

## **Do speakers of Indian English accommodate on the telephone in professional interactions? The India Telephone Maptask**

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In this study speakers of Indian English complete a maptask (Brown 1995, Anderson et al 1991) on the telephone with a speaker of American English, in order to determine whether they make any adjustments in the direction of American phonological variants. Two phonological variables where there is a distinct American English variant and a distinct Indian English variant, namely /a/ in BATH and postvocalic /r/ are selected and distributed across the landmark names of the maps (*staff room, pool of water* etc.). Sixteen Indian participants from an IT company based in Pune described a route around a map to an American (based in the UK) and a fellow Indian in the control (Pande 2010). Half of the Indian participants regularly deal with customers or colleagues in the US on the telephone, and the other half do not work with Americans at all. For each Indian-American call the American English speaker read out a list of the landmarks at the beginning to prime the Indian participant. Preliminary results indicate that the experienced Indian participants are more likely to move in the direction of the American variant. They suggest that Indians who spend long hours on the telephone to Americans in professional settings (most commonly call centres) are likely to accommodate even without explicit instructions to adopt American pronunciation. These kinds of claims are hard to make with call centre data because even where recordings are available, details of agents and customers are typically not, and management expectations of their accent are extremely complex (Cowie 2007, Cowie and Murty 2010, Poster 2007). Furthermore, the task is a relatively neutral one and allows us to see what is happening when both parties are likely to be co-operative. We expect that this data will also be useful for comparing pragmatic strategies across NNS-NS dyads and NNS-NNS dyads (cf. Lindemann 2002).

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