Giuliana Regnoli, *Accent Variation in Indian English. A Folk Linguistic Study*
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Reviewed by Roberta La Peruta

Giuliana Regnoli's *Accent Variation in Indian English. A Folk Linguistic Study* explores direct and indirect language attitudes and perceptions towards regional accent variation in a transient Indian student community studying in Heidelberg, Germany, in 2018.

The data are gathered from "sixty speakers […] aged 21–30, coming from sixteen Indian states, speaking fourteen different languages as L1 (one Germanic language (English), 9 Indo-Aryan ones, 4 Dravidian ones) and the same number of IndE regional dialects" (117) and are based on sociolinguistic interviews collected using network and ethnography sampling methods. More specifically, the author follows a 'friend-to-friend' approach to target language users, accessing the community – and their subgroups – and eliciting "participants' information for each of the social variables already partially defined in other sociolinguistic studies (gender, ethnicity and time spent in Heidelberg)" (116). In doing so, Regnoli is the first to examine language perception and use in an Indian diasporic group located in Germany through a sociolinguistic lens and to provide a detailed perceptual landscape map of English dialects in India. Therefore, what makes this contribution particularly enlightening is the research gap that it aims to fill. Indeed, while accounting for *stankos* – borrowing from Bloomfield – or folk beliefs about perceived accent variation, it investigates an Indian local community whose peculiarity is entailed in its very nature: the speakers of Northern and Southern Indian English (IndE) varieties represented in the interviews constitute a transient, short-lived, dynamic multilingual community that is based in non-anglophone settings, two areas of research which have so far been neglected in Indian diasporic studies.

The research questions and aims of the present study include a) the perception of different accents by members of the aforementioned community – as well as shared assumptions and knowledge related to the same –, explored with the help of mental maps; b) the collection of self-reported folk attitudes towards phonological variation in the range of IndE varieties spoken by the interviewees, and the degree to which the perceived accents index regional ethnic identities; and c) the interaction between language variation and network integration within their community in terms of linguistic awareness and attitudes arising from the recognition of different dialectal traits.

The detailed methodology used to uncover (perceptually heterogeneous) folk perceptions of different Indian English accents in the investigated multilingual speech community combines perceptual dialectology and language attitudes research through an *ad hoc* deductive mixed-method approach relying on dynamic data collection techniques. Indeed, over the last fifty years, methodological triangulation has often been selected by researchers in the field of social sciences, among which (socio)linguistics, in that it enables the validation of data from a quantitative and qualitative perspective, and "allows researchers widen their inquiry with sufficient depth and breadth" (Dawadi, et al. 2021:27).

The volume is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One, the author introduces the matter at hand as well as the community under scrutiny, the research aims, and its design.

Chapter Two defines the key terms used throughout the study and offers an overview of sociolinguistic theory, folk linguistics, and perceptual dialectology, as well folk metalinguistic awareness, or overt knowledge and attitudes about language by nonlinguists. It also includes sections dealing with one of its central topics, namely how language attitudes (and especially accent variation) affect identity and what these concepts stand for, with specific reference to Indian diasporic environments. Finally, it focuses on the definition of a speech community and the role, uses, and features of L2 English in transmigrant diverse societies, with a focus on Indian ones.

The volume proceeds with Chapter Three, which defines the research area, providing a historical account of the Indian diaspora in Germany and Heidelberg, and describing the demographic distribution of its population, as well as its varied degree of socioeconomic, sociocultural, and political integration.

Chapter Four illustrates the experimental research design and methodological triangulation used to elicit and interpret the results, including a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methods. Furthermore, it provides information on data collection, fieldwork experience, and statistical testing.

Chapter Five is the core of the volume, and is divided into two sections presenting, respectively, the quantitative (Section 5.1) and qualitative (Section 5.2) data analysis. The first subchapter describes data extraction and coding along with the sociolinguistic variables included to provide a more comprehensive understanding and contextualization of the sample, which also – but not only – tackles the question of ethnic identity and representation. The second subchapter is based on a bottom-up qualitative content analysis (adapted from Mayring 2014) which aims at addressing the themes of indexicality (Section 5.2.1) and metalinguistic awareness (Section 5.2.2), expanding on and adding to the quantitative results shown in the previous section.

Finally, Chapter Six summarizes the research findings and brings to light the study's implications and suggestions for future research. It is followed by bibliographical references and appendices.

Through the analysis of questionnaires, semi-structured recorded interviews, accent identification tasks, and cognitive maps, this research successfully depicts the multifaceted accent perception and phonological variation in Indian students living in Heidelberg, addressing the role of diasporic IndE in Germany, metalanguage, and identity within the theoretical framework of transient multilingual speech communities. Results validate the innovative mixed-methods design adopted and highlight the emergence of precise social stereotypes that are linked to accent variation, viz. Northern accents are perceived as being closer to the norm – and function as a superordinate norm within the student community at hand – whereas Southern ones are deemed to steer away from the standard. As a matter of fact, cognitive boundaries arise from this analysis that suggest dialectal awareness and salience regarding the North vs. South accent divide, showing how distinct phonological features serve as indexes of different ethnic identities, which are often fluid, prismatic, (re)negotiated and (re)negotiable in different (or foreign) sociocultural contexts.

What makes this study interesting is not only the cutting-edge methodological approach but also the choice of examining a transient linguistic group and giving space and voice – an accent, in fact – to one of the many mobile, mixed, and dynamic language communities that are born out of contemporary migration processes which do not allow for "homogeneity, stability and boundedness of languages" (Blackledge and Creese 2019:100). More specifically, in 2018, Indian non-residents living in Germany were estimated to be around 109.000 (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2018), a figure that has been increasing over the past few decades, and largely encompasses skilled and educated immigrants. Though being one of Germany's biggest immigrant groups, the study of linguistic variation in Indian speech communities is considerably overlooked, as has been IndE internal variation. Investigating overt and covert language attitudes, Regnoli is the first to draw scholarly attention to this particular group, adding to the growing body of academic literature that is interested in creating a coherent sociolinguistic model for exploring the complex identities of mobile people and the linguistic processes involved in their representation.

To conclude, this much-needed contribution offers a sociolinguistic take on the problem of heterogeneous perceptual identity representation within a transient multilingual speech community as well as on accent variation as an important identity index. Its exceptionally well-explained content makes it a worthy read for scholars, students, and sociolinguistic enthusiasts who wish to further their knowledge of accent variation in diasporic communities and their "ethnography of speaking" (Hymes

1964), as well as those who are interested in mixed-methods approaches and methodological triangulation.