

Where do you shop --- in mols or molz?

The present study focuses on the variability in voicing patterns in English spoken in Delhi. The study departs from the past practices of treating Indian English as a second language where the local innovations are looked at as deviations from the standard ENLs, which are then attributed to the mother tongue influences. An attempt to move beyond the concept of English as a second language (ESL) and to define Delhi English as a new variety has been made in this study. The enormous increase in the use of English beyond institutional domains over the past three decades and the growing bilingual interactions make it necessary to view Delhi English differently and as a new variety in its own right.

Voicing is examined in three morpho-syntactic categories such as plurals, possessives and third person singulars and one phonological category as shown in (1-4).

1. Plurals (cats, bags, judges etc.)
2. Possessives (black buck's legs, dog's collar, mother's day etc.)
3. Third person singulars (loves, cries, kills etc.)
4. Stem internal (chrysanthemum, absurd, assorted etc.)

The results of the study show that there is a clear preference for a voiceless variant [s] over a voiced variant [z] irrespective of the context within which it occurs. Limited voicing that occurs is conditioned not by the preceding segment alone but by the following one as well. It appears to be a weak phonological process than a morphophonemic one looking at the striking similarity in voicing patterns of the morpho-syntactic and phonological categories.

Reading tasks involving word-lists, sentences and passages serve as the primary source of data in the study from eleven speakers in the age group of 25 to 30 years, born and brought up in Delhi belonging to middle class population. Additional data from spontaneous speech suggest that voicing in Delhi English takes place at the word boundary instead of at the morpheme boundary.

The results of the subjective reaction tests further show that no social stigma or prestige is attached to the use of (s). There is also no evidence of style shifting in the speech of Delhiites with respect to [s] or [z].

There is a remarkable unity in the voicing patterns across the eleven speakers in spite of having different L1s and schooling backgrounds. None of the social factors turned out to be significant.

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The paper investigates the voicing patterns in English language as spoken in Delhi, India. Delhi is situated in northern India and its population comprises immigrant (from other urban and rural places within India) as well as the locally born people. Delhi is a multilingual speech community where English is used as a medium of interpersonal communication. The present study concentrates on the English language as used by the locally born population of Delhi who have different first languages. Data used in the study was collected from the North and North-West areas of Delhi.

