Of Changing Needs and Mismatched Expectations: Teaching Business Communication in Indian Business Schools

Madhusri Shrivastava[1] iD

Abstract

The exploratory research uses the framework of Communication Studies and Sociology to demonstrate how restructuring of social hierarchies impacts language use in the Business Communication class of an Indian management institute. The study examines how dominant communication practices are being subverted by issues of identity, power, privilege, sociopolitical forces and technological transformation. It suggests that instructors teaching Business Communication may benefit by aligning their pedagogy to the sensibilities of the present generation of management students. The paper is premised on the interpretivist belief that meanings and identities are socially constructed through respondents' engagement with everyday realities. Twenty-two in-depth personal interviews were conducted with participants of the postgraduate programme in management and instructors of Business Communication. Further, a questionnaire was administered to 51 participants of an executive management programme to understand attitudes towards language use at the workplace. The responses indicate that a variant of indigenised English appears to be acquiring legitimacy amongst young professionals, while instructors continue to emphasise grammatical accuracy, blindsided by their training in language and literature. Therefore, to cater to the next generation of managers, instructors may have to shed their bias against non-formal expressions in English, and consider focusing on the functional aspects more important for intra-national purposes.

Keywords

Business Communication, pedagogy, English, Indian management institutes, sociocultural change, Communication Studies

This exploratory paper seeks to understand the hitherto unexamined societal and cultural changes that have transformed the attitude of management students in Indian business schools towards the English language itself, and consequently, towards Business Communication. It examines the curriculum and

[1] Communication Area, Indian Institute of Management Indore, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India

Corresponding author:
Madhusri Shrivastava, Communication Area, Indian Institute of Management Indore, Prabandh Shikhar, Rau Pithampur Road, Indore, Madhya Pradesh 453556, India.
E-mails: madhusri@iimidr.ac.in; madhusrishrivastava@gmail.com

pedagogy of the Business Communication course from the perspective of its purveyors and consumers, namely, the instructors and their students. The research works across boundaries of business education and language use in a cultural, sociopolitical and technological context and engages with the manner in which established communication practices are subverted by issues of identity and power. Employing a range of interdisciplinary perspectives, it researches the importance of inclusiveness in educational contexts, and attempts to demonstrate how classroom interactions are the site for interplay of multiple social and cultural forces. The purpose is to understand the changing patterns of English usage in the business school context primarily through theoretical lenses from Communication Studies literature and Sociology, namely, Co-Cultural Theory–Dominant Group Theory (Orbe, 1998; Razzante & Orbe, 2018), Communication Accommodation Theory (Gallois et al., 2018), Speech Codes Theory (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981; Philipsen, 1976) and Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1979, 1984). The study questions the overemphasis on correct usage and English grammar in a Business Communication class, and highlights the mismatch between the expectations of the instructors and those of young management students. The paper submits that instructors need to reorient themselves in tune with the altered requirements of their students and focus on the functional and contextual aspects of business messages.

Business Communication is taught in almost all management institutes as it is considered a skill that recruiters routinely seek in prospective employees. Research is compellingly clear and consistent about the necessity of restructuring the Business Communication course in tune with the changing requirements of both management students and their employers (Apparaju, 2016; Condon & Hoggart, 1997; Li, 2017; Plutsky, 1996; Warner, 1995; Zhu & Liao, 2008). In India, the increased presence of multinational corporations has further underscored the need for imparting effective communication skills to prospective managers (Agarwal, 2008; Apparaju, 2016; Gupta, 2005) India has over 5,500 business schools,[1] a reflection of the aspirational quotient associated with management education. The curriculum of the 'required communication courses in Indian business schools focuses mainly on skill acquisition—written and oral' (Rajadhyaksha, 2002), that is, the ability to speak and write the English language with reasonable fluency in business contexts. Faculty teaching Business Communication to business graduates in India consider basic skills in Standard English as a pre-requisite to drafting effective business emails, memorandums and reports (Apparaju, 2016). However, students' perceptions regarding the Business Communication curriculum reflect how this emphasis on correct English leads to disinterest in acquiring Business communication competencies, especially since 'somewhere down the line, the medium of communication is more emphasised than communication itself' (Agrawal, 2008). Mere rituals of teaching Standard English may no longer serve the needs of a swiftly evolving business environment that has little need for purity of expression, and privileges linguistic flexibility over form. The altered mindset of the current generation of management students, namely, generation Z that was born after the mid-1990s, is a manifestation of changes in the cultural and sociopolitical environment in India. While Hinglish, an indigenised version of English, is gaining currency among young professionals, instructors who teach Business Communication in Indian management institutes are often blindsided by their training in language and literature, the very basis of their academic identity. They essentially continue to remain, teachers of English, without adapting to the changing requirements of management students and the corporate organisations that recruit them.

Changing Composition of Business School Participants

Ever since Macaulay's Minutes on Education (1835) laid the foundations of English education in India, 'creating a new caste of English educated gentry' (Acharya, 1988, p. 1124), English has inalienably been

associated with success in all spheres. In a polyvocal country such as India, English is necessary for official, administrative and business purposes. It is therefore one of the two official languages in India (the other being Hindi), and the medium of instruction in higher educational institutes. British linguist David Graddol estimates that as many as 55–350 million English speakers are to be found in India (Baker, 2015). The swelling ranks in English medium schools and the proliferation of English-speaking classes are testimony to the social mobility associated with proficiency in the language.

Nonetheless, in the last three decades, a series of economic, social, cultural and technological changes have led to repositioning of the English language in India. Studies estimate that in the period between 2004–2005 and 2011–2012 the Indian middle class has increased to a staggering 604 million from 304 million (Krishnan & Hatekar, 2017). This spectacular growth has been fuelled by the proliferation of opportunities for wealth creation (Parasuraman, as cited in Chhapia, 2016). After the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s, as purchasing power increased considerably and 'consumerism was sanctified' (Varma, 2007, p. 183), business studies attracted youth from the aspiring neo-middle class of tier 2 and tier 3 Indian cities. Globalisation enabled the Indian middle classes to aspire for and live the consumerist lifestyles of the developed countries. More significantly, this growth was accompanied by a powerful up-thrust from the backward castes, who acquired political heft and were beneficiaries of the affirmative action that gave them legitimate space in professional institutions and government jobs (Kochhar, 2004). Large numbers from smaller towns sought admission in engineering colleges and management institutes to achieve 'upward socio-economic mobility via professional education' (Upadhya & Vasavi, 2006, p. 49).

Moreover, the current generation of Indians in their early twenties is far removed in time from memories of colonisation. They may still look westwards for professional advancement, but globalisation has denuded the awe that characterised their parents' attitude towards native English speakers. English still is the language of the upper crust that is the dominant group in all spheres of society, but the sense of entitlement of this stratum is being challenged by the new middle classes gaining access into arenas hitherto out of bounds for all but the privileged few. This shift in the approach to English usage is in part a reflection of the changes in the composition of the student population in higher education institutes. It is also in keeping with a recognisable social phenomenon: as cultures across the world begin to celebrate diversity, normative models of language cease to be seen as markers of social identity (Baron, 2008).

Expositing on the shifting paradigms in postcolonial pedagogy, Niranjana (1990) had drawn direct correlations between the burgeoning confidence of the Indian middle classes, and the weakening of influence of metropolitan 'cultural signifiers'. Non-western texts are aggressively seeking legitimacy as students challenge the cultural authority of canonical, colonial texts, and defy strictures of accuracy in spoken and written English. The new-found confidence of the hitherto marginalised sections is best represented by a growing impatience with rigid norms that restrict the freedom to shape the English language in accordance with their requirements. Besides, under the influence of right-wing ideology, over the last decade, there has been a resurgence of pride in all things Indian. It has created a class that is very comfortable with its own native culture and social identity and is vocal in its support of regional language use for official purposes. The hold of English over the minds and hearts of Indians had once led the British satirist and journalist Malcolm Muggeridge to remark that the last Englishman left would be an Indian (Iyer, 1997). However, if right-wing ideologue Swapan Dasgupta is to be believed, 'after 70 years of self-rule, such people are a minusculity' (Dasgupta, 2018). The cachet still enjoyed by English breeds resentment against the widening cultural and socio-economic divide between dominant groups who have access to English education and the marginalised ones who are denied it (Dearden, 2014). The growing political and economic power of the new middle classes lends traction to the demand for social and cultural legitimacy to regional languages.[2] Notably, a new variant of indigenised English reigns

supreme: English has morphed into Hinglish, a unique combination of English and Hindi. If 'popularity of a language depends upon the social prestige, self-respect, regional pride and national sentiment of its speakers' (Deshpande, 2000), Hinglish is the new variety that has caught the imagination of the media and marketing mavens. Interspersing English sentences with Hindi, or with any of the several regional languages, imbues it with a reassuring familiarity. It divests it of its upper-crust pretensions, while investing it with *apnapan*, a word that can loosely be translated as 'a feeling of belonging/of one's own'.

Caught in a Time Warp

More importantly, technology has been the greatest driver of the move towards a pithier, and more informal version of language, characterised by hybridity. Research in the area of techno-linguistics reminds us that among the current generation

> …there seems to be a growing sense of laissez-faire when it comes to linguistic consistency …{a} 'linguistic whaterism' {which is} less a display of linguistic defiance than a natural reflection of changing educational policies, shifts in social agendas, a move in academia toward philosophical relativism, and a commitment to life on the clock. (Baron, 2008, pp. 169–170)

Notwithstanding the prognostications of alarmists, studies indicate that computer-mediated communication is not leading to the death of the language; it has actually triggered linguistic creativity, hence what we are witnessing is 'language in evolution' (Crystal, 2008, p. 175).

Above all, not only is the hybrid language different, the cultural sensibilities of its speakers have undergone a sea change too. 'Competing in global education markets has created an awareness of the need to generate discourses that situate educational institutions and practices as ideological and material embodiments of sociocultural contexts and sites that necessarily reflect the lived experiences of postcolonial realities' (Pillai, 2015, p. 152). Yet, despite the changes that have swept over English language studies at the undergraduate level in most Indian universities, in the world of Indian business schools, validation is still sought from the west; for the major part, participants of the postgraduate programme are required to study principles and practices of managerial communication emanating from the west. Business Communication in Standard English is hence a pre-requisite for executive education; not only because of the all-encompassing influence of the American educational institutes, but also on account of the increasing power of multinational corporations (Altbach, 2007). The dominance of English is ascribed to the unification of markets, and its unassailable position attests the extent to which 'language policy interlocks with all the other domains of social interaction and hierarchization' (Phillipson, 2001, p. 188). Significantly, while pragmatism propels developing countries towards English as a medium for conducting business, learners are straitjacketed into the standardised mental models that subsume their own understanding of reality (Phillipson, 2001).

Further, in Indian academia 'the value historically placed on teaching British literature manifests itself today in an English faculty composed solely of literature teachers' (Ramanathan, 1999, p. 225) who are expected to help students acquire proficiency in the functional aspects of spoken and written English. In the case of business schools, the problem is compounded by the fact that instructors who teach Business Communication are almost always drawn from a pool of aspirants who have undergraduate, postgraduate, as well as doctoral degrees, in English literature and language.[3] They are therefore twice removed from the training they have received and 'are not exposed to the recent developments in their area in the corporate world' (Jha & Kumar, 2012, p. 15). Unsurprisingly, in its present form Business

Communication continues to lay emphasis on the mechanics of the language, in addition, to form and etiquette, although social media, globalisation and the overpowering influence of American cultural texts have rendered the earlier proprieties meaningless.

Theoretical Framework of Communication Studies and Sociology

Social constructionist research has always focused on the evolution of communicative practices and everyday interactions in order to understand the interrelationship between power, privilege and communication. Essential to a deeper understanding of this interlinkage are critical–cultural theories that engage with the influence power wields over communication (Althusser, 2006; de Certeau, 1988; Foucault, 1979). Co-Cultural Theory focuses on the way in which co-cultural groups, i.e., groups that have been historically marginalised, interact with dominant groups that have been historically privileged (Orbe & Roberts, 2012). Using concepts similar to that of Co-Cultural Theory, Dominant Group Theory (Razzante & Orbe, 2018) throws light on sociocultural power dynamics in communication contexts. Issues of dominance and control also undergird the Structuration Theory of Giddens (1979, 1984), wherein he exposits on the power that social systems and structures confer on dominant groups in society by providing them access to allocative and authoritative resources. This command over material objects and people allows the elite to legitimise existing social practices that further their interests. However, even as unequal distribution of resources ensures structural continuity and constrains action, social change is made possible through collective movements that overturn the structures of dominance (Chitnis, 2005; Giddens, 1984).

Further, complex questions pertaining to power, language, context and identity are addressed by the Communication Accommodation Theory that underscores the difficulties inherent in communication between people who occupy different positions in the power hierarchy (Gallois et al., 2018, p. 311). Failure to adhere to norms of the standard, prestigious speech codes may give rise to feelings of inadequacy amongst speakers (Philipsen, 1976), a manifestation of the 'linguistic insecurity' Labov (1973) had drawn attention to. Therefore, groups often alter their communicative behaviour either by converging with or diverging from the communication practices of others, continuously seeking a balance between the conflicting pulls of social inclusion and the desire to establish one's distinctive identity (Gallois et al., p. 314). Although Communication Accommodation Theory was employed initially to assess how linguistic markers and bilingualism inflected membership to cultural groups, it has also been applied to study communication in intercultural and intergenerational settings (Giles & Johnson, 1987). Similarly, Co-Cultural Theory has been used as a theoretical framework in the study of multiple groups ranging from people of alternative sexuality to people with special needs. There is a need, however, for the exploration of 'non-western and indigenous approaches to culture' adopted by dominant groups (Giles & Watson, 2013, cited in Gallois et al., 2018).

Methods

It is in this context that the study seeks to explore the manner in which communication practices of erstwhile dominant groups are being challenged by co-cultural groups who are gaining ascendancy in the social hierarchy.

The purpose is to understand the ways in which 'the domain of everyday experience and its linguistic representation are cultural creations' (Katriel & Philipsen, 1981), and how sections of society gradually

exercise agency to align their practices with their purpose. The changing paradigms of social acceptability are impinging on the shibboleths of pedagogy and course content in Business Communication. The theoretical framework of Communication Studies was therefore considered appropriate as it is grounded in qualitative and mixed methods research and aligns with the research design selected. The research was primarily exploratory, and was premised on the belief that multiple meanings are constructed in the course of respondents' engagement with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000; Schwandt, 2000). Through an inductive and interpretive process, patterns of meanings were arrived at by construing the way respondents view the world and construct their identities. The focus of the study was on 'contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants' (Creswell, 2007, p. 21), and also on the manner in which personal experiences shaped my own interpretations. Purposive sampling methods were used to conduct 15 in-depth personal interviews ($n = 8$ women and $n = 7$ men) with participants of the postgraduate programme in management in a premier business school located in a tier 2 city in India. All of them were in the age group of 22–25 and had less than two years' work experience. In-depth personal interviews were also conducted through purposive sampling with seven instructors of Business Communication in Indian B-schools ($n = 6$ women and $n = 1$ man), all with degrees in English language/literature: one educated in a small town, two from tier 2 cities, the fourth, fifth and sixth from a metro city, and the seventh with a degree from a university in the USA. The study was conducted over a period extending from February 2017 to July 2018. A small, but focused sample was considered suitable for the study, since saturation had been reached in terms of the information elicited from the responses of the interviewees. The in-depth interviews, each of which lasted from 60 to 80 minutes, allowed face-to-face interactions and enabled me to capture both affective and cognitive aspects. The interview questions were open-ended and semi-structured, to enable faithful documentation of interviewees' perceptions. Inferences were reported as 'research-based assertions' supported by analyses, relevant quotes from the interviews and interpretative comments, to present a comprehensive picture of the interviewees' outlook.

The research also draws upon my own decade long experience of being an instructor of Business Communication in B-schools. The attitudinal changes observed in the participants of the postgraduate management programme, and insights gained from extended discussions with faculty members teaching Business Communication, fuelled my interest in the manner in which English used for business purposes was becoming more malleable. At times, I was a participant-observer: this was so when I was teaching Business Communication in the class and discussing the appropriateness, or otherwise, of certain modes of writing emails and reports. The interviews were conducted in English and were recorded. Particular care was taken to ensure that the interviewees belonged to different regions in India and were from different socio-economic strata. This was also kept in mind while selecting the instructors to be interviewed.

Further, questionnaires were used to collect data from 51 ($n = 39$ men and $n = 12$ women) executive participants of a programme in business management in Mumbai, an Indian metropolis. A five-point Likert scale was employed to assess the importance accorded to mastery of business English, as well as their attitudes towards English as a marker of socio-economic class, and a pre-requisite for upward mobility. To ensure fair representation the sample was drawn from those with considerable work experience: both mid-level and senior-level executives. The responses supplemented insights drawn from the interviews. When describing attitudes and challenges related to language use, a descriptive design was employed. Interpretations drawn from multiple sources, i.e., the interviews, observations, and the survey, helped establish the complex issues that informed the importance of reworking the pedagogy and the curriculum of Business Communication.

Teaching Business Communication: Challenges and Concerns

Insights drawn from in-depth interviews with seven instructors of Business Communication underscored the challenge of establishing the relevance of a course that is acknowledged as important, but seldom given the attention it merits. All the instructors reiterated that classes in oral communication were valued in management programmes, but there was tremendous resistance to courses that involved written communication.[4] Participants were unwilling to invest time and effort into a venture that did not bear dividends within a short time.

Professor Aruna,[5] whose doctoral work is in Linguistics, maintained that the instructors teaching communication in B-schools were essentially teachers of language, and that even stalwarts from the field of communication, such as Stephen Bailey and Mike Markel, have a basic background of language studies, which is the core discipline. She observed:

> This region is changing the language according to its requirements. Code shift is the rule, and intermingling of languages is no longer disapproved. But you have to retain the essence. What they {participants} speak is not Indian English … that has been standardised since the 1980s. They are asserting their right to make mistakes. When corrected, they counter-argue 'We know the degree of formality expected in the corporate world, and will shift to an acceptable style when required'.

However, she feared that their confidence was borne out neither by their performance in the class nor when they faced recruiters. Hinglish, was 'cool' to use, and granted them flexibility. More importantly, no one could judge them on the basis of correctness. She wondered:

> How far can this flexibility be stretched? Clarity, conciseness, process and organisation are indispensable. How will they write reports that are objective and accurate, and understood across all the regions that speak English? The style they use is part of the 'SMS culture'. How can you write 'Hello' as your salutation? Nowhere is this accepted in formal communication!

(Incidentally, the participants who have worked in the software companies would contend that such informality is embedded in the organisational culture of the Information Technology industry).

With her specialisation in language studies and fluency in several Indian languages, Professor Revati often used innovative ways to teach English phonetics through the vernacular to students from semi-urban backgrounds. She considered it essential for business graduates to switch from the informality of the water cooler conversations to the linguistic propriety required in formal settings. Having taught Business Communication for over 15 years in various management institutes, she had witnessed a change in the attitude of her students: they simply did not care about the register, the format or even the clarity of content. She claimed:

> I look upon myself as a facilitator … and I maintain the communicational difference between grammar and language. However, I cannot allow the meaning to change because of wrong usage. Unfortunately, my students cannot even construct a simple sentence without using words such as *matlab ki* (Hindi words that denote 'By that I mean').

While instructors expected greater diligence from their charges, they admitted that many of the participants were demotivated on realising they did not have the wherewithal to master the language within 20 sessions. When their efforts in the classroom did not elicit appreciation from instructors, they quickly lost interest. Instructors concurred that students were generally unreceptive to feedback. The

general perception among participants of the management programme was that they could succeed at the workplace without the course in Business Communication.

Acutely conscious that Business Communication practices are fraught with sociocultural conditioning, Professor Aruna indicated that 'culture was a huge factor in the classroom' and even the most innovative pedagogy could misfire. Examples of miscommunication, particularly those that involved humour (in this case a sentence from the television show 'Whose Line is it Anyway?'), were incomprehensible to several participants. They complained that they 'had not been trained this way'; they were not 'into this kind of thing'; or that the effort they had invested in the class was 'the limit' of what they could do. More significantly, they found the use of humour in the classroom inappropriate, and in some ways derogatory to those unable to comprehend it. The context, even when provided by the instructor, was often so far removed from the participants' notions of what constituted reality that it failed to convince. Textbooks of Business Communication were culture-specific and adhered to standards of correctness legitimised by native speakers of English. The 'arguments for teaching and the methods recommended for reading them still emanate from the Anglo-American book markets' (Chandran, 2006, p. 154). There was increasing awareness among management students that 'the ideas and concepts that have been effective in the countries of their origin have been less effective in Indian organizations' (Dayal, 2002). Hence it stood to reason that an understanding of cultural and sociopolitical underpinnings must precede any unreflective imposition of texts or educational models (Hodkinson & Devarakonda, 2011).[6]

This was underscored by Professor Snehal, who had acquired mastery of the English language only after she moved from a small town to a bigger city for a doctorate in English literature. She deplored the fact that in India effective Business Communication was conflated with fluency in English. Moreover, because her home state was known for its low context communication, she was sensitive to the culture-specific variations in written communication. Participants often pointed out to her the dissonance between the cultural environment in Indian organisations and the tone of writing advocated in books by native speakers of English.

Instructors pointed out that multinational corporations in India were gravitating towards low context and less convoluted western norms of business writing, but for the major part, family-owned businesses[7] and public sector undertakings continued to prefer archaisms, such as 'your esteemed organisation', 'your gracious presence', 'your kind consideration' and 'my humble submission'. Participants of the management programme often claimed that the stilted, formal phrases disapproved by instructors were the very expressions they were expected to employ at their workplace.

It was evident from the responses of the instructors that cultural norms privileging a direct writing style were often at odds with the more circumlocutory style that favoured 'saving face'. For instance, a request for response by a specific date, like 'Please let us know by … as we have to move quickly' is deemed discourteous. Participants would rather soften the sentence with 'kindly respond at the earliest', without stipulating a date. Again, the query 'Would you please help us decide if Acme Hotel can be the venue for our annual conference?' that comes to the point without a preamble, is considered rude and 'in your face'.

This lack of congruence between the email etiquette advocated by native speakers of English, and the ground realities in the Indian business context was described by Professor Nalini. She recounted how a participant had demurred at the suggestion that an email to a prospective vendor contains all information that is relevant. With the sagacity inherent in the Indian mercantile community to which he belonged, the participant commented: 'Apni handi men kitna chawal hai hum kyun batayein?' (Why reveal what is the quantity of rice in my pot? A metaphoric allusion to the need for keeping your cards close to your chest while negotiating a business deal). Professor Nalini had taught literature to undergraduates for two years before transitioning to Business Communication. Her chief regret was that 'a major part of the syllabus

of Business Communication lacked soul'. She confessed that she looked upon herself essentially as a teacher of English language:

> I believe that language is the heart and core of communication. As regards, grammatical correctness, while I may not be tyrannical about it, I do believe that respect for language includes abiding by the rules of its structure. It is difficult to stop oneself from correcting grammatical errors.

She reflected:

> Students resist anything to do with language … mainly the English language. Then there is the mindset that assumes language is purely functional and serves a utilitarian purpose alone. This, unfortunately, is the opinion of learned colleagues too.

Professor Shaila too admitted that she looked upon herself essentially as a teacher of English language who attaches importance to the 'correct usage of language'. Although she had been teaching Business Communication in a metro city, the composition of her classes was not homogeneous in terms of English language proficiency. Her greatest challenge was to balance the needs of students who were fairly proficient in the use of English with that of students struggling to articulate even simple sentences accurately. Although she acknowledged that abbreviations and an admixture of English and Hindi were commonly used while communicating on social media, she averred that 'knowledge of correct English was crucial'.

Professor Madhavi stated that she enjoyed teaching 'communication theory, non-verbal communication, barriers to communication and interviews', since one could bring in numerous examples from public and private sector organisations. She admitted that she found it difficult to resist the temptation of correcting the grammatical errors in the students' written and oral communication, although she realised that they were preparing to enter the world of business, and would have little use for such exactness. She reflected that the component of oral communication and presentation skills would be far more useful to them, as would a course on emotional intelligence. She had observed a marked difference between the earlier batches of students and the present ones: receptivity to feedback, especially in matters concerning language use, was waning.

Professor Chetan has an undergraduate degree in literature and a doctoral degree in cultural studies from an American university. He believed that the ubiquitous impact of the software industry and the resultant informality that had seeped into language usage had led to disregard for any kind of formalisation of language. The challenges faced by instructors arose essentially because the standardised Common Aptitude Test taken by thousands of candidates across India for entry into management institutes did not test them for their knowledge of functional grammar. Secondly, the Latinate syntax of English did not come naturally to Indians. While he did not over-emphasise grammar in the Business Communication class, he admitted that 30 per cent of the evaluation component was based on linguistic clarity, i.e., the ability to use 'standard' English with reasonable accuracy.

All the instructors maintained that technology had changed Business Communication in ways that were unaesthetic. Truncated sentences and slang jostled with officialese in a mix unacceptable to them. It was significant that the 'WhatsApp' status message for a group of Business Communication instructors was a quote: 'I don't judge people based on race, creed, colour or gender. I judge people based on spelling, grammar, punctuation and sentence structure'.

It appeared from the interactions with instructors that, notwithstanding well-intentioned efforts, '{t}eachers of English have neither the authority of the justice nor the audacity of the thief' (Sledd, 1965,

p. 700), hence the futility of imposing linguistic standards of a bygone age on the new generation. What was worthy of being taught was the use of language in a manner suitable for the purpose for which it was being employed. More importantly, for the language to be useful, it had to 'be shorn of its former glamour and cultural snobbery' (Gupta, 1995, p. 78), and rooted in practicality.

Hinglish: The Tie that Binds

The disregard of language norms held sacrosanct by the instructors was reflected in the responses of the interviewees who were participants of the two-year full-time postgraduate programme in management. They confessed Business Communication was placed low in the hierarchy of courses they studied, because it had failed to keep pace with changes in the corporate world. English continued to be a 'gatekeeper to power', and made them 'future ready', but they were reluctant to associate higher social class with proficiency in the English language. Speaking and writing well definitely gave them an edge over those battling with the language, yet they were emphatic that punctilious adherence to grammatical accuracy and to British English had no place in a Business Communication class at the postgraduate level. Hinglish had become the unifier, arching over linguistic barriers in the multilingual set-up of an institute of higher learning. Moreover, a working knowledge of English was all that was required to get by in the world of work.

Swati, who had worked in an educational counselling agency, was assigned a client-facing role because of her facility with words. She recounted how she had been chided by her peers for preferring to speak in English rather than in Marathi, her mother tongue, especially in the midst of colleagues belonging to the same region. They had asserted the importance of *abhimaan*, that is, pride in one's culture. Whether in college or at the workplace, bonds were forged through the mother tongue. This was confirmed by Kapil, a chartered accountant now pursuing a management degree. In his organisation, English was employed only for terms related to finance; interaction with clients, barring those from multinational corporations, was in Hindi than in English. Faraz and Dinesh, both engineers with experience of working in Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), indicated that young executives preferred to speak in Hinglish; or else, they chose to converse in the regional language.

Suniti, a software developer who had spent two years in the Knowledge Process Outsourcing industry, described how they had even coined words in Hindi for the jargon commonly used by coders and developers in software companies: for instance, 'there is an error in the code' was described as 'code phat gaya hai' (the code has split). As part of their initial orientation programme, new joiners who lacked the required level of fluency in English were made to undertake remedial lessons. However, within months, the young trainees settled into a 'comfort zone' in which English, Hindi and the regional languages co-existed harmoniously. Business English (the form of Indian English used in organisations), was a professional requirement; never the language of interpersonal exchanges. *Indianisms* were perfectly acceptable in official correspondence as long as the recipient understood the message. The style of writing was simply adjusted to match the organisational culture. It was informal where the hierarchy was flat; more formal where the power distance was greater.

Jaya, an electronics engineer, had worked in a start-up in Gurugram, a hub for IT and ITES. She observed that the internal interviews for project allocation at her workplace were always conducted in Hinglish. Some of her colleagues who had studied in vernacular medium government schools did have difficulties with spoken and written English, but professional advancement within the company was not hampered by their inability to draft emails or write project reports in 'good English'. Smita, also an Electronics engineer who had worked for a software solutions firm, indicated that when interacting with

overseas clients, they received support either from the on-site counterpart, or from the team lead, who willingly 'covered up' for their colleagues' lack of fluency. She believed sound technical knowledge was far more important for moving up the corporate ladder than any of the Business Communication skills touted in business schools.

Riya and Aman were both electronics engineers from reputable regional engineering colleges. The former had worked as a senior associate in a capital markets firm, and the latter in a major telecom company. They reiterated that a mix of Hindi, English and the local language was used for workplace interactions. Grammatical correctness was never a concern, except when formal reports had to be submitted. Riya admitted:

> If it {a report} has to go out, we ask someone in the office to double check the language. Emails are a problem at times … but we learn through imitation. As long as we can implicate {*sic*} the meaning, it is fine.

Lalitha, who had two years' experience as a business analyst, had a similar perspective. She too spoke of the importance of writing reports of weekly deliverables in fairly accurate English. Initially, she had faced difficulties, but her seniors had soon schooled her. What mattered was mastery of the professional jargon of the industry.

Bakul was a civil engineer from one of the most prestigious institutes in India, yet he spoke English haltingly. He recounted that his first job in a well-known construction company entailed regular interfaces with vendors and suppliers in local markets, hence, it was knowledge of the local language that had stood him in good stead.

What set Rohit apart from the rest of the respondents was his pronounced regional language accent. An engineering graduate from the eastern part of India, he conversed confidently notwithstanding the malapropisms (he used the word 'terrible' to mean 'terrific' and was unfazed when it was pointed out gently). He explained how he had been plagued by anxieties about his flawed sentence constructions and poor vocabulary, till a communication coach had advised him to stop fretting over grammar, since he was not going to be judged on his ability to turn out elegant phrases in English. He stated:

> What is important at the workplace is quick and effective communication. You have to be clear in conveying your ideas. I will never be biased against anyone who makes mistakes when writing in English. If he is reporting to me, I will not stop his promotion.

Responses from interviewees revealed that well-meant attempts by instructors to correct faulty sentence constructions were often viewed with exasperation. Manjari was very sceptical of the improvements suggested in her assignments by the instructors of Business Communication:

> Do you really think it matters? I have worked in an organisation for two years … neither my colleagues nor my seniors wrote any better than me. As long as I convey my meaning, who cares if the tense is wrong … if the preposition is missing?

With candour, Sharad, the youngest of the interviewees, offered his perspective on the classroom exercises in Business Communication:

> Most participants in the class do not have the vocabulary to write any better. And they are not interested either…

Interviews with the respondents established that they did not discount the importance of effective communication; just that the English they chose to communicate in had moved beyond the 'constraints'

imposed by instructors of Business Communication. So, one did not 'look forward to' … but 'look forward for' the event; one did not 'explain the meaning to him', but 'explain him the meaning'; one 'took tension' and 'passed out' of college. An interesting aspect of the interviewees' attitude was revealed in the course of the interactions: there appeared to be a certain inverted snobbery among some of the participants when they spoke dismissively about the need for superior skills in spoken and written English at the workplace. There was an unwillingness to accord it a very high place in the order of enabling factors that guaranteed professional success.

Garima, a senior member of the business school's placement committee, regularly interacted with Human Resource personnel from various corporate organisations. In premier Indian management institutes, the placement committee has a databank of companies and arranges for campus interviews for business graduates. Since her responsibilities were primarily focused on getting graduates of business schools placed in organisations, she was attuned to industry requirements. She stated that the level of English proficiency demanded depended on the nature of the industry and the job profile of the aspirant. While most consulting firms preferred candidates fluent in spoken English, effective written communication was emphasised only when the job entailed preparation of industry reports, as in the case of rating companies. A majority of the finance, insurance and banking sector organisations, as well as the FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) companies chiefly looked for grasp of domain knowledge. Public Sector Companies were 'vernacular' in their approach, and not overly concerned about proficiency in English. In the final analysis, recruiters demanded 'an overall package', i.e., a combination of content, deportment, attitude and culture fit; the ability to communicate in 'correct' English in the business context was only one of the many components of this 'package'.

All the interviewees were convinced there was more to effective Business Communication than drafting flawless emails and writing cogent reports. When interacting with peers and seniors, or with clients, vendors and retailers, it was more important to 'establish that connect'. Interspersing English with the local language helped them strike an immediate rapport. Conversely, the use of 'polished English', with its aura of superiority, only alienated them from those they needed to influence and persuade. Effective communication was no longer synonymous with an ability to express oneself like a native speaker of English. Communication in faultless English was considered an enabler in the corporate world; yet, the groundswell of opinion was in favour of Hinglish at the workplace.

Perspectives from Executive Participants

Thus, the insights gained from the interviews highlighted that particularly among young participants of MBA programmes, effective communication was no longer synonymous with an ability to express oneself like a native speaker of English. The interviewees had worked in entry-level positions in corporate organisations. I wished to understand if their disregard for correct usage was shared by executives who were not in the initial stages of their career, and had completed their postgraduate studies in an earlier era, in the decades prior to the opening up of India's economy. Accordingly, data were gathered by administering a questionnaire to 51 executives. Twenty-two of them were in the age group of 25–35, and 24 between the ages of 35 and 45. Five respondents were above 45 years of age.

- Of the respondents, 41 had had their education in English medium schools, while 10 had studied in the vernacular medium. (Education in the vernacular medium, however, had not adversely impacted the career growth of these 10 respondents, as all of them were mid-level and senior-level executives.)

- 44 of the respondents acknowledged the importance of speaking grammatically correct English for career advancement.
- 42 of them agreed that fluency in English contributed to better career prospects.
- 31 respondents indicated that those in the topmost positions in their organisations used the English language impeccably.

However, it was noteworthy that

- A majority (46) of the respondents agreed that a mix of English and Hindi was most frequently spoken at the workplace.
- Only 24 of the respondents were willing to ascribe flawless diction and impeccable writing to social superiority. This was in keeping with the interviewees' assertion that proficiency English could not necessarily be attributed to higher social class.

The data reaffirmed that communication in flawless English was considered an enabler in the corporate world. In contradistinction to the young participants of the postgraduate programme (interviewees) who had grown up in post-liberalisation India, the senior and mid-level executives who responded to the questionnaire indicated that better command of the English language facilitated professional advancement. This importance accorded to English by older executives may well be understood as a function of the fact that higher levels of managerial responsibilities involve extensive interaction with important external stakeholders. However, it also pointed towards the social expectations and cultural norms of an earlier generation of management professionals. Notably, it was evident from the responses of the executive participants that most of them were in favour of Hinglish at the workplace, an indication of the changing dynamics of language use in corporate India.

Crafting New Standards of Legitimacy

The increasing acceptability of Hinglish, and the experimentation in terms of language usage indicate how new definitions of social legitimacy are being crafted, replacing older expressions that fail to represent the world view of young professionals. Generation Z in India is representative of post-liberalisation consumerist ethos. Exposure to global culture through digital media, the ease and affordability of travel across continents, and the mobility of skilled labour to the west have given rise to a class that has jettisoned the trappings of the past. In addition, social media have led to a disregard for the rules of grammar, syntax and spelling. Senior executives from reputable companies affirm that a decade ago mingling Hindi with English would have been 'a sign of a lack of education. Now it's a huge asset … power has shifted to the young, and they want to be understood rather than be correct' (Baldauf, 2004).

In keeping with the norm developing proclivities of countries that lie in the outer circle of classification of World Englishes (Kachru, 1986), linguistic norms of the past are being contested. Schneider (2003) posits that as former colonies forge a new national identity the initial stages of language usage pave the way for the development of a robust hybrid variety of English. He maintains that this phase of Endonormative Stabilisation 'is marked by the gradual adoption and acceptance of an indigenous linguistic norm, supported by a new, locally rooted linguistic self-confidence' (Schneider, 2003, p. 249). Speakers stake ownership of the language as Anglo-centrism loses its hold in the 'periphery nations' (Higgins, 2003, p. 617). As in most developing countries, in India too business establishments are at the vanguard of this change, since the competitive domestic market has made it imperative for companies to

'Indianise' in order to survive (Baldauf, 2004). The prognosis is, 'Hinglish will spread as India becomes more powerful' (Baker 2015).

Those privileged in the societal hierarchy have always used their power consciously or unconsciously to reinforce structures that impede on the lived experiences of co-cultural, i.e., marginalised group members. The proficient use of Standard English has historically been associated with the privileged class that dominates politics, media and administrative services in India. English has therefore been, and is even now for all practical purposes, the marker of power and privilege in society. However, sociopolitical forces may lead to erstwhile co-cultural groups gaining dominance in societal hierarchies and redefining notions of appropriate and effective communication (Orbe, 1998). The increasing use of Hinglish by the new generation of prospective management professionals signals the restructuring of societal hierarchies, and a challenge to the erstwhile socially dominant groups that consider the norms of Standard English as sacrosanct. The historically marginalised speakers of 'non-Standard English' are gradually asserting their presence, and consequently, new norms of language use are being established. The media were the first to reflect this change, with their move towards mingling English with local languages—especially Hindi. The corporate world followed suit. With the rise of the neo-middle class and the consequent entry of students from the small towns of India into elite business schools, Hinglish gained primacy.

Explicating the 'dialectic of control', Giddens (1984) states that structural reality is made up of repeated patterns of social practices that endure, and consequently, impede the process of change. Yet, within the existing social framework, people can be empowered and can exercise agency to counter structures of domination: that is, they can take decisions on matters that impact their lives (Chitnis, 2005). In the Indian context, structures and systems that legitimise certain ways of using English continue to be reproduced in the same unaltered forms, thus constraining the process of change. Everyday practices within and outside academia reinforce existing power relationships and inhibit the wide-scale adoption of new variants of English. However, simultaneously, large segments of society are adapting to altered social realities and creating new communication practices that match their needs. Eventually, the communicative practices and the knowledge people create on the basis of their lived experience (Chitnis, 2005; Giddens, 1984) will challenge and undermine the imposition of established forms of communication.

Studies indicate that groups that wish to maintain their linguistic identity often interweave words and grammatical expressions of their mother tongue into the language of the dominant group (Giles & Ogay, 2007) With regard to the students who were respondents of this study, their departure from Standard English appeared to serve as a distinctive feature of group membership in the microcosm that was the business school. The desire to gain acceptance from the group they identified with was a powerful motive for strategies of convergence (Giles & Ogay, 2007), since adopting a linguistic style favoured by the group led to stronger interpersonal bonds. Therefore, speech characterised by a hybrid variety of non-standard English was viewed as 'an instrument of sociability with one's fellows' (Philipsen, 1976, p. 25). However, simultaneously there was an unarticulated, possibly unconscious need to establish their distinctive identity through divergence from the norms of Standard English. The assertive use of Hinglish allowed young people the comfort of a speech code that melded English with familiar expressions from regional languages. The students did not consciously seem to employ strategies divergent from the communication norms advocated by instructors in the Business Communication class as an act of differentiation. It was the sincerest expression of who they were: products of post-liberalisation India who were aspirational and comfortable in the global arena. It was the reflection of a pan-Indian phenomenon that mirrored the emergence of a self-assured new social identity: a class of citizens, unapologetic about its antecedents, even aggressive in its demand for acceptance on its own terms.

Furthermore, in the B-school scenario, the co-cultural groups—viz. the students, were in a position of privilege now since they were important stakeholders, and their requirements, as also that of the corporates who employ them, reigned supreme. Since many of them had experience of working in the industry, they were unwilling to acquiesce to communication practices that did not reflect their everyday realities. The previously marginalised co-cultural groups could engage in communicative practices they were comfortable with, even as the erstwhile dominant groups, in this instance the instructors, were sceptical of the casual and often flagrant disregard for linguist norms. The instructors may have viewed a certain proclivity towards non-accommodation (apparent in some of the respondents), as unconcern for the approval of the gatekeepers of hallowed portals. Generally, those in subordinate positions (co-cultural groups) are expected to accommodate the 'prestige patterns' of those in superordinate positions (dominant groups), a strategy referred to as upward convergence (Giles & Ogay, 2007, p. 295). Conversely, participants who attempted to converge to the instructors' styles, i.e., to the norms of Standard English, would be considered as more amenable to course correction, more competent and receptive to learning. In keeping with this, the instructors' WhatsApp status message (as stated earlier), was a reassertion of the boundaries of linguistic acceptability, a communication approach that rationalised existing values through 'aggressive reinforcement' (Razzante & Orbe, 2018, p. 363), and attempted to maintain the status quo. It was in the Business Communication class that they could ask their students to 'sanitise' and 'standardise' their sentence structures in accordance with established norms, since only in the context of the classroom did they have the authority and autonomy to set the rules of acceptability.

Nonetheless, it is possible for dominant groups to use power productively (Allen, 2014; De Turk, 2011; Foucault, 1979), and even be 'interpellated as allies' of co-cultural group members (De Turk, 2011, as cited in Razzante & Orbe, 2018). That is, power and privilege may be deployed by dominant groups to create a level playing field and establish greater sociocultural equality. Razzante and Orbe (2018) indicate that the adoption of an assertive dismantling communication approach enables dominant group members to facilitate change in society. Notably, this can be undertaken mainly by people who have self-assurance and our comfortable with their identities (Razzante & Orbe, 2018).

In this context, it is suggested that instructors, who occupy positions of privilege within the classroom and beyond, understand the need to adapt to the altered sociopolitical environment. Both as academics and as members of the dominant groups in society, it behoves them to reinvent themselves as allies rather than as adversaries of their students (De Turk, 2011). Through a realistic reassessment of the purpose of the Business Communication course, instructors could take recourse to assertive dismantling of 'oppressive communication practices' that act as constraints. While apprising students of the need for different registers in different communicative contexts, they may make efforts to facilitate ease in communication through 'micro-affirmations'. This would require an understanding of how technology and socio-political realities have permanently altered the communication landscape in a way that requires a serious realignment of pedagogy with everyday lived experiences. Survival and continued relevance require flexibility and reconstitution of norms.

Limitations

It needs to be underscored that the study is exploratory hence further research may be required to understand if the altered attitude towards language use at the workplace is true for larger segments of the student populace in Indian management institutes. Students' perceptions regarding the need for accuracy in the use of language, and the degree of proficiency in English they possess, may vary according to geographical location, since in India, complex political and socio-economic factors govern the importance

accorded to the English language in school and college curricula. To offset this problem, the sample selected had interviewees from tier 2 and tier 3 cities as well as metropolitan cities in India. This was possible because the premier business school selected as the site for the study draws applicants from across the country who score high marks in an extremely competitive Common Aptitude Test.

Similarly, with regard to the choice of instructors, albeit the sample size is small, care was taken to ensure that responses were sought from a range of interviewees teaching in different institutes and representing of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

Further research could also be undertaken to ascertain the perceptions of HR professionals and hiring managers who regularly visit Indian business schools for recruitment. It would also help to compare the findings of such research with the perspectives of employers based outside the country regarding the importance of written communication, for instance, U.S.-based studies conducted by Hart Research Associates (2018).

It would be interesting to carry out a longitudinal study to observe the changes, if any, in the attitudes of the young research participants, when they move into more senior positions in the corporate world. Perhaps then, the disregard for language proficiency might give way to a greater regard for improved English language skills when communicating at work.

Finally, my interpretations may have been inflected by my own position as a Business Communication instructor of many years' standing, although I have attempted to keep my biases at bay.

Conclusion

This research thus draws upon a range of related perspectives to understand the interface between business education and the sociocultural forces that shape the dynamics of teaching and learning. Through insights into the lifeworld of the respondents, it explores how the changing socio-historical context and repositioning of power structures impacts language use in the Business Communication class in an Indian management institute.

In the final analysis, it exhorts instructors of Business Communication in management institutes to recognise 'the different functions English must perform for different categories of people' (Gupta, 1995, p. 77). Business Communication may add more value to management education if instructors modify their approach to match the requirements of their students and make way for the *Indianisms* that are an integral constituent of the English language as it is used in the world of work. This also requires an acknowledgement of the new generation's desire to exercise agency and assert its cultural identity by adapting English to the region's requirements, 'adding local vocabulary, focussing on local cultural variations, developing fresh standards of pronunciation' (Crystal, 2001). Of necessity, 'understandings of "which English" and "whose English" should be related closely to developing an understanding of local contexts' (Young & Walsh, 2010, p. 14).

Owing to internationalisation, the decision to spread the study of English is unlikely to be reversed. Hence teachers must make the process of learning 'as enabling and as rewarding as possible' (Dearden, 2014, p. 33). Towards that end, instructors teaching Business Communication in Indian management institutes may need to shed their bias against non-formal expressions and be more accepting of idiosyncrasies of usage that have become innovative features of local Englishes. Their purpose should not be limited to equipping students with language skills for international comprehensibility; perhaps the greater need today is for skills that cater to intra-national purposes, for the markets within India. It is time 'to shift their focus from primarily subject discipline to application … to respond to the need of client

organisations which themselves are subject to such changes' (Dayal, 2002, p. 99). A way forward is to focus on new workplace technologies that have revolutionised communication (Laster & Russ, 2010). Further, in keeping with technological development. the emphasis on business writing could make way for multidisciplinary topics (Li, 2017). The process of change would require 'educators to retrofit their own mindset … {and go beyond} the rules and mechanics of grammar, or format of a business letter' (Berry, 2013, p. 58). English is merely a tool for Business Communication; the subject also encompasses non-verbal communication, interpersonal relationship and intercultural competencies, among other skills. Instructors may want to adopt the communicative approach, integrating Business Communication pedagogy with learning from functional areas of management, while ensuring that communication skills run as a common thread through all the core courses (Condon & Hoggart, 1997). Instead of treating Business Communication as a repository of set phrases and expressions, they could introduce interactive sessions that recreate authentic real-life business situations (Sampath & Zalipour 2010) and encourage participants to use contextual intelligence to determine the appropriate register.

This study therefore suggests that 'English teachers' who teach Business Communication must remain 'alive to the possibilities of reconstituting the subject' (Chandran, 2006, p. 151). They would benefit by initiating open discussions about the challenges that beset them, reviewing textbooks and teaching materials for cultural appropriateness, and acknowledging the usefulness of code-switching. Pedantic notions of exactness in language may undercut the very purpose of teaching communication to prospective managers; instead, instructors could choose to value 'nonprestige varieties of English' and 'perceive "error" as the learner's active negotiation and exploration of choices and possibilities' (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 593), while impressing upon their students the advantages of fluency in multiple Englishes. When the curriculum and the pedagogy of courses in communication are attuned to the requirements of the workplace, they reflect the lived realities of those seeking employment. To remain relevant, instructors may need to adapt to altered cultural and sociolinguistic demands, for the effectiveness of Business Communication is determined by its success in addressing stakeholders' needs.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

ORCID iD

Madhusri Shrivastava https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9397-2025

Notes

1. The article cites The Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) study which attributes deterioration in student quality in premier institutes to the poor quality of high-school education in India (Chakrabarty, 2016).
2. According to a report from search giant Google and consulting firm KPMG India, Indian language users have overtaken English language users on the Internet in India (Ujaley, 2018).
3. A quick look at the profiles of faculty teaching communication in 8 of the Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) indicates that at least 14 of the 24 have qualifications in English literature or language. (Information was gathered from the websites of Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Indore, Kashipur, Bodhgaya,

Lucknow, Nagpur, Sirmaur.) This is essential because Indian universities do not offer degrees in organisational communication**.**

4. In this context, it is noteworthy that Tirumalesh (1991) had drawn attention to a significant distinction, namely, how 'writing in English is very different from writing English'. Writing in English requires a degree of self-abnegation, a submission to the homogenising demands of the centre. The former is the prerogative of those whose first language is English; the latter of those who learn it as a second language.

5. All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

6. Hodkinson and Devarakonda (2011) drive home their point through the example of the word 'pity'. While in the west, the word is associated with condescension and is therefore not used with respect to disability, in India, teachers working with those with special needs repeatedly used the word interchangeably with compassion, almost celebrating it, for a significant feature of Indian values is its celebration of pity as 'charity of deed'. This researcher has observed a similar tendency on the part of Indian students of Business Communication: when writing a mail soliciting funds for the underprivileged, both the word 'pity' and the sentiments it evokes are frequently used to move the recipients to action. Students are unable to understand why such words are considered demeaning and inappropriate.

7. India has 108 publicly listed family-owned businesses, the third highest in the world (*Times of India*, 2017).

References

Acharya, P. (1988). Is Macaulay still our guru? *Economic and Political Weekly*, *23*(22), 1124–1130.

Agarwal, S. (2008). Indian business management students' perceptions about and preferences for the business communication course curriculum. *The ICFAI University Journal of Soft Skills*, *2*(3), 7–22.

Allen, B. J. (2014). *Difference matters: Communicating social identity*. Waveland Press.

Altbach, P. G. (2007). The imperial tongue: English as the dominating academic language. *Economic and Political Weekly, 42*(36), 3608–3611. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40276356

Althusser, L. (2006). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation). In A. Sharma & A. Gupta (Eds.), *The anthropology of the state: A reader* (pp. 86–98). Blackwell.

Apparaju, H. (2016). How effective are the persuasive and other communication abilities of MBA students in India: Implications for business communication courses. *The IUP Journal of Soft skills*, *10*(3), 24–47.

Baker, S. (2015). Will we all be speaking Hinglish one day? https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/will-we-all-be-speaking-hinglish-one-day

Baldauf, S. (2004). A Hindi-English jumble, spoken by 350 million. https://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1123/p01s03-wosc.html

Baron, N. S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. Oxford University Press.

Berry, P. (2013). The impact of globalization and technology on teaching business communication: Reframing and enlarging world view, methods, and content. *American Journal of Business Education*, *6*(1), 57–66.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2006). The place of world Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition and Communication*, *57*(4), 586–619.

Chakrabarty, R. (2016). 93 per cent MBA graduates are unemployable: Problems with management education in India. https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/mba-education-problems-328626-2016-07-11

Chandran, K. N. (2006). On English from India: Prepositions to post-positions. *The Cambridge Quarterly*, *35*(2), 151–168.

Chhapia, H. (2016). New entrants in India's middle class: Drivers, carpenters, pani puri vendors. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/New-entrants-in-Indias-middle-class-Drivers-carpenters-pani-puri-vendors/articleshow/53370870.cms

Chitnis, K. (2005). The duality of development: Recasting participatory communication for development using structuration theory. *Investigación y Desarrollo*, *13*(2), 228–249.

Condon, G., & Hoggatt, J. (1997). New directions for an old department. *Journal of Education for Business*, *72*(6), 331–335.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*, (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: SAGE Publications.

Crystal, D. (2001). The future of Englishes analyzing English in a global context. http://www.beta-iatefl.org/844/blog-publications/the-future-of-englishes/

Crystal, D. (2008). *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8*. Oxford University Press.

Dasgupta, S. (2018). Why Modi chose Hindi medium to pitch India to the world. https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/right-and-wrong/why-modi-chose-hindi-medium-to-pitch-india-to-the-world/

Dayal, I. (2002). Developing management education in India. *Journal of Management Research*, *2*(2), 98–113.

Dearden, J. (2014). *English as a medium of instruction—A growing global phenomenon*. British Council. https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/e484_emi_-_cover_option_3_final_web.pdf

de Certeau, M. (1988). *The practice of everyday life* (S. Rendell, Trans.). University of California Press.

De Turk, S. (2011). Allies in action: The communicative experiences of people who challenge social injustice on behalf of others. *Communication Quarterly*, *59*(5), 569–590. doi:10.1080/01463373.2011.614209

Deshpande, A. (2000). Hindustani in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *35*, 1240–1242.

Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Random House.

Gallois, C., Watson, B. M., & Giles, H. (2018). Intergroup communication: Identities and effective interactions. *Journal of Communication*, *68*, 309–317. doi:1093/joc/jqx016

Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*. University of California Press.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Polity Press.

Giles, H., & Johnson, P. (1987). Ethnolinguistic identity theory: A social psychological approach to language maintenance. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *68*, 69–99.

Giles, H., & Ogay, T. (2007). Communication accommodation theory. In B. B. Whaley & W. Samter (Eds.), *Explaining communication: Contemporary theories and exemplars* (pp. 293–310). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gupta, J. M. (2005). An integrated approach to management communication at the T.A. Pai Management Institute. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *68*(2), 237–246.

Gupta, R. K. (1995). English in a postcolonial situation: The example of India, *Profession*, *98*, 73–78.

Hart Research Associates. (2018). *Fulfilling the American dream: Liberal education and the future of work*. Author. https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2018EmployerResearchReport.pdf

Higgins, C. (2003). "Ownership" of English in the outer circle: An alternative to the NS-NNS dichotomy. *TESOL Quarterly*, *37*(4), 615–644.

Hodkinson, A., & Devarakonda, C. (2011). For pity's sake: Comparative conceptions of inclusion in England and India. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, *4*(2), 253–270. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/irqr.2011.4.2.253

Iyer, P. (1997). English in India: Still all the raj. *New York Times Book Review*. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/97/08/10/bookend/bookend.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

Jha, S., & Kumar, M. (2012). Revitalising management education in India: A strategic approach. *Journal of Management & Public Policy*, *3*(2), 5–17.

Kachru, B. B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions, and models of non-native Englishes*. University of Illinois Press.

Katriel, T., & Philipsen, G. (1981). 'What we need is Communication': 'Communication' as a cultural category in some American speech. *Communication Monographs*, *48*, 301–317. doi:10.1080/03637758109376064

Kochhar, R. (2004). Denationalised middle class: Global escape from Mandal. *Economic and Political Weekly, 39*(1), 20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4414456

Krishnan, S., & Hatekar, N. (2017). Rise of the new middle class in India and its changing structure. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *52*(22), 40–48.

Labov, W. (1973). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania.

Laster, N. M., & Russ, T. L. (2010). Looking across the divide: Analyzing cross-disciplinary approaches for teaching business communication. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *73*(3), 248–264.

Li, M. (2017). Constructive alignment: Teaching business communication to Asian international students. Journal of Organizational Behavior Education, 10, 57–74. http://www.neilsonjournals.com/JOBE/

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & E. G. Guba (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 163–188). Sage.

Niranjana, T. (1990). 'History, really beginning': Compulsions of post-colonial pedagogy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *25*(42/43), 2379–2384.

Orbe, M. P. (1998). From the standpoint(s) of traditionally muted groups: Explicating a co-cultural communication theoretical model. *Communication Theory*, *8*, 1–26. doi:101111/j.1468-2885.1998.tb00209.x

Orbe, M. P., & Roberts, T. L. (2012). Co-cultural theorizing: Foundations, applications and extensions. *Howard Journal of Communications*, *23*(4), 293–311. doi:10.1080/10646175.2012.722838

Philipsen, G. (1976). Places for speaking in Teamsterville. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *62*, 15–25. doi: 10.1080/00335637609383314

Phillipson, R. (2001). English for globalisation or for the world's people? *International Review of Education*, *47*(3–4), 185–200.

Pillai, M. (2015). Cultural studies and the reinvention of English pedagogy in India. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, *46*(1), 143–173.

Plutsky, S. (1996). Faculty perceptions of students' business communication needs. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *59*(4), 69–76.

Rajadhyaksha, U. (2002). Teaching communication: Where do Indian business schools stand? *Vikalpa*, *27*(2), 49–56.

Ramanathan, V. (1999). "English is here to stay": A critical look at institutional and educational practices in India. *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*(2), 211–231.

Razzante, R. J., & Orbe, M. P. (2018). Two sides of the same coin: Conceptualizing dominant group theory in the context of co-cultural theory. *Communication Theory*, *28*(3), 354–375. doi:10.1093/ct/qtx008

Sampath, D., & Zalipour, A. (2010). Effective Teaching strategies for learners of business communication: A case study from INTI University College, Malaysia. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *XIX*(3), 256–266.

Schneider, E. W. (2003). The dynamics of new Englishes: From identity construction to dialect birth. *Language*, *79*(2), 233–281.

Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 189–213). SAGE Publications.

Sledd, J. (1965). On not teaching English usage. *The English Journal*, *54*(8), 698–703.

Times of India. (2017, October 26). India has third highest number of family owned businesses – Report. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/india-has-third-highest-number-of-family-owned-businesses-report/articleshow/61244515.cms

Tirumalesh, K. V. (1991). Writing-English versus writing-in-English: New Notes on an Old Theme. *Economic and Political Weekly*, *26*(47), 2670–2672.

Ujaley, M. (2018). Indian languages are storming the internet in India, 9 out of 10 new users to be an Indian language user. https://www.expresscomputer.in/news/indian-languages-are-storming-the-internet-in-india-9-out-of-10-new-users-to-be-an-indian-language-user/21282/

Upadhya, C., & Vasavi, A. R. (2006). *Work, culture, and sociality in the Indian IT industry: A sociological study*. Final report submitted to NIAS-IDPAD, Bangalore, India.

Varma, P. K. (2007). *The Great Indian Middle Class*. India: Penguin Books India.

Warner, K. (1995). Business communication competencies needed by employees as perceived by business faculty and business professionals. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *58*(4,) 51–56.

Young, T., & Walsh, S. (2010). 'Which English? Whose English?' An investigation of non-native teachers' beliefs about target varieties. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *23*(2), 123–137.

Zhu, W., & Liao F. (2008). On differences between general English teaching and business English teaching. *English Language Teaching*, *1*(2), 90–95.

Author's Bio-sketch

Madhusri Shrivastava is faculty in the area of Communication at the Indian Institute of Management, Indore. Her areas of interest include Communication, Cultural Studies, Literature and Media studies.