the very least, Indian linguists should actively seek to participate on these and other international editorial boards, as the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of editorial boards undoubtedly influence the language, tone, and content of the research published in these venues. It helps to remember that linguistics, as we know it today, was pioneered by the Indian linguist, Panini. Even today, Panini's invaluable contributions are apparent. His research in linguistics is unparalleled, yet we need more Paninis.

As regards the second research question, firstly, most would agree that the Indian accent - despite its regional variations - is one of the least tolerated and the most widely ridiculed worldwide. [5] In fact, the Indian accent is far more likely to be dismissed as a mirror of low English language skills than of a highly educated speaker for whom English might be a fourth or fifth language — which is more often the case. In many cases, the vocabulary of Indian speakers of English exceeds that of their U.S. and British counterparts, yet the Indian accent (despite its regional and social variations) is readily discriminated against and dismissed or associated with low intelligibility. Second, differences in educational systems, in national entry and occupancy requirements, and in research norms or what is expected of linguists and professors in India versus other countries make it hard for many highly qualified Indian linguists to occupy post-doctoral and other research positions outside India. For these reasons, Indian institutions could endeavor to attract international linguists to India. It goes without saying that it is our responsibility to educate others about our preferred speech and writing styles, as well as to make others aware of our linguistic strengths (i.e., our societal multilingualism), so that rather than concentrate on our accent, listeners will focus on our message; that is, on what B.B. Kachru (1986) terms *comprehensibility.*

Regarding the third research question, given India's success as a top corporate U.S. outsourcee and, increasingly, too, as an economically viable global player, successful intercultural and cross-linguistic communication (i.e., business negotiations) constitute an area that is in need of careful attention. Conversation and other discourse analyses of exchanges involving different varieties of English, as well as of other languages, and the potential for miscommunication or misunderstandings are likely to be highly beneficial and insightful.

Regarding the fourth research question, linguistic conferences and online collaborations are most advisable, particularly in these technology-friendly times. Given increased access to the Internet and India's technological edge, India could

attempt to host more international conferences and, with the support of the CIIL, which has overseen a host of national language projects and publications, as well as linguistics Departments at Indian universities, publish one or more international journals in linguistics. These research endeavors would facilitate research and publications in English, Indian languages, and other languages.

As regards the final research question, India will only continue to grow in importance, not only because of its highly affordable, culturally amenable, multilingual, and skilled labor force and the 12-hour time difference that allows for a seamless 24-hour work day, but because of the highly lucrative and wide open market it offers for a plethora of American products, services and solutions, ranging from fast food to fashion and popular culture (e.g., U.S. TV, DVDs, and music CDs).

"HORN OKAY PLEASE": RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

At the rear of the countless flamboyantly decorated trucks, buses, and other goods carriers in India one often finds the following sign: "horn okay please." This Indian English expression that roughly translates to "Please horn (i.e., to let me know that you are behind me), okay?" baffles many an outsider ("All Things Considered, NPR broadcast on noise pollution in Mumbai and Pane, Dec. 24, 2008, 6:30 p.m. EST). Given that honking is acceptable in most areas in India and is, in fact, a necessary communal exchange (see Ratna, 1980) in India's overcrowded roads and cities (where reckless driving is a common sight), this sign serves as a vital and communal call for assistance. Similarly, on India's linguistics highway, additional research roadways are very much needed to accommodate and navigate the increasing complexities of everyday exchanges. Some recommendations for future language training and research in India include:

- Organize more conferences in the field of linguistics and highlight the interdisciplinary value of linguistics. The Hinglish conference "Chutnefying English" scheduled for January 2009 in Mumbai, organized by the Mudra Institute of Communication, Ahmedabad (MICA) is very promising.

- Institute at least one undergraduate and one graduate writing course with a cross-cultural and professional/corporate communication focus.

- Offer a course in World Englishes and/or a course in Business Englishes, with special emphasis on features of corporate American English vs. British English and Indian English (i.e., distinctive sounds, words, expressions, sentence, and discourse-level features), and discuss appropriate contexts of use. In such a course, it would be important to share cross-cultural differences in the

meaning, or semantic fields of words, such as "Sir" and Ma'am", Words which are assigned very different interpretations in American and Indian contexts.

- At the very least (i.e., in the event that a stand-alone course on World Englishes is not feasible), offer a course in Business Englishes. In such a course, it would help to discuss dialectal differences in oral and written exchanges involving different countries. Discussing key criteria such as goodwill (i.e., politeness markers), clarity (i.e., how to state your main point or thesis statement as quickly as possible, and how to stick with it and reiterate it by consistently and constantly referring back to it, and making sure that everything you mention relates to this main point and is clearly spelled out), brevity, accuracy or correctness (in content, organization, and mechanics), and completeness would also help familiarize Indian students and colleagues with the linear American writing style.

- Organize a workshop, conference, or course on discourse analysis and devote some time to ethnographic research techniques to equip students and business professionals, in particular with the skills needed to succeed in different (linguistic and cultural) environments. Discussions of politeness theory, Grice's theory of implicature, culturally appropriate survey design, and ethnographic research would be invaluable in this regard.

We would do well to remember that for linguists based in India, India's many languages — including Indian English — provide a steady, ready, one-stop, and rich data source —some of the most diverse and richest linguistic fodder one could, in fact, hope for. Studying how these languages co-exist and influence each other and English, as well as how they influence the cognition, speech, and writing of their users would be insightful in itself.

Conversation analyses (see Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974) of exchanges involving those born and/or brought up in India and those raised elsewhere, for instance, could reveal significant differences in role relations (i.e., reflected in the use of honorifics and other expressions of empowerment), turn-taking patterns (hierarchic or egalitarian), and even in uses and perceptions of pauses and silence, and of interruptions — in speech. Similarly, ethnographic studies involving early acquisition of two or more languages—both inside and outside the classroom context in India, are likely to interest linguists everywhere, given the success of multilingualism in this part of the world. Politeness theory (see Brown and Levinson, 1988) and J.L. Austin and John Searle's speech act theory, Grice's theory of

conversational implicature (see Grice, 1989) and inferencing would also be invaluable to linguists in India. The research of other applied linguists, such as Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Ruqaiya Hasan, Michael Halliday, and Deborah Tannen is also insightful and worth testing and extending in the Indian context. In short, linguists based in India could be more actively engaged in research and in international dissemination of their research findings.

For those Indian linguists with limited resources at their disposal (i.e., under-funded libraries), the Internet offers brief synopses of ongoing linguistic research in numerous locations worldwide, as well as current and older publications. Several sites even offer sneak previews of Tables of Contents and sample chapters, all of which are invaluable in keeping us abreast of our colleagues' research. In short, the Internet is a beacon or lighthouse of sorts, enabling the underserved to connect with others, and to find a voice and a place (e.g., online publications) of their own.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has attempted to demonstrate that contemporary Indian linguists could contribute more to research in applied linguistics, including sociolinguistics; language instruction and learning, or approaches to successful bilingual and subsequent language instruction (inside and outside the classroom); discourse analysis investigating Indian communication styles and politeness markers in both speech and writing in Indian languages and in the English used by Indians, for instance; as well as in neurolinguistics, to name a few areas. In short, given India's vast linguistic potential, much more could be accomplished by Indian linguists.

For linguists in India— a linguistic powerhouse in multiple senses of the term, making linguistics immediately relevant to students, and clarifying the value of this invaluable discipline to the general public, including policy makers, school teachers and administrators, corporations, and the business community should be a top priority. As Wolfram et al. (2008: 1109) rightly observe the "linguist–community collaboration" could work through concerted "sociolinguistic engagement and dialect awareness outreach programs" as "the public is inherently curious about language differences and this intrigue can be transformed into informal and formal public education." They further demonstrate that "positively framed presentations of language differences in sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts can effectively counter dominant, seemingly unassailable ideologies in non-confrontational ways" (p. 1109).

Notes

1. "The idea is not to replace the mother tongue but to capitalize on the capacity of young children to grasp different languages," Pitroda observes, as though early exposure alone will miraculously ensure the desired proficiency in English.

2. The significant number of undergraduate participants was a welcome sight, and highly commendable. Also, the fact that Deccan College prioritizes linguistics is evidence of the Indian government's support and recognition of the value of linguistics. It is the linguists' responsibility to demonstrate the value of linguistics to the general public, including policy makers, school teachers and administrators, corporations, and the business community.

3. In his Nov. 2008 presentation at the AICL in Pune, presenter Niladri S. Dash was very critical of English teachers who failed to correct their students' errors. He recalled receiving feedback from international reviewers advising him to get editorial assistance. "For me, this is severe humiliation! That kind of humiliation we cannot ignore," he noted. For this reason, he recommends "English corpora" to non-native speakers, so that they can be autonomous learners and do not have to rely on their teachers alone.

4. Much of the writing required in English Departments in India is narrative in mode and centers around literature (not necessarily Indian). In short, process-based argumentative writing and linguistics are still relatively foreign to English Departments in India.

5. Refer to the American Sitcom "The Simpsons," for instance, where one of the business owners is a perpetually angry Indian man with a thick accent. In another episode, a restaurant owner from Pakistan—who also happens to have a South Asian accent—has great difficulty establishing his restaurant, and his English language skills are considered problematic.

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