
UNIT 1 : NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Native Varieties of English
 - 1.2.1 Speech community/native language
 - 1.2.2 Variation across time
 - 1.2.3 Variation across space
 - 1.2.4 Dialect and accent
 - 1.2.5 Variation by social class
 - 1.2.6 Variation according to use
- 1.3 Non-native Varieties of English
 - 1.3.1 The spread of English
 - 1.3.2 Implications of the term non-native
 - 1.3.3 Influence of native language on non-native varieties of English
- 1.4 English as a Foreign Language and as a Second Language
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Key Words
- 1.7 Some Useful Books and Journals
- 1.8 Answers

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will help you to

- understand the dynamic and variable nature of language;
- get an insight into the important distinction between native and non-native varieties of language;
- appreciate the difference between native language, second language and foreign language;
- become aware of the different contexts in which English is used and the functions it performs.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language is neither static nor homogeneous. All languages show variation along different dimensions. When one talks about "the English language" or any other language, or when one reads a grammatical description of one language or the other, the impression one gets is that language is a monolithic, homogeneous entity. The fact, however, is that all languages show variation. The variation can be along the dimensions of time or space. Thus English today is different from what it was a few hundred years ago. Similarly, along the dimension of space, we know, languages vary from one place to another -- American English is different from British English and, within British English, there is regional variation as one moves from the south of England to the northern parts. Languages also vary along other dimensions viz. social class, sex, education, etc. As a matter of fact such labels as Chaucer's English, Twentieth century English, Yorkshire English, Queen's English, Standard British English, Cockney English, etc. are evidence of the fact that rather than being a homogeneous, invariant entity, language is essentially dynamic and variable.

1.2 NATIVE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

1.2.1 Speech Community/Native Language

It is useful to begin our discussion of native varieties of English with the term "language community" or "speech community". The language community is a group of people who regard themselves as using the same language. Various other interesting definitions of language community or speech community are available, but the crucial point is that all members of such a group consider themselves not only as using the same language but also as being 'born into' or 'born with' the same language. Thus one can speak of the Chinese speech community, the German speech community, the Hindi speech community, the English speech community, and so on and so forth. All members of such communities, irrespective of 'where' they are, 'who' they are, and at what point of time they are located, identify with a given language. The language we identify with in this manner is generally referred to as the native language. The language is native also in the sense that the person who identifies with it gets her/his first cognition of the world through this language, acquires it before any other language and continues to owe allegiance to it. That is why it is also often called 'mother-tongue' or 'first language'. The term native language (or mother tongue) has its counterpart in the term 'native land' which refers to the nation or country one identifies with. We shall have occasion to return to this term in a different section of this unit. We may note that it is possible for an individual to belong simultaneously to two or more speech communities and learn two or more languages as native languages.

1.2.2 Variation Across Time

Now speech communities or language communities are not undifferentiated. Although members of such communities see themselves as belonging to and using the same language, these members are distributed across time and space. Thus, those who may be considered members of the 'English Community' or native speakers of English have to be looked at along these two dimensions of time and space. The native speakers of English living in the fourteenth century used a variety of English which was very different from the variety of English used in the eighteenth century which, in turn, was very different from the variety of English used in the present century. A comparison of texts belonging to these three periods would make the point very clear. Languages change over time. English today is not the same as it was two hundred years ago, but for a member of the English language community, English was a native language in the fourteenth century, as much as it is the native language for such members of the community today. This is the historical or **diachronic** perspective of looking at language varieties. It is customary to speak of 'old English', 'middle English' 'modern English' and so on. Within modern English one can recognise differences between twentieth century English, eighteenth century English, Elizabethan English, etc. These are all labels to refer to native language varieties across time.

To make you aware how English has evolved, let us look at some major changes in pronunciation since late Middle English:

Some major changes in pronunciation since late Middle English Modern

Chaucer	Shakespeare	Today	Spelling
ti:d	tɔid	tald	tide
gre:n	gri:n	gri:n	green
me:t	me:t	mi:t	meat
ma:k(e)	mɛ:k	meik	make
g :t	go:t	gɔut	goat
fo:d	fu:d	fu:d	food
hu:s	hɔus	haus	house
kut	kut	kʌt	cut
ri:ŋ	ri:ŋ	ri:ŋ	ring
liçt, li:t	liçt, lait	lait	light
kne:	Kni:	ni:	knee

1.2.3 Variation Across Space

However, if one were to keep time constant and focus say, on modern-day English, one would find variation depending on where one is located in relation to space. All languages have regional varieties. It is customary to refer to such varieties as 'dialects' or 'regional varieties'. The English speech community is spread over a vast area and members of this community show a marked difference in their language. The English used in Britain, for example, shows interesting patterns of variation as one moves from one region or area to another. Thus one gets such varieties as South-east Midland dialect, South-central Midland dialect, Yorkshire dialect and so on. Thus what you call a *bʌs* (bus) in Standard English is actually called a /*bus*/ in Yorkshire English with *u* being pronounced as *u* and not as *ʌ* (*u* is roughly equal to /*a*/). The important thing to remember is that from among such regional varieties or dialects, one variety comes to be recognised as "standard" language. In England, for example, the South-east Midland dialect has come to be recognised as "standard", while the other regional varieties continue to be referred to as dialects. Once a regional variety comes to be recognised as the standard, it receives institutional support (e.g. educational institutions teach it, propagate it and promote it, the media uses it and most administrative agencies support and use it), it gains prestige and recognition and becomes synonymous with the national language. Thus, when we talk about British English, we generally have in mind standard British English. This standard form or standard variety forms the basis of all descriptions of the language (grammars, dictionaries, thesauruses, etc.)

Another interesting dimension of the spatial distribution of native language is that often languages come to be associated with political entities known as nations. Thus, the English language, operating as a native language, has come to be associated with national entities such as Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. At this level of variation one can then talk of "Australian English", "British English", "Canadian English", "American English" and so on. The interesting thing is that these different "national varieties" are all native varieties, and the different labels they carry are more indicative of different nationhoods rather than any substantial differences in form. Having said that, one must hasten to add that there are differences between American English and British English or British English and Australian English (as reflected in the spoken form and, to a lesser degree, in the written form), but these differences are generally not taken note of.

1.2.4 Dialect and Accent

Whether or not one speaks standard English, one will certainly speak with an accent. It is wrong to believe that some people speak with an accent while others do not. The fact is that every language user speaks with an accent; it is a different matter that some speakers may have particularly strong or easily recognizable accents. The terms accent, in its technical sense, is restricted to aspects of pronunciation which help us identify a speaker in terms of where s/he is from, regionally or socially. Accent needs to be distinguished from dialect which refers to features of grammar and vocabulary, as well as, to aspects of pronunciation. For example, the sentence "you don't know what you are talking about" will generally appear the same whether spoken with an American or a Scottish accent. Both speakers will be using standard English forms, but have different pronunciations. However, the sentence "Ye dinnae ken whit yer haverin' about", has the same meaning as the first sentence, but represents what a person who speaks a Scottish dialect of English might say. There are, as you will notice, differences of pronunciation (ken, haverin') and a different grammatical form (dinnae instead of don't).

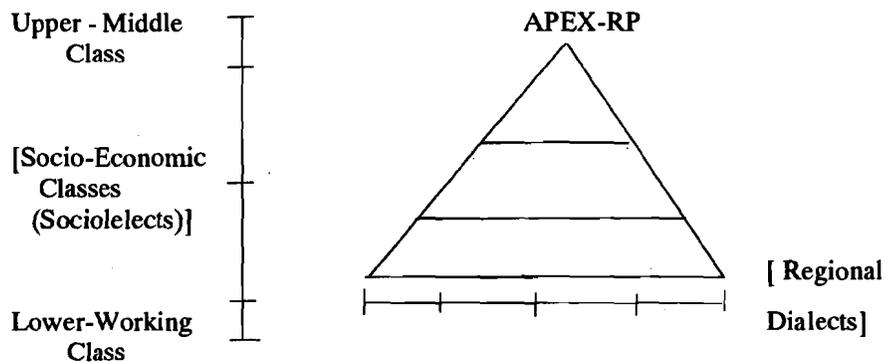
1.2.5 Variation by Social Class

Native languages (English in this case) also vary according to social classes. While spatial distribution gives us different regional dialects, socioeconomic differences lead to social-dialects or sociolects. You must have come across such descriptive labels as "speech of the aristocracy", "upper-class speech", "language of the man-in-the-street", etc. What actually happens is that in any community or society where there are sharp class distinctions, language tends to reflect these distinctions. Present day American society, for example, shows interesting differences between varieties used by the upper-middle classes and the lower working classes. In England, where class distinctions are more sharp than in the U.S.A., differences in sociolects are more pronounced and more easily recognised. We

quote below an extract from Halliday *et al* to give you an idea of these two dimensions of native varieties of English.

The dialect structure of English today can be represented by a pyramid. The vertical plane represents class, the horizontal one region. At the base there is wide regional differentiation, widest among the agricultural workers and the lower paid industrial workers. As one moves along the socioeconomic scale, dialectal variety according to region diminishes. Finally, at the apex there is no regional differentiation at all.... This regionally neutral variety of English, often known as 'RP'... carries prestige and may be acquired at any stage... . Certain institutions, notably the preparatory and public schools create, as part of their function, conditions in which it can be learnt. The speaker of this form of English has many social and economic advantages". (Halliday, M.A.K. *et. al. The linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (1964). London. Longman, Green and Co. p.86).

This may be represented by the following figure:



We may note that Received Pronunciation (RP) is not really 'neutral', even regionally. It is associated predominantly with the South of England. It is of course true that it is more a marker of an elite social class.

1.2.6 Variation According to Use

So far we have discussed native varieties in terms of the 'users' of language and their location in time and space, as well as, in the social structure. However, language also varies according to the uses to which it is put. This variation of language according to its function is called **registral variation** and such varieties are known as **registers**. In any given language community the members use language in a variety of situations, for a large variety of purposes and to perform a wide variety of functions. The native speaker, intuitively and by training, is aware of the conventions that govern the appropriate form of language for a particular use or function. This appropriate form is what register refers to. Certain words, word-combinations and grammatical forms are appropriate for one function, while certain other words, other word combinations and grammatical forms are appropriate for another function. A look at the following examples will make the point clear:

- 1 Medical staff strike work.
- 2 Kapil ripped through Australian batting.
- 3 Add three tablespoonfuls of sugar and mix well.
- 4 All donations are exempt from Income-tax.
- 5 Please speak.
- 6 For necessary action.
- 7 The use of pigments and subtle shades...

- 8 Power, fuel-efficiency and sleek looks.
- 9 Lower necklines and higher hem-lines.
- 10 The gas was passed through a vertical glass tube containing potassium phosphate...

Anyone familiar with English would immediately recognise that examples 1 to 10 belong to different registers. While sentence 1 is clearly a newspaper headline, 2 is part of a report (written or spoken) on cricket. Sentence 3 obviously is part of instructions typical of a recipe, while 4 belongs to an appeal for donations for a charity; 5 and 6 are typical notings from official files. While sentence 7 belongs to a comment on the art of painting, 8 appears to be part of an advertisement. Sentence 9 belongs to a comment/review of fashions and clothing, while 10 clearly belongs to a chapter on some scientific or industrial process.

It is possible to quote any number of sentences or passages to show how language varies according to use. Such language variation is not merely a matter of lexical differences (although some words typically belong to certain types of language use). Registers are marked by different word-collocations or combinations (e.g. tablespoonful, mix well, for necessary action) and certain grammatical features (notice the interesting construction of sentence 1, or the use of impersonal passive construction in 10). By now it has been recognised that the forms of language vary according to the topic (field or subject of discourse), the manner (formal or informal) and whether a discourse is written or spoken (mode of discourse). These three determine variations in language by use i.e. they determine different registers.

Check Your Progress 1

1 What do you understand by "language community" or "speech community"?

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2 a How do languages vary across time?

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2 b Give five examples from your mother tongue of language variation across time.

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3 What are dialects and how are they related to 'standard language'?

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4 What are social-dialects or sociolects?

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5 What are registers? Name the three determinants of registers.

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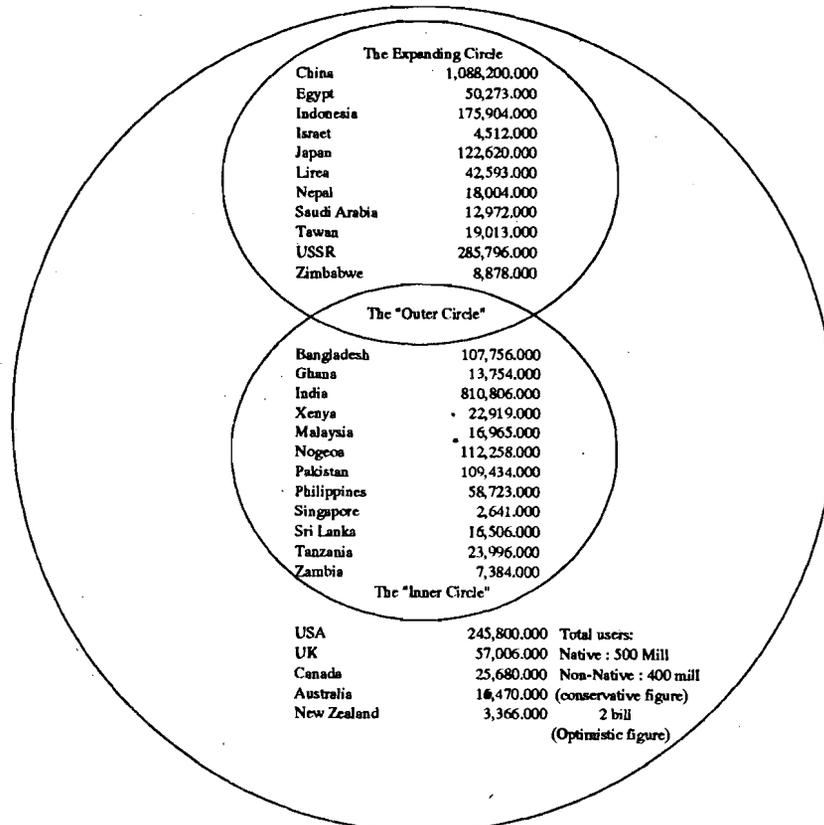
6 Indicate the register to which the following belong:

- a. Girl's merits sole consideration.
- b. F.M. announces further liberalisation
- c. Only local anaesthesia is necessary for such minor surgery.
- d. The relevant files may be put up for further consideration.
- e. Inconvenience to patrons is sincerely regretted.

1.3 NON-NATIVE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

1.3.1 The Spread of English

In the preceding section we have discussed the native varieties of English and brought in such terms as "standard language", "regional dialect", "social dialect", "accent" and "registers". As one moves away from the contexts in which English is used by a native community of speakers (e.g. England, the U.S.A., Canada and Australia), one observes that English is widely used in different parts of the world where it is not a native language. As a matter of fact if we look at English in the global perspective we find that there are many times more non-native speakers/users of English than there are native speakers. One estimate states that while there are 500 million native speakers of English, there are about 2 billion non-native speakers of English spread over different parts of the world (Kachru, 1994). We reproduce below a diagram based on Kachru's work to show the spread of English world-wide. This will give you an idea of the wide dispersal and distribution of English, especially its non-native varieties.



Kachau, 1994

1.3.2 Implications of the Term Non-native

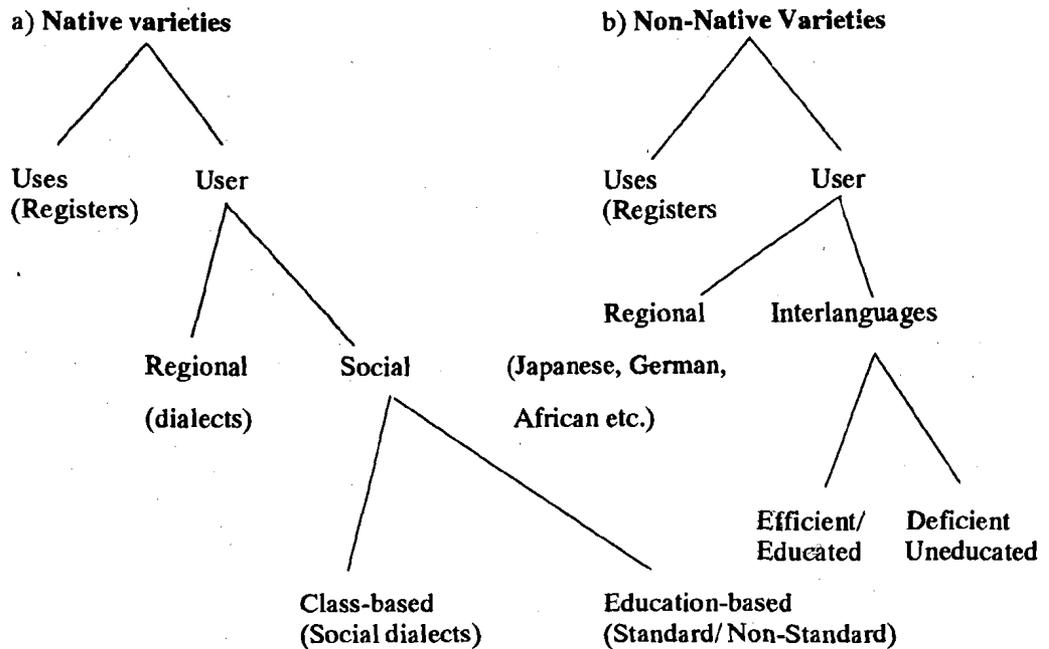
While discussing the native varieties of English we had clarified what we mean by native language or native speakers of a language. In contrast, the term non-native means the forms, uses and functions of English in those parts of the world where it is not the native language (or first language or mother tongue) of the people. The term non-native implies the presence of some other native language. A German user of English has the German language (or some variety of German) as his/her native language, an African user of English has, perhaps, Swahili as his/her native language, just as an Indian user of English may have Hindi or Tamil or Bangla as his/her first or native language. One important implication of this is that these users of English already possess one native language which, at least theoretically, should be sufficient for them for all their communicative needs. English, therefore, constitutes for them an additional language. Now this additional language can be learnt at different stages of life; it can be learnt for different purposes, aims and goals; it can be made use of for different functions, and it can be learnt differently i.e. with different degrees of proficiency. We need to elaborate this further. The German, the African, the Indian all learn English as a non-native language in addition to an already existing native language. More important, however, is the fact that they all learn it with different motivations, for different purposes, and in different socio-cultural contexts. While the Germans, the Chinese or the Japanese learn English as a foreign language, people in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria or the Philippines learn it as a second language. We shall have more to say about these two terms in a later section of this unit. Here we would like to stress that whether one learns English as a second or a foreign language, one does it in a socio-cultural context different from the one that obtains in America or England or Australia. This non-native socio-cultural context has an important bearing on the kinds of non-native varieties of English that arise globally. Furthermore, because all non-native users/speakers of English already know and use their native language, their English tends to be influenced by their respective native languages. This influence is most prominent in pronunciation. However, even vocabulary and grammar tend to show traces of this influence.

1.3.3 Influence of Native Language on Non-native Varieties of English

As stated earlier, non-native learners and users of English already possess and function with their own respective native languages. This means that when a German or a Japanese learns English, some features of her/his native German or Japanese language are carried over into her/his English. You must have observed how easily people are able to identify non-native speakers of English in terms of their native languages. This easy identification is possible because non-native speakers use a form of English that has several features of German or Japanese. "Speaking with an accent", "foreign accent", "German accent", etc. are some of the labels we use to characterise this phenomenon. The sounds, stress patterns and intonation patterns of the non-native speaker's first language are carried over into their English. This carry over is often referred to as **transfer**, and from the pedagogical point of view this constitutes some kind of **interference** in the learning and use of native-like English. This interference and transfer gives rise to various non-native varieties of English which are distinct from native varieties of English. Thus, one can talk about Japanese English, German English, Indian English, African English, etc. The phenomenon of transfer or interference can be viewed from another perspective also. The non-native learner/user of English can be seen as one who is trying to learn and approximate to standard British or standard American English. S/he succeeds in her/his endeavour to a greater or lesser extent depending on a) where s/he learns English, b) why s/he learns English; c) the degree of motivation s/he has for learning English; d) the uses to which s/he puts her/his English; e) the persons with whom s/he uses English, and f) the opportunities s/he has for exposure to native varieties of English. Since all these are variable in nature the non-native speaker/learner of English never achieves total or complete approximation to native standards. S/he therefore has command of and uses an **interlanguage** which is not standard British or standard American English but a learner's variety, a non-native approximation. It is a different matter altogether that some non-native speakers through rigorous training, high degree of motivation and frequent exposure to and interaction with native speakers of English, become fluent and proficient users of native-like standard varieties. They are the exception rather than the rule. The majority of non-native varieties are therefore interlanguages ranging from near-native standard to minimal, heavily marked and restricted varieties of English.

We can round off this part of our discussion by stating that non-native varieties can be viewed in terms of space (as foreign varieties with features of the languages of the region they are used in viz. German English, French English, Japanese English, etc.) or in terms of approximation to native standards (depending on the factors listed above i.e. interlanguage Englishes ranging from the most rudimentary and minimal to the highly proficient, near-native variety). The former variety would be characterised by limited vocabulary, limited grammatical structures, heavy or very prominent 'accent' and rather restricted functional uses. The latter, on the other hand, would be characterised by near-native pronunciation, extensive vocabulary, control of most of the grammatical structures and wide-ranging functions. We can designate these two kinds of non-native varieties as Efficient: Deficient or as Educated: Uneducated. It is obvious that the efficient or educated non-native varieties would include different registers too. Notice that all that we have said about an Indian learning English is equally true of an Englishman trying to learn, say, Hindi.

The following two diagrams would, it is hoped, make the distinction between native and non-native varieties abundantly clear.



Patnaik, B. N. (1991)

Check Your Progress 2

1) What do you understand by interference and transfer?

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2. How would you define the term "interlanguage"?

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1.4 ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN AND AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

From your reading of 1.3 it must have become clear that globally English is perhaps one of the most widely learnt and used languages. People in different parts of the world learn and use English. However, there is a marked difference in the roles that non-native varieties of English play in different countries of the world. While in certain parts of the world English is learnt and used as a foreign language e.g. Germany, Russia, Japan, Turkey to name a few, in certain other parts of the world English is learnt and used as a second language (e.g. several countries in South Asia and Africa). The difference between foreign language and second language can be easily appreciated if you consider for a moment the learning and use of German or French or Italian or Spanish in the Indian context, contrasted with the learning and use of English. Languages such as German, French, Spanish or Italian are learnt as a part of one's personal enterprise, out of personal choice, aspirations and ambitions. These languages are foreign not only in that they do not belong to the Indian nation (that is why English too is a foreign language), but more importantly, we call them foreign languages because we learn them for very restricted purposes. Perhaps we wish to learn more about France, or we wish to acquaint ourselves with the French culture, history and literature, or perhaps we hope, some day, to go to France and in order to make our stay fruitful and rewarding we learn the French language. Other people learn Italian or German or Chinese for similar purposes. In such cases, where a language is learnt and used for restricted, individual purposes we call it a foreign language. These foreign languages, while being available to us if we should wish to learn them, are not an integral part of the socio-cultural and linguistic context in which we live. These languages do not form a part of our communities' verbal repertoire and there is no social or educational pressure on us to learn these languages, in the sense that our daily routine does not require that we learn these languages either for education or for inter-regional communication or for personal interaction with other people within the country. We do not have French, for instance, as a medium of instruction or as a requirement for a job; we do not publish newspapers and books in French, nor do we make public speeches in French. French, therefore, is a foreign language for us in the sense that it is foreign to our socio-cultural, educational and administrative contexts.

On the other hand, English in India (and several other countries of South Asia and Africa), is learnt and used as a second language. We call it a second language, and not a foreign language because it has become a part of our national and socio-cultural reality. English is as much a part of the Indian linguistic scene as any other Indian language. If we consider our educational set-up, our administrative and bureaucratic contexts, our trade and commerce, our judicial set-up, and even our personal communicative needs, we find that the need for English can be discerned in every sphere. There is a constant social pressure to learn and use English and our education system is organised and structured to teach English at different stages. We learn not only English but we also learn many subjects through English. Several of our creative writers write in English. When such a situation obtains it is a) qualitatively different from that of a foreign language and b) quantitatively different too because an ever increasing number of people learn and use English. At the same time, English is not a first language or native language in India. Within the Indian context we all learn and use one or more Indian languages (Hindi or Tamil or Bangla or Marathi, etc.). This fact makes English a second language. Another thing that has to be remembered is that English, in addition to being widely used by Indians, enjoys official recognition as Associate Official Language and as a Link Language. In second language contexts such as ours, English becomes associated with better education, better job opportunities, better inter-regional mobility and communication and higher social status. Similar situations obtain in other countries of Africa and South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Kenya, etc.).

Check Your Progress 3

Make a list of the differences between a foreign language and a second language.

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit you have realized that despite pedagogical 'norms' that we as teachers of English tend to follow, language is actually a dynamic entity, constantly subject to change. This has probably changed your world-view of language, and the insight that you have gained will help you understand your students better.

Moreover, you have also been made to appreciate the difference between native and non-native varieties of English; English as a second and foreign language; and finally the functions and status that English enjoys in a second language context.

1.6 KEY WORDS

accent	pertaining to differences in pronunciation only
diachronic perspective	language studied from the point of view of historical development; language over a period of time.
dialect	a regionally or socially distinctive variety of a language. The differences pertain mainly to words and grammatical structures.
dynamic	ever-changing
homogeneous	a thing that has parts which are all the same; having no differences
interference	when the influence of the mother tongue on the second language leads to errors
interlanguage	the type of language produced by second language learners who are in the process of learning a language
intonation	the way the sound of one's voice rises and falls when one speaks
invariant	showing no differences
lexical	pertaining to words
monolithic	something which will never change
native language	the language which is acquired naturally during childhood (also sometimes called the 'first language' 'mother tongue')
register	a variety of language defined according to its use in social situations
sociolects	dialects which identify where a person can be placed in terms of a social scale (also called social dialects and class dialects)
speech community	refers to any group that shares the same language and closely identifies itself with it
standard language	a dialect that attains prestige and receives institutional support
static	remaining the same; unchanging
stress	the degree of force used in producing a syllable
transfer	the influence of the mother tongue on the second language
variable	something which is subject to change over a period of time
variation	differences from the norm
verbal repertoire	the different languages that an individual knows
word collocations	idiomatic combination of words

1.7 SOME USEFUL BOOKS AND JOURNALS

Agnihotri, R.K. and A.L. Khanna, (ed.) *Second Language Acquisition: Socio Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of English in India*. New Delhi : Sage Publication, 1994.

Gupta, R.S. and Kapil Kapoor, (ed.) *English in India: Issues and Problems*. Delhi: Academic Foundation, 1991.

Kachru, B.B., *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1981.

The Indianization of English: The English Language in India. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983.

The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions and Models of Non-native Englishes. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1986.

World Englishes and Applied Linguistics in Agnihotri, et al, 1994.

Pride, J.B., *New Englishes*. Rowley, Newbury House, 1982.

Smith, L.E., (ed.) *Readings in English as an International Language*. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1983.

Journals

1 *English World-wide*

2 *World Englishes*

1.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1 See 1.2.1 for the answer

2a See 1.2.2 for the answer

3 Dialects refer to the regional varieties of a language, and are associated with a particular geographical area. In the case of English spoken in Britain, one hears of varieties such as the Yorkshire dialect, the Lancashire dialect, the Cockney dialect, and so on. The Standard Language is merely one of the regional varieties which has attained prestige, after which it gets institutional support, and is then used by media and administrative agencies.

4 See 1.2.5 for the answer

5 See 1.2.6 for the first part of the answer.

The three determinants of registers are:

The *field*, *manner* and *mode* of discourse.

6 a) matrimonial advertisement b) newspaper headline c) medical text book, d) noting from official files e) on a notice board.

Check Your Progress 2

1 See 1.3.3 for the answer

2 See 1.3.3 for the answer

Check Your Progress 3

1 See 1.3 for the answer.