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Diachronic stability in Indian English lexis

ABSTRACT: In the late 1930s two British commentators, A.F. Kindersley and R.C. Goffin, published articles on various linguistic features (semantic, grammatical, orthographical, and phonological) of the English language as used in India. These two glossaries offer a valuable insight into late-Raj Indian English. In order to assess the extent of change over the intervening 70-plus years, a comparison of the content of those glossaries to present-day Indian English has been made. The overall picture is one of surprising stability, especially given the strong resistance by educationalists and others who have long stigmatised local variations as ‘errors’. This stability over time suggests a long-standing endonormativity that has hitherto not been recognised. Many of the features discussed have even longer stable histories, suggesting an even lengthier endonormativity. This type of diachronic investigation may have similar implications for many other varieties of English.

Keywords: Indian English, endonormativity, lexicography, dictionaries, diachronic studies

INTRODUCTION

An exonormative view of language is one where the perceived prestige or standard form is that of a non-local variety, while, in contrast, an endonormative view is one where features of the local variety are viewed as contributing to, or being part of, the standardised variety. Taking a strictly exonormative point of view, variations in so-called non-native varieties are characterised as *abuses*, in the sense of ‘a wrong or improper use’, a ‘misuse’. In this sense the noun is countable. Another use of the word *abuse* is to refer to ‘insulting language’. In so-called native varieties of English, this second sense is strictly uncountable, but this is not so in Indian English, as shown by the following two quotations.

Mr. Huq concludes that statement with a note of warning to strikers whose representatives [...] have taken the extraordinary step of inviting Pandit Jawaharlal to come to Calcutta to hurl reckless abuses at him and his colleagues. – *Indian Express*, 6 May **1937**

Press-photographers and correspondents have been advised to maintain a safe distance because in her previous appearance in court, Sonia had suddenly pounced on a press-photographer, smashed his camera and hurled abuses at the scribes. – *Times of India*, 14 Sep **2001**

In these extracts the word *abuse* is used in the sense of ‘an individual piece of invective’ or ‘an abusive comment’ and is clearly a countable noun. These quotations provide evidence that this usage has been present in Indian English for a period of over 60 years, and thus, that the term *abuses* is not considered an ‘abuse’ of language in Indian English. The presence of stability has implications for the question of endonormativity in the case of Indian English. To date, the extent and significance of such stability has not been substantially investigated. This paper compares two late-Raj glossaries of Indian English terms with modern sources in order to obtain a first glimpse of how nativised features of Indian English have withstood the test of time. This research is further examined in light of the lexicography of Indian English. At present there is no up-to-date history of Indian English from a lexicographical perspective, although, a historical dictionary of Indian English would be able to present a clear picture of diachronic change and hence contribute to the question of endo- versus exonormativity.

INDIAN ENGLISH AND ENDONORMATIVITY

Colonial-era accounts of Indian English largely concentrated on lexis borrowed into English from Indian languages, or else, took an exonormative view and focused on errors made by Indian users of English (e.g. Wright 1891; Whitworth 1907). More recently, especially within the world Englishes paradigm, more detailed analyses have become the norm, and many items formerly classified as ‘errors’ have become regarded as valid features of the variety. However, despite this academic attention, at present ‘there is no comprehensive perspective or clarity on the status and meaning of English’ in India (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998: 4). The term *Standard Indian English* has been in use for well over half a century (e.g. Quirk 1958: 13; Sailaja 2009: viii) to refer to the acrolectal variant of Indian English associated with the highly educated. However, the existence of a term does not necessarily imply or enforce the existence of that which it denotes, and the existence of a standardised form of Indian English is still the subject of debate. Graddol notes that ‘English proficiency in India is distributed very unevenly across the various socio-economic groups’ (2010: 66), while John describes the situation as ‘a cacophony of English from the farthest village to the mega malls of glitzy megapolises’ (2007: 4). There is diversity of academic opinion on the question of what makes a standardised variety of a language (see Wright 2000; Crowley 2003). However, one factor is the absence or presence of an endonormative orientation as far as norms of correctness and usage are concerned. Schneider notes that an endonormative attitude is ‘far from being generally accepted’ in India (2007: 171). There are three major stances towards Indian English, namely, (a) the endonormative view, (b) the exonormative view, and (c) a lack of concern. The first two of these have advocates from both the academic and popular domains, but the last attitude is that of many of the actual users of English in India.

An endonormative stance towards Indian English is often invoked as a remedy to the adverse estimation arising from prevailing exonormative views. Balasubramanian, in calling for detailed linguistic descriptions of national varieties of English, notes that ‘[s]uch descriptions would work towards dispelling the negative attitudes that still persist today toward certain varieties of English’ (2009: 4). Alongside and conflicting with the endonormative viewpoint, a widely held exonormative view has been in place from the colonial period to present. On the academic front this view is in retreat, though some contemporary researchers seem not to have forsaken it (e.g. Bock 2006: 15-17). Amongst

many Indians, however, an exonormative view, which even today posits British English as the target model, appears to be firmly in place (Wong and Thomas 1993: 15-16; Lange 2012: 50). Indicative of this viewpoint is Pavan K. Varma, the former Press Secretary for the President of India, who in 2004 complained that ‘Indian English is littered with instances of spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, pronunciation howlers and incorrect phraseology’ (cited in Sedlatschek 2009: 26). This attitude is supported by the publication of usage guides such as the perennial Smith-Pearse (1934/2000),¹ and Yadurajan (2001), both published by Oxford University Press. The latter of these states that its explicit goal is to inform readers ‘whether a certain expression which they have been regularly using is, in fact, admissible as Standard English’ (x) (see Chelliah 2001 for an exploration of the educational implications of such guidebooks). Görlach notes that ‘Indians are much less willing to admit to the variation and its communicative functions in the country’ (1998: ix), and Sailaja reports that ‘in India, those who consider their English to be good are outraged at being told that their English is Indian’ (2009: 14). At the same time, against the intellectual background of these opposing viewpoints, there is a widespread lack of concern. Milroy and Milroy note that frequently ‘a yawning gap’ exists ‘between what linguists profess to think about language and what ordinary people assume in their daily use and observation of language’ (1985: 13). In India, there is a similar gap between the general population who use English in their daily lives and the current academic literature. There is also a gap between the general population and the falling-standards bemoaners, usage guide publishers, and language pundits, whether conservative or progressive.

Debates rage, seminars are held, languages are linked to the freedom movement and national culture, departments for the propagation of Hindi are set up, flags of nationalism are raised, authors talk of guilt and conflict of interests, national languages are pit against each other – but, English grows. No one speaks on its behalf, no grammarians accept its parentage, no student openly backs Indian-English usage [...] Streetside painters dab it on walls and hoardings, roadside shopkeepers proudly display Indian-English on their boards [...] Indian-English was what the uneducated people wrote for the benefit of the educated. (John 2007: 69)

The fact that the juggernaut of Indian English rolls inexorably on, largely unconcerned by the academic arguments taking place about it, is in itself an indicator of an endonormative force in the variety, and this can be traced historically.

LEXICOGRAPHY AND ENDONORMATIVITY

The link between language norms and the codification of a language – in dictionaries, grammars and usage guides – is well accepted. Kachru has labelled lexicography the ‘first arm’ of codification (2005: 224), and Green (1996) has detailed the significant role played by early English lexicographers in the development of standardised British English. Schneider comments that there is ‘a mutually reinforcing process’ at play: ‘new national identities cause an awareness of the existence of new language varieties, which in turn causes the production of dictionaries of these new varieties; once such a dictionary is out it strengthens the distinct national and linguistic identity’ (2007: 52). In terms of new Englishes, Bamgboṣe points out that ‘one of the major factors militating against the emergence of endonormative standards in non-native Englishes is precisely the dearth of codification’ (1998: 4). Kachru makes the same point, asserting that the ‘compilation of dictionaries for the non-native varieties of English is a crucial first step toward their standardization’ (1980: 72). However, the interplay between lexicography, language, and standardisation should not be overstated nor oversimplified. The mere existence of a dictionary of a certain variety of English does not automatically confer acceptance of that variety. As Dolezal notes, while ‘[d]ictionaries can have an influence on how people make individual decisions on language use’ (2006: 698), the mere ‘descriptive and explanatory adequacy of a dictionary does not in itself promote an attitude of legitimacy for the language being described’ (699). Beyond the mere existence of a dictionary, what is required is the acceptance of the notion of a home-grown standardised variety in the language community itself.

The development of the historical dictionary in the late nineteenth century, most famously employed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*), was one important lexicographical innovation that influenced the acceptance of dictionaries as authorities. The historical approach is commonly used for creating dictionaries of national or localised varieties of English (e.g. Matthews 1951; Story *et al.* 1982; Silva 1996). Historical lexicography consists of the diachronic investigation of a language and the presentation of that lexical research in dictionary format, including the presentation of the linguistic evidence upon which the results are based. Such a dictionary thus provides a history of the language. The call for the dictionary to act as language historian dates back to the eighteenth century (Chambers 1728: xxii; Johnson 1747: 31-32), long before Trench famously averred that a dictionary should act as ‘an historical monument, the history of a nation’ (1857: 6). Creating a historical dictionary for a variety of English valorises that variety by linking it to national history and national identity. Further, by presenting lexical information diachronically, it displays the stability of the particular words, spellings, usages, idioms, etc., and thus cumulatively the overall stability of the

language or variety in general. This goes right to the heart of questions regarding endonormativity. If a certain feature persists within a variety over a long period of time, this indicates a continuity of use by writers, and comprehension by readers, over the years. Hence, it becomes more difficult to maintain that such a feature is an aberration, error, or mistake, as exonormative analyses are wont to maintain. Speaking of English in India, Lange points out that ‘if an expression is already firmly entrenched in the speech community, it is more likely to eventually become part of an Indian English endonormative standard than an expression with a less general distribution’ (2012: 6). The stability over time of a certain feature within a language community indicates a continued practice of not looking elsewhere for its norms.

The importance of the frequency and persistence of linguistic features was highlighted by Saleemi (1993) who called into question certain lexicogrammatical claims made in features lists:

[T]he number of grammatical variants used *fairly consistently* is not as large as generally supposed. [...] I am afraid that several variants cited by writers are in fact no more than extremely transitory linguistic forms, such as idiolectal or interlanguage deviations, or nonce-words. (Saleemi 1993: 37; emphasis in original)

This is precisely the type of information a diachronic study, and hence a comprehensive historical dictionary, can provide about a language, not only in the case of positives but also negatives, that is, those usages which have been ephemeral. Saleemi listed a number of terms as examples of transitory usages, including *fooding and lodging* for ‘board and lodging’ and *coward man* for ‘coward’. Google provides around 20 tokens of the compound *coward man* from Indian and Pakistani sources, suggesting that while it may not be common, it is certainly not a nonce term. *Coward man* also occurs in Indian English literature (e.g. Sharma 2002: 102; Majumdar 2004: 30) and is cautioned against in at least one locally-produced usage guide (Vaid 1989: 70). With *fooding*, on the other hand, a Google search restricted to site:.in gives 31,800 hits, the bulk of which are valid citations of the term, that is, not contrived product or company names. Furthermore, *fooding* dates back to the nineteenth-century (W. c.1890: 10, 80, 173, 174, Wright 1891: 87).

Irrespective of how correct Saleemi was in his selection of examples of peripheral terms, the important lesson he furnishes is that this is not a matter for guesswork. If it is important to document Indian English at all, then it is important to have a means of assessing the status of terms based on a comprehensive survey of relevant source materials. In terms of the debate over questions of norms, the significance of establishing

the history of the numerous items ascribed to Indian English in various features lists and other linguistic and lexicographical works, especially with regard to frequency and longevity, is paramount. It is important to know whether a certain feature is in fact a nonce formation or a regular item of the variety. Historical dictionaries, such as the *OED* and similar dictionaries of various sub-varieties of English (e.g. Rundell 1985; Prucher 2007), provide this information for British and American English, and for the English of settler colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Such dictionaries have had an effect on the perception of a standardised form for those varieties. If native-speaker varieties have been given such scholarly attention, surely non-native-speaker varieties should not be excluded from similar treatment. At present there is no up-to-date historical lexicon of Indian English. The research here is a beginning step, and the results indicate that Indian English lexis has maintained a high level of stability over time, which argues for a strong endonormativity, regardless of the debate over standards and norms in the literature, both popular and academic.

METHODOLOGY

For this paper two glossaries of late-Raj age were used to supply a set of lexical items: R.C. Goffin's *Some Notes on Indian English* (1934) and A.F. Kindersley's *Notes on the Indian Idiom of English: Style, Syntax, and Vocabulary* (1938), reprinted in Bolton and Kachru (2007). Technically, the two papers examined here are more features lists than true glossaries; however, they are largely in the form of a word or phrase followed by a definition and so the term 'glossary' is used here as a shorthand reference. Together, these glossaries provide a valuable insight into 1930s Indian English, a period for which there is essentially no other linguistic or lexicographical description.

The two glossaries differ greatly in style and intent. Goffin is a prose text interspersed with short lists of typical terms exemplifying certain sub-classes of Indian English lexis. The prose text sections are also replete with Indian English lexical items treated discursively. Despite the innocuous-sounding claim that the purpose of his article was 'to provide a few notes on the characteristics of English used to-day by the educated Indian' (20), Goffin's text is very much in the 'Babu English' tradition, that is, it derides the way in which Indians used English. In British India, a *babu* was a native Indian clerk who worked in the British colonial administration. From the prevailing colonial perspective, the English of the babus was error-ridden and characterised by over-elaborate ornateness, and for these 'transgressions' it became the butt of native-speaker ridicule.

In contrast, Kindersley takes an approach that is closer to that of a descriptive

linguist and is largely devoid of the superior tone of Goffin: where Kindersley uses the term ‘pleonastic cliché’ (1938: 31), Goffin more damningly has ‘phrase-mongering’ (1934: 31). Kindersley is clearer about the source of his information, which he notes consists of:

Twenty-four years in the Indian Civil Service in various parts of the Bombay Presidency and Sind. Perusal of reports and speeches made, and books written, by Indians of other provinces. Travel in most of the major provinces, including the Punjab, Bengal, and the Dravidian linguistic area of South India. (Kindersley 1938: 25)

In addition, Kindersley did not rely solely on his own experience, but had all of his findings cross-checked by other members of the British colonial service from different parts of the country (1938: 25). With respect to Babu English, Kindersley states that he and his colleagues believed ‘the extent of its use has [...] been much overstated’, and that instead the ‘English commonly spoken and written by professional men and clerks in most provinces is a more cautious and restricted type of language’ (26). There is minimal overlap between the two texts with only six items appearing in both texts despite the large number of lexical items in each (over 100). This low number points to the incompleteness and, with respect, haphazardness of the two selections.

For the modern period, I have used a variety of sources, including a dataset of 25.4 million words of the *Times of India* ranging from 2001 to 2003 (hereafter *TOI*), Indian English online newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites, and scanned books available through such services as Google Books and the Hathi Trust. In addition, I was able to call upon my own citation database, of some 20,000+ records, part of an ongoing Indian English reading program.

The two texts were read closely and lexical items were extracted. This resulted in a total of 207 items that could be assessed against modern Indian English sources. For a small number of terms it was not possible to effectively assess the claims made by Kindersley or Goffin using the resources available. Nevertheless, this in no way affected the overall picture of the findings, since there were ample terms for drawing a broad picture. For the sake of convenience, the search items are grouped into eight categories, primarily based on the classifications used by Goffin and Kindersley. The categories are outlined below, followed by the total number of items for each (ordered from largest to smallest):

1. General lexical items [90]
2. Borrowings from non-English languages [42]
3. Words of different frequency to British English [31]
4. Anglo-Indian neologisms [21]

5. Words having different connotations to British English [11]
6. Archaisms or old-fashioned usages [11]
7. Anglo-Indian abbreviations [9]
8. Words displaying spelling differences to British English [4]

RESULTS

Table 1 summarises the results of the investigation. Percentages have been rounded. The overall retention of Indian English features from the 1930s to present is 68%. The category where least retention was observed was for terms Goffin and Kindersley claimed had a high frequency in 1930s Indian English, including those terms they labelled clichés. If this figure is removed from the entire set, the percentage retained rises to 78%. For two categories – archaisms and spelling – there were too few searchable items for the percentage figures to have any meaning and they have only been included in the table for the sake of consistency. Following Table 1, a brief discussion of the results for each category is presented. For each category the number of terms found in modern Indian English sources is given, and the percentage of retention. For space reasons only a selection of salient items for each category is discussed.

Category	Searchable items	Present in modern IE	Percentage retained
General lexical items	90	69	77%
Borrowings	40	34	85%
Frequency	31	4	13%
Neologisms	21	15	71%
Connotation	9	7	78%
Archaisms	2	2	100%
Abbreviations	9	8	89%
Spelling	5	2	40%
Total	207	141	68%

Table 1: Results of diachronic study of Indian English terms

GENERAL LEXICAL ITEMS

For the purposes of this paper, terms classed by Kindersley or Goffin as involving either a semantic or grammatical peculiarity have been grouped together. This is in keeping

with the lexicographical focus of the research, as such terms would be supplied with different definitions in a comprehensive dictionary. For example, the term *abuse* would require at least one definition for the uncount usage ‘invective, insulting language’, and another for the count usage ‘an item of invective, an insult’. Similarly, transitive and intransitive senses of verbs are defined separately in comprehensive dictionaries. Given these parameters, there were 90 searchable items noted by Goffin and Kindersley. Of these, 69 were found to still be in use in modern Indian English: a retention rate of 77%.

In addition to *abuse(s)*, Goffin and Kindersley noted six further cases of mass nouns used as countable nouns in Indian English: *bread*, *furniture*, *information*, *luggage*, *riffraff*, and *scenery*. Thus, a *bread* is a loaf of bread, a *furniture* is a piece of furniture, and a *riffraff* is a disreputable person. Other terms which have particular senses in Indian English, both in the 1930s and currently, are *hotel* ‘country restaurant, native tea-shop’, *reach* ‘to arrive’, *scythe* ‘a sickle’, and *since* used to indicate a span of time, rather than the starting point, as in ‘I am living here since twenty years’ (Goffin 1934: 26). This has been present in Indian English since the nineteenth century (e.g. W. c.1890: 156). The words *best* and *worst* preceded by an indefinite article (examples found were ‘a best education consultancy’ and ‘it was a worst sojourn’) were quite infrequent, indicating that these are perhaps not part of a developing norm. Others searchable items were common or at least not infrequent, some of which have been commented on in other treatments of Indian English, including *call as* (Nihalani et al. 2004: 22), *consider over*, *dispose off* (Nihalani et al.: 67), *enjoy* without object (Sengupta 1991: 1447), *marry* followed by *with* instead of *to*, and *preside* used with a direct object, as in ‘He will preside the meeting’. Terms claimed by Kindersley and Goffin that could not be located in current sources include *foot* meaning ‘the leg’, *hand* meaning ‘the arm’, and *worshipper* meaning the ‘priest of [a] temple or shrine’ (Kindersley 1938: 34).

It must be borne in mind that for many of these items parallel forms exist in Indian English. That is, the form that is common in standardised Inner Circle varieties of English is also found in modern Indian English, alongside the form that is reportedly peculiar to Indian English. In addition, the standardised form is often the more frequent one. For example, *preside over* is much more common in Indian English than *preside* with direct object, and *dispose of* is more common than *dispose off*. However, this does not necessarily mean that the uncommon form is universally deprecated or viewed as basilectal in Indian English. Where there are two variants of a certain linguistic feature, one is generally more common than the other, but that fact in itself says nothing about the status of the terms in the language. For example, it is more common to ask ‘Can you do it?’ than ‘Are you able to do it?’ but neither form is preferable, both are acceptable in standardised varieties of English.

The important point brought to light by the present research is the fact that 77% of the nativised lexical items noted by Kindersley and Goffin have persisted in Indian English since the 1930s.

BORROWINGS

In his introduction, Goffin provides a list of ‘Anglo-Indian vocabulary’ (20) which consists of borrowings from either Indian languages or Portuguese. Many of these terms are found in Yule & Burnell (1886/1903), but their reproduction by Goffin attests to their continued use in the 1930s. Goffin did not supply definitions for these terms, and so three terms, *bas*, *basha* and *mal*, were omitted from the search terms as they could not be precisely identified. The final number of search terms was 40. Of these, only 6 were not found, thus exhibiting an 85% retention rate. The 6 terms not found were *bandy* ‘a type of horse-drawn carriage’, *chell* ‘to go’ (now replaced by *chullo*, though generally only in code-switching situations), *dustoor* ‘a commission or customs fee’, *hazri* ‘breakfast’, *poochee* ‘an insect’² and *tikka gharry* ‘a hired carriage’. The large-scale replacement of horse traffic with automobiles in India explains the loss of *bandy* and *tikka gharry*. Of the words that have stood the test of time, some salient examples are *almira* ‘a wardrobe’, *baksheesh* ‘a gratuity’, *godown* ‘a warehouse’, *tamasha* ‘a spectacle’ and *tiffin* ‘lunch; a package meal’. Others terms listed by Goffin have now become part of core English in most if not all varieties: *bungalow*, *compound*, *cot*, *jungle* and *verandah*. However, the precise meaning of these, especially *bungalow* and *jungle*, in Indian English may differ from that in other varieties. The slang term *cushy* dates from the early twentieth century and is quite common in present informal Indian English, whereas *Blighty*, of similar age, is less common and usually only found in contexts discussing colonial attitudes.

FREQUENCY

There were a total of 31 words or expressions which Goffin and Kindersley commented on in terms of their frequency, and it was this category where their statements least matched the present state of Indian English. All 31 terms were found to be still present in Indian English, and to occur in other varieties of English as well, but for the most part the frequencies claimed by the glossarists did not match with those of present-day Indian English. A total of 16 terms were labelled clichés by Goffin and Kindersley, a number of which would now be regarded as relatively unremarkable expressions, such as *change of heart*, *each and every*, and *utter dismay*. Only a few of Goffin’s and Kindersley’s terms seemed to have greater currency in Indian English than other varieties, in particular, the

word *thrice*, and the expressions *do the needful* and *make or mar*. That Indian English favours *thrice* over *three times* is well documented (Muthiah 1991: 153; Nihalani et al. 2004: 179), as is the continued nominal use of *needful* (Muthiah: 64; Mehrotra 2003: 23-24). Goffin and Kindersley were writing during the struggle for Independence and a number of their ‘clichés’ were common expressions in the newspapers of the day: a *Himalayan blunder* was ‘a large mistake’, asserted to be a coinage of Gandhi (Goffin 1934: 31), *dumb millions* referred to the voiceless masses, and *council entry* to the plan by swarajists to become elected to colonial government councils and thus subvert their workings from inside. These terms can now be found in reprinted Indian English texts of the era or current historical texts relating to the Independence movement, but are of no especially high frequency. Another political term of this era, *nation-building*, is now common in many varieties of English, not only Indian.

Goffin and Kindersley also call attention to words that in Indian English were far more common than a synonymous term. Kindersley claimed that the word *sick* is ‘used almost to exclusion of *ill*’ (33), and Goffin claimed that *lady* and not *woman* ‘remains the feminine of *man*’ (32). Other pairs (with the term claimed to be more frequent in Indian English first) are: *belly* / *stomach*; *ox* / *bullock*; *serpent* / *snake*; *thankful* / *grateful*; and *Xmas* / *Christmas*. For all of these pairs the reverse frequency is the case today. For instance, in the *TOI* data, *ox* appears 10 times and *bullock* 91 times, *Xmas* appears only 8 times while there are 489 tokens of *Christmas*, and *serpent* appears 13 times against 293 instances of *snake*. In addition, none of the purportedly more common terms of these pairs appear to be especially frequent in modern Indian English. Overall, Goffin and Kindersley’s assertions concerning the frequency of various items of Indian English lexis shows the least stability over time. Of the 31 terms examined, only 4 could be determined with any certainty as still being more frequent in Indian English (13%).

NEOLOGISMS

The nativisation of English in India has resulted in the creation of many new coinages or neologisms. A total of 21 neologisms were recorded by Goffin and Kindersley. Of these, only 6 terms could not be located in modern Indian English texts. This amounts to a 71% retention rate from the 1930s to the present for this category. Neologisms that have withstood the test of time include *all-Indian*, *Anglo-Indian* (as noun and adjective), *babu English* and *babu-ism* ‘an item of babu English’, *bazaar notebook*, a type of cheap, locally made educational text, *cousin brother* ‘a male cousin’, and *co-son-in-law* ‘a wife’s sister’s husband’. As an adjective *Anglo-Indian*, dating from 1787 (Gilchrist: v), originally referred

to anything that incorporated both English and Indian aspects. As a noun, it was first used to refer to the British living in colonial India (*Annual Review* 1805: 429), but later began to be applied to people of mixed British and Indian parentage. Goffin notes that in 1911 ‘the Government of India decided to substitute “Anglo-Indian” for “Eurasian” as the official term for those of mixed descent’ (1934: 21), though this meaning is much older than 1911 (e.g. Malcolm 1826: 248). This last meaning is the most common noun sense in modern Indian English, but all three usages still have some currency. Also surviving across the decades is the transitive verb *by-heart* ‘to learn something by heart’ (see Muthiah 1991: 42; Sengupta 1991: 1440).

Terms that were recorded by Goffin and Kindersley for which no current examples could be located were: *all-in-all with* ‘on the closest terms with’; *in the name of* ‘in favour of’ (referring to business transactions); *in tow with* ‘carrying on a sexual intrigue with’ and *kickslaps* ‘kicks and blows’. Goffin also records *this-all* and *you-all* as ‘commonly heard’ (26). Neither of these pronominal compounds was found in current sources. Finally, in a footnote Goffin states that ‘*Wog* is a curious modern Anglo-Indian word that seems to be increasingly used’ (21).³ The earliest evidence notes that it was used by British soldiers in the First World War to denote soldiers of Indian regiments (James 1921: 188-189). However, further evidence for its use to describe Indians is sparse (Bowen 1929: 153; Cardew 1935: 79), and the term appears to have quickly been transplanted to the Middle East where it was used to refer to people of Arabic origin, and, less specifically, as a generalised term of disrespect for any non-white (Norden 1928: ii; Baker 1941: 82; Partridge 1970: 1515). Today *wog* has wide currency in British (Dalzell & Victor 2008: 704) and Australian English (Lambert 2004: 217). *Wog* was largely absent from modern Indian English sources, with the few tokens found referring to British usage and attitudes towards Indians. The absence of *wog* in modern Indian English is understandable as the word remains to this day a derogatory term used by white people to refer to people with darker skin colour.

CONNOTATION

Kindersley and Goffin record nine terms used in both Indian and British English but which carried a different connotation in Indian English. Of these, seven were found in modern Indian English sources, giving a retention rate of 78%. Goffin states that

the Indian is liable to use certain well-known phrases, which to an Englishman almost invariably carry some ironical connotation (suggested by tone of speech, but carried over by frequency of usage to the written language) in their simple

literal sense. Of a beautiful view, for instance, you will often hear him exclaim, ‘This is all very fine!’ [...] Or he will say, ‘You can do what you like’, with no idea in his mind that his language sounds defiant; he merely offers you a free hand. (Goffin 1934: 27)

The phrase *this is all very fine* is used in British English to mean that something is fine only to a certain extent, and is frequently followed by a *but*-clause introducing a reason why everything is actually not all right. This is also the common use in modern Indian English, however, there is some modern evidence of the phrase (*something*) *is all very fine* used merely to describe something as being perfectly all right, as Goffin claimed for the 1930s. In contrast, no evidence could be found for the expression *you can do what you like* used to offer a free hand. Kindersley noted a number of other expressions that differed in terms of connotation, including *nearly* meaning ‘approximately, without sense of falling short’ (32); *no doubt*, ‘undoubtedly (without usual watered-down and often concessive sense of the phrase)’ (32); *rascal* meaning a ‘real bad character, low-class fellow (without playful or semi-indulgent sense)’ (33); and *so-called* ‘used literally, without ironical sense’ (34). There is evidence for all of these usages in modern Indian English. Another expression that Kindersley noted was *dam cheap* meaning ‘very cheap’ which he claimed was ‘[u]sed even on formal occasions’ (30).⁴ The collocation dates from the nineteenth-century in Indian English (e.g. Kennedy 1887: 305). In British English *dam cheap* (or *damn cheap*, the spelling has no semantic significance) is completely informal, however, there is evidence that the level of informality in Indian English is not so great, with one example in the *TOI* data, another from the official report of the Rajya Sabha *Parliamentary Debates* (1988: 219), and another from a modern Hindi-English dictionary where the Hindi expression दमड़ी के तीन (*damṛī ke tīn*) is defined as ‘damn cheap, of no worth’ (Bahri 2010: 804).

ARCHAISMS

Goffin, but not Kindersley, remarks that a number of expressions in Indian English result from the preservation of terms that were no longer current in British English of the 1930s, a phenomenon formerly known by the deprecating term ‘colonial lag’. Görlach considers that ‘the term and the phenomenon described by it are largely myths as far as the hard linguistic facts of language varieties of English are concerned’ (1987: 105), and also stresses that ‘retention is only a small and rather unimportant category in language development’ (94-95). Goffin describes 11 terms as archaisms. Two of these are present in current Indian English but obsolete, or at least obsolescent, in British English: *backside* ‘the

back part or rear of a building or premises' and the phrase *twice or thrice*. *Backside* in particular has gained notice (Muthiah 1991: 30; Sengupta 1991: 1435; Nihalani et al. 2004: 27) because its usual meaning in other varieties of English is to refer to the buttocks, lending itself to misconstrual either genuine or deliberate (e.g. John's book on Indian English entitled *Entry from Backside Only* (2007)). *Backside* also has the anatomical meaning in Indian English, but misconstrual does not occur as context generally provides sufficient information for sense differentiation, in the same way that *butt*, meaning both buttocks and the end of a cigarette, causes no confusion in normal English usage.

The other terms listed by Goffin as archaisms are not obsolete or even particularly archaic in British English, and presumably were not so in Goffin's time notwithstanding his claims to the contrary. Goffin claimed that '[j]okes are still "cracked" in Indian English; figures still "cut"' (32), and described as old-fashioned the word *place* meaning 'residence' (21). These are not archaisms, and all are attested to in both modern British and Indian English sources. The terms *parts* meaning talents is today restricted to the phrase *a person of many parts*, in both British and Indian English. Goffin claimed that an 'Englishman to-day would perhaps hesitate to write this sentence (which is quite unambiguous in Indian English): "It was not till the trial-scene that Portia displayed her parts"' (32). This may have been quite unambiguous in Indian English in the 1930s, but that is no longer the case. Finally, the phrase *holus bolus* is not archaic in British English as Goffin claimed, but its occurrence in modern Indian English is very limited, if it occurs at all (it does not occur in the *TOI* data).

Only two terms listed as archaisms by Goffin are actually archaic in British English, and both occur in present-day Indian English. A sample size of two is not sufficient for generalisations to be made, yet, it is clear that the pressure of exonymativity has not stopped the continued use of these two terms in Indian English.

ABBREVIATIONS

Indian English is well-known for its high level of acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations, many of which are obscure to outsiders (Sailaja 2009: 82-83; Sedlatschek 2009: 87). Goffin makes light of this

Any Anglo-Indian or English-educated Indian could readily construe (in fact he would scarcely find it odd) a letter which read like this: 'H.E.'s P.A. has written D.O. to the A.S.P. about the question of T.A.'s. The D.C. himself will visit the S.D.O.P.W.D. to-day at 10 a.m. S.T.' (Goffin 1934: 31)

The initialisms here are, in order of appearance, *H.E.* his excellency, *P.A.* personal assistant, *D.O.* a demi-official (letter), *A.S.P.* Assistant Superintendent of Police, *T.A.* travelling allowance, *D.C.* district commissioner, *S.D.O.P.W.D.* sub-divisional office, Public Works Department, and *S.T.* standard time. Although it may appear that Goffin is exaggerating, such accumulations of initialisms were not uncommon and the case is similar today, as per this example from the *TOI* data:

At the time of filing this report, the DC, SSP, SDM, ADC, SP (city) and many senior administration and police officials were visiting the victims' families. *Times of India*, 27 Aug 2002.⁵

Not only has the proclivity for this style of abbreviation persisted in Indian English from the 1930s to the present, the actual examples Goffin adduces also show stability over time. Of the nine initialisms listed by Goffin (separating out *S.D.O.* and *P.W.D.*), eight are still in use in modern Indian English. This, of course, implies that the terms they represent are also still in use. The only change has been that *S.T.* has been replaced by *IST*, for Indian Standard Time, and that there has also been a stylistic change in favour of dropping the periods from such abbreviations, as in other varieties of English. The sample of abbreviations here argues for long-term systemic stability overall with respect to this feature of Indian English.

SPELLING

Neither Goffin nor Kindersley had much to say about the orthography of 1930s Indian English. Goffin noted that the word *bazaar* 'is often spelt "bajar"' (27), though no evidence of this spelling could be located, and the forms *bazar* and *bazaar* are normal in modern Indian English texts. Goffin also recorded *paisha* as variant of *paisa* (21), but this was absent from modern sources. Kindersley stated that *genealogy* was misspelt *geneology* in Indian English. This spelling is found in modern Indian English texts, but it is not common (zero tokens in the *TOI* data). However, it also appears with low frequency in other varieties of English and does not appear to have any greater frequency in Indian English than elsewhere. Two orthographical conventions that are still current in Indian English were identified by Kindersley, namely, spelling *intact* as two words, *in tact*, and spelling *in spite of* as *inspite of*. These are not exclusive to Indian English, but are very frequent there. In the *TOI* data, *in spite* appears 551 times and *inspite* 107 times (19%), while *intact* appears 237 times and *in tact* 12 times (5%). I have traced *inspite* as far back as 1867 in Indian English (Sircar: 287), but Kindersley claims to have 'traced this form in a copy of an unpublished letter taken by an Indian clerk at Madras about 1795' (31). *Inspite* is also recorded by

Mehrotra (1998: 71). Neither form is listed as a historical form in the *OED*. In total, only five orthographical variants were discussed in the two glossaries, of which, two were no longer used and three have remained in place since the 1930s. However, these numbers are too low to enable the detection of any trends. Most commentaries on Indian English discuss orthography either very briefly, or not at all (e.g. Whitworth 1907; Nihalani et al. 2004; Yadurajan 2001). Lambert (2012: 301-302) has documented the persistence of the form *upto* in Indian English from the 1900s to present, and the evidence of Goffin and Kindersley suggests that there are other orthographical variants that are worthy of attention.

CONCLUSION

This study compared a selection of lexical items identified as salient examples of Indian English of the 1930s against modern sources in order to assess the level of diachronic stability of this important variety of English. The overall retention rate of 68% indicates a robust constancy of the linguistic features investigated. A high level of stability was indicated for general lexical items, borrowings, neologisms, and the use of abbreviations, as well as the abbreviations themselves. These features have remained in place in the face of the exonormative stance of corrective literature, educationalists, and language purists, who have long evinced a disapproval of local innovations, viewing them as language ‘abuses’. The results of this study argue for a greater endonormativity in Indian English than has hitherto been recognised. At the same time, there is still much work to be done to more accurately gauge this diachronic stability and to construct a history of Indian English comparable to the historical accounts, especially lexicographical, of other major varieties of English. The production of historical dictionaries of Indian English would not only entail such diachronic research but also present the results. At present, lexicographical work on Indian English has not improved much since colonial times, in fact, if anything, there appears to have been a regression (see Lambert 2012). Modern lexicons do not take a diachronic approach, and there is no modern equivalent of Yule & Burnell’s classic study of the variety (1886, revised 1903). The *OED* covers a number of Indian English terms utilising a diachronic approach, however, overall this constitutes a limited selection of Indian English. An in-depth coverage of Indian English is clearly not considered part of the remit of the *OED*. For example, of 14 verb senses found in the present research to be current in Indian English, the *OED* records only four, and of 15 neologisms, only eight are in the *OED*. More importantly, even when terms are recorded in the *OED*, they are often defined in terms of British English. For example, the expression *your good self* is a common polite form of address in Indian English, but it is recorded in the *OED* only as ‘a

commercial form of polite address or reference' based entirely on British English evidence (dated from 1923 to 1967). The expression has nothing to do with commerce in Indian English, and is recorded much earlier in Indian sources (e.g. Martin 1841: 242; W. c.1890: 38). Meanwhile, the *OED*'s entry for *abuse*, recently revised (in December 2011), labels the countable sense 'a verbal insult' as being used only 'formerly', with citations from 1616, 1687 and 1759. Unlike the *OED*, a dictionary that did concern itself with Indian English *abuses* would be a major contribution to the study of Indian English.

Limitations of the present research include the fact that although the findings are based on a relatively ample set of terms (207), sample sizes for most of the individual categories were not large enough to allow any in-depth statistical analysis. Also, it must be remembered that claims made by Kindersley and Goffin were impressionistic, as opposed to being based on modern linguistic data collection and analysis methods. This is especially pertinent for the category of frequency where the weakest stability was observed. The frequency of the Indian English forms discussed here, how that frequency may have changed over time, and how such terms are viewed in India, are important questions for determining their contribution to a potential norm for Indian English, but answering such questions is beyond the scope of the present paper. The provision of such assessments would depend on large-scale diachronic corpora which have yet to be constructed for Indian English. Nevertheless, the overall results of the present research provide a clear picture, and the method used affords an example of the type of research that can effectively address Saleemi's concern that many of the features claimed to be representative of varietal Englishes are transitory, peripheral or nonce formations. It goes without saying that this type of research could be conducted on Indian English for any range of periods. The present research has uncovered a number of salient items that have been part of Indian English since the 1930s, and in some cases since the nineteenth-century, and no doubt some terms have even longer histories. It also goes without saying that similar research could be productively conducted for any variety of English provided there is sufficient historical data to work with.

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NOTES

- ¹ Smith-Pearse, *English Errors in Indian Schools* (1934, 1938 1939, 1963), retitled *The English Errors of Indian Students* (1968). The text has remained unchanged from 1968 until 2000 (the nineteenth impression).
- ² This meaning is the most likely one intended (see Kerr 1873: 148; Steuart 1905: 68), but Brown (1852: 92) records *poochee* meaning ‘responsibility’ from Marathi. In any case, the form *poochee* (or variant spellings) was not located in modern Indian English in any sense.
- ³ Goffin also provides the earliest evidence of the explanation that *wog* is an acronym of ‘westernized oriental gentleman’ (1934: 21), though he offers the alternative suggestion that *wog* is ‘a shortened form of “gollywog”’ (21). The latter etymology has the most supporting evidence, with a number of sources citing British use of the word *golliwog* to refer to non-whites (e.g. Sladen 1911: 359; Briggs 1918: 76) antedating the first appearance of the term *wog* (James 1921: 188).
- ⁴ The spelling of *dam* without the final ‘n’ is perhaps influenced by the etymological conjecture that the phrase *I don’t give a damn* was originally a reference to the *dam*, an Indian coin of small value. This etymology was first put forward by Grose (1785: 48) and later promoted by Yule & Burnell (1886: 227-228, 1903: 293-294). Otherwise, it may be a euphemistic spelling.
- ⁵ Here, *DC* = District Commissioner; *SSP* = Senior Superintendent of Police; *SDM* = Sub-Divisional Magistrate; *ADC* = Additional District Commissioner; and *SP* = Superintendent of Police.

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