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“HAPPY B'DAY BHAIYA”. CHARACTERISTICS OF FACEBOOK INDIAN ENGLISH

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to analyse linguistic practices of specifically one group of English Facebook users – the speakers of Indian English. As one of the most thoroughly studied members of the so-called New Englishes group, Indian English is believed to demonstrate a number of characteristic features resulting especially from the prolonged English-Hindi language and culture contact. Following a brief outline of the history and current position of English in India the paper examines in detail characteristic features of Indian English found in the Facebook material collected from fan pages and private messages: changes in spelling and pronunciation of English words, use of abbreviations, characteristic features of nativised Indian English grammar, language errors, as well as some typical sociolinguistic features of that variety of English, notably forms of address, culture-specific elements, and code-switching.

Recent decades have witnessed a particularly heated discussion concerning the spread of English across the world. The variation within a seemingly uniform language has become so great that some linguists (cf. McArthur 1987, Kachru 1988, 1992, Modiano 1999a, 1999b) have considered it necessary to analyse this diversity in greater detail and provided some systems of classification which would make the process of describing various aspects of English easier and more thorough. The best known of these classifications is that offered by Kachru as early as 20 years ago. Kachru's system divides the varieties of English into: 1) areas where English is spoken as the first language (the so called Inner Circle, now by far the smallest of all the categories), countries in which English has remained following the colonial era, and

functions there as the second language mostly (i.e. the Outer Circle), and finally the lands in which English is a growing language of international communication (i.e. the Expanding Circle).

In view of the above it is obvious that the subject of my analysis, i.e. the Indian variety of English will find itself classified in the Outer Circle. English in India has a very rich and long history. It was first brought there as early as 1600 in tandem with the establishment of the East India Company in Calcutta. At first one of a number of European languages brought to India along with traders (i.e. French, Portuguese, Danish and Dutch), it began to establish its ever stronger position as the British, after a series of battles, managed to get rid of the competition on the Indian subcontinent, first weakening the position of the Portuguese in Goa and Bombay in the 17th c., and then gradually winning over their primary rival, the French, in the second half of the 18th c. (Keay 2001, Riddick 2006). The second half of the 18th c. also witnessed the annexation of the Danish and Dutch colonies in India to the British dominion. The East India Company effectively ruled India from 1757 until 1857, the time of the Sepoy Mutiny (or India's First War of Independence), which led to the dissolution of the Company and the British Crown taking over the government of India in 1858, following the Government of India Act. Between 1858 and 1947 India was under the rule of the British Raj either directly or in some parts (the so-called Native States) through local rulers (Riddick 2006). As a result of the union of 1876 the country began to be officially known as the Indian Empire, with Queen Victoria proclaimed the empress of India a year later (Keay 2001).

A natural corollary of British rule of India was the use of the English language from the very beginning. Kachru (1992: 232) enumerates four reasons behind the spread of English not only in India, but also other colonial states: colonial expansion, the urge to gain strategic control in various places in the world, proselytization, and cultural imposition. As a result, “[i]n attaining these non-linguistic goals, the English language became a primary tool of communication, administration, elitism, and, eventually, linguistic control” (Kachru 1992, cf. Kachru 1986). An important step on the road to this linguistic dominance was the introduction of a Minute on Indian Education written by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1835, which established English-language education in India (although it also needs to be added that in 1854 Charles Wood, the President of the Board of Control, allowed the local inhabitants to obtain their education in their native tongues as well) (cf. Kachru 1992, Crystal 2005). The official introduction of the English system of education was, according to Macaulay, the origin of “a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect” (Kachru 1983: 22). Indeed, it has to be said that some proportion of the Indian society – the local elite – supported this move, as “the local elite saw English as a window to the scientific and technological development of the Western world” (Kachru 1992: 232). Through English they also gained access to the great literary traditions of other European languages. As seen today, these developments have no doubt contributed to the powerful, indeed, as some say, imperial position of English in the world in general (cf. Phillipson 1992), and in

India in particular, although that direction was not at all obvious when India regained its independence in 1947. In fact, it was Hindi along with its Devanagari script that the Indian Constitution established as the official language of the Union, although, as clause (2) reads, "[n]otwithstanding anything in clause (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution in 1950, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement". Thus, the use of English after India became an independent state in 1947 (cf. Riddick 2008), was to be short-termed, however, two factors contributed to the emergence of a different scenario. The first issue was the fact that the Constitution allowed for much flexibility in connection with the use of English (e.g. that the Parliament might, after the 15-year period, provide for the use of English), and second, and probably most influential, was the fact that the inhabitants of the southern, Dravidian-speaking part of India strongly resisted the introduction and spread of Hindi as an official language there, primarily on the grounds that no southern language was to be given a similar status in the North (cf. Das Gupta 1970). As a result, in 1963 an Official Languages Act (with the Amendment of 1967) stated what follows:

- (1) Notwithstanding the expiration of the period of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution, the English language may, as from the appointed day, continue to be used in addition to Hindi,
 - a. for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before that day; and
 - b. for the transaction of business in Parliament:

Provided that the English language shall be used for purposes of communication between the Union and a State which has not adopted Hindi as its Official Language

Additionally, the Act provided for the use of English in official communication between a state which has adopted Hindi as the official language and any of the states which have not done so (cf. Dwivendi 1981). This naturally strengthened the position of English in India, which has in fact been growing ever since the regaining of independence (cf. Jenkins 2009). One reason for this is the above-mentioned fact concerning the role of English as a neutral language of inter-state communication. No doubt, what contributed to its ever growing, powerful position was also the gradual establishment of English as a *lingua franca* all over the world, and especially in the countries of the "second diaspora of English", i.e. the countries of the Outer Circle (cf. Kachru 1992, Jenkins 2009), in which the varieties of English are often referred to in literature as *New Englishes* (cf. Platt et al. 1984). No doubt, the expansion of British colonial power, as well as the growth in influence of the USA, were the main factors leading to the English language gaining the position of chief international language it enjoys today (Crystal 2003b). It is not the first international language in the history of the world (cf. e.g. Greek or Latin in the Antiquity – Stockwell 2002), however, its influence has reached an unprecedented

scale mainly due to the development of electronic media, along with radio, TV and cinema (cf. Crystal 2003b, Jenkins 2009). Notably, in the context of interpersonal communication and education the use of English as a lingua franca has raised a number of issues. One of the most important considerations concerns native speakers of English – in view of the fact that so many people in the world have come to own the English language as their second or even first language, some linguists are currently inclined to change their approach as to who is to be considered a native and non-native speaker of English, and some have even proposed alternative terms to be used instead, rather reflecting degree of expertise in the language (cf. Rampton 1990, Seidlhofer 2006, Mesthrie, Bhatt 2008, Jenkins 1996, 2009). This consideration may indeed apply to Indian speakers of English, some of whom may be very proficient indeed, even using English at home as the primary language of socialisation and communication (cf. Jenkins 2009). With this in mind, a corollary becomes obvious, namely the fact that the countries of the Inner Circle are no longer the sole model for the correct use of the English language, and the world of English should be now noted for its pluricentricity (Kachru 1992). Thus, at this point when evaluating the use and correctness of the English language one would need to first make a conscious decision as to whether this language is used in a given context as a foreign language or as a lingua franca. The former is learnt and used as a language of communicating with native speakers of the language, the latter – as a means of communication between people who themselves are native speakers of other languages. Therefore, what may be viewed as an error or marker of language deficit in the context of EFL should be evaluated as a resource, evolution and a marker of difference in the context of ELF (cf. Kirkpatrick 2007, Jenkins 2009).

The above should certainly be borne in mind when discussing characteristic features of Indian English. This variety of English is the best known and most extensively studied example of New Englishes. Similarly to other varieties used in the Outer Circle this language is characterised by being indigenised in terms of adopting words and expressions from the local languages and also nativised, i.e. possessing structural features typical of the native tongues (cf. Platt et al. 1984, Mesthrie 2000). Platt et al. (examples after Platt et al. 1984: 120, 129, Mesthrie 2000: 308) also suggest that, like most other New Englishes, Indian English shares three most characteristic features with them, i.e. the use of copy pronouns (e.g. *Most Indians, they know English*), the use of invariant question tags (viz. *He is going there, isn't it / is it / no?*), as well as double marking of clauses (e.g. *Though the farmer works hard, but he cannot produce enough*). As concerns the more language- and culture-specific features of Indian English, linguists list, among others, the following (after Stockwell 2002: 21, Jenkins 2009: 150–155, Sedlatschek 2009: 197–308, Singh 2010: 415–444), although it must be emphasized that the features below are not necessarily found in the language of all speakers and not on all occasions:

- omission of articles,
- SOV word order, following the Hindi model,
- alternative ways of the comparison of adjective/adverb,
- the use of *only/itself* at the end of the utterance, mostly for emphatic purposes,

- non-standard use of tenses and aspect, with a greater preference for the progressive verb forms as well as a wrong usage of the 3rd person singular verbal ending in, e.g. the plural forms,
- question non-inversion,
- the use of different prepositions than in Standard English, and often, after the model of Hindi, placed in the postposition,
- much greater use of markers of politeness, which is traditionally derived from earlier variants of the language transmitted to local inhabitants by the educated elite, mainly officers (this includes a particularly frequent use of honorifics, often derived from the Hindi model).

Apart from grammar many Indian English speakers, especially those less exposed to Standard English, will also mark their place of origin by certain features of pronunciation. The best known and most visible element is the use of retroflex stops /t/, /d/ formed with the tongue curled back (cf. Mesthrie 2000, Singh 2010). Apart from that a frequent feature is that of mispronouncing /w/ as /v/, and the other way round, and in some parts of India even as /b/ or /bh/ (Pingali 2009, Singh 2010). A feature of Indian pronunciation is also the reduction of diphthongs, notably /ei/ into /e:/, a frequent spelling pronunciation of the cluster <th> as /th/ and at the same time a frequent substitution of /d/ for Standard English /ð/, an insertion of an additional vowel sound in consonant clusters (e.g. *film* would be pronounced as /filam/), and a substitution of /ʃ/ for /s/, especially in Bengal. A characteristic suprasegmental feature of the Hinglish pronunciation is the lack of reduced vowels, which means that every syllable in a word receives some stress (cf. Trudgill, Hannah 2002, Mesthrie, Bhatt 2008, Jenkins 2009, Singh 2010).

Naturally, Indian English as a variety of New English has been heavily indigenised, mainly by taking words over from Hindi and to a lesser degree from other local languages. This is certainly connected with Indian culture, the Hindu, Muslim, and Parsee religions as well as the immediate surroundings, but there are also other, less obviously motivated changes in the vocabulary and the semantics of words. Some classical examples of words which have become generally recognised are, e.g. the numerals *lakh* ('100 thousand') and *c(a)rore* ('10 million'), *yaar* ('man, buddy'), *achcha* ('good'), *chai* ('tea'), *dhobi* ('laundress'), *bhang* ('a milk-based alcoholic drink'), *didi* ('older sister'), *desi* ('native'), etc. To these one needs to add some English-based expressions whose meaning, however, would be hard to arrive at by the native English speaker, e.g. *biodata* ('CV'), *co-brother* ('wife's sister's husband'), *uncle/auntie* ('a respectful form of address used to any older stranger or family acquaintance'), *timepass* ('pastime'), *eve-teasing* ('sexual harassment'), etc. (examples after Stockwell 2002, Sedlatschek 2009, and mine). This group should also contain some popular clipped forms of acronyms, a strategy very much favoured by speakers of Hinglish, e.g. *arbit* ('arbitrary'), *enthu* ('enthusiastic'), *subsi* ('subsidiary'), *POA* ('plan of action'), *JLT* ('just like that'), *FOC* ('free of charge') (examples after Stockwell 2002, Pingali 2009, Sedlatschek 2009, Singh 2010). An additional, and in itself a very important and characteristic feature of Indian

English, which I discuss separately in a different paper (cf. Dąbrowska 2011b) is that of code-switching between Hindi (or other local languages) and English. This phenomenon points to the fact that both tongues are important for their users – Hindi as their native language, a marker of identity, and English, valued for the greater power it gives the users as well as a sense of prestige (cf. Kachru 1992, Dąbrowska 2011a, 2011c).

The subject of this paper, as its title states, is the analysis of the use of Indian English in the context of the Computer Mediated Communication or rather, Computer Mediated Discourse (cf. Herring 2001), and notably the language used by Facebook users. I have selected this type of communication on the assumption that it will generate a lot of valuable examples of fairly spontaneous and therefore very real language samples, which I elaborate on more extensively in another paper (Dąbrowska 2011b, Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012). At first glance seemingly expressed via a primarily written mode, CMD, as discussed by various authors (cf. Baron 2000, 2008, Crystal 2001, Dąbrowska 2000, 2010), in fact combines elements of speech and writing. This is best visible in email, which, as Baron (2000) points out, has a mixed format, being like writing (since email is durable) and like speech (as it is typically unedited), both of which affect the grammar of the messages. In terms of social dynamics Baron suggests that the fact that interlocutors are physically separated encourages personal disclosure and helps structure the conversation on equal terms. The social network, a category to which Facebook belongs, is a more recent development, dating back to 2004 (cf. Baron 2008), but the features mentioned above with regard to email do seem to match Facebook characteristics as well, i.e. the users' physical separation, which in turn encourages personal disclosure, and in terms of the structure – sharing features of speech and writing. Another feature which Baron stresses is the low level of formality that characterises email language and uncontrolled expression of emotions (cf. Baron 2000, after Jenkins 2009: 141), which is very much true of Facebook as well. Moreover, a particularly useful aspect of Facebook in terms of linguistic analysis is the fact that, by being such a popular and democratic network it encourages international participation, which, as my former analysis of Facebook language has shown, encourages interaction in English¹ (cf. Dąbrowska 2011b, Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012). It is therefore particularly useful for studying naturally occurring interaction in both English as a lingua franca and English as a second language. Also, due to some thematic links, notably fan pages, it makes it possible to analyse the language of a certain subset of the audience, which often may be quite specifically identified in terms of language and culture. The age of the users which such social networks attract may also be more precisely defined, thereby contributing to a more detailed analysis of language practices of certain groups (my investigation has, for instance, demonstrated that particularly characteristic

¹ Crystal (2001, 2003b) claims that around ca. 80% of world Internet communication is carried out in English, however, Graddol (2006) demonstrates that the use of English on the Internet has been steadily decreasing (it fell from 85% in 1998 to 68% in 2000).

of Facebook language, and especially the language of Indian Facebook users, is the use of abbreviations).

Thus, as regards the material selected for the present study, it is constituted by a sample of 210 posts collected on Facebook in April 2011. 102 posts came from two fan pages devoted to two famous Hindi movie stars, Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan. Both of them enjoy enormous popularity among Hindi movie audience, which explains the very affectionate and emotion-laden style and content of the posts. The remaining posts were collected from the walls of 20 Hindi-speaking friends and acquaintances of mine, both women and men, whose age covers the range between 20 and 50. Whereas the ages of the post authors on the fan pages are for obvious reasons unknown, and it may only be guessed that these might be teenagers as well as young and middle-aged adults, the knowledge of the age of the authors of the other half of the samples gives us an idea about the CMD writing conventions young adults and middle aged Facebook users rely on.

At the beginning of the analysis it needs to be stated that the material discussed below is not characteristic of every post written by an Indian Facebook user, on the contrary, the overwhelming majority of posts authors write in unabbreviated English in terms of spelling (mainly British, which is taught at schools) and with adherence to grammar. Most of the strategies analysed below can be found primarily, though not exclusively, in the posts of younger Facebook users (i.e. roughly up to the age of 35–40), and they seem to occur more often in posts written by men rather than by women. However, who the posts are addressed to is obviously important – the same person may use a number of non-standard strategies when interacting with their close friends of a similar age group, but when leaving a post on an older person's wall will often follow the rules of grammar and spelling, mostly British, as indicated above, very adequately. It therefore needs to be borne in mind that the linguistic behaviour to be observed in the analysed posts is selective and certainly context-specific. Nevertheless, they represent the possibility of certain changes or strategies which, as it may be assumed on the basis of their frequency, are available in the linguistic repertoire of Indian English speakers.

The analysis of the collected material will be subdivided into a number of categories distilled from the list of Indian English features presented above. It is obvious that in the analysis of written posts features of pronunciation cannot be made prominent, however, as will be demonstrated, one of the categories will in fact allow us to make some comments on the question of sounds as well. A feature clearly related to the issues of pronunciation and spelling to be included in the discussion is the use of abbreviations of various kinds. The third category, with two subsections, will focus on the question of structures, and more specifically on the nativised features of Indian English grammar as well as various kinds of mistakes found in the posts. Another aspect of this analysis will focus on the question of vocabulary – the first subsection will specifically analyse the question of terms of address, the second, on the other hand, will attempt to identify the most popular, and often culturally conditioned, items of informal Indian English lexicon. Finally, only a very brief mention will be made about the strategy of code-switching.

1. Pronunciation and spelling

As mentioned above, the written medium of Facebook does not on the whole provide much information about the question of Indian English sounds. Indirectly, however, one may gain some insight into at least one particular aspect of the local pronunciation, thanks to the strategy of language abbreviation, so characteristic of CMC language. Here are some examples illustrating this aspect, followed by glosses in Standard English:

Pronunciation and spelling (39)

- (1) *is ds really Aamir khan....I mean the aamir khan?* [Is this really Aamir Khan... I mean the Aamir Khan?]
- (2) *All ok wid u* [Is all OK with you?]
- (3) *how r things wid u* [How are things with you?]
- (4) *Even d mirror vl fal in lov wit u* [Even the mirror will fall in love with you]
- (5) *We'll win dis match also* [We will also win this match]
- (6) *V r very excited 2 watch dis movie!!* [We were very excited to watch this movie!]
- (7) *V wil rock.....* [We will rock]
- (8) *u vl lead* [You will lead]
- (9) *hope dey make ur one of tha dream come true* [I hope they will make yours (?) one of the dreams come true]
- (10) *We'd Love dem* [We would love them]
- (11) *n by da way wen did ku go den* [And by the way, when did you go then?]
- (12) *All da best Shahrukh sir* [All the best sir Shahrukh]
- (13) *all d best sir.* [All the best sir]
- (14) *U R D BST* [You are the best]
- (15) *thn wht is d decision* [What is the decision then]
- (16) *Tats good!!* [That is good!]
- (17) *happie budday* [Happy birthday!]
- (18) *Lotsa nice sistahs there too ;-)* *Mebbe u too shud go check it out!!!* [(There are) lots of nice sisters there too. Maybe you should go and check it out!]
- (19) *oh my. i think i burst an organ i was laffing so hard* [Oh my, I thought I would burst my tummy I was laughing so much]
- (20) *Lemme knw ur number...* [Let me know your number]

This group covers 39 examples of abbreviations which make use of different strategies of orthographic styling, particularly the strategy of letter-word substitution – as said above, they constitute a very good source of information about the actual pronunciation of the sounds. As can be gathered from the collected samples, among the sounds subject to change in Indian English are the two dental fricatives, /ð/ and /θ/. These two sounds, as the studies of English as a lingua franca have demonstrated (cf. Jenkins 2009) are rated among the most difficult features to be mastered by non-native speakers of English and are therefore substituted by the nearest sounds the interlocutors associate them with. It is also a very frequent

modification found in non-standard varieties of British or American English, e.g. the substitution of /θ/ by /tθ/ or /f/ by AAVE speakers or inhabitants of New York (cf. Labov 1972, Mesthrie 2000). Indian users of English also often substitute the troublesome sounds in speech, and an especially frequent option is the voiced stop /d/ for the voiced fricative /ð/, occasionally even /t/, and this is also reflected in spelling (cf. Pingali 2009: 21–22). This feature has been commented on in the context of CMC language, and text message language in general (cf. Crystal 2008, Dąbrowska 2011c, Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012). Here the high frequency of items like: *wid/wit* ('with'), *dey* ('they'), *dem* ('them'), *budday* ('birthday'), *d/da* ('the'), *d(i)s* ('this'), *den* ('then'), *tats* ('that's') is especially telling, although the use of the unabbreviated words even in the same sentences, as in *thn wht is d decision* or *is ds really Aamir khan....I mean the aamir khan?* is a very good indication that the users are quite well aware of the standard spelling and presumably also the respective sound behind.

Side by side with the simplified fricatives some examples, viz. *u vl lead*, *V wil rock.....*, *V r very excited 2 watch dis movie!!* and *its good that v r back to older days* reflect another feature of Indian English pronunciation, namely the /w/ – /v/ substitution, one of the features listed above. The use of just the letter ⟨v⟩ in the position of the pronoun *we* or an abbreviated form of *will* – *vl* is a good confirmation of the fact that some Indian speakers of English make use of an alternative pronunciation (cf. Pingali 2009: 20, Singh 2010: 422). Thus, to sum up the above examples of the Standard English sounds which frequently are modified by Indian English speakers, the non-standard use would be as follows: grapheme ⟨d⟩ (far less frequently ⟨t⟩) would stand for ⟨th⟩, when it reflects /ð/, and ⟨t⟩ (less often ⟨d⟩) for ⟨th⟩ when it stands for /θ/ at the end of the word, otherwise ⟨f⟩ for ⟨th⟩ when it is pronounced as /f/. As regards the Standard English bilabial /w/, it is often mispronounced as /v/ and hence it is also written down by means of grapheme ⟨v⟩.

An interesting subcategory of spelling modifications, which this time may not in fact characterise the users of Indian English as such, are examples like *lemme/leme*, *mebbe*, *pichas*, *sistahs*, *budday*, *laffing* (cf. *lemme/leme knw yur number*; *pichas*; *Mebbe u too shud go check it out!!*; *Happie budday*). As it seems, these spellings may not be solely modified due to possible differences in the Indian pronunciation, but are rather informal, typically American English forms which, no doubt, introduce a variation of pronunciation (cf. www.urbandictionary.com). They might, in fact, also reflect a tendency characteristic of Indian English, i.e. the consonant cluster simplification. Thus, it is hard to establish which of the two prevails, American pronunciation or New English simplification.

2. Abbreviations

The use of orthographic styling is not specifically Indian English, yet its usefulness has already been proved in the previous section. This way of formulating a message is to be found in a great proportion of posts, viz. 358 items.

Abbreviations of words (358)

- (21) *K sir* [OK sir]
 (22) *grt,...i m very hpy..grt* [Great... I am very happy... Great]
 (23) *hey ppl..* [Hey people]
 (24) *i think its not r8t to comment nything abt the video until the movie is released*
 [I think it is not right to say anything about the video until the movie is released]
 (25) *hey srk it seem kkr had a grt combck* [Hey Shahrukh, it seems KKR had a great comeback]
 (26) *wud b a gr8 choice* [It would be a great choice]
 (27) *Cuz ur so cute its so amazing* [Because you are so cute. It is so amazing]
 (28) *gud mrng sir ji* [Good morning sir]
 (29) *Twas nice chatting with u* [It was nice chatting to you]
 (30) *N tis terribly hot here* [And it is terribly hot here]
 (31) *And yes, twas an interesting n happy night alright* [And yes, it was an interesting and happy night all right]
 (32) *its gdn8 sir jj* [It is good night, sir]
 (33) *i knw u r gud in sprts in ur scul nd clg lif* I know you were good in sports in your school and college life]
 (34) *I LUV U SRK...!!!! U R D BST...* [I love you Shahrukh, you are the best]
 (35) *we r always with u. hope kkr wil win agnst rcb dis tym n top da points table*
 [We are always with you. I hope KKR will win against RCB this time and top the points table]
 (36) *pre bday xcite ment ha ha lolls* [Pre-birthday excitement, ha ha]
 (37) *srk u r all tym fav no1 cn beat u....so creative nly u cn do dis....srk rcks.....* [Shahrukh, you are (my) all time favourite, nobody can beat you... So creative, only you can do this... Shahrukh rocks...]

Altogether 69 posts containing at least one example of orthographic styling were recorded, which is a very significant proportion of the 210 posts collected for analysis. Many posts contained not only more than one abbreviated word, but also more than one shortening strategy (occasionally even one word exhibits more than one strategy, e.g. *hwz* is both a contraction of *how* and an apostrophe deletion *how's*). For the sake of more clarity the table below lists the identified strategies with respective illustrations of those, although it will be noticed that at times one item will be found in more than one category due to its ambiguity.

Type of abbreviation	Examples
Contractions	<i>Gr</i> t 'great', <i>hpy</i> 'happy', <i>ppl</i> 'people', <i>abt</i> 'about', <i>combck</i> 'comeback', <i>mrng</i> 'morning', <i>tis</i> 'it is', <i>twas</i> 'it was', <i>knw</i> 'know', <i>sprts</i> 'sports', <i>nd</i> 'and', <i>clg</i> 'college', <i>bst</i> 'best', <i>xcite</i> 'excite', <i>nly</i> 'only', <i>hwz</i> 'how's'
Homonyms	<i>Wud</i> 'would', <i>ur</i> 'your', <i>gud</i> 'good', <i>scul</i> 'school', <i>luv</i> 'love', <i>da</i> 'the', <i>tym</i> 'time', <i>dis</i> 'this', <i>n</i> 'and'

Type of abbreviation	Examples
Word-letter substitutions	<i>b</i> 'be', <i>u</i> 'you', <i>r</i> 'are', <i>d</i> 'the'
Word-number/syllable-number substitutions	<i>r8t</i> 'right', <i>gr8</i> 'great', <i>gdn8</i> 'good night', <i>m8</i> 'might'
Clippings	<i>fav</i> 'favourite', <i>congrates</i> 'congratulations', <i>cuz</i> 'because', <i>bday</i> 'birthday'
Apostrophe deletion	<i>Its</i> 'it's', <i>hes</i> 'he's', <i>whats</i> 'what's', <i>tonites</i> 'tonight's', <i>hwz</i> 'how's', <i>ur</i> 'you're'

Indeed, this group contained some very classical uses of shortenings, which might be observed with some postauthors, i.e. the most conventionally recognised abbreviations in the form of word-letter substitutions, e.g. *u* for *you* and sometimes *r* for *are*. Many users, however, especially male and younger ones, seemed to be virtually unlimited in what they could abbreviate. It seems that for many the most popular device was contraction involving vowel signs omissions. This choice might have additionally been motivated by the underlying Hindi model, according to which <a> is not written when reflecting the short vowel /a/, which is by default in the pronunciation of each Hindi consonant, and thus, e.g. *h* stands for /ha/, and hence *hpy* would naturally indicate 'happy', yet most of the examples seem to conform to the English CMC model of the deletion of any letter marking a vowel sound. Not infrequently, the users also resorted to another option, viz. the spelling simplification involving homonymy, resulting from the similarity of pronunciation of certain letter combinations, and thus, e.g. *look* became *luk*, *good* – *gud*, *time* – *tym*, *life* – *lif*, *would* – *wud*, *should* – *shud*, *it was* – *twas*, etc. Another subcategory were clippings, in which the final, initial, and sometimes even a middle syllable were deleted, as e.g. *fav* for *favourite*, *bday* – *birthday*, *cuz* – *because*, *congrates* – *congratulations*, etc. Finally, not to be omitted are word-number/syllable-number substitution, as in *gr8*, *r8t*, *gdn8*. There are also numerous examples of the apostrophe deletion, which at times may in fact confuse the reader a little, e.g. *its* (as in *its so amazing*); *whats*; *twas*; *tonites gonna b*; *hes to cute*. These few illustrations may fail to indicate the importance of abbreviations in Facebook Indian English. However, one aspect is of tremendous importance – the huge popularity of this strategy. As said above, the afore-mentioned 69 posts which manifested abbreviations altogether contained as many as 358 individual examples of shortenings of various type. By comparison, in another study I carried out on Facebook language (Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012), this time based on the posts of native British English users, in 400 posts generated by 36 users (18 women and 18 men) from young, middle-aged and senior age groups only 129 examples of abbreviations were recorded. When these figures are compared to 358 instances of shortenings in 210 messages, the huge disproportion pointing out to the popularity of this convention among the Indian English users is hard to miss. It was not uncommon to find entire posts written with the help of abbreviations, e.g. *i knw u r gud in sprts in ur scul nd clg lif; gud morning amir sir.hwz u nd hwz*

going making of delhi belly; *its gdn8 sir jj*; Even *d mirror vl fal in lov wit u*, *Cuz ur so cute*, etc. This strategy is in fact in keeping with one of the above-mentioned points describing characteristic features of Indian English, i.e. the tendency to shorten words (cf. Stockwell 2002, Singh 2010) and even phrases, which are already abbreviations themselves, such as *OK* (cf. Singh 2010: 438) – one short post had, in fact, the following form: *K sir*. This feature is no doubt particularly visible and useful in the CMC language.

3. Features of Indian English grammar

The list of typical features of Indian English grammar mentioned a number of aspects by which Indian English differed from British English. Not all the elements from the list found themselves represented in the collected material, however, those which did can be divided into a number of subsections:

- disagreement between the person and the verbal ending (12)
 - (38) *true....very true....but it dont mention my phone...:-* ([True, very true. But it does not mention my phone])
 - (39) *my aunty like u* [My auntie likes you]
 - (40) *srk u rocks....lov u* [Shahrukh, you rock... (I) love you]
 - (41) *Srk you Rocks* [Shahrukh, you rock]
 - (42) *SRK u Rockz* [Shahrukh, you rock]
 - (43) *ur humbleness inspire ussssssss* [Your humbleness inspires us]
 - (44) *We loves u and kkr* [We love you and KKR]
 - (45) *You look very young and it remind me of 'Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman', 'DDLJ' days :)* [You look very young and it reminds me of 'Raju Ben Gaya Gentleman', 'DDLJ' days]
 - (46) *gud morning amir sir.hwz u nd hwz going making of delhi belly* [Good morning Aamir, sir. How are you and how is the making of Delhi Belly going?]
 - (47) *Thx X! Hws u doing? :* [Thanks X! How are you doing?]
 - (48) *hey srk it seem kkr had a grt combck* [Hey Shahrukh, it seems KKR had a great comeback]
 - (49) [I] *dsnt feel up2 it* [I do not feel up to it]

This is the largest of all the groups covering grammatical differences. The discrepancy in the presence or absence of *-s* in comparison with British English has been mentioned by different authors (Jenkins 2009, Singh 2010), which the recorded examples appear to confirm. Singh (2010: 431) claims that Indian English speakers typically attach the *-s* to the plural forms and leave it out in the singular, on the assumption that since plural nouns typically are marked by *-s*, so should the accompanying verbs be marked by this ending as well, while the singular nouns should have unmarked verbs. This logic is reflected in a couple of examples here (*we loves you* vs. *my auntie love u*; *it remind me*; *it seem*; *it don't mention my phone* or *ur humbleness inspire us*). As can be seen, there

is more variation here, since for some reason the second person singular also obtains the plural -s ending, possibly on the assumption that when addressing an unknown or a more important person (in this case, a famous Hindi film actor) one uses the plural pronoun *aap* in Hindi which also demands the use of the plural verb, hence possibly the forms *SRK you rocks/rokz*. This strategy, however, is not reflected in the address to another Hindi movie star, where the post author uses the verb *to be* in the third person instead, i.e. *hwz u* (i.e. 'how are you?'), and a very similar form is found in a private post written by a friend to a friend, i.e. *hws u doing*. Since such forms as the latter, however, are to be found in the informal language of native British English users as well, the application of such forms here may, on the other hand, show an attempt to emulate a foreign, and therefore more fashionable, pattern. The last recorded option in the examples above is an instance of the elliptical first person singular, as can be judged from the exchange of the posts, i.e. [I] *dsnt feel up 2 it* (i.e. 'I don't feel up to it'). Due to the fact that it was the only one recorded, it is hard to draw any conclusions about this use which, in all likelihood, might also be a mistake or a misprint.

- inversion in direct questions (8)
 - (50) *u don't add pic to ur profile on purpose ?* [Don't you add a picture to your profile on purpose?]
 - (51) *with whom u spent d sat nite?* [With whom did you spend Saturday night?]
 - (52) *thanks for the wishes! u r back in bbay too?* [Thanks for the wishes. Are you back in Bombay too?]
 - (53) *You sure its still on?*[Are you sure it is still on?]
 - (54) *where r u basedn what u do?* [Where are you based? And what do you do?]
 - (55) *you looking for a graduate? jaroori hai?* [Are you looking for a graduate? Are you sure?]
 - (56) *Ur pregnant? Congratulations!* [Are you pregnant? Congratulations!]

The examples above illustrate a variation in the question formation – a question marked by intonation only when spoken, or else by the question mark, or simply the context of the whole turn when written (cf. Sedlatschek 2009). Mesthrie (2000) suggests that such questions may be markers of the more mesolectal variant of Indian English and may be used by the same speaker alongside the proper interrogative structures when interacting with locals or friends. The above examples certainly come from friend-to-friend posts rather than from the fan pages, which creates a context conducive to bending rules of grammar. Such a variation is no doubt to be found in other varieties of English, notably English as a lingua franca, and not just in Indian English. Nevertheless, it seems to be one of the defining features of Indian English on the grounds of its frequency – it is likely motivated by the Hindi pattern, in which questions are formed only by intonation and not involving a change of word order (cf. e.g. *Tum thik ho* 'you are all right' vs. *Tum thik ho?* 'are you all right?').

- omission of articles (6)
 - (57) *N tis terribly hot here. Middle of summer n all that* [And it is terribly hot here. The middle of the summer and all that]
 - (58) *striking effect of light* [A striking effect of light]
 - (59) *really nice place.....*[A really nice place...]
 - (60) *didnt know that star like amir can be on FB to greet his fan.....wow thats a real star* [I did not know that a star like Aamir can be on Facebook to greet his fans... Wow, that is a real star]
 - (61) *i hv messaged u few numbers* [I have messaged you a few numbers]
 - (62) *hi shahrukh i m big fan of u* [Hi Shahrukh, I am a big fan of yours]

Omission (cf. Jenkins 2009, Sedlatschek 2009) or sometimes an incorrect use of articles (cf. Sedlatschek 2009, Singh 2010) are mentioned by linguists as quite typical features of Indian English, and New Englishes in general. Similar to the use of inversion in questions for the purpose of asking questions mentioned above, the omission of articles can also often be found in the intimate or casual style of native English speakers (cf. Joos 1959). It has also been quite often recorded by me in my analysis of Facebook English (Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012). Out of the recorded examples the first one (*middle of summer*) may in fact be judged as an elliptical construction of the informal style, however, the remaining ones do seem to either come in a slightly more formal context (e.g. *striking effect of light; really nice place*) or be used inconsistently (cf. *star like Aamir vs. thats a real star* in the same sentence). The remaining two examples appear to be more serious departures from the grammatical rule – the use of *a* is expected in a structure like *a big fan of you* or rather *of yours*, i.e. one of many, whereas in the phrase *i hv messaged you few numbers* the actual reading of the message is quite different from the intended one, as *few* naturally implies a very limited number, whereas *a few* implies several. Concluding this aspect of Indian English, it needs to be said that in the informal medium of Facebook, which is typically characterised by reduction of redundant elements of sentences, investigation of the omission of articles is hard to conduct, if not downright futile.

- a different way of adjective/adverb comparison (3)
 - (63) *My mommmmyyyyyy bestest!!!!* [My mummy is the best!]
 - (64) *bestest baby u always rock* [Best baby, you always rock]
 - (65) *u r the BESTEST* [You are the best]

This category, albeit very limited, illustrates some very obvious departures from the Standard English model. Sources do provide examples of Indian English adjective comparison patterns which would have been found in the 16–18th c. English in Britain, but which still appear in Indian English, possibly as a remnant of the very early English models spread in India at the time when British rule was being established (viz. *more good, most good* in Stockwell 2002, or *more better* in Singh 2010; I have also heard the comparison of *good, gooder* and *goodest*, and

bad, *badder* and *baddest* in one of the interviews with Shahrukh Khan available on his fan page). Here the choice is limited to only one option, viz. *bestest*. It is not to be assumed that those respective users do not know the correct form, it is rather, I feel, the fact that the standard *best* does not fulfil the role, not being emphatic enough for the meaning intended by the user, hence the doubling of the superlative marker in the case of this irregular form (cf. the jocular use of Polish *najlepsiejszy*). No Hindi model of double superlative which might stimulate such formation exists, as Hindi follows the analytic method of comparison of adjectives (cf. Stasik 2006).

- the use of invariant question tags (4)
 - (66) *hmm yeah dad's dream....after selling off our place in X....nice na?* [Hmm, yes, (it is) Dad's dream... After selling off our place in X... Nice, isn't it?]
 - (67) *ok na.....X na. Really* [OK, isn't it ... X, isn't it. Really]
 - (68) *I am there na!* [I am there, aren't I?]

These few examples illustrate one of the above-mentioned features of Indian English which appears to characterise all New Englishes, i.e. the use of invariant question tags. It is naturally not to be understood that all Englishes in the Outer Circle make use of exactly the same form of the tag, but they follow the same principle of using one common form which disregards person and tense. Indian English speakers may use the form *isn't it?* or *is it?* or *no?* in all possible contexts (cf. Singh 2010) (in fact Mesthrie, Bhatt (2008) claim the canonical tag is used to mark assertion, whereas the invariant tags are to be interpreted more as pragmatic markers of politeness). It is often the case, however, that Indian English users will also transfer a Hindi element used as a tag in Hindi into the relevant position. The collected examples reflect the latter option in the use of the word *na*, which, as Singh (2010: 432–433) explains, is a shortened form of the Hindi expression *hai na?*, meaning 'isn't it?'. Singh (2010) suggests that this element has often been attached to sentences which do not really need this kind of reinforcement, and this is in fact what we can see in the sentences *ok na. X na* (X standing for a personal name), which in the context of the entire interaction are to be interpreted more as emphatic markers of criticism.

4. Miscellaneous

- conversion (2)
 - (69) *i hv **messaged** u few numbers* [I have messaged you a few numbers]
 - (70) *X pls **msg** me if i havent and i can send it.* [X, please, message me if I have not and I can send it]
- the use of *even* in the place of *also* (3)
 - (71) ***even** i miss my sporting days with my friends* [I also miss my sporting days with my friends]

(72) *Even I would get into a tub and dance* [I would also get into a tub and dance]

(73) *OMG!!!! u r DE best!!!! evn wen u wear ur shades at nite* [Oh my God! You are the best! Also when you wear your shades at night]

- the use of *only/itself* at the end of phrases for emphatic purpose (1)

(74) *kareena Kapoor only* [Only Kareena Kapoor]

The last category concerning the analysis of grammatical markers of Indian English is a collection of mostly individual examples of some structures mentioned in the initial list of structural features of Indian English or simply those containing elements which, although not incorrect, are rarely found in modern Standard English. Two items, viz. *i hv messaged u few numbers* as well as *pls msg me if i havent and i can send it* illustrate the feature of Hinglish which involves conversion of various parts of speech into others (cf. Singh 2010). Here, unlike in British English where people *text each other*, the Indian users of English *message each other*. The pattern is therefore the same, the vocabulary item performing this function is, however, different. Three further examples contain the word *even*, which, though hardly ever mentioned in literature on the subject, is a very characteristic element of Indian English. The speakers of this variety use it in the sense of *also*. In fact, the grammar of Hindi by McGregor (1995) suggests that the adverb *bhi* is to be translated into English either as *also* or as *even*, two words whose meanings are naturally different in Standard English, hence the likely confusion (a much clearer example coming from private communication would be a frequent answer to someone's expressing his or her love to someone else – in response to this one would most likely hear *Even I love you*, which, when interpreted according to Standard English rules, could obviously be treated as an insult, while in Indian English it is naturally not the case). The three examples may not indicate this meaning as clearly, but the context in which the three sentences were used confirms this interpretation, i.e. that the speaker *also* misses his sporting days, that the other would *also* get into a tub and dance, as there is no obstacle which would motivate him to stress this fact by using the word *even*, while the third sentence should rather be interpreted in the sense that the movie star is the best *also* when he wears shades at night – the use of *even* in the literal sense would, in fact, contain a hint of criticism here. Last but not least, apart from the above examples there is also a sentence with the well known insertion of the Indian English *only* at the end of the sentence, which is used to mark emphasis (cf. Sedlatschek 2009), viz. *Kareena Kapoor only*, a sentence used as a firm suggestion in response to a question as to who should play a role in a film.

5. Language mistakes

Moreover, quite a long list of linguistic inadequacies has been found in the samples:

Language mistakes (30)

(75) *wat ever u say totly inspire me u r a real actor u rock* [Whatever you say totally inspires me. You are a real actor. You rock]

- (76) *I like **your this** casual hair style SRK* [I like your/this casual hairstyle Shahrukh]
- (77) *nd **hwz going making** of delhi belly* [And how is the making of Delhi Belly going?]
- (78) *Yesterday i **choose** to get into bed with a book and my ipod* [Yesterday I chose to get into bed with a book and my iPod]
- (79) *Please **replied** comments **for** me i like u* [Please reply with comments to me. I like you]
- (80) *ya u must **enjoyed** it!* [You must have enjoyed it]
- (81) *and **one thing more, u'll going** to rock dis year with two greatest hits* [And one thing more, you are going to rock this year with two greatest hits]
- (82) *love you **alots*** [I love you a lot/lots]
- (83) *the probablity factor states that there are as **much chances** of an owl being a 'ullu', as being a 'wise' owl!!* [The probability factor states that there are as many chances of an owl being an 'ullu' (Hindi) as being a wise owl]
- (84) *Tats good!! Hope all ur days b **as best as this one!!!!*** [That is good! I hope all your days may be as good as this one]
- (85) *its like u r shooting for **any** film.....really nice place.....* [It is as if you were shooting for any film. A really nice place]
- (86) *looking **forward to see** some good stuff* [(I am) looking forward to seeing some good stuff]
- (87) *hey ppl.. looking for an aasistant for my work,some girl **whose** a graduate, any one in mind.. pls email me* [Hey people, (I am) looking for an assistant for my work, some girl who is a graduate. Anyone in mind? Please email me]
- (88) *Im confused wether to wish you Good Night or Good Morning... So **hears** both.... Good Night!!! Good Morning!!!* [I am confused as to whether to wish you good night or good morning. So here is both. Good night! Good morning!]
- (89) *Hello X mamma, how are you today i am so happy to see your **photo's** felt so homely* [Hello Uncle X, how are you today? I am happy to see your photos. It felt so homely]
- (90) ***Presently** I've got a 800 page Chemistry text for graduation students to edit!* [At present I have got a 800-page long chemistry text for graduation students to edit]
- (91) ***have well done job** in you carrier.....* [Have a well done job in your career]

The above is a considerably long list of language errors identified in the collected material. Unlike the previous category, where the grammatical differences appear to be to a large degree systematic and well-established in the language of Indian English users, the errors collected above are mostly one-off occurrences of both grammar, but also, largely, spelling inadequacies, which in some cases introduce some ambiguity into their possible interpretation as well. The collected mistakes range from very subtle examples of misprints (e.g. *wat ever, wether, carrier* ['career'], through some departures from the rules of grammar (*its like u r shooting for any* ['some'] *film, a[n]* 'ullu'; *what shud I do to met you; looking forward to see some good stuff; yesterday I choose; thinking of you and miss you; presently* ['at present'], *photo's* ['photos'], *much chances*), to some more serious or more deeply ingrained

structural and spelling mistakes (e.g. *so hears* [‘here is’] *both*; *u’ll going to rock*; *please replied comments for me*; *as best as this one*, *howz going making of Delhi Belly* and *some girl whose a graduate .../whose D.K. Bose?*, etc.). Thus, they cover a spectrum of specific grammatical structures as well as homophonic items. These mistakes are not exclusively found in Indian English – they may be simplifications of grammatical issues which cause difficulties to learners of English as a foreign language in general. The point I wish to make here, however, is that there are surprisingly many mistakes for users of English as a second, not a foreign language, namely, a language they have been exposed to for most of their lives, typically since starting formal education at the age of 4–5. By way of comparison, the figure of 30 mistakes of various calibre found in 210 posts may be juxtaposed with 12 detected in 390 posts of native British English users whose language I analysed in a different study (cf. Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012). Thus, despite their intense exposition to Standard English some Indian English users tend to neglect the rules of standard grammar and spelling, which is in fact a concern of many educated Indians, especially in view of the fact that, as my investigation of the perception of English by the Indian youth demonstrated, the status of English as compared to Hindi and other local languages is very high (cf. Dąbrowska 2011a). Indeed, some Indians, though certainly only a small proportion, can be quite critical about the position of English and its influence upon the other languages, while others show an ambivalent attitude (Dąbrowska 2011a). Most people, however, recognise English as the language of power and prestige. The number and quality of mistakes, however, may corroborate the claim made by some linguists (cf. Dasgupta 1993, after Mesthrie 2000: 311) that English is still up to a point a “stranger language” – “an auntie language”, to quote a metaphor used regarding people who appear more powerful than the average Indian and therefore deserve respect. They will, however, always remain strangers.

6. Honorifics and forms of address

In this and the following section the discussion will go beyond the level of grammar and look into some pragmatic aspects of the use of English in India. As the analysis of New Englishes demonstrates, the use of English in the post-colonial world has been indigenised, which is reflected in the incorporation of elements of local tongues into the English lexicon. In this section the question of addressing people, an essential aspect of basic functioning in day-to-day living, will be examined.

Honorifics and forms of address (57)

- (92) *sir, u r looking simply gr8 n awesome in this uniform* [Sir, you are looking simply great and awesome in this uniform]
 (93) *gud morning amir sir* [Good morning, sir Aamir]
 (94) *Thank u very muc Hi Sir, many many happy returns of the day.* [Thank you very much. Hi sir, many happy returns of the day]
 (95) *Happy Birthday Sir ji* [Happy birthday, sir]

- (96) *Gud nyt n gud mrning ji...:))* [Good night and good morning, sir]
 (97) *OMG so cool yes shahrukhji please do it again* [Oh my God, so cool, yes sir Shahrukh, please do it again]
 (98) *if u had listened to obamaji's "victory" speech [...]* [If you had listened to Mr Obama's 'victory' speech'...]
 (99) *amir saab* [sir Aamir!]
 (100) *Hope to see you soon X uncle* [I hope to see you soon Mr X]
 (101) *HELLO UNCLE! NICE TO SEE YOU ON FACEBOOK* [Hello sir! Nice to see you on Facebook]
 (102) *hi X mam good to see you on face book* [Hi, Madam X, good to see you on Facebook]
 (103) *Thank u so much aunty.. :)* [Thank you so much Madam]
 (104) *Great aamir brother* [Great, brother Aamir]
 (105) *X dear thn wht is d decision???how r bro????* [X dear, then what is the decision? How are you, brother?]
 (106) *happy b'day bhaiya* [Happy birthday, brother]
 (107) *gud nite aamir bhai.....* [Good night, brother Aamir]
 (108) *hey mamma look so differnt and young to* [Hey, uncle, you look so different and young too]
 (109) *cnngrats bhabhi!!!!* [Congratulations, sister-in-law!]
 (110) *awesome, watta style u hve yaar* [Awesome, what a style you have, man]
 (111) *awesome yar* [Awesome, man]
 (112) *Awesome SRK u rock man* [Awesome, Shahrukh, you rock, man]
 (113) *happy birthday dude* [Happy birthday, dude]
 (114) *all good buddy, how r things wid u and family* [All good, buddy, how are things with you and family?]

The above examples present a wonderful plethora of options which may and should be considered culture-specific. I will start my discussion of the collected items with the most formal and English-derived elements, later moving on to the more neutral and Hindi-derived ones in order to finish with the most colloquial items. The first and most frequent term of address, found primarily in the posts written on the two fan pages, but also in some more private posts left on their friends' walls, is the form *sir*. It is a word which has been incorporated into the local lexicon and can easily be found in Hindi-only sentences as well. Here 12 uses of the word have been recorded. The word sounds very formal when interpreted according to the British English standard, however, its status is certainly not as high in the Indian context, as it is a fairly neutral term of address to be heard mainly in the corporate context and in interaction with strangers (cf. Dąbrowska 2011b, Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012). It is an equivalent of the Hindi word *aap*, which could be compared to the German *Sie* or the Polish *Pan/Pani*. The fact that its use is more relaxed than in British English may be confirmed by such sentences as *Oh, ye hi sir, happy b'day! njoy!; very nice look sir* or *good night sir* ;). An interesting example is found in *Plz Aamir sir*, as it reflects the Hindi word order, where *Aamir sir* would be *Aamirji* in Hindi, showing

that the grammatical pattern is definitely Hindi, and that what we are dealing with is simply a substitution of a foreign element.

The next four items demonstrate an interesting intermediate stage between the English-only *sir* and the code-switched honorific *ji*, i.e. the combination of both, e.g. *gud mrng sir ji*; *happy birthday sirji*. *Ji* is typically a suffix which is used in Hindi to indicate deference towards or regarding our interlocutor. It follows the name or the professional title of the person, and may then be written together or separately, but it may also easily appear alone, as the following five examples demonstrate, e.g. *u alwys rock shahji!* vs. *Good hai jiiiiiii*. Such sentences, therefore, appear to sound fairly formal from the Standard English point of view, yet such combinations as in *u alwys rock shahji!* show that the use of *ji* is fairly neutral, but nevertheless socially expected. The combination of the English *sir* with the Hindi *ji*, is, however, especially important as it creates a doubling of the honorific, one being a formal term of address, and the other – a marker of respect. This naturally cannot be reflected in any translation, a point which only emphasizes the cultural differences between language users.

As regards the formal addressing of men, a few other, less common options have also been recorded. Two sentences contain a hardly visible shortened version of the title *sahab/sahib*, i.e. *amir saab* and *khan sb verry gd*. This is a title which originated from the Muslim tradition, however, nowadays it has largely lost Muslim-specific connotations (incidentally, both addressees are Muslim), and is gradually disappearing from use. It may be noticed that this time the title follows the person's surname, not the first name, as was the case with *ji*, and therefore is a bit more formal in its reading. On the other hand, a more familiar term of address which is hard to interpret correctly outside the Indian context, is the use of the title *uncle*, e.g. *HELLO UNCLE! NICE TO SEE YOU ON FACEBOOK*. It is an English word which, alongside of *auntie* (spelled *aunty* by the Indian speakers), has been wholly embraced within the Hindi lexicon and as a result, its functional distribution has been changed. Both *uncle* and *auntie* are used when addressing strangers, indeed, they may be very close strangers, e.g. one's neighbours or people met in the street, they will, however, contrary to the English connotations of the words, not be one's relatives. The Hindi language and its related dialects have a very rich system of kinship terms, with the distinction of terms used for relatives on the father's and mother's side, respectively. It is therefore typically very clearly indicated in speech what sort of a relation is being referred to. Further along in the list there are, for instance, some examples with the word *mamma*, which, contrary to expectations, is not a word for *mother* – in fact, it is not even feminine – rather, the word is used to address one's maternal uncle (the feminine counterpart would be *mami*), the paternal uncle and aunt being *ćaća* and *ćaći*, respectively.

Most of the collected material contains appellative forms used to address men, mainly because many posts were taken from two fan pages of two famous Hindi movie stars – both male. There are, however, a few examples of parallel forms of address used towards a female addressee. In such a context Indian English makes frequent use of the word *madam*, often shortened to *ma(a)m*, as in *hi X mam good to*

see you on face book; **Dear X Maam....Wish u a very Happy and Joyous Birthday !!!**. The use of **madam** is comparable to the use of the form **sir**, i.e. it is utilised when addressing a female in the professional context, or an older, more powerful or simply unknown female in general (as in the question *What is your good name madam?* which I was asked when booking a bus ticket on the phone). Alternately, when Indian speakers want to address an older female who may be a family friend or a neighbour, but not a family member, the term (misleading for a native speaker of English) *aunty* (i.e. *auntie*) is used, as mentioned above, e.g. *Thank u so much aunty :)*. Similarly as in the case of *sir* or *ji* (the latter may also be used when addressing a woman), the words *madam* or *aunty* follow the first name of the addressee.

In India there are also culture-specific forms of address used when addressing one's equal. Naturally, there is the first name option, but it is much more typical to attach either a specific or conventional title after the first name. By far the most popular form is that used for addressing another male, i.e. the word meaning *brother*, although, as could be guessed from the above discussion, the term does not have to (although it may) indicate any family kinship at all. The term may be used towards a young man, but more often with respect to an older one, one the speaker knows in person, as well as one he knows from, e.g. the cinema screen – the term is simply a marker of solidarity. The examination of the collected material has demonstrated all the possible options found in the Hindi-speaking context. And so there is the form *bhaiya*, as in the title of the paper, which is typically applied when addressing an older man who the speaker may in fact know, e.g. a shop-keeper or a bus-driver – thus, the term is a fairly neutral form of address, e.g. *happy b'day bhaiya*. A more familiar term, used by both strangers and friends is the word *bhai*, as in *Gud nite aamir bhai* as well as its English equivalent *brother*, e.g. *Great aamir brother*. An equivalent of his, but one which shortens the distance between interlocutors is its colloquial variant *bro*, e.g. *X dear thn wht is d decision???.how r bro???*. Naturally, the term of address *brother* is also found in the varieties of the Inner Circle, yet its frequency in Indian English (7 instances recorded) in comparison with its use in Hindi allows us to assume that its use has been primarily motivated by its Hindi equivalent and thus constitutes an example of a semantic extension.

No examples of a feminine equivalent appeared in the sample material mainly because of the structure of the respondent group, but also because Indian women do not use the word *bahan* ('sister') or its English equivalent in this way. What can be used and is often heard is the word *didi*, a term of address employed when addressing an older sister or any older or married woman in general, even when the rest of the sentence is in English. This is, therefore, a limited form in its application, and it is not surprising it was not as easily recorded on Facebook. However, there were three instances of a specifically feminine term of address, i.e. of the word *bhabhi*. This term means 'sister-in-law', and is traditionally used in a family when such a relationship applies. Here we have, for instance, *cnngrats bhabhi!!* or *Thx a ton bhabhi*. The combination of a very informal English phrase with the traditional Hindi form of address emphasises the pragmatic difference between the two cultures and the practical application of the English language in the native and non-native context.

The last subsection concerns very informal terms of address, both of Hindi origin and their English counterparts. Here only masculine forms have been recorded, for the simple reason that no feminine equivalents can be found either in the Indian context or the Inner Circle language practice (which constitutes an interesting contribution to the genderlect differences in itself). Thus, the most typical local form of address implying a close relationship and a casual style of interaction is the Hindi word *yaar*, sometimes misspelled as *yar*, which may be compared to the English colloquial form *man*. Quite a few examples with this form have been found, both in the addresses towards friends and the movie stars, e.g. *awesome yar* or *shahrukh.....love u yar!!!*. Side by side with this form (i.e. the most popular informal term of address used in the Hindi context), an example of its English equivalent has also been recorded, viz. *Awesome SRK u rock man*, thereby making it sound very colloquial and in fact very American in style, as the form *man* can often be heard in the language of African-Americans. This observation concerning a certain American feel to Indian speech is important to note, since, as the next terms of address will demonstrate, American culture has left an indelible trace in the language of younger Indian English users, most likely due to the influence of American cinema as well as personal visits to the US, a very popular destination for travel, work or habitation (NRIs) for young Indians. This influence is visible in the frequent application of the words *dude* and *buddy*, respectively, viz. *happy birthday dude*; *same here dude.....*; *all good buddy*, *how r things wid u and family*. The term *dude*, primarily indicating a city dweller from the East Coast of the USA, particularly careful about his fancy clothes when on a visit to the West, has no doubt positive connotations with rich and fashionable city men among the Indians, explaining its popularity (it is further underscored by its frequent use in the Hindi cinema). *Buddy*, on the other hand means a friend or a comrade, a partner, probably an alternation of the word *brother*, and is also typically found in American and Canadian English. Thus, the popularity of the last two terms shows that, despite the fact that the officially followed model of English in India is that of British English, American English seems to be exerting visible influence on the informal mode of communication and among a certain social group of fashionable young males.

7. Culture-specific vocabulary

Apart from the above items used as terms of address also other elements were recorded which are characteristic of the Indian English language use:

Culture-specific vocabulary (39)

- (115) *and your hairstyle is awesome* [And your hairstyle is awesome]
 (116) *yoppyyyyyyyy,u'r back.awesom sir* [Yippy, you are back, awesome, sir]
 (117) *well!!!!!!!!!! awesum!!! waitin for more..* [Well, awesome! Waiting for more!]
 (118) *u r awesome shahrukh bhai.....* [You are awesome, brother Shahrukh]

- (119) *osumm*..... [Awesome]
 (120) *awesome yar* [Awesome, man]
 (121) *luv u srk.....best of luck* [I love you, Shahrukh, good luck]
 (122) *Best of luck bollywood superstar shahrukh khan 4 kkr. We loves u and kkr* [Good luck, Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan, to KKR. We love you and KKR]
 (123) *best of luk for kkr* [Good luck to KKR]
 (124) *super cool things* [Very cool things]
 (125) *Sir, inshallah kkr r going to be champions of ipl-4....* [Sir, God willing, KKR are going to be the champions of IPL-4]
 (126) *Inshaallah. We'll win dis match also. we r always with u* [God willing, we will also win this match. We are always with you]
 (127) *mashaallah he is adorable.....* [By will of God, he is adorable]
 (128) *hes too cute!! mashallah.... & he's mine too!!!* [He is so cute, by will of God. And he is mine too!]
 (129) *congratulations X.....u both look good mashaallah.may u have a very long n happy married life ahead. ameen!!* [Congratulations, X... You both look good, by will of God. May you have a very long and happy married life ahead, amen]
 (130) *MUBARAAK ON YOUR ENGEMENT AND SAW YOUR BEAUTIFUL PICTURES latest nephew mubarak :)* [Blessings on your engagement, and I saw your beautiful pictures of your latest nephew, best wishes]
 (131) *salaams not heard from u in ages, hope ur well, x* [Greetings, I have not heard from you for ages, I hope you are well, x]

As stated earlier, this category of elements characterising Indian English goes beyond the level of grammar and focuses more on the question of discourse and interaction routines. The collected examples, containing both English-based and other elements, will be subdivided into two main sections. The first will focus on the question of expressing emotions and polite meanings. Compared to British English, Indian speakers are considered to be more direct and at the same time more polite in their use of language. The latter claim, discussed by, e.g. Singh (2010), is corroborated by the fact that Indian English uses more modal verbs and other markers carrying tentative meanings. One aspect of Brown and Levinson's (1987/1994) theory of politeness is to be positively polite, i.e. to indicate to others that they are liked, admired, appreciated. Some of the examples gathered in this category demonstrate that the pragmatic realisation of this strategy is much more enthusiastic and positive in Indian English than the equivalent behaviour would have been in British English. It seems that in this case the model of behaviour adopted by Indians is based more on American English, at least in terms of the vocabulary, most likely due to the influence coming from American movies and frequent trips young people take to visit their families in that country, but the reading is altogether more culturally coloured. Thus, when expressing praise, one author uses the phrase *super cool*, which, although making use of a generally recognised American English slang, as a result of the combination of two items becomes much more expressive (cf. Singh 2010). But what appears to be particularly popular among Facebook users,

mainly teenagers and young adults, is the application of the adjective/adverb *awesome*, recorded in 12 posts here, as in *awesome pic; u r awesome shahrukh bhai...; awesum!!! waitin for more...; osumm.....; awesome yar*. It seems to be practically the only adjective found in expressions of positive reactions. Also interesting are the different spellings of the word: *awesome*, *awesom*, *awesum*, *osumm*. The word itself is more often found in American than British English, therefore its frequent presence in Indian English is an indirect proof of American influence on the speech, and at the same time behaviour, of Indian youth.

Along with the above word used to express praise, there is another characteristic marker of positive politeness found, i.e. one used to convey wishes of good luck. In Indian English, however, it is not merely good luck, but – *best of luck*. This example was recorded 9 times here, as opposed to only one example with the standard *good luck* (*best of luck* is also a phrase one hears in Hindi movies). This expression, therefore, appears to be a particularly characteristic feature of this variety of English.

Apart from the carriers of politeness which make use of English elements, the second of the two above-mentioned categories are, also, culture-specific pragmatic features of interaction, which this time make use of the local word stock, and in particular, of Arabic borrowings in Hindi. One of the very distinctive features of interaction among Indian speakers, and especially, though not exclusively, Muslim Indians, are references to Allah. It is altogether a lot more common in India to make open references to religion, and particularly, to give religious blessings while interacting with others, especially when sharing wishes or congratulations (and even in a conversation which focuses on the speaker's hope or wish), than is the case in western societies. One of the most common phrases of that type found in Indian English is *inshallah* ('if Allah wills / God willing'), an expression of hope, here recorded twice, e.g. *Sir, inshallah kkr r going to be champions of ipl-4....*, side by side with the expression *mashallah*, lit. 'whatever Allah wills' (used here four times), uttered as a reaction to unusual, surprising events, and as an expression of appreciation and gratitude, as in *mashallah..he's adorable!!!* :). It is also not uncommon to find the word *ameen* (lit. 'Oh Allah, respond to what we have said'), the Islamic version of the Christian *amen*, which some users also made use of when asking for a wish to be granted, e.g. *u both look good mashaallah. may u have a very long n happy married life ahead. ameen!!* There are also other markers of religious connotations, viz. *mubarak*, e.g. **MUBARAAK ON YOUR ENGEMENT AND SAW YOUR BEAUTIFUL PICTURES**. This is another word of Arabic origin, typically associated with Islamic religious practices, which means 'blessed'. It is therefore a form of a wish, and an equivalent of 'happy', most typically associated with *Eid Mubarak*, and used on the occasion of important religious festivities. An expression which also evokes Islamic religious connotations is *salaam*, a form of a greeting, here in *salaams not heard from u in ages, hope ur well, x*. The word, meaning 'peace', is a shortened form of a typical Islamic greeting *As-salaamu alaykum*, 'may peace be upon you'. These expressions show, therefore, how important religious connotations are for the Indian, and specifically the Muslim Indian community, serving as a strong group identity marker for many.

8. Code-switching

Last but not least, in our overview of Facebook Indian English it would be impossible not to mention the phenomenon of code-switching:

Code-switching (10)

- (132) *king of bollywood.3 saal se wait kar raha hu 1 blockbuster movie ki....dedo yar*
[King of Bollywood. I have been waiting for 3 years for a blockbuster movie...
Come on man, give it (to us)!]
- (133) *Good hai jiiiiii [it is good, sir]*
- (134) *Looks like quite a few behen out there in this big bad world!!!* [It looks like there are a few sisters out there in this big bad world]
- (135) *Wow.....nice house X.....wer is this???* *aapka naya ghar hai kya???* ;) [Wow, nice house X, where is it? Is it your [+Hon] new house or what?]
- (136) *you looking for a graduate? jaroori hai?* [Are you looking for a graduate? Surely?]
- (137) *mera comment sirf X specific tha.. I can never be a good 'aasistant':P* [My comment had only a specific reference, X... I can never be a good 'aasistant']
- (138) *amir saab!..jab log subah morning walk kerte hein ..tab aap gudnyte kerte hein :)* [Sir Aamir! When people do the morning walk, then you [Hon] say good night]
- (139) *wasie depend karta hai ki poke kar kaun raha hai....*[It depends on who is poking]
- (140) *srk u r all tym fav no1 cn beat u.....so creative nly u cn do dis....srk rcks..... plsss mereliye ek baar baazigar ka dialogue* [Shahrukh, you are (my) all time favourite, nobody can beat you... So creative, only you can do this... Shahrukh rocks... Please, the dialogue from Baazigar for me once more]
- (141) *ye hum par depend karta hai ki hum misinformed hai ki uninformed ki informed ya well-informed* [It depends on us whether we are misinformed or uninformed or informed or well-informed]

The above section contains a mere ten items, not because this category was scarce among the posts which I analysed, but because I deliberately tried to avoid collecting examples of code-switching, or rather, in the context of the above, code-mixing, the reason being that this phenomenon, its classification and Facebook-context specific use are a subject of a separate, quite extensive paper of mine (cf. Dąbrowska 2011b, Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012). I will therefore refer to this aspect only very generally here. The above examples were often combined with some other type of changes being discussed in the present analysis, hence their presence there, mainly to flag the phenomenon. They represent the most characteristic type of code-switching, i.e. the intrasentential code-switching, that is, the shifting back and forth between English and Hindi within one sentence or one post, viz. *mera comment sirf X specific tha..*; *amir saab!..jab log subah morning walk kerte hein ..tab aap gudnyte kerte hein :)*; *ye hum par depend karta hai*

ki hum misinformed hai ki uninformed ki informed ya well-informed, although a couple of examples of intersentential code switching (cf. Poplack 1980) are also to be found here, viz. *Wow.....nice house X.....wer is this??? aapka naya ghar hai kya??? ;*; *you looking for a graduate? jaroori hai?*. It may be seen that most of the intrasentential code-mixing utilises Hindi as the Matrix Language, possibly with the exception of the example *Looks like quite a few behen out there in this big bad world!!!*, where the ML is English (cf. Myers-Scotton 2009). In the case of the Hindi language constituting the ML it is reflected in the structure of the sentences, and especially in the structure of complex verb phrases, e.g. *walk kerte hein*; *gudnyte kerte hein*; *hum misinformed hai*; *depend karta hai*; *wait kar raha hu*, etc. Of particular interest here is the use of conversion, i.e. applying lexical English items, notably verbs, in the form of nouns in complex verb phrases, e.g. *walk karte hein* (lit. ‘he does walk[ing]’), *depend karta hai* (lit. ‘it does depend[ence]’), or *wait kar raha hu* (lit. ‘I am doing wait[ing]’). Thus, the collected examples of code-mixing demonstrate that Indian English shows a great degree of adaptability to the ML, i.e. the Hindi context, especially in the word formation of verbs. In the case of intersentential switches the elements switched are full sentences, which does not constitute much risk grammatically in terms of violating any structures. In the case of intrasentential switches the English elements cover the above-mentioned verbs inserted into complex verb phrases, which ensures grammatical adaptability and, predominantly, nouns as well as adjectives which, as the analysis of this limited group demonstrates, fit in the Hindi structure. It is visible, for instance, in terms of the word order within a phrase, as in *hum misinformed hai* (‘we are misinformed’), sometimes almost up to a point of relexification of the whole sentence, as in *ye hum par depend karta hai ki hum misinformed hai ki uninformed ki informed ya well-informed*, in which case they do not violate the structure of the Matrix Language either (cf. Myers-Scotton 2009). Why did the post authors switch between the two languages at all? Both languages, after all, offer sufficient means to express the required meanings. However, code-switching and code-mixing are a day-to-day phenomenon in India, and are, no doubt, connected with the status of both tongues involved. Hindi is the official language of the state, and also one of the local languages in the North, it therefore constitutes a marker of identity for its users. At the same time English is an assistant language in India, a language of inter-state communication, but also the most powerful lingua franca of the modern world, and a language of especially great prestige and fashion in India (cf. Dąbrowska 2011a). Both languages are, therefore, used and, in fact, expected as prestigious tongues – code-switching makes it possible to combine both of them. According to Myers-Scotton such switches would be examples of unmarked switching (cf. her Markedness Model – 1993a). They are also especially expected as markers of in-group identity – and indicators of one’s membership of this particular community of practice (cf. Eckert 2000, Dąbrowska 2011b, Dąbrowska forthcoming 2012), i.e. the community of Facebook users. They are therefore a particularly characteristic item of the Facebook language.

Concluding remarks

The following comments might be made on the basis of the foregoing analysis:

- The popularity of English among Indian Facebook users indicates its prestigious character.
- Most of the time, users adhere to the norms of Standard English, particularly that of British Standard English regarding norms of grammar and spelling, although a considerable American influence can be detected in the informal context of Indian English use at the level of vocabulary and pronunciation.
- However, the analysis has also demonstrated that Indian English bears its own culture-specific characteristics, visible at a number of levels. This is reflected in the grammar of the collected materials, which does depart at times from Standard British English taught at school, particularly in terms of word order, lack of agreement between the subject and the verb, question non-inversion, culture-specific gradation of adjectives, invariant tags, etc.
- Departures from the standard are largely systematic, although the analysis has also shown quite a substantial number of spelling and grammatical mistakes. Those were, up to a point, blurred by the shortening strategies (deletion of vowels, clippings, letter-word and number-word substitution, etc.), characteristic of the CMC language in general. The frequency of use of those strategies was at least twice as high among users of Indian English as it was in the case of Standard English users. Shortenings, therefore, need to be recognised as a characteristic feature of informal Indian English.
- A particularly idiosyncratic feature of Indian English are items which mark pragmatic use of English, i.e. elements which are particularly strongly, and often exclusively, bound with the local culture. This is visible both at the level of terms of address (both native titles and their English equivalents), which reflect a culture-specific use of deference, respect and/or solidarity, and in the interaction of Indian English users, particularly in the context of special occasions requiring ritual wishes, congratulations, and positive encouragement. In such situations one speaks emphatically and controls one's language less. The fact that such elements are to be found in the written medium, and in the informal CMC context in particular, points to the fact that the above are particularly strongly ingrained in the user's vocabulary and linguistic practice. This co-existence of both types of elements, the local and the global (which Hindi and English represent, respectively), finally reaches its peak in the process of code-switching/code-mixing, where the two varieties are intertwined within one post or even one sentence. The above features, then, represent the quintessential personality of an Indian English Facebook user, who takes the best of both worlds and elevates it to a different functional level.

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