

CHAPTER - I

**SOME IMPORTANT SEGMENTAL AND SUPRA-
SEGEMENTAL FEATURES OF INDIAN ENGLISH
(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WEAK FORMS)**

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Some Important Segmental And Supra- Segmental Features Of Indian English (With Special Reference to Weak Forms)

So many linguists and scholars have worked in the area of how phonetic features of Indian English are different from British English. There is a variety which is called E. I. E. (Educated Indian English) There are regional varieties of English. Prof. R.K.Bansal and J.B. Harrison, Paroo Nihalani, Prof. Tongue and Priya Hosali and Prof T. Balausubramanian have contributed a great deal to the study of phonetic features of Indian English. They have also mentioned the segmental and supra-segmental features. Their Findings have been very useful for those who wish to study some of the features of Indian English. So we are also indebted to them for their findings as our hypothesis is based on their findings. Let us have a look at their findings one by one.

1. Segmental Features of Indian English.

1.1 - R.K. Bansal and J.B. Harrison : 'Spoken English for India :A Manual of Speech and Phonetics' R.K.Bansal and Harrison describe the features of Indian English in detail.

1.1.1 - Vowels in Indian English.

Compared with the twenty Vowel system of British Received Pronunciation (R.P. here after) Educated Indian English has a

system of 11 pure vowels and 6 glides. They are as following

/ i: / as in seat / si:t /
/ I / as in sit / sIt /
/ e: / as in rate / re:t /
/ ɛ / as in bed / bɛd /
/ ʌ / as in mad / mɪd /
/ ɑ: / as in car / kɑ:r /
/ ɒ / as in cot / kɒt /
all / ɒl /
horse / hɔ:rs /
/ o: / as in home / ho:m /
force / fo:rs /
/ ʊ / as in cook / kʊk /
/ u: / as in rule / ru:l /
cube / kju:b /
/ ə / as in bus / bʌs /
bird / bɜ:d /
about / əbaʊt /

1.1.2 - Vowel Glides :

/ dI / as in kite / kaɪt /
/ oɛ / as in boil / boɪl /
/ ɔʊ / as in house / haʊs /
/ Iə / as in cheer / tʃɪə /
/ eə / as in air / eə /
/ ʊə / as in poor / pʊə /

1.1.3 - Difference Between the Vowel System of British R.P. and Indian English.

The important differences between the vowel system of British R.P. and Indian English are as follows :-

- i) Indian English has only one phoneme /ə/ corresponding to R.P. /ʌ/ , /ə:/ and /ə/ .
- ii) Indian English has one phoneme /ɒ/ corresponding to R.P. /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/ .
- iii) Indian English has monophthongs /e:/ and /o:/ instead of R.P. /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 differs from that of in R.P.

For Example - In an unaccented syllable, We can observe that weak vowel (like /ə/ , /ɪ/ or /ʊ/) is used. But in Indian English there is a tendency of using the vowel indicated by the spelling.

1.1.4 - Consonants in Indian English :

According to R.K. Bansal and J.B. Harrison Indian English differs from British R.P. in respect of the following.

- i) /t/ , /d/ are sometimes retroflex [ʈ] , [ɖ] .
- ii) /tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/ are articulated with tongue tip down.
- iii) /v/ , /w/ are replaced by one phoneme [ʋ] which is realised as frictionless labio dental [ʋ] or weakly rounded [w]

iv) /θ, ʒ/ are replaced by plosives /t^h, d^h/.

1.2 - Nihalani, Tongue and Hosali : ' Indian and British English :- A Handbook of Usage and Pronunciation (1979)

In this pedagogical work the authors begin with a concept of 'Educated Indian English.' They have tried to find out a fitting model of pronunciation for Indians. A synthetic model consisting of both indigenous and native English elements is proposed. This book gives as the features of sounds spoken by Indian speakers and the use of the alternatives by them for difficult R.P. sounds such as /e:/ and /ɔ:/ for R.P. /eɪ/ and /əʊ/.

This model gives us the phonological essentials of standard English which is called 'Educated Indian English'. The authors firmly believe that there is an educated Indian pronunciation. It differs from R.P. in some respects, they have made compromise with certain sounds on the basis of two criteria. One is national and international intelligibility and another is attainability in the actual teaching situation. But they have insisted that it is essential for Indian speakers to adopt the features of stress, rhythm and intonation

The following is a list of vowels in EIE according to them.

1.2.1 - Monophthongs

/ i: / as in seat /si:t /
/ I / as in sit /sɪt /
/ e: / as in say /se:/ /
/ e / as in cottage /kɒtɪdʒ /
/ ɛ / as in set /sɛt /

/ ɜ / as in sad / sɜd /
 / d: / as in part / pɑ:rt /
 / ɒ / as in cot, / kɒt /
 caught / kɒt /
 / ʊ / as in foot / fʊt /
 / u: / as in food / fu:d /
 / ə / as in bird, / bɜ:rd /
 about / əbɑ:ʊt /
 / o: / as in coat / ko:t /

1.2.2 - Diphthongs

/ dɪ / as in kite / kaɪt /
 / dʊ / as in house / haʊs /
 / ɔɪ / as in toil / toɪl /
 / ɪə / as in here / hɪə /
 / eə / as in air / eə /
 / və / as in poor / pʊə /

1.2.3 - Differences Between the Vowel System of R.P. and EIE

i) Indian English has monophthongs /e:/ and /o:/ instead of R.P. diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/.

ii) There are three central vowels in R.P. /ʌ/, /ɔ:/ and /ə/. EIE only have one corresponding vowel /ə/.

iii) R.P. vowels /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/ have only one corresponding vowel /ɒ/ in Educated Indian English.

iv) E. I. E. is a rhotic accent, that is to say 'r' is pronounced where ever it occurs, unlike R.P. where post

vocalic 'r' is not pronounced.

v) In R.P., the neutral vowel never occurs in a stressed syllable where as in E I E it does.

For Example - mother /'mʌd̩ə/

1.2.4 - Differences Between the Consonant System of R.P. and E. I. E.

i) /v/ and /w/ are often replaced by sound /ʋ/ in E.I.E.

ii) Sometimes alveolar sounds /t, d/ of R.P. are retroflexed.

iii) /tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/ are articulated with tongue tip down and the blade of the tongue making an alveolar or post alveolar contact. In R.P. it is the tip and not the blade.

iv) Majority of Indian speakers of English do not use /ʒ/. As a result, the distinction between the voiceless palato alveolar /ʃ/ and its voiced counterpart /ʒ/ is lost.

v) The fricatives /θ, ð/ are replaced by plosives /t^h, d^h/ in E I E .

The differences between R.P. and E I E at the segmental level are marginal from the point of view of intelligibility and could be easily learned.

1.2.5 - Stress

There are so many Indian speakers to whom the phenomenon of stress has become a problem. Words which are accented in R.P. are often uttered as unaccented in I.E. This presents the problem of intelligibility. However they grant that G.I.E. and

R.P. forms can be regarded as the two extremes of a continuum which covers the complete range of acceptability according to the criteria established, namely intelligibility at the national and international level. Many speakers of English in India may find themselves to be somewhere in between these two extremes. This would mean that their English would be understood anywhere in the world but their pronunciation would probably identify them as Indians.

1.3 - T. Balasubramanian - 'A Textbook of English Phonetics for Indian Students' (1981)

In the book, T. Balasubramanian has given the concept of General Indian English (G.I.E.) and also discussed some of its features. GIE is a variety of English spoken by Educated Indians. It is free from regional features. It describes the phonological features of a variety of English, so it is descriptive. It is prescribed at the C I E F L to Indian speakers of English as a model of Spoken English to emulate so it is prescriptive. This G I E system concentrates on the common phonological features of several varieties of Indian English together removing certain gross regional features. This is a generalised as well as standardised model for the use of Indian speakers

Let us look at the vowel and consonant system of GIE

1.3.1 - The Vowel System of GIE

G I E has a vowel system consisting of 11 pure vowels and 6. diphthongs

Pure Vowels/ Monophthong

/ i: /	as	in	beat	/ bi:t /
/ I /	as	in	big	/ bI g /
/ e: /	as	in	gate	/ ge:t /
/ E /	as	in	get	/ gEt /
/ x /	as	in	bat	/ bxt /
/ d: /	as	in	past	/ pd:st /
/ ɒ /	as	in	cot,	/ kɒt /
			caught	/ kɔ:t /
/ ɔ: /	as	in	coat	/ kɔ:t /
/ ʊ /	as	in	put	/ pʊt /
/ u: /	as	in	fool	/ fu:l /
/ ə /	as	in	cut,	/ kət /
			hurt,	/ hɜ:t /
			about	/ əbaʊt /

Diphthongs

/ dI /	as	in	bite	/ baɪt /
/ ɔI /	as	in	oil	/ ɔɪ /
/ ɔʊ /	as	in	cow	/ kaʊ /
/ Iə /	as	in	hear	/ hɪə /
/ ʊə /	as	in	poor	/ pʊə /
/ eə /	as	in	there	/ θeə /

1.3.2 - Difference Between the Vowel Systems of R.P. and GIE

i) As against R.P. /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/ GIE has only one phoneme /ɒ/. Thus in G I E the distinction between cot and caught has

been lost.

ii) There are /ə:/, /ʌ/ and /ɔ/ in R.P., where as G I E has only one phoneme /ɔ/.

iii) G I E has two pure vowels and monophongs /e:/ and /o:/ in place of R.P. diphthongs /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ respectively.

iv) G I E has closer and less centralized /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ than their R.P. counterparts.

v) The G I E vowel in words like bet, bed, etc is more open than its R.P. counterpart. (That is why G I E vowel is symbolized /ɛ/.)

1.3.3 - The Consonant System of G I E

There are 24 consonants in R.P. but G I E has only 23 consonants. There are differences between G I E and R.P. consonant systems which can be mentioned as below.

i) G.I.E. has dental plosive /d_n/ and /t_n/ instead of R.P. dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/.

ii) G.I.E. has retroflex plosives [ɖ] and [ɗ] instead of R.P. alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/.

iii) R.P. has two phonemes /w/ and /v/. But GIE can replace /v/ to both. Indians, we can say, do not differentiate between pairs like wine vine, vest and west etc.

Apart from these differences in the consonant system, there are certain phonetic differences between R.P. and G.I.E. These are listed below.

i) In G.I.E, voiceless plosives are unaspirated in

all positions where as in R.P. they are aspirated. When they occur initially in stressed syllables.

ii) In G.I.E /ŋ/ does not occur word-finally. Since word final /h/ is represented by the letters ng. Most Indians introduce /g/ after /ŋ/. In other words, words like ring, sing, young are pronounced with final /ŋg/.

iii) In G.I.E /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are palatal affricates. But in R.P. they are not palato alveolar affricates.

iv) In R.P. /r/ has different phonetic realizations where as in G I E /r/ is invariably a rolled [r] or a [ɾ] tap. Also, most Indians pronounce /r/ in all positions i.e where ever the /r/ is found in spelling.

v) In G.I.E there is one to one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. Most Indians tend to pronounce words with medial double consonant letters with the consonant in question considerably prolonged. For example, words like upper, letter, summer, running, Pully etc. with a prolonged /pp/, /tt/, /mm/, /nn/, /ll/ respectively.

T. Balasubramanian opines that many of the features of G I E do not affect intelligibility within India.

1.4 Summary

Let us compare the three scholars' findings :

Bansal (E.I.E.)	Nihalani et al(I.E.)	T. Balasubramanian
<u>Vowels</u> - 11+6 =17 .	<u>Vowels</u> - 12+6= 18 /e/ -additional ɒɪ instead of Bansal's oɛ .	<u>Vowels</u> -11+6= 17 agrees with Bansal in all respects including oɛ .
<u>Consonants</u> - 23 v and w replaced by ʋ .	<u>Consonants</u> - 22 ʒ missing ʋ in stead of v and w .	<u>Consonants</u> - 23 Same as Bansal's .

It is clear from the above comparative table that most of I.E segmental phonemes posited by these three scholars are the same. There are, however, some marginal differences as follows.

- i) The phoneme inventories of Bansal and Balasubramanian are identical but according to Nihalani et al there are 18 vowels in I.E. They give one more pure vowel /e/ which the other two scholars do not.
- ii) Nihalani et al do not have the diphthong |oɛ| instead of RP |ɒɪ| in their inventory.
- iii) Nihalani et al's inventory of consonants has only 22 consonants as against Bansal and Balasubramanian's 23. According to them the voiced palato alveolar fricative |ʒ| does not exist in I.E.

1.5 - Supra - Segmental features -

1.5.1 - Accented and Unaccented Words

Words do not occur singly, they come in groups as they are spoken continuously. The words are combined in sentences. Some words are accented and some words are unaccented. Some words are said with greater force and some words are pronounced more weakly. The words which are pronounced with greater force are called 'strong forms' or 'stressed words.' If a word has two or more than two syllables, then the prominent syllable is stressed. In the same way, some words always stand out from the rest in an utterance comprising two or more words.

Some words are not generally stressed if they are purely grammatical words like pronoun (I, we, he, his, him, she, her, it, then, they, us) prepositions (to, from, at, for, of, by etc) articles (a, an, the, some) conjunctions (and, or, but, yet, although etc) auxiliaries (will, would, shall, should, can, could, do, does, did, has, have, had, was, am, is be, are, may, must). The words usually stressed are the content words like. Main Verbs (come, eat, play etc) Nouns (pen, Raju, Taj Mahal, etc) Adjectives - (beautiful, golden, tall etc.) and Adverbs (fast, quite, swiftly etc.) and the like. It means that the structural words are not stressed and the content words are generally stressed.

For Example

- i) He used to come on sundays.
// i: 'ju:zd tə 'kʌm ɒn 'sʌndeɪz //

Here the stress is on 'used' (M.V.), 'come' (M.V.) and 'sundays'

(N.)

ii) I've found my book

// dɪv 'fʌvnd maɪ 'bʊk/

Here the stress is on 'found'(M.V) and 'book'(N). So words which are accented are 'content' words. These words are more important than others in conveying the meaning of the sentences. Words which are unaccented are 'formal' or 'grammatical'. Words which perform grammatical functions rather than carrying meaning. These unaccented syllables are pronounced rapidly when several of them come together between accented syllables. This means, these unaccented syllables are considerably weakened. The use of the 'weakened' pronunciations or 'Weak Forms' is therefore very important.

The important thing from the learner's point of view is to know which words are to be accented in the sentence. The first point to make is that the syllables of words which receive primary accent when the word is pronounced in isolation are 'potentially' those which will receive the accent when the word occurs in a sentence. Thus in a two syllable word 'about' /ə'baʊt/, the first syllable is unaccented and the second accented. When 'about' is found in connected speech, the first syllable could not be accented, and the second might or might not be, depending on the rhythmic balance of the sentence and the relative importance ascribed by the speaker to its different semantic constituents. In the sentence, 'They are coming about nine' R.P. // ðeɪ ə'kʌmɪŋ əbaʊt 'naɪn // the second syllable of 'about' is not accented because the most important

parts of the sentence from the point of view of meaning are 'coming' and the 'time at which they are coming.' In the sentence, 'she don't know what she's about' R.P. // ʃɪ dɒznt 'nəv wɒt ʃi:z ə'baʊt //

The second syllable of 'about' receives primary (or tonic) accent, because the word is semantically important, because it occupies a position in the sentence, where, given the position of the other two strong syllables, another strong syllable would become necessary because of the rhythm of the sentence as a whole. Accent at the level of the sentence is therefore much freer than in the word. However the content words like Nouns, Main Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs, Demonstrative and Interrogative Pronouns receive accent in the sentence. The tonic accent is indicated by oblique bar pointing down word.(\)

For Example - He came late to the office.

// i: 'keɪm 'leɪt tə ðə ɔfɪs //

Words that are normally accented in native English are sometimes left unaccented in Indian English. This is one reason why Indian English is sometimes unintelligible to native English speakers.

1.5.2 - Weak forms

This is an important feature of English accentual pattern. The unaccented syllables between the accented syllables tend to become reduced. This reduction is most marked in quick and informal speech. There are roughly 45 words in English which give two or more pronunciations - one 'strong' and one 'weak'. The learning of weak forms is extremely necessary. Many non-native speakers of English generally fail to use this

feature in their speech, especially in relation to native speakers of R.P. Almost all speakers of R.P. use weak forms in their pronunciations.

It must be noticed that all the weak forms are formal or grammatical words. These form words, do, in certain circumstances, retain their strong forms, but generally they are pronounced in their weak forms. We shall now make a list of the circumstances when strong forms are acceptable and when weak forms are used.

<u>Words</u>	<u>Strong Forms</u>	<u>Weak Forms</u>
1) Articles		
i) a	/eɪ/ // dɪ'wɒnt eɪ'pen nɒt'menɪ//	/ə/ // dɪ'wɒnt ə'pen//
ii) an	/ən/ // dɪ 'dɪk ən'xpl nɒt mɪn'gæv//	/ən/ // 'hɜv ən'xpl//
iii) the	/ði:/- before vowels. // ði: 'dɪnts ən ði: 'lykɪz//	/ə/- before consonants. // dɪ kɪld ə mən//
iv) some	/sʌm/- if used as pronoun. // sʌm əv mɑɪ 'tʃɒks//	/səm/- if used as an article. // səm 'men//
2) Pronouns (Except I, we, she - they are always in strong form)		
i) he	/hi:/ // hi: ɪz 'greɪt//	/i:/ // dɪd i: 'wɪn//
ii) him	/hɪm/ // 'gɪv ɪt tə hɪm nɒt hə: //	/ɪm/ // 'gɪv ɪm 'tu: //

<u>Words</u>	<u>Strong Forms</u>	<u>Weak Forms</u>
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iii) his	/hɪz/	/ɪz/
	// hɪz 'pen //	// dɪ 'dɪk ɪz 'pen //

iv) her	/hə:/	/ə:/
	// hə: 'dres //	// 'teɪk ə: 'hæv //

(At the beginning of word groups the forms /hi:, him, hə:, hɪz/ should be used)

2) Pronouns

v) them	/ðəm/	/ðəm/
	// 'ki: ðəm 'nɒt ʌs //	// 'send ðəm bɑ: 'pɔ:st //

vi) us	/ʌs/	/əs/
	// 'ɒt wɜd bi 'i:zɪ fɔ: ʌs //	// i: 'wɒt əs tə'gəʊ //
		ɪs/ - only in <u>'let's'</u>
		// let's 'dʒ: ɪt //

3) Preposition

i) at	/ət/	/ət/
	// 'kʌm ət 'dʒʌst 'ɑ:ftə 'eɪt //	// 'kʌm ət 'wʌns //

ii) for	/fɔ:/	/fə/ - before consonants.
	// 'wɒts ɒl ðə 'hæri fɔ: //	// 'kʌm fə 'ti: //
		/fɔ:/ - before vowels
		// 'kʌm fɔ: ə 'mi: //

iii) of	/ɒv/	/əv/
	// dɪl 'si: 'wɒt ɒl kən 'θɪŋk ɒv //	// ðə 'kɒntrɪ 'stænd //

<u>Words</u>	<u>Strong Forms</u>	<u>Weak Forms</u>
iv) to	/tu: - before vowels and in the final position. // dɪ 'wɒntɪd tu: 'dɪskju: //	tə - before consonants // tə 'steɪ ɔ: tə 'gæv //
v) from	frɒm // ɪts 'dɪfɪkəlt tə 'get əweɪ frɒm //	frɑ:m // dɪ 'sent ɪt frɒm 'lændənɪ //
4) Conjunctions		
i) and	ænd // ænd 'tɒm 'tu: //	ən or n // ju: ən dɪ //
ii) but	bət // bət tu: 'kwɪkɪl //	brɛd n 'bətəl bət // dɪm 'sɔrɪ bət dɪ keɪnt 'help //
iii) as	əz (normally used as a weak form.)	əz // əz 'gʊd əz 'gævld //
iv) than	ðæn (normally used as a weak form.)	ðən // 'beta ðən 'evəl //
v) that	ðæt // ðæt 'mɪn ɪz mɪ dɪ 'freɪnd //	ðət // dɪ 'læt ðət 'gə:l //
5) Auxiliaries		
i) am	əm // əm dɪ veri leɪt //	m - after [ɪ]. // dɪm 'hɪpɪ // əm - elsewhere. // 'wen əm dɪ tə 'bi: 'ðeə //
ii) is	ɪz - after /s, z, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ // 'wɪtʃ ɪz 'raɪt //	s - after /p, t, k, f, θ // 'ɔxts 'faɪn // z - after vowels and vd. consonants. dʒən z 'hɪə //

<u>Words</u>	<u>Strong Forms</u>	<u>Weak Forms</u>
iii) was	/wɒz/ // wɒz dɪ //	/wəz/ // ə 'we ə wəz 'terɪbəl //
iv) are	/ɑː/ // wɜ d: 'stju:dənts //	ə - before consonants. // ə gə:lz ə 'bjʊ:təfl // ər - before vowels. // ə 'men ə 'ŋglɪ //
v) be	/biː/ // iː wɪl 'biː 'ʒeəl //	ɪ bɪ / // 'duː ɪt 'nəv ɪf juː 'wɒnt tə biː 'prɒmpt //
vi) do	duː - before vowels. // duː ɪt 'nəv //	də - before consonants. // 'hæv də juː də //
vii) does	dɒz/ // dɒz hiː //	dəz/ // 'wen dəz ə 'reɪn 'liːv //
viii) has	hæz - Rarely used as a strong form. Generally used as a weak form.	əz - after /s, z, ʒ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ . // ə 'pleɪs əz 'tʃeɪndʒd // s - after /p, t, k, f, θ . // 'dʒɪks 'gɒn // z - elsewhere. // 'dʒɒn z 'biːn 'sɪk //
ix) have	hæv // hæv juː ən 'əpɔɪntmənt //	v - after 'I, we, you, they'. // juː v 'dʌn ɪt // əv - elsewhere. // ə 'men əv 'gɒn //

<u>Words</u>	<u>Strong Forms</u>	<u>Weak Forms</u>
x) had	/hæd/ //hæd'eni wən fəʊnd//	/d/- after 'I, we, you, he, she, they' //dɪd dən ɪt// /əd/- elsewhere. //ʒə 'gɑ:l əd bi:n 'gɒn//
(At the beginning word groups the forms /hæv, hæz, hæd/ should be used. When has, had, have are full verbs they should be always pronounced /hæv, hæz, hæd/ J.D.O. Conner)		
xi) can	/kæn/ //jəs ju: kæn//	/kən/ //hæv kən dɪ 'help//
xii) shall	/ʃæl/ //ʃæl wʊɪ 'gæv//	/ʃəl/ //dɪ ʃɪ 'du: ɪt//
xiii) will	/wɪl/ //wɪl ju: //	///- after 'I, we, you, he, she, they', and consonants except /// //hi: / 'gɪv tɪ// /əl/- after vowels and /// //ɒl 'wɪt//
xiv) would	/wʊd/ //wʊd ju: 'du: ɪt//	/dɪ/- after I, we, you, they, he, she. //dɪd 'du: ɪt// /əd/- elsewhere. // 'dʒɒn əd 'du: ɪt//
xv) must	/mʌst/ //jəs wʊɪ mʌst//	/mʌst/ //dɪ mʌst 'tɪ ɪm//

The weak forms are not always used in Indian English. Sometimes the weak form used is different from that of in R.P.

For Example

- i) 'a' is generally pronounced as / e / .
- ii) 'and' is generally pronounced as / xnd / .
- iii) 'are' is generally pronounced as / d:ɹ / .
- iv) 'for' is generally pronounced as / fɔɹ / .
- v) 'from' is generally pronounced as / frɒm / .
- vi) 'of' is generally pronounced as / ɒf / .
- vii) 'to' is generally pronounced as / tʊ / .
- viii) 'as' is generally pronounced as / ~~ɒ~~ / .
- ix) 'the' is generally pronounced as / d̩ə / .