

Structural Nativization in Indian English Lexicogrammar

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Volume 46

Structural Nativization in Indian English Lexicogrammar
by Marco Schilk

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Marco Schilk

Justus Liebig University, Giessen

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam / Philadelphia



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Cover design: Françoise Berserik

Cover illustration from original painting *Random Order*
by Lorenzo Pezzatini, Florence, 1996.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schilk, Marco.

Structural nativization in Indian English lexicogrammar / Marco Schilk.

p. cm. (Studies in Corpus Linguistics, ISSN 1388-0373 ; v. 46)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. English language--India--Grammar.
2. English language--India--Usage.
3. Lexicology.
4. Grammaticality (Linguistics)
5. Linguistic analysis (Linguistics) I. Title.

PE3502.I61.S35 2011

427'.954--dc23

2011018552

ISBN 978 90 272 0351 9 (Hb ; alk. paper)

ISBN 978 90 272 8508 9 (Eb)

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John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

To Mara Moësha

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to many people who supported me with their help and comments while I was writing this book. An enormous debt is owed to my academic teacher and advisor, Joybrato Mukherjee, for his advice throughout the project, his enthusiasm, wisdom and patience. Without his constant feedback and support, this book would not have been possible.

I am grateful to the Justus Liebig University, Giessen, the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the International Graduate Center for the Study of Culture (GCSC) for providing me with project funding and travel grants.

Further, I would like to thank the conference delegates at the ICAME conferences in Helsinki (2006), Stratford-upon-Avon (2007), Ascona (2008), Lancaster (2009) and Giessen (2010) as well as the ISLE conference in Freiburg (2008) for their stimulating questions and helpful feedback to the presentation of various stages of the project.

Special thanks go to Sebastian Hoffmann for introducing me to the LWP-module in Perl and providing me with the newspaper section of the BNC, to Stefan Th. Gries for his statistical insights and the time he devoted to the identification of statistical bugs in some of the software I used and to Rosemary Bock who proof-read the original manuscript.

Thanks are also due to my colleagues at the linguistics department in Giessen. Sandra Götz, who assisted me with coding when she was still a student and became a great office-mate and friend later; Christiane Brand for all the time she devoted to linguistic discussion and personal conversation over many cups of coffee and Tobias Bernaisch for many fruitful talks about verb-complementation.

Finally I would like to thank my family: my parents Ulrike and Bernd-Rüdiger, for their unfailing love and support, my wife Manuela for her love and patience as a “PhD-widow” and for adding a non-linguists perspective. Last but not least I wish to thank my beloved daughter Mara Moësha for reminding me that there is more to life than work. To her this book is dedicated.

Introduction and overview

1.1 Introduction

English has global currency, be it as a native tongue, a foreign language or as a *lingua franca*. Its spread was originally in part due to a long history of British political and economic dominance in every continent of the world. Apart from communities in which English is the dominant or single language, English functions as an additional or link-language in many countries that had colonial ties to Great Britain in the past. In those countries English is not the native language of the majority of its speakers, but plays an important role in many international and intranational functions (cf. Görlach 1991: 13).

One of these non-native varieties, Indian English, stands out owing to its sheer number of speakers. Although it is very difficult to assess the exact number, some estimates are as high as 200 million (cf. Crystal 2004: 101), thus, from a purely numerical standpoint, ranging amongst or even outnumbering native-varieties of English. There have been many studies on nativization in Indian English since Braj B. Kachru published his fundamental collection of papers *The Indianization of English* (cf. Kachru 1983). However, early studies of Indian English often described the variety based on a very limited set of linguistic data, and were often of an anecdotal nature. Over the last two decades since the compilation of the Kolhapur Corpus of Indian English and later the Indian component of the International Corpus of English, this has gradually changed, so that an ever increasing body of corpus-linguistic descriptions of Indian English has now been developing.

However, these descriptions often concentrate on the lexical description of the variety, since structural innovations in new varieties of English were traditionally believed to be relatively “unobtrusive” (Quirk et al. 1985: 17). Although there have been recent studies that aim at a more detailed description of lexicogrammatical features, such as Schneider (2004) and Olavarría de Ersson & Shaw (2003), these studies were mainly of a pilot character. Other recent research, such as Sedlatschek (2009), provides a good description of many features of Indian English, including lexicogrammatical features, but does not focus on them in detail. The aim of the present study is to provide insights into structural nativization

on the level of collocation and verb-complementation in Indian English with a specific focus on ditransitive verbs.

1.2 Structural nativization in Indian English lexicogrammar: Preview

The present work is organized into nine chapters. The second chapter lays the foundations by providing a general description of Indian English. Firstly, the historical development of the variety from its early colonial stages until the present day is summarized in order to show how the present linguistic situation on the subcontinent developed. In the second part of Chapter 2, different models that are currently used for the description of World Englishes will be discussed. This discussion will treat classical static models, such as Kachru's (1985) highly influential *three-circle model*, as well as more dynamic models such as Schneider's (2003) cyclic evolutionary model; a discussion of influential factors of structural nativization concludes the chapter.

Chapter 3 deals with theoretical preliminaries concerning the main linguistic areas in the focus of the present analysis, i.e. collocation and verb-complementation. These two lexicogrammatical areas represent different points within the lexis-grammar continuum. Collocation, situated more towards the lexical end of this continuum, is described from a quantitative and a phraseological viewpoint. Additionally, earlier studies on collocation in Indian English will be briefly discussed. The section on verb-complementation describes different influential models for the description of ditransitive verbs. The introduction in Chapter 3 thus lays the foundation for the analysis of the ditransitive verbs GIVE, SEND and OFFER that is carried out in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, respectively.

Chapter 4 introduces the descriptive apparatus and the corpus data of the study. Since the study is based on two standard corpora of British and Indian English, as well as on a web-derived newspaper corpus, the design of the standard corpora and the retrieval process and structure of the web-derived corpus will be described in detail. The second part of Chapter 4 introduces the concept of collocational profiles and verb-complementational profiles that form the basis of the descriptive analysis of the current study. The third part of Chapter 4 provides a quantitative overview of the usage of the verbs that are analysed in detail within the next three chapters.

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 the findings of the analysis are in focus. For each of the three chosen ditransitive verbs, GIVE, SEND and OFFER, collocational and verb-complementational profiles are derived from the different corpora. In turn, similarities and differences between the varieties are discussed in order to show

the extent to which structural nativization is taking place in Indian English with respect to the lexis-grammar interface.

Chapter 8 evaluates the methodological framework introduced in Chapter 4 in the light of the findings discussed in the previous chapters. After this methodological evaluation a model for the description of lexicogrammatical nativization with a focus on the linguistic encoding of CAUSE-RECEIVE processes is proposed. A brief conclusion of the present analysis and an outlook for further research into structural nativization in Indian English is given in Chapter 9.

Aspects of structural nativization

2.1 From English in India to Indian English

India has been called an “expanding network of languages” (Annamalai 2004: 151), a network of a large variety of languages from four different language families (with Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages accounting for more than 95% of the languages spoken). English entered this network in the 17th century and although it was not the first European language to be introduced into the subcontinent as a contact language, it became the most influential of these in the colonial history of India.

Mehrotra (1998) divides the colonial history of the English language in India into two different phases; an early phase from 1579 to 1834 and the phase of the British Raj from 1835 to 1947. The initial period starts with the arrival of the missionary Thomas Stephens, who is said to have been the first Englishman in India (Mehrotra 1998: 3). During this phase, no clear-cut language policy was carried out by the colonial power. The final upshot of this unsettled situation was the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy that ranged from the 1780s to the 1840s, where the Orientalist position aimed at governing India by use of the “languages that had been in use before, such as Persian” (Schiffmann 2005: 2112), while the Anglicist position aimed at systematically introducing the English language into the colony.¹ Schiffmann (2005) summarises this situation as follows:

Ironically during the first 250 years of British colonialism in India, the East India Company ran things and their policy was to use whatever languages had been in use before [...], although English gained some ground. This did not work everywhere and some local elites resisted it. [...] [After 1850] the rule of the Company came to an end and a colonial office was established in London that undertook to train people professionally to govern India. But even before this, English-educated elites challenged the “Orientalist” position, and wished to use more English, and after 1830, this became the policy. (Schiffmann 2005: 2112)

This policy culminated in the *Minute on Indian Education* (cf. Macauley 1835), which institutionalized English language teaching in India on a large scale and

1. For a thorough discussion of the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy see Rahman (1996).

which marks the end of the first of Mehrotra's (1998) phases. This Minute can be seen as the linguistic beginning of the phase of the British Raj, during which the colonial power actively promoted the English language by "making English the medium of all education in the schools and universities in India" (Mehrotra 1998:4). This systematic introduction of the English language into the multilingual setting of the subcontinent, which subsequently allowed for the use of English as a medium of administration and law throughout India, "changed the position of English in the multilingual network in India, endowing it with a dominant position together in the three domains of commerce, administration and politics" (Annamalai 2004: 153).

This change of position had several effects on Indian society as well as on the English language spoken on the subcontinent itself. Within Indian society, a good command of English became an asset for Indians since it opened the door to positions within the colonial administration and the field of trade. This aspired status of the English language was actively initiated by the British administration in Harding's proclamation (1844) that "made recruitment for public offices in India available only through English schools – this was of course focused on elites only" (Schiffmann 2005:2106). Since it was not the native language of any group of Indians, it "was not perceived to be under the control of any native elite, based on caste and religion and blocking access to it (as Sanskrit was under the control of the Brahmins and Persian under the Muslim elite)" (Annamalai 2004: 153), an important point in a highly heterogeneous India. Access to the English language may now no longer have been blocked by traditional Indian barriers such as caste or religion, but it was controlled by the non-native group of British citizens, who, by founding English-based schools and universities, gradually established English "as the official and academic language of India" (Kachru 1983:23). However, at least during the early stages, only a very limited number of native Indians achieved bilingualism in more than a very limited set of registers of English and a native Indian language, so that Kachru has suggested viewing bilingualism in India as a cline:

[...] This cline has three 'measuring points,' i.e. the *zero* point, the *central* point, and the *ambilingual* point. An English speaking bilingual who ranks just about the zero point is considered a minimal bilingual. [...] a bilingual who has adequate competence in one or more registers of IE [...], may rank around the *central* point. A standard (or educated) IE bilingual may be defined as one who is intelligible not only to other Indians in the different parts of the subcontinent, but ideally speaking, to the educated native speakers of English.

(Kachru 1983: 129, his italics)