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# British Received Pronunciation and Native Indian Speaker

**Reena Singh<sup>1</sup>, Tuhin Srivastava<sup>2</sup>, Vipul Vibhanshu<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Krishna Institute of Engineering & Technology, Ghaziabad  
<sup>1</sup>reena.singh@kiet.edu

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

**Keywords:** Grammar, vocabulary

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There is usually a standard form of written English all over the world. But even in the countries where English is spoken as a native language there are variations in speech. For example in UK there are variations in speech of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland and again within each of these areas there will be a wide variety of accents (i.e. way of pronunciation). Similarly in India where English is a spoken as a second language it has developed a variety of accents. For example, the speech of a Bengali speaker of English will differ markedly from that of a Punjabi or Tamil or Gujarati speaker. As there is such a wide range of variation in the accent (both native and non-native), it is essential that for teaching spoken English we follow a standard. One native regional accent that has gained social prestige is the Received Pronunciation of England (R.P. for

short). It is the pronunciation of South-east England and is used by educated English Speakers. It is also characteristic of “elite” society. R.P. today is generally equated with the “correct pronunciation of English”.

## 2. MODEL IN A NON-NATIVE SITUATION

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

The teaching and learning of pronunciation concern the following:

- The sound system (i.e. the segmental features-consonants and vowels)
  - Word accent
  - Rhythm, and
  - Intonation
- } (i.e. the supra-segmental features)

In this paper I am considering the Word Accent feature of pronunciation. There are twenty distinct vowels in British Received Pronunciation (RP.). The twenty vowels are:

### The Sounds of English-Vowel:

#### Pure Vowels

/i:/ as in these /i:z/                    /ɔ:/ as in all /ɔ:l/  
/ɪ/ as in bit /bɪt/force /fɔ:s/  
/e/ as in bed /bed/horse /hɔ:s/  
/ʌ/ as in bus /bʌs/                    /ʊ/ as in book /bʊk/  
/æ/ as in cat /kæt/                    /u:/ as in rule /rʊ:l/  
/ɑ:/ as in card /kɑ:rd/                /ɜ:/ as in serve /sɜ:v/  
/ə/ as in account/ ə'kaʊnt /  
/ɒ/ as in hot /hɒt/

#### Vowel- Diphthongal Glides

/eɪ/ as in gate/geɪt/  
/aɪ/ as in bite /baɪt/  
/ɔɪ/ as in boil /bɔɪl/  
/əʊ/ as in home /həʊm/  
/aʊ/ as in house /haʊs/

/ɪə/ as in cheer /tɪə/  
 /eə/ as in air /eə/  
 /ʊə/ as in poor /pʊə/

**Vowels in General Indian English**

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

**Pure Vowels**

/i:/ as in these /di:z/	}	/u:/ as in rule /ru:l/
/ɪ/ as in bit /bɪt/		/ə/ as in bus /bəs/
/e:/ as in gate /ge:t/	}	bird /bɜ:d/
// as in bed /b d/		account /ə'kaunt/
/æ/ as in bad /bæd/	Vowel Glides	
/ɑ:/ as in card /kɑ:rd/	/aɪ/ as in bite /baɪt/	
/ɒ/ as in	hot /hɒt/	/ɔɪ/ as in boil /bɔɪl/
	all /ɔ:l/	/aʊ/ as in house /haʊs/
/o:/ as in	horse /hɔ:rs/	/ɪə/ as in cheer /tɪə/
	home /hə:m/	/eə/ as in air /eə/
	force /fɔ:rs/	/ʊə/ as in poor /pʊə/

/ʊ/ as in book /bʊk/

**Differences between the Vowel Systems of British R.P. and General Indian English**

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

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

**Description of Vowels**

- 1) I have mentioned the brief articulatory descriptions of English Vowels along with the information about spellings and common substitutions in Indian English below to bring out the difference in vowels of British and Indian R.P.

°/i:/

/i:/The position of the .highest point of the tongue for this vowel is indicated in the diagram. The front of the tongue is raised to a height just below the ‘close’ position: the lips are spread and the tongue is tense. The vowel is comparatively long, but the length is reduced before voiceless consonants.

The various spelling [ɪ] for this vowel are: e, accented, generally e+consonant+mute e.

British R.P Indian English Variant Recommended Form

Immediate: /i'mi:dʒ ət/ /ɪmɪ:dʒət/ [2]. [ɪ'mi:dʒət] [3].

ei

receive : /rɪ'si:v/ /rɪsi:v/ /rɪ'si:v/

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

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

It is necessary to keep the two phenomes separate and maintain the difference of quality. It is also necessary to give /i:/ adequate length, except when it is followed by a voiceless consonant.

2). /ɪ/ as in bit

In the production of this vowel the hinder part of the front of the tongue is raised to a position between close and half-close.

**Indian English**

°/ɪ/

R.P. /ɪ/°

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

**Spellings**

British R.P. Indian English Variant Recommended Form

i). i

bit /bɪt/

thick /θɪk/ /t<sup>h</sup>ɪk/ /θɪk/

e,

begin /brɪ'gɪn/ /bɪgɪn/ /brɪ'gɪn/

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

village /vɪlɪdʒ/ /vɪledʒ/ [vɪledʒ]

private /'praɪvɪt/ /'praɪvət [ˈpraɪvət]

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

carries /'kærɪz/ /'kæri:z/ [ˈkærɪz]

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

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

Similarly, in the case of vowel-

Indian English /e:/

British R.P. /eɪ/



as in gate

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

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

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

I have worked on these vowels mentioned above in my research paper now I will show in my paper the distinction of Consonants between British R.P. and Indian English. I have done the research mainly on Plosives which is a significant feature of consonant.

**The Sounds of English- Consonants**

There are twenty-four different consonants in English (British Received Pronunciation). These can be classified as shown in the table:

TABLE 1.

Consonant Sounds	Related Word
b	bad
m	meet
w	water
V	van
ð	this
z	zeal
d	deal
n	net
l	let
r	road
dʒ	june
ʒ	vision
j.	yes

g	get
ŋ	uncle
p	pet
f	for
θ	think
T	teen
s	set
tʃ	choose
ʃ	sheep
K	keen
H	had

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

- i) /t,d/ are sometimes retroflex /t,d/
- ii) /tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/ are articulated with the tongue tip down
- iii) /v/ and /w/ are replaced by one phoneme
- iv) /v/ realized as a frictionless labio-dental /v/ or weakly rounded /w/
- v) /θ, ð /are replaced by the plosives /tʰ, d/

**Plosives**

- i) A plosive or stop consonant is produced by:
- ii) A complete closure of the air passage in the mouth
- iii) The holding of the closure and compression of the air coming from the lungs

A sudden release of air with explosion

**British R.P. has three pairs of plosive phonemes:**

/p,b/ bilabial  
 /t,d/ alveolar (In Indian English these are often retroflex [t, d]).  
 /k,g/ velar  
 /p,t,k/ are voiceless and comparatively strong called fortis;  
 /b,d, g/ are voiced and comparatively weak- lenis

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

Pack [pʰæk], table [ 'tʰerb], cage [kʰeɪ dʒ]

This aspiration is absent in Indian English, and lack of aspiration is a frequent cause of Indian English being unintelligible to native speakers [4]. It is desirable to have some aspiration in /p,t,k/ when they occur initially in accented syllables.

### **Bilabial Plosives**

In Indian English /p/ is unaspirated in all positions. It is necessary to aspirate it at the beginning of accented syllables when talking to native English speakers, because lack of aspiration in this position is likely to cause confusion between pairs like pack and back.

### **Dental Plosives in Indian English**

Dental plosives /t<sup>h</sup>/ and /d/ are used in Indian English instead of the fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ in words like thank and then. For international intelligibility it is necessary to use the fricative sounds.

### **Alveolar Plosives /t,d/**

In British R.P. /t/ is aspirated at the beginning of accented syllables, as in team, tone, top, at 'tack, be'tween, train and tune. It is unaspirated after /s/, as in steam, stone, stop, and in unaccented positions, as in 'better, 'enter, 'liberty, to'morrow. /d/ is never aspirated in English.

In R.P. /t/ has a nasal release in words like button, cotton, eaten, and a lateral release in words like battle, little, settle.

### **Velar Plosives /k,g/**

In British R.P. /k/ is aspirated at the beginning of accented syllables, as in cool, cold, corn, clean, but is unaspirated

after /s/, as in school, scold, scorn, and in unaccented positions, as in ca'nal, col'lect, 'packing, 'equal. /g/ is never aspirated in English.

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

### **3. CONCLUSION**

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

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