

Intonational realisation of focus in Indian English spoken by L1 Bengali and L1 Kannada speakers of English

English language spoken in India is one of the most distinct varieties of World Englishes. Taking into account the country's vast linguistic diversity and a steady rise of bilingualism and multilingualism, Indian English (IE) presents a rather complex phenomenon with a number of possible sub-varieties. Previous research indicates that IE has a strong influence from the indigenous languages spoken in the sub-continent (Wiltshire & Harnsberger, 2006). However, despite the fact that the phonological system of IE has always been a subject of interest and current literature includes several descriptions and models of IE (i.e., Wells 1982; Gargesh 2004), there has been very little systematic research into its prosodic structure and intonation variation within this variety.

This paper investigates declarative intonation patterns of the speakers of English of Bengali and Kannada L1 backgrounds. The aspects under investigation are the effect of focus on accent placement and phrasing, the phonetic realisation of broad versus narrow focus and possible differences in distinguishing the types of focus conditions. Five L1 speakers of Kannada and five L1 speakers of Standard Kolkata Bengali were asked to read a number of English utterances. These utterances were responses to prompt questions designed to elicit two focus structures: narrow and broad. The F0 contour for each utterance was annotated for pitch accents and boundary tones using the EMU software for speech analysis (Harrington, 2010). The results show that the speakers of both L1s have a preference for using a rising pitch contour (LH) to mark the focal constituent. This pattern has been documented for a number of Indian languages, i.e. Hindi (Patil, Kentner, Gollrad, Kugler, Fery & Vasisht, 2008), Bengali (Khan, 2007) and Tamil (Keane, 2007). In addition, Bengali L1 speakers tend to use phonetic lengthening and pitch excursion to mark the focal constituent. For both language groups, similar to the speakers of Gujarati and Tamil L1 (Wiltshire & Harnsberger 2006), the speakers in this study used a greater number of pitch accents in an intonational phrase. In narrow focus structures, deaccenting of non-focal material is observed although this is not consistent across the corpus, especially for Bengali speakers. On the contrary, the speakers rely on phrasing instead of the use of pitch accents. The results also show a number of differences in the phonetic realisation of the pitch contour on the focal constituent and the effect of focus on the segmental material between the two L1 groups.

- Gargesh, R. (2004). Indian English: Phonology. In Edgar, W., Burridge, K., Kortmann, B. Mesthrie, R. and C. Upton (Eds.). *A handbook of varieties of English*, Vol.1: Phonology. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Harrington, J. (2010). *The Phonetic Analysis of Speech Corpora*. Wiley- Blackwell.
- Keane, E. (2007). *Distribution and alignment of F0 contours in Tamil*. In the Proceedings of the International Congress of Phonetic Sciences (ICPhS). August 2007, Saarbrücken, Germany.
- Khan, S. (2007). *Phrasing and focus in Bengali*. Paper presented at the ICPhS workshop on the Intonational Phonology: Understudied or fieldwork languages.

- Patil, U., Kentner, G., Gollrad, A., Kugler, F., Fery, C. & S. Vasishth (2007). Focus, word order, and intonation in Hindi. *Journal of South Asian Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-21.
- Wells, J. C. (1982). *Accents of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wiltshire, C. & Harnsberger, J. (2006). The influence of Gujarati and Tamil L1s on Indian English: A preliminary study. *World Englishes*, 22(3), 291-303.